

Vampire Adjuncts

Chapter 1

Mother was in the foyer waiting for me with a far away look in her eyes. I'll bet she's visiting someplace else she would rather be than taking her fractious daughter out to dinner. She could have cancelled our weekly dinner but mother is a stickler for schedules since she is busy the moment she is up.

Mother insists we go to dinner together at least once a week if I am going to stay in the same city as her, so I'm in on Wednesday nights. This evening she dressed as if she's going out on a date with someone she really likes and intends on doing more than having dinner with me. It appears I'm the third wheel tonight. Her current boyfriend will be joining us for dinner. I will say in her favor, she gave me two days notice to adjust to the change of venue and company. I could have opted out but we are just getting reacquainted and I wanted to show her I wasn't as rebellious as some of her cronies like to make me appear.

My suspicion is that while I was away at correctional school, mother was hunting for someone to fill up her life. Usually whoever caught Mother's interest she had to have, if only for a short while.... that went for humans too. Mother isn't picky about gender or their preference in eating habits. Am I being too judgmental of her? Hell. Maybe I am. Sometimes I'm not nice and sometimes I'm downright rude.

My evening attire was black on black but it was silk, including my undies. I wasn't going to be that uncomfortable about this meeting. I added some extra ear piercings so as not to appear as an obedient daughter. I stopped at piercing the precious parts on me – lips, tits, and clit. I thought about the nose but if I had to blow my nose, I didn't want to complicate it with a nose ring.

All right, so maybe her cronies were influenced by my behavior to judge me as a problem child.

"The limo with chauffeur is waiting for us," Mother said, waiting for me to open the door for us. "You remember what I told you about chauffeurs and limos?"

"Yes. The person in livery opens and closes the doors, helps with packages, etc. Does he pack?"

"Pack? What have you been reading?"

I startled Mother. I could see her nose wrinkle for just a moment, showing her distaste for what I said.

"I'm up to Bugs Malone and..."

"Oh, Helen. Who gave you that to read? If you're going to catch up on news, do stay away from that type of riff raff."

"If I'm going to be able to protect myself, I need to know what went on in the various levels of life in the past and now."

"We're not involved with that type of *blooding*."

I caught the worry in her eyes. In the past I was known for taking on causes dealing with the underdog. I told Mother and Father I would let them know if I took up any cause these days. Father has moved on but it doesn't mean I don't leave notes at his tomb and Mother will worry about me no matter what. I'll keep that in mind as I reacquaint myself with life in the big city. So you see I'm not really a totally bad person, just different.

As we walked down the hall and into the elevator I thought of what she said. A limo with a chauffeur. Nothing but the best for Mother. I was used to others driving, be it a cart, a horse drawn carriage or recently, Mother's sports car. I literally missed the Model-T era. I didn't know what a limo was, but if it goes as fast as Mother's sports car, I was looking forward to it.

I glanced at Mother and was surprised to see she was actually looking relaxed and happy. Was her new sexual interest like us or different? I didn't think he was different. After centuries of living mother wouldn't go for someone with a short life span, unless it was intentional to go along with her short attention span for mates.

The limo was shiny black with night lights reflecting like diamonds off its surface. The chauffeur held the door open and Mother slid in first and then I did. It was obvious Mother and he knew each other by the bantering going on between them. Though he was dressed in livery he must work as a comedian in his off hours.

Our limo stopped in front of a nice restaurant...nice as in there is no waiting line and the person that greeted us at the door was who showed us to our table and waited on us. I've been to a lot of nice places in Europe and the Orient, and not so nice places where the only ones that followed that close to a customer were the ones that ripped the customer off, though it wouldn't have worked with us.

A dark haired, pale skinned gentleman, dressed for the evening and with cane, gloves and hat in hand, stopped at our table. Mother's face lit up.

"Good evening, Bernard."

He leaned over her and nipped her neck. I looked closely to see if there was any blood. It would be in bad taste for an exchange like that in public with someone of my mother's stature. I was sure that much hadn't changed since my waking up. Mother laughed and slapped his arm as if it was a joke they shared.

"This is my daughter, Helen. Helen, this is Bernard." She said it with such finality that it was like saying his name was supposed to provide me with his genealogy. It didn't. Vampires are supposed to know the who's who that count. Genealogy is snobbery with the older vampires.

Didn't I tell you we're vampires? Pardon me. We're from an old and respected family of vamps. It's rather complicated to explain vampires but the Anunnaki, our creators, started our species in their laboratory. Over millions of years and sharing blood and memories with other species we comingled with, we have evolved to what we are today, a mixture of *transmuted* to *awakened* beings. Our long life is due to our creators mixing DNA with species from different dimensions and planets. They experimented with life to produce a perfect worker in dark and airless underground mines they were harvesting for minerals on 3rd dimensional Earth. When the Anunnaki withdrew due to their own wars with each other, and had less of a presence on 3rd dimensional Earth, our ancestors along with all the other species the Anunnaki created, such as the Minotaur, Mermaids, and other creators that are on carved walls that today humans think are mythical creatures from someone's imagination, we had to figure out how to survive. I could tell you a lot of stories of what the Anunnaki created in their labs, but that is neither here nor there, as humans like to say.

So, when our creators left, we had to learn to survive both as a species and as thinking beings that were capable of existing and visiting different dimensions, and not feeling totally comfortable in any one. The Anunnaki had no intention of making us intelligent. They were still working on improving our efficiency as miners. We developed our intelligence by intermixing with other species. Over centuries of our evolution, we have learned many things about DNA and transmuting knowledge and withholding from those we create. Humans are not the only species we blood and not all species we blood are transmuted or awakened. Those that are converted from another species to vampire are done with intent and the decision to grant them transmuted status or awakened is dependent on whether the vampire creating another vampire holds the status of transmuted.

To be a transmuted vampire means that vampire has DNA memory of all beings she or he has blooded, and that includes ancestor memories, past lives if they have souls, and the individual's memories. Understand this important fact, not all humans have a soul. It's earned just as not all vampires have what humans recognize as a soul. The consciousness that is considered Supreme, we all believe in. However, many of those humans revered as god or goddess, were the Anunnaki or creations of theirs whether by mixing their own DNA or others from their labs. I can honestly say, vampires have never been driven to the extremeness of wiping out entire populations claiming it was for the Supreme Being. We knew who we were doing it for - ourselves.

So, now that you have some idea of what this is about, back to my present dinner date with Mother and her date.

"Helen, you are indeed the type that two cities would go to war for," his voice surprised me and I missed entirely what he said and had to do a mental playback. Mother must have been bragging.

Since his hand was out waiting for mine I automatically stuck mine out there. His hands were not warm...not cold either. I took my hand back hurriedly, realizing my mistake. I had a role to play: a not too energetic daughter being introduced to her mother's latest boyfriend.

He ordered for us, because Mother told him to. While we waited for our drinks, Bernard, as he liked to be called, explained he was expecting his child to join us. I

noticed he didn't say the gender or name. He also didn't feel too pleased that his child was going to put in an appearance. Mother didn't either. I wasn't interested.

Three tall tubes of warm red fluid were set before each of us. It had to be less than a pint, otherwise it would have put us all into a coma induced state. Though I was curious how it would taste, I declined to test it out and pushed it over toward Mother. I, instead, asked for a cup of coffee. Can you believe that? A vampire drinking coffee? It is indeed a cultivated taste that I limited to two sips at the most.

The waiter looked surprised but bowed and left.

I was about fifteen minutes into looking everywhere but at Mother and Bernard when I looked into the darkest eyes I have ever dove into. I don't dive into people's eyes often, but these I wanted to.

I'm not sure how much time elapsed before Bernard looked to see where I was staring and hastily introduced Bertie, his daughter. She must have been named after him. I noticed she was wearing the same black clothes as I and what I thought were fake tattoos were

Perhaps I should backtrack a little. This woman, Bertie, was at the jewelry counter where I was looking over some ugly earrings that were cheap looking too. I was trying to decide just what image I wanted to put out for the next evening's dinner. She was looking over the counter at the salesperson whose nice round butt was sticking up. We both had looked at each other and recognized a fellow vamp. I wondered who the show was for, her or me. That's when we both spotted a young man staring from another aisle as if it was the first booty he had ever seen.

We shared a park bench in the night, and she entertained me with some interesting stories of what the world was like for young vampires. She seemed to be very worldly, so I asked her advice on how to not be a part of a parent's romantic encounters. She never said because her cellphone rang. I want to point out, she was wearing dark glasses, a hat pulled over much of her face, and some kind of filmy fabric over her arms so I couldn't really tell if those were real tattoos. I was as covered as she in order to go into stores with lights on and at dusk, but my arms were completely covered and I also wore gloves. I thought she was interesting, and her hasty goodbye didn't give me a chance to get a name

and number. She disappeared into the night. I was sure we would see each other again because it's hard to hide from another vampire.

Well, here she is. Her tattoos were uncovered, nice, though a bit much. Her rings were not only on every finger, but in her nose, ears and by the bumps under her black silk shirt, on her tits. Ouch. She looked more Goth than vampire.

I was asked a question for which Mother used her elbow to get my attention.

"Why?" I managed to get out.

"Because, to start a business on two continents it requires capital. With both of us putting money in the venture it has a better chance of making the long haul this economic downturn is in."

Mother wanted me to go in with her to invest in a night club that Bernard was involved in. "No" was my answer then, and for sure no now. I knew what was happening with money. I always had invested in the acquisition of land that wasn't being taxed to make up for lost revenues. There are some sections of land no one was interested in, but was for sale. Everything was for sale. Nothing had changed.

"Mother, money...on all continents, isn't worth the paper it's printed on. It's like the nickel that costs more to produce than what it's worth. I'm interested in trading the paper for something I can barter with, like small farms with fertile land that aren't caught up in planting what the government says but what can grow under the changing weather conditions."

"Oh, dear, you have such fatalistic ideas," Mother said. "I told you, Bernard, she's into this survivalist mentality. She doesn't want to live near the ocean, doesn't want to live in a city, and she doesn't want to live near mountains or volcanoes. I told her to move to Texas. That's flat. But she says it'll be under water for a long time. She bought some land somewhere in Oregon and had the builder construct an underground bunker for her."

Mother said that with a smirk. She was being funny.

Bernard looked impressed. "What good is that if your neighbors know about your safe place and when times are harsh, bombard you with pleas for help?"

"I'll help them."

"They'll shoot you and take it," Bertie said dryly. "And when they find shooting you doesn't kill you, you'll become their obsession."

"Or a Goddess," I said, though I wasn't serious about that. I was a high priestess in one of my roles and that was like being a goddess. Too much work and little time for myself.

She's right though. Some humans, when faced with difficulties look for solutions outside of themselves and a lot of times it's for the easy way out. But, we all have our faults. It's what's supposed to make life interesting.

"My intention is to have seeds, tools, and whatever else I can provide for the more hearty to survive. No weapons."

"Why do you worry about others?" Bernard asked.

"If you experienced a devastating earthquake do you worry about saving just yourself or would you help others as well as yourself? That's the question a lot of people ask themselves. They wonder if they're big enough to forget their fear and put aside their shock and help others."

"Dear, you need to worry about the present," Mother said in an undertone.

Bertie's eyebrows rose a little at that. Bernard chuckled. "Bertie was in Indonesia when the tidal wave hit. I know she wasn't there to help anyone. She just wanted to prove to herself that she was invincible. She came back with all those tattoos." He stared at her arms with a look of reproach.

Invincible? That could mean she was suicidal. I knew vampires that challenged their immortality and they were the kind to keep away from. They attracted unpleasant attention that seeped into everyone's life around them.

A fresh tube of bright red liquid was placed before Bertie. She grinned at me as her teeth distended. Her focus became emptying the tube in minutes.

Before me was set a tube of a green substance. I looked at the waiter surprised. He smiled and left. I was one of those vampires that some called veggie vamps. Not that I ate vegetables. We don't eat for sustenance. Some drink and some absorb energy. To get the nutrition blood would normally give me, I turned to substitutes and weaned myself off of primarily needing blood. I was able to sustain my energy on the substitutes, which goes to show you, not all of us vampires are into sucking blood all the time.

I sipped the contents cautiously then drank the rest down in one breath. It made my eyes water from the energy it sent through me. I must have been lower on energy than I thought.

"I apologize for not ordering something you like," Bernard said to me. "I had no idea you...well, Lida did say your tastes were unusual..."

"She's old enough to make her own decisions and take care of herself," Mother said, echoing my very thought.

It was nice to hear her say that and without any rancor or undercurrents of double meaning. Dinner conversation turned to other matters that adults that lived for centuries talked about, like places they visited, lived, and would never go back to in this century.

After dinner, Mother and Bernard left the restaurant and I hung back to speak with Bertie. I knew my way about town and could find my way back to Mother's apartment where I've been staying for the last month.

"Why were you at that jewelry counter?" I asked her.

"To see what you looked like. Your mother's description was like a mother's description. Rebellious, but not in the norm. She said you went vegetarian. I wanted to know what a vegetarian vampire was like."

"Why?"

"Do you know how many vegetarian vamps there are?" she asked mockingly.

"No." Since I've been out of vampire politics for a while I wasn't about to give out names without knowing if being a vegetarian vamp meant another dividing up of tribes and the start of another war.

"Leonard. He's the one that said it could be done. When he dies, you're on your own," Bertie said in that mocking tone I was beginning to like.

"He's not that old," I protested. She confirmed my suspicion that someone was keeping tabs. Why? Some people like to denounce curiosity as bad but it's what makes life interesting and what gives intelligence a boost.

"He's not being a real vampire. Sooner or later he's going to turn himself over to one of those crazy Christian groups that like to whip themselves up into a hateful mob every meeting."

"Whipping up the devil, is it called? Crazy mob scenes are already here. Christians? I haven't met the one they call Jesus. If he lived in this time he would be called a left-wing liberal and those that call themselves Christians would kill him as they had then. Recorded history is distorted and written by propagandists and each generation rewrites it."

"Imagine that. Just like how it got out that vampires only like to suck blood," Bertie said provocatively.

My heart picked up beats. It had to do with the way her eyes were devouring me. Really. I'm sure you've heard about someone capable of devouring you with her or his eyes and you think its romantic nonsense. I think everyone should have that experience at least once so you know how helpless you become to passion. It makes your body hot, your juices flow with desire, your focus is only on the emotion of sex, and if anything should get in the way... Well, think of getting run over by a stampeding horse drawn cart.

There's more, but I'll leave the rest for you to discover on your own.

So I followed her as if a leather leash linked us to a white limousine. The chauffeur was a woman. Her bustier showed more skin than not. She was a ghoul. A dedicated blood donor to a blood sucker - Bertie. She was dressed in white, if you can believe that, down to her white boots that came up to her mid thigh. Her eyes were on Bertie as she opened the passenger door.

"Bernard and Leda went to his hotel," Bertie said.

"They left us to our own?" I asked. I didn't bother to ask her how she knew. We all knew telepathically about our ken.

Bertie smiled like she had something planned. "Get in, if you dare," she said.

I got in.

Nothing was said as we were transported to a destination the chauffeur and Bertie knew about. I could sense where we were going from Bertie's feelings. The chauffeur's thoughts were on Bertie. It's a wonder we didn't end up in a ditch somewhere from all the turns we took and her mind on Bertie and not the road. I seriously believe the mythic horses under the hood got us there safely and not the driver.

We drove through ornate carved gates that began to close as we passed through. The driveway curved around a yard that had high bushes alongside as if hiding something

beyond them. The vehicle stopped in front of stairs and the door was opened immediately. Bertie nudged me to slide out and she followed me, her hand resting on my hip. The valet that opened the car door walked us up the steps to a big mansion, shaped in a U.

"How many rooms do you have in this place?" I asked Bertie.

"I don't know. It's Uncle Mick and Aunt Hils' place. Since they haven't been sleeping together for a long time, they have their rooms in opposite wings." She laughed and glanced at me. "Uncle Mick writes romance novels and goes to book conventions to pick up women. Auntie goes to the vampire bars and picks up young boys eager to join our ranks." Bertie looked me over with an interested eye and added, "She's past her lesbian phase so you don't have to worry about her pinching your butt to test you for ripeness."

I could feel my face heat up like a school girl's blush. That was so stupid.

"And you?" I thought to ask.

"I like what I'm seeing," she said.

I took her hand from my hip and intertwined our fingers as she led us into an elevator and pressed a button to the 4th floor. In the elevator I took her lips in a passionate lip lock, deciding it was time I started to make some moves to show I was interested but wasn't a follower. The woman knew how to kiss without sampling my blood.

By the time we were on a bed, I didn't have clothes on. I didn't take time to admire her tattoos. I was too much into seeing my passion abated. We thrashed and bent the springs and warped some bed boards as we went at each other for a while. Daylight was what slowed us down.

At the hint of light from outside, the curtains automatically closed. When I first moved in with Mother and her curtains on the top of the building began to close around the entire front room I was quite impressed. I'm beginning to gather, modern vampires have their homes customized for comfort and ease.

We weren't sleepy, just hungry for nutrition so Bertie led us to the kitchen where the pantry had fresh liters of blood. This was one of those occasions I would go off my diet.

"So tell me about this school your mother said you spent some time in," Bertie said.

"You mean the correctional school for vampires?" I asked with a laugh. It really was a disgusting place. That's what drove me to trying out the vegetarian route. Lessons in necking vampire style was too messy and laughable to take the teacher and students seriously. I didn't come out of hibernation to see such a disgusting display of vulgarity. Father should have stuck around and taught there to bring respectability back.

"They have a school for vamping?"

"For the newly *awakened*. How to - definitely. How to set up your next meal, how to keep your ghouls near if they turn out to be tasty, how to keep a low profile, look for a job, keep a job, the correct jargon to use and be recognized as a vampire and so on. There were also lessons in how to make sure your next bite isn't on someone that is taking drugs. An over medicated society messes up a lot of the older vampires. Can you imagine Viagra and a vampire?"

I watched Bertie with interest as she took only two sips of blood. Bertie puzzled me. What was her interest in me...besides sex?

Bertie grinned at me as if she picked up on a thread of my thoughts. Not so. I knew how to keep my kind from dipping into my thoughts unwanted. I was a *transmuted* vampire not an *awakened*. Some thoughts were unimportant and shallow. It was my deep thoughts I wished to keep to myself. I figured it was my expression she was reading.

"So what's your interest in me?" I asked.

"Sex at the moment." She held out her hand and I took it willingly and followed her to another bedroom. If we spend time in each room, it would be an interesting kind of record to begin. I wondered how that would work in a hotel.

Chapter 2

It was days later, or I should say, nights later, that Bertie dropped me off at Mother's apartment. Mother's flat overlooked the city. Mother liked to be at the top of a building and, from something Bertie said, Mother liked to top her female sexual partners too. That was a clue that Mother had been to bed with Bertie. Since Mother wasn't a jealous type, she was too busy to be, I didn't have to worry that she would be waiting for me with nasty remarks. That's another thing about Mother. She didn't say nasty things. She told you what she thought and dropped it. If you wanted to make a fool of yourself, you were on your own. Since my key, as if I needed one, let me in her apartment, I knew our relationship was okay.

Mother had left me a note. She and Bernard were in Europe for a few weeks to look over buildings.

I called my lawyer and made sure my properties were doing fine and then thought to make visits to each to see them up close. Why not fly like a bat, you're asking? Have you heard of pesticides, crazy people with guns, and looking for a place to spend the day when you're dressed in bat costume? I didn't think you had.

The doorbell rang and I didn't have to guess who was there. Bertie.

"Hello," I said when she was standing before me dressed in jeans and a tight t-shirt. The woman had a body to hunger for with her nipples poking out from the outline of the nipple rings. Her body was balanced with solidness and muscle. I liked it. I had always lusted after women with strong bodies. Endurance and flexibility were very important to me.

"So our parents are gone for two weeks. Got anything planned?" she asked.

She knew the apartment. She walked in and headed to the kitchen. She helped herself to Mother's stash and handed me one of my green drinks.

"I'm going to tour this nation," I said. "Want to come along?" I was imagining how much fun it would be to ravish her in rooms cross country. She made a lot of noise when we had sex and it would be interesting what it would do to those that shared walls with us.

"I have a friend that delivers motorhomes. Have you ever traveled in one of those?" Bertie asked.

"Ahm. No. What is a motor home?" I thought she was going to say a house with a motor because that's all it could be.

"Your education has holes in it," she said. She got up and walked over to the computer that I was beginning to become proficient with.

She downloaded pictures of buses on wheels. It was astonishing what they could do with them to make them into livable places on wheels besides public transportation vehicles.

"That looks interesting." It was mentally put on my list of things to do. When you've hibernated for as long as I had, there were things that were more interesting to learn than others.

"How do they move?"

"We drive it like a car. We'll take some lessons and head out." She made up her mind and that was that. I didn't mind. Traveling with her was going to be interesting.

It took one day for me to learn to drive such a huge thing. I knew about piloting war ships because I had sailed many on oceans and rivers in my past. Have you ever backed a warship out of a harbor in flames? It's a ghastly difficult experience but if you wanted to keep your ship and crew from burning up, you did what you had to do. Backing up this motorhome wasn't as difficult. There were cameras placed on the motorhome to give me various views of what was beside and behind the large structure.

Our driving instructor, Mote, was a friend of Bertie's friend Howard. Mote spent time teaching me about the buttons and other gadgets that needed to be monitored to keep the motorhome going. I understood I needed to keep an eye on the dials. If they read empty I failed in monitoring them properly. If a red light turned on, I was also too late. Amber was warning. Mote said fill everything when it reached the half mark, just to avoid problems.

Bertie wasn't so interested. She was more interested in the Internet connection on the motorhome. Howard, who she was hoping to see, wasn't here and according to Mote was still traveling the roads. According to Bertie, he kept in contact with vampires with

his trips across this nation in his motorhome. Bertie had a laptop and could follow his trail.

So we reaffirmed our reasons for making this trip. Bertie was hoping to meet up with Howard and I was going for the adventure. However, Bertie had a secret desire and it wasn't about Howard. I was curious what it was.

We left notes for our respective parent, I purchased the right clothes, and we each marked where we would stop for food. Herbal shops shouldn't be that difficult to find, I was thinking. Bertie had the names of night spots along the way where she could stop for fresh blood and news. From the internet she was able to locate the right bars.

If it sounds like I knew no one in this new world, you're right. When I went into hibernation, it was to get away from the abuses humans were doing to all creatures in the name of a person who wouldn't even kill a flea. He didn't have to kill anything. A command and fleas wouldn't bother him. So why did he let himself be tortured? He had a pregnant wife and a great future to look forward to. I wasn't around for that so I couldn't ask him or his wife. I was on another continent, but I'll tell you now, those same people that call themselves the religious right are the same people that condemned him to death. That mind set hasn't changed, even with all the guides that were physically sent to teach 'Be kind to others' and 'Share with others'. There are some people that are addicted to hate and tormenting others and will use whatever tool is at hand to snare victims. It's in their DNA. They could change it too, but no one seemed to realize that.

During one of the dark periods when thousands of people were leaving earth from starvation, diseases, another round of the bubonic plague and murder through petty wars, I was too tempted to kill the humans and their associates that were the cause of that ugly mess. That wasn't what we, the Everlastings, were allowed to do.

By the way, we aren't everlasting, and I really resent being called that. Some popish self-indulgent repressive official in a religious organization that was trying to dominate everyone thought that up. I thought he was a bit too jealous of vampires and if he already hadn't sold his life to the proverbial devil, would have offered his neck for a step into the everlasting himself.

Anyway, I thought it better for my piece of mind to sleep through it rather than escape as Father has, to another dimension. When I returned five years ago, I studied

world news and realized that not much had changed. The same evil was trying to destroy good - however, goodness was winning. It doesn't always seem so because evil makes a bigger stink but goodness is prevalent in the masses. I can feel it. There's no perfection but life on earth is supposed to be a learning experience with goodness as the goal for all creatures including vampires and other night creatures. Goodness is not a difficult concept to practice. People who are evil know they are doing evil. Killing someone and using any other excuse other than they wanted to kill is lying.

So, as Mother pointed out, I needed to find myself something to do and do it. That's when I got interested in survivalists. Change was coming, that was for sure. So-called extraterrestrials, not the Anunnaki, were appearing all over the planet, getting those that were open to the message to prepare themselves. I already knew I could escape to another dimension but I wasn't going to just leave with my life intact. I wanted to set up safe places and things humans could use, to help the children survive. Sound crazy? What does it matter when the soul is indestructible provided you have one? It matters to me. If someone gets hurt, do you ignore it and let that person fend for herself or himself? Of course not. You help the best way you can, even if it's leaving the scene and calling the proverbial 911, on some level. I do understand that there are some on their own path to destruction and those I let drive off the proverbial cliff.

I learned on many battlefields what the good of one person could do for others. Do you think dying is the end of everything? It's a transition, or a transmutation in the higher sense.

A female on a battlefield, you ask. When you're dressed for battle in some armies, or you're covered in battle gore, gender isn't that easily noticed. I found a lot of females disguised in battle and some were there as themselves. Not all males cared. Some soldiers were what you call transgender, some lesbians, bi-sexuals and some were just comfortable fighting.

Chapter 3

"And there goes Barnstone or Bellstone?" I asked as we left the small town. We just about emptied their one and only underground tank of diesel fuel. We didn't have to worry about not finding diesel because the motorhome could also take biofuel and Bertie knew how to convert the grease from fryers to usable fuel. Bertie is highly intelligent and boredom was something she didn't tolerate. She created things for her to do while I drove at night and before it got too bright for the sunglasses and clothing to be of no help in preventing the UV rays to burn our cells.

Bertie downloaded all sorts of information from the internet. One was a farm whose family was dedicated to converting vehicles to using biofuel. The family fell over themselves to show Bertie how to do it. They were a family of ghouls. They were fascinated by my request for the ingredients to make my drink instead of taking their offered necks. They didn't know I was primarily a psychic vampire and partook in bits of their energy body. I didn't want to freak them out since they were so into the neck biting scene.

"Neither. It's got a crease through the name so it's...." She found it and hummed as she traced her finger along a route then tapped in the address in the GPS. Imagine that. A device that tells us where we are, how much further we have to go to our destination and if I take the wrong road, it tells me it's recalculating our route. I traveled with people that were quite rude about letting the lead rider know when they took the wrong path. Often times, it was at sword point that they made their displeasure known. Those days, taking the wrong path usually meant someone was being set up by robbers or your fellow travelers.

The GPS was very patient when I took the wrong turn. My repeated taking the wrong turns to get the seductive voice of the GPS to tell me it was recalculating had Bertie finally threatening me with disconnecting it if I didn't behave.

It seemed as we got closer to our next stop, Bertie was becoming more animated. Our sex was nearly too passionate...that is, she tried to bite me. I wasn't into sharing my blood with others unless I was in a committed relationship. Laugh if you will, a vampire in a committed relationship. Really! However, I had no intention of giving up part of my

essence and power to another vampire. I was a *transmuted* vampire. I had the DNA of thousands of beings, their memories, their ancestors and previous lives if they had a soul. It was sharing in a treasure that was also sharing me.

Remember I told you about the vampire wars? Those times happened too recently to me. They were before Bertie was created and though I knew she was also a transmuted vampire, she only had a borrowed memory of it from those that did go through it.

"So tell me about this person that we're supposed to see in..." I glanced at her to fill in the blanks.

"Gladstone. Mullen works in a hospital so he has plenty of access to blood. He also works for the Red Cross and is quite good at getting his community to donate blood." Bertie smiled at something she was remembering. What I picked up from her had me thinking about renewing my protection spells around the motorhome. A different side of Bertie was surfacing. It was not something to fear, because there's little I fear, but it was something to be cautious about.

"Doesn't anyone suspect him?"

"Of what? He's very careful with collecting blood that's healthy. Who better to care for it than someone that knows what is bad and what is good?" Bertie said.

She sounded like she was there and watched him do his duties. I couldn't help smiling because this felt like her ulterior motive for this trip.

"Are you talking about tasty blood as opposed to contaminated?" I said.

"Right, right. You're the health food person. Have you had blood from one of those vitamin freaks?" Bertie gave a childish giggle. I gave her a startled glance.

"Wait until you see Mullen. He's got a lot of women throwing themselves at him so be careful how you look at him. One of them may go crazy if you look too interested in him."

"You mean stare at his neck?" I meant that as a tease because her voice changed as if she was warning me away from him.

"And lick your lips, show your canines," Bertie joked. "Yeah, right."

I pulled the motorhome into a parking lot our lovely GPS voice directed me to. The lot was nearly deserted, strewn with bits of trash and pot holes. The huge tires crunched over whatever was in our path. I had no intention of having to change a tire on

this monster motorhome so I was anxious at what was run over but unable to avoid all the trash. I parked the motorhome in the furthest corner of the parking lot from the buildings. It was nine at night and there were no parking lot lamps lit, which really didn't mean much to my night vision, but it did tell me that this lot wasn't maintained and therefore it would attract those that sought such places for nefarious deeds.

The air brakes let out their characteristic cross between screeches and belches and we came to a stop. I studied the buildings the lot serviced. Most had for rent signs in their windows and others had closed signs.

"When is he going to be here?" I asked.

"Right now," Bertie said. "That's Mullen's art studio. He lives above it."

"It looks deserted, permanently," I said. It felt like there was no one attached to the room she pointed out. Looking up at the apartment above the store I could see a light had just turned on. I glanced at my watch. I didn't need a watch but it was a wonderful invention that I really did appreciate with all the doodads on it. I had a sun and moon that went around the face showing me night and day. Interesting invention.

"Right on the hour so the light is probably on a timer." I wasn't totally dumb about modern inventions. I just had gaps.

"I sent him an email so he's expecting us," Bertie said.

We still had not gotten out of the motorhome. The seats were comfortable so I thought that more the reason than not liking the looks of what we may be heading into, for waiting. Something about this place made me want to get away like a bat out of hell. I was beginning to think Mullen was the source of the bad feeling, because the more I focused on the room he was supposed to reside in, the more empty it felt.

A black sports car with dark tinted windows roared into the parking lot and slid to a rock spewing stop next to the motorhome. A young woman dressed as a Goth hopped out of the driver's side and went around to the passenger side door of the motorhome. By the looks of it, she was intent on pounding on the door. Bertie had the door opened before she could do any physical damage. This was not a vampire, but she smelled like she was around vampires. She was a ghoul by her smell. Some ghoul's became slaves to one vampire, becoming their *pomme de sang*. Since humans should only give one pint of

blood every fifty-six days, I guessed the way she was unsteady on her feet, she had given more than she should.

"Where the hell is Mull!" she demanded.

"We just got here. He said he would meet us. What's your problem?" Bertie demanded back.

"He's gone! Everything of his is gone! No goodbyes! No nothing!" She was too emotional to hear anything someone else said. I don't like most emotional outbursts. They tended to attract the type of attention I wanted to avoid.

"What's happening that could have him leaving suddenly?" Bertie asked, not so politely, meaning she used her will to get an answer. It doesn't always mean you'll get the information you need.

"Not a damn thing! We have an agreement...." She stopped abruptly as a dozen cars rolled up yards away from us.

I could feel their focus was on the building. They were going to burn it down.

"What's that about?" Bertie asked the young woman.

"It's those church goers. They don't like Mull's art. They said it was demon inspired and they were going to run him out of town. They were at the hospital he works at yesterday, but he works nights."

"So maybe that's why Mullen left suddenly?" Bertie said sarcastically.

"He would have told me," she said vehemently.

"We all need to go," Bertie said, but I knew it was to get rid of the woman.

"Where is he?" she demanded.

"I don't know," Bertie said. "But we're moving on. Go, go," she encouraged.

I could feel Bertie exerting her influence on the woman. This time Bertie got the result she was intending. The woman did get in her car and used an exit far from the trouble at the building. We sat and watched his apartment and the adjoining businesses go up in flames. It happened so quickly, as if they were all made of wood.

"I do love a good bonfire now and then, especially when I'm not the one in the middle of it," Bertie said.

"I attended one too many where I was in the middle of it," I said.

My thoughts went back to when I was accused of being a witch because that's what was done when someone feared you and you were a female. I was the only woman left in that small town that openly used herbs to make people feel better from the plague, diseases through unclean drinking water and consumption that was surely going to kill all the living. It's a complicated story but I'll shorten it. I escaped and moved far away from large towns and cities. However, everyone was barely surviving and those in power continued to beat, torture and kill those whose work they thought was a threat to their absolute power. There wasn't much chance for soul growth. Like I said, humanity was at one of its lowest points and I decided to withdraw from living through it. Father and Mother owned the villa I took refuge in. It was built into a mountain and high enough and away from normal human traffic.

I turned the engine on and while Bertie did her cellphone thing, texting she called it, I headed to the next address. As I drove out of the parking lot, I could see in the rear view camera that the local fire department had arrived. A few of the members in the group burning the building down switched sides. I suspected Mullen had a hand in those people over-reacting. There's a type of energy that hangs over areas that have been manipulated with a group suggestion. I've used it often in the past and could easily pick up on the feel of it.

Bertie moved around the motorhome restlessly while I enjoyed this invention of moving swiftly over a smooth road to another town. I rolled my window down to feel the wind in my face and view the stars in the sky. I became aware of headlights that were behind us for the last hour and decided because I couldn't get any read on the driver it was probably Bertie's friend.

"I think we're being followed," I said. "But it's not that car from the parking lot."

"It's Mullen." Bertie's voice quivered with anticipation, and I felt a twinge of jealousy. That emotional response from me had me backing off quickly. I didn't want to get emotionally involved. Sex with her wasn't that good.

At the first turnoff I pulled over and stopped. Bertie was out the door before I had come to a complete stop. I was wondering what her hurry was. As I stepped down, there she was giving him a lip lock like she gave me. It had my imagination going back to when I was the recipient of her kisses.

"Mullen," she finally said breaking from his bloody lips. I didn't think the blood was his. That was my snap judgment of that type of vampire Mullen was. He preyed on his own people. Being that Bertie was a transmuted vampire meant she could control what information was passed on via her blood, and I was hoping it wasn't something she would regret he knew about her.

"This is the friend I told you about." She didn't stop from looking up into his eyes. He was good looking but really not my type. My father's amulet was warm against my skin. He was testing his strength on me. I didn't like him at all. He felt like a renegade and those were the lowest and most despicable of vampires to mingle with.

"Friend, what is your name?" He had the nerve to command me.

I pointed a finger at him and a purple spark from my finger tip told me he was doing more than commanding me. He was trying to cover me with his energy, to suck me dry of mine, I was thinking. Sucking blood wasn't the only thing some vampire's wanted. There was body energy which I liked, psychic energy, life energy and soul energy, but most vampires I've known have no use for soul energy.

He backed off and concentrated on Bertie. He was hungry. I felt sorry for Bertie. He must have snared her when she was too young to know that to have sex with someone that likes to dominate you for your entire life span meant you were at his or her beck and call for the rest of your immortal life...unless you had a strong enough friend or two on the outside that sought to break the spell. I wondered why her family let this enchantment go on.

Though it was dark, I could see his eyes trying to penetrate the protective bubble I had around me. He wanted ME.

I played with the idea of breaking his spell over Bertie and then shut the thought down. I wasn't going to entertain anything concerning him as long as I was in his area of influence. I climbed back into the motorhome. I decided to check my spells and amulets of power that were to protect me from another's unwanted influence before Bertie returned. I would know if he had removed them or weakened them. I lived through the Vampire wars and knew how to protect myself from domination by another.

Mullen didn't even attempt to enter the motorhome. I knew what he was doing out there to her. He was taking her vital energy. A vampire's vital energy carried power and if

she didn't respect the responsibility of having it, then it wasn't my business to correct her...or was it?

I didn't care, really. I started the engine. I was done here. If Bertie was going to continue on with me, she would have to make it to the motorhome before I pulled out.

"Hey!" Bertie slapped the door and I opened it. "What's the hurry? Are you jealous?"

I didn't bother with a reply. "Put your seat belt on if you're coming along."

"I asked him to travel with us but he declined. He said he'll meet up with us further on. I was hoping he had some blood replenishment but he said he didn't."

"Bertie, ask me before you invite anyone along. I wouldn't invite that vampire sucker anywhere or even be in the same room as him." It's time to get the truth out and let the chips fall where they may.

"You're acting like you're jealous. Okay. I'll remember to ask next time." I could see Bertie leaning against the door as if exhausted. She should be. She would be needing blood soon. There wasn't any in the refrigerator.

"Why do you give your energy to him?"

Bertie shrugged her shoulders. "It started out as a way to get back at my parents and then..."

"Too late. You were his," I finished for her.

"You can say that, but I don't mind," Bertie said. "I don't see him often. He's away a lot." Her eyes closed as if it took a lot of energy to keep them open.

"He's enslaving vampires that don't know better," I said. What if he was getting ready for another vampire war and he was collecting vampires for his army now? "This list of vampires Howard is visiting, are they part of an army that Mullen is putting together?"

Bertie laughed at my question, not bothering to open her eyes. She didn't answer me but her thoughts did.

Bertie got up and walked to the back of the motorhome. I pulled the motorhome over, parked and went to the back to speak with her. She was naked and waiting for me. I could feel my whole body ready and willing, but not my brain.

"Is he following us?" I asked.

"No." She patted the bed.

"Bertie, because I chose to hibernate for all those centuries doesn't mean I'm suicidal. It meant I didn't want to go on a mass killing spree and wipe out a small period of human history. It would have messed up my mental stability. Now, your friend Mullen, he uses humans but he preys on vampires, his own people. I find that a problem."

She patted the bed again. I could feel my clitoris strumming as if it were being stroked.

I mentally went around the room and searched for my protection amulets. They were removed. I backed out of the room. I didn't think to protect the room against her.

I should have tossed her off the motorhome, I was telling myself as I walked back to the driver seat. I could feel all my charms and talismans as I passed them, humming as if they were being tested. I took a sip of my own vitalizer, sent out energy to renew my power tokens and then concentrated on activating my backup charms in the bedroom. Bertie shrieked and came running forward. I created something in her path over which she tripped and fell. It appeared she was unconscious. That wasn't impossible since Mullen had taken a lot of her energy. I picked her up and dropped her on the bed. At each of my power objects, I gave them new protection spells. Vampires have power, but having witch or wizard talents added to one's tool bag. I had picked whom I blooded in the past and now, and though I didn't transmute or awaken any practitioners of magic to vampirism, I did enhance my knowledge with their DNA, thus all their memories.

"Bertie, I'm going to give you some lines to say to yourself," I said.

We all hear at some level, even if not listening. As if nudged by my father's teachings of doing good to others, I pulled out his talisman and began to recite an old prayer of release from another's influence. There were one hundred lines of verse. I recited fifty verses, enough to diminish his influence significantly, and then went back to the front of the motorhome to continue our journey. Dawn was two hours away and by previous arrangements, a little less than that was a place I could park and sleep the day away. A ghoul had offered his place for us to park. It meant I could get some fresh blood for Bertie.

My intention was to find a place that Bertie would be safe until she became strong enough to stand on her own. Mullen wouldn't be able to control her mindlessly but he still

had a strong hold on her. I pulled an address out of Bertie's memory. It was tucked away where I didn't think Mullen would be interested in corrupting. It was days from where we were but I planned on driving for as long as I could before pulling over when the sun reached its strongest power. Sunglasses, heavily tinted windows, and the right clothing had their advantages for a vampire in a hurry to get somewhere.

As I drove I thought of undoing Mullen's work. From Bertie's thoughts, I now knew my suspicion of Mullen was correct. He was building an army of humans, ghouls, vampires and werewolves with the intention of creating havoc within the chaos leading up to the change on planet earth. I pictured Mother charging over to the school she sent me to, to interrogate the teachers, looking for the person responsible for my lapse in vampire etiquette of not interfering with another's business. She should know that I've been like this all my life and a few centuries in hibernation, to rethink my choices in life, weren't going to change my character. Her overprotectiveness of me had to do with my waking from my hibernation. A vampire with the intention of not only bleeding me on my waking but to kill me with infusions of tainted blood was waiting for me to waken. Very politically motivated. Another reason why I've taken to other means of replenishing my energy. Mother saved my life by arriving early and slaying the assassin. The tainted blood did nasty things to my memory and recovery from hibernation.

To my way of thinking, the vampire wars didn't have to happen if the ruling Vampire Council did something about the troubled members before it was too late. The violent members were whittling down neutral members so they could replenish the numbers with new blood that they could influence. It backfired on them. It didn't help that the violent members were jealously killing each other and each others recruits as fast as they were killing everyone else. It was as if they all drank from the same crazy blood pool.

So, I was on a mission. Like I said, I have talents that hibernating undisturbed gave me a chance to hone. I was interested in testing out what I learned...but not at the expense of humans or vampires and other *supernaturals* that didn't go out of their way to destroy the nations that share third dimensional earth.

In order for Mullen to not know his plans were being dismantled, I was going to plant a suggestion with his followers that it was Mullen's order. If they were already

under his power, then he already had them listening to his orders. Each day before they went to sleep, they would chant verses to be released. It wasn't necessary to say any out loud until they got to the final verse which had to be shouted. I thought my plan was very crafty.

It would be rather funny if he has them all gathered in a circle ready to march in his bloody war and instead of shouting praises to him, they shout the line of release from his control. I thought about my father and believed I heard him laugh. I wouldn't put it past him that in his dimension he was following me. Father had a sense of humor that I missed.

Chapter 4

Glen Oaks was a small private and gated community within a large city. It was at the top of a slope covered in eucalyptus trees, and had two golf courses. One was for the members of Glen Oaks gated community and the one on the other side of the slope was for nonmembers. I think those that belonged to the gated community didn't mind having a golf course few used. Flying golf balls through their windows would be nasty surprises to wake up to.

It was midnight when I pulled up at the curb of Bertie's address. She had been unconscious for the last two days. I had put a sleeping herb in her blood supply. Before I left Bertie here, I wanted to see just who lived here that she felt she had to protect them by tucking their location away in a corner of her memory. When I opened up the door waiting for me were three vampires and two ghouls. The ghouls were dressed down to the black leather boots like proper Goths. The vampires were old. I knew that immediately from the shields they each had around them. Very old power.

"Where's Bertie," one of the elders demanded.

"In the back sleeping. Mullen...."

"Don't speak his name here," one of them said hurriedly and waved his hand in a ward-off.

"The traitor," another said.

"Are you related to Bertie?" They had this energy around them like they had something invested with Bertie.

"We're her aunts and uncles. Twelve of us in all. You have arrived at Tilda Clan Holding."

"We have our spells up to counter any bad energy you might have so don't even try it," another said.

"So you know he's taken her as a slave?" I asked.

"We've been trying to get her to give him up but she's going through that rebellious stage still. Two hundred years and still at it. I'm referred to as Tilda."

Of course I understood. The head of a Clan Hold was always called by the name of the Clan because they were in effect speaking for the Clan. Through telepathy they

were in direct contact with all the heads of the clan's holds. They were royalty of their territory.

"And you are?"

"Helen of the Vincente Clan." I glanced at the back of the motorhome as Bertie emerged. She looked like she needed an infusion of more blood.

"Come, Bertie," Tilda commanded. As Bertie stumbled off the motorhome's stairs, the arms of her ken supported her.

"I'm Master Frank. Come in if you dare, Helen," he challenged humorously. "Is that your real name? It is, isn't it? You're that Helen."

I couldn't feel any dark energy threatening me so I closed the motorhome and said a protection spell against the door. Neither a vampire or a witch would get past that. A magician could however, but he would destroy the motorhome.

"I see you weave old spells. Most vampires these days don't bother with such things. They like to use up their energy instead," Master Frank said sounding impressed.

"Less of a drain but it does take memorizing," I said. I was intrigued by the yard we walked through and then the walkway into the house. They were preparing for something that they hadn't named yet. I could feel it. Once inside the building, we went downstairs into an enormous underground fortress. The exterior of the building was deceiving. I felt at home down here.

"Who are you protecting this place from?"

"That traitor. He's been trying to either get rid of some of us or dominate us. He's killed off his entire family, blood related and adopted. Became head of his adopted clan during the dark times."

I snapped my fingers as I remembered. "Mueller? That's him?" Oh how I remember that person. It pleased me to hear he was the last of his family.

"We had him trapped for hundreds of years with a stake in his heart and entombed in a silver casket and some human archeologist goes and digs him up and removes the stake!" another said disgustedly. "He read all the warnings we had on that coffin, in every language we could think of. Dr. Erling and his entire team paid for their arrogance. Mueller woke up and he was a very thirsty and a very angry vampire."

We walked into a kitchen that smelled strongly of herbs. Bundles of herbs were hanging everywhere.

"I see you're an apothecary of old." I sniffed for a specific herb. Dragon's breath. That would help keep Mullen away. Its essence smelled so bad it would keep a dragon at a distance. Don't get any romantic ideas about dragons. They were nasty and were more blood thirsty than the worst vampire or wereperson had ever been. It took the united strength of vampires to drive them out of this world but the vampire war started soon after that. Power corrupted and too late the wiser vampire heads realized the dragons had kept the corrupt vampires in check.

"Yes. Anything you need?" An older gentlemen and I do mean gentleman, asked. He wore an apron with a humorous design. I knew it was funny but I couldn't say what it was. There was that mental block I had with languages. One of these days I would take the time to undo the spell that was placed on me.

"Dragon's breath," I readily said.

"That I keep separate. I don't want the neighbors calling the cops again," he said. He held out his hand and I automatically handed him my hand. He wrapped his hands around mine and beamed at me. The feeling I had was like being in a coven with aunts and uncles of my own.

"You were smart to hibernate through that miserable part of Earth's trying times. I see you're making up for lost time." He said it in such an understanding way I didn't know if they were vampires or witches. I was really confused.

"We're both," he said. "Not all of us are vampires or want to be. We're here to help Earth get ready for the coming of the enlightened times. My name is William."

"I'm Helen," I said.

"Yes." He patted my hand comfortingly.

Tilda came back into the room and with a much healthier looking Bertie.

"You're looking better," I told Bertie.

"You've put a spell on me," she accused me.

"I put one on you? Get real."

"Don't be witless," Tilda told Bertie. "She saved your life. He took too much from you this time. He's probably been low on his own blood supply and didn't care what damage he was doing to you. We care." Tilda squeezed her hand.

"He wouldn't...." Bertie stopped there. Bertie knew what Mullen was capable of. She had to if she could read the thoughts of vampires and was close to Mullen.

"So, what have you two been doing, and you can leave out the sex part," Frank said.

"Well then, we've been doing nothing," Bertie said.

"I own land here and there and thought driving across this continent would be a good way to see it. Bertie wanted to come along for the sex and to make connections with other vampires along the way," I said. I watched Bertie and felt happy she gave me that seductive look of hers when I said for sex. Maybe she did forgive me for removing some of the control Mullen had over her.

Tilda looked at Bertie thoughtfully and then studied me longer. "So it is," she said slowly.

"Bertie, come and get some rest." The command had us all turning to see who had spoken. It was a petite woman who was not a vampire, but she was ancient. How can anyone feel that old and not be a vampire?

"I'm not tired, Mother," Bertie said but even I could tell that though she had looked okay for a brief moment, she was sagging again. Regardless of her denial she followed her mother out of the room.

"Just what did he do to her besides drain her?" Frank asked.

"Did he have sex with her?" Tilda asked.

"Maybe in her dreams but it wouldn't have been for long. I have the motorhome protected." I remembered that the protection had been down for a brief time in the bedroom. "Well, it was down in the bedroom for a short time, but it's fine now."

"Would you mind if we take a look? I just don't trust him. We were surprised Bertie came here, but it would be something he would arrange."

Did I dare tell them how I dragged the memory of this place from Bertie's memories? They should know that whatever Bertie knew about them, Mullen would

know. "I didn't ask her. She wasn't in any condition to offer any suggestions. I was just bringing her somewhere that she felt safe until the spell she had on her is broken," I said.

"We hadn't seen her for fifty years after she told us in no uncertain words to stop meddling in her business," Frank said. "That's when we realized who she got involved with. We had to step back and wait to see what he was up to and her. She's very intelligent...with too much knowledge and not enough experience."

"Then, about three years ago, we've been getting little hints that she was willing to say hi to us. Her father and his side of the family wanted to see if they could wean her off of him but I think that thought ended in a few weeks. That's how your mother and her father met," Tilda said.

"He's pulling an army together and he wants to be the ruler of what's left of Earth after the change," William said.

"It won't happen," I said before even thinking what I was saying.

"Of course not," Tilda said. "But he thinks he can and death to as many lives as possible is part and parcel of his plan. He'll go out on an energy high that will put a smile on any sociopath's face."

"I thought vampire sociopaths were a thing of the past due to the Council's Justice," I said.

One of the male vampires snorted. "As long as you have human sociopaths you'll have vampire sociopaths."

"When you get adolescent vampires unable to control their passions, they're bound to bite an undesirable," Frank said.

"What did you think of *that* vampire Bertie hangs around?" Tilda asked.

"I don't like him. He tried some of his vyrding on me," I said.

"Our soldiers are looking over your motorhome now."

Soldiers? The sounds of crying peasants dragged from their fields as the agents of their Lord of the Manor went about adding to his armies, replayed in my head. They were meant to be fodder, and if they survived the forced marches, they would die in someone else's field. I mentally shook that memory from my thoughts. I needed to stay focused in the now.

"We found it!"

Three look-a-like Goths came into the room.

"It was underneath the motorhome," one said triumphantly. "You didn't protect the underside of your motorhome. He had a spell buster." She held up the amulet now drained.

"We've taken care of it." Another woman held her fingers like she was shooting someone and made the sound of firing a weapon. "Next time he touches your motorhome, he's going to hurt."

"Gotcha," a male Goth said.

"I bet it was leeching out the power of your talismans. I've got something for that," William said.

My head was going back and forth between the vampires and ghouls in the room. I was beginning to feel closed in with so much goings on that I wanted out for some peace and quiet.

I needed to focus on Mullen. Did that mean while she seduced me I would have been under his power completely? That was scary. Just how close was I to succumbing to his recruitment?

"You need some serious infusion," one of the Goths said to me.

"Have you checked the oil or water since you started your trip?" another asked.

I stared at him. "Oil? Water?"

"You can take care of that for her, Adam," Tilda said. "She's not savvy on mechanical things."

"Who fills the tanks on your motorhome?" Adam asked.

"The gas station attendant or Bertie with the biofuels."

"Make sure all the fluids on this motorhome are checked when your diesel tanks are filled."

"I'm not letting someone on the motorhome that I don't know."

"You don't know what I'm talking about, do you?" Adam said smiling. "You think because you're a girl that all the gas station attendants are going to help you out? Not."

Tilda reached out to pat Adam on the arm which turned into a stroke. "You can show her how to take care of the motorhome before she leaves."

Her fangs were pushing against her lips, a clue that there was something going on between her and Adam. "So what do you all do here?" I asked to change the focus.

Tilda smiled, fangs distended. "We retired here." I stepped back and away from Adam. Tilda stroked the back of his neck. "We have a ready source of good blood from the surrounding humans. Arnold makes sure the blood isn't tainted."

"Doesn't anyone get suspicious?" I asked. Someone had to think these old people were strange. I thought they were strange.

"We own this side of town. Anyone not our kind goes somewhere else...a ward off here and there takes care of that. We also have our own Sunday church group. Our preacher is quite good. Very Goth but she has a sense of humor making the attendance worth it. There aren't that many who come looking to join us that aren't *supernaturals*," Tilda said.

"We go into the city now and then to check out the supply, but these days you have to be careful about what you suck up to," Frank said.

"What did Bertie bring with her?" Tilda asked.

"Nothing. She replenished at different bars and at her friends' homes that we stopped at."

"Friends?" Tilda asked suspiciously. "You mean that traitor's friends." She looked at one of the Goths and he and his friends left.

"I've been chanting the Unbinding for the last two days," I said.

"We'll all gather in an hour and finish it. It's time to release her. If she goes back...then it's her decision," Tilda said.

"Do you like our Bertie?" one of the oldsters asked.

I wasn't clear about what liking Bertie meant so I wasn't going to answer the question. If she was a slave to Mullen, then all we had together was sex. I wondered why I expected more when I wasn't looking for more.

"Bertie's weak minded. We should just leave her and move on," one of the men said.

I didn't like the sound of that. From the looks of some of the women, they didn't either.

"You're not related to her so you would say that. Consider where you would be if we just left you," Tilda said.

"That was over five hundred years ago! When are you going to stop using that excuse for everything?" he demanded.

"When you decide to leave," Tilda said.

"Now stop it you two. You're just like squabbling siblings." Affectionately, one of the women patted him on the arm.

I shouldn't have put myself into their family business.

The others disappeared into various rooms of the house, leaving me with Tilda. It's rather eerie to hear how vampires leave a room. If you're sensitive to sounds, which we are, it's enough to lift what hairs you have on your arms. I hadn't been in the same room with more than five vamps at one time since I left school.

Tilda showed me into a dark chamber and I mean dark. Our eyes were bright red and the smell of fresh blood was making my stomach growl. My fangs distended and it took concentration not to add a growl. I began to see more of the room, which was empty.

"This is our ritual room. We'll..." abruptly she stopped and turned around to the door where there was a lot of noise.

Two of the elders were dragging Bertie into the room and she was screaming she was not going in. Her exact words were she can't go in. I could see a pale yellowish color around her. Within it were flecks of black and gray. Everything is made up of energy even a metal chair, and energy has color or a wavelength that translates to a color. We, though considered dead, have an energy aura around us and magic is also energy. This was the black and gray in her aura.

She was dragged into the room anyway. They dropped her into a chair that suddenly appeared and, as most people know, binding a vampire to a chair isn't the easiest thing to do. These bindings were not made of the usual stuff.

Bertie's eyes were as bright red as all of ours but a tiny green dot was in the center. There were others filing into the room circling the chair Bertie was in.

The chanting began the moment the circle closed with Bertie shouting to leave her alone. By the time we got to line 50, she became silent and sullen.

At the hundredth chant of the release we all could see the energy of the enchantment spell Mullen had put on her to enslave her as clear as our hands in front of our faces, as we all had our hands out directing our energy to expel it. His spell took hours to undo. It required some of Mullen's self and that was found in Bertie's mouth and under her nails. We can be very thorough when looking for the little things that make up a spell. When the last of his spell was evaporated Bertie fell forward.

Bertie left with two elders as Tilda escorted me to another room. Keep in mind that vampires live in the dark so every room we walked through was pitch dark or had one pale lamp lit. The pale light was for the humans or they would have to wear night vision goggles to not run into anything.

You didn't think I would know about modern electronics because I didn't know what a motorhome was, right? Anything that can be used against me, including affairs of the heart, I studied about. Motorhomes didn't come under potential to do harm. I don't think Mother considered the possibility of me getting run over by one or taking up traveling in one.

The room Tilda took me in had twenty-two chairs around a table. The high back black enameled chairs had intricately detailed woodcarvings on the arms, legs and sides of gargoyles, bats and other creatures of the night. To my surprise, two ghouls knelt beside two of the chairs with heads bowed.

The vampire energy, the smell of blood and my tiredness led me to do it. A neck was presented to me and I hungrily bit into him, finding his blood to my taste. I was not lost in my gorging. I was careful to measure my gulps to not leave him lifeless or nearly so. Two hearty gulps were all I needed.

A napkin was provided with a bowl of scented water to wipe my lips and hands. I also carefully cleaned the neck presented me and watched as it healed over. He had some vampire blood in him. This guy has been at this for a long time.

Tilda leaned back in her seat with a look of contentment.

"I love our soldiers' thoughtfulness in being ready should we need a refreshment after that strenuous work," Tilda said. "I'm glad to see you haven't given up on your bleeding side."

"Have you been talking to my mother?" I asked. My mother's favorite choice of word was "blooding". It was the new word for feeding.

"I know her. We all know each other. She told me you might be heading out this way." Tilda held up her hand, to stop me from saying something rude.

"They have been worried about you both. Bernard is my cousin and your mother is related to me by..."

"We're all related someway," I said more impatiently than I had intended. I interrupted her. Older vampires are sticklers for respect from the younger ones, though, by all accounts, I was nearly her age. You would have to be at least five hundred years old for an elder to see you as a vampire, otherwise you were a *fledgling*, a vampire *awakened* and not *transmuted*. Vampires are very snobbish, even the fledglings. They were talking to me, so I was considered an equal, but I needed to not interrupt clan hierarchy, the Tilda leader.

"You haven't changed a bit, which is good. You'll need that impetuosity for what you plan on doing. Run that by me again on how he *isn't* going to know you've stolen his little army?" She was mocking me like Mother does, or used to.

"You need some reality along with this plan of yours or you're going to needlessly leave a trail of dead behind you," she said, reading my thoughts. I was slipping in my thought control.

"What kind of spell was placed on him to keep him contained all those years?" I asked.

"Dragon's Breath to keep him asleep and a silver casket with a stake in his heart."

"Why wasn't he killed?"

"I wasn't in the group that found him, captured him and entombed him. Everyone that was involved...he's hunting them down."

"So if I wave packets of Dragon's Breath in front of him will it enrage him like a bull seeing red or will it send him retreating to the nearest cave?"

Tilda laughed. "I think this time he needs to be killed. A stake in his heart, then a trip to the morgue where his blood is drained and replaced with embalming fluid will do it."

The way she looked at me I thought she was implying that I should be the one to do it. I'm not a killer. I find other ways to solve my problems. Mullen just needed to be removed from stalking the Earth for two years. After that, the changes on the Earth would take care of the rest.

"Look what happened when the last group put him under and they didn't kill him," Tilda said.

"I don't kill as an alternative. If it happens, it's not because I have it in the back of my mind. If you don't think I can neutralize him then do what you need to do, but don't ask me to participate," I said. By the look on her face she wasn't buying it. What was I not getting across to her? Of course if I'm attacked I will defend myself, killing my attacker if necessary, but Mullen was a skilled fighter, probably better than I. I would rather find out what his weakness was and exploit it.

I got up. It was time to leave Bertie's family behind. Climbing the stairs back up to the front door there was a sliver of light on the stair post, warning me it was light outside. I could cover myself with the clothing made especially for light sensitive skin, wear dark glasses and put on the floppy hat made for emergencies, but it was going to the extreme when this wasn't an emergency.

"We have a room for you. It has a nice pine casket with room service," Tilda said. "Come along. Don't be crabby. We all need some rest. It's not too long before the sun goes behind the clouds. Weather reports have overcast skies with rain for the next three days. That means he'll be thinking of coming here when he thinks we're sleeping."

"I don't think he dares to come here." I looked around trying to pick up any threat that was around me.

"Of course he'll come here. Bertie is the key to his little plan and she's not as compliant as he thought she was or as we thought. We're waiting for him. He can't pass up a challenge like that. He wants to test his minions."

I had the distinct feeling that idea wasn't originated by Mullen. If she planted that idea in his head and he was going to take her up on it, then there was going to be some serious blood letting.

Chapter 5

When I woke hours later and reinvigorated with a vegan drink that William had prepared for me, I found the entire house was dressed for war. Swords clanked as dark shapes moved near doorways. My own hand itched to feel the long sword again.

"There you are. Feeling better already I see," Master Frank said. "Tilda said you would need this. It's what her older brother fought with." He handed me the sword.

Images of its past owner came to me as I touched the hilt. Triumphs and sadness were part of the sword's story. I gripped it, determined to add more triumphs to its lineage. As I pulled the blade from its sheathe, the slithering sound it made brought back memories of battles I had participated in. Was this always going to happen? A replay of my life whenever I touched something from the past?

"It's a hero's sword," Frank said. "Gregory held off the dragons until we got everything in place."

"I was there," I said. I experimentally waved the sword around to get a feeling for it. "Gregory of the Lowlands and Millicent, his wife. The talk had always been they got along better on a battlefield than in their castle."

Gregory was tall and broad and black as night and Millicent was tall and broad and pale as the moon. Their tempers were notorious and that was probably why Gregory was so often absent on hunts, and Millicent, not one to be left behind, was close behind him.

"I remember you were part of the fire group. Unarmed and carrying that firewood to make a magical circle." Master Frank's eyes became distant as he too, remembered one of the many fights the vampires and dragons had.

We eventually drove the dragons through a portal, where they fled to another dimension and for all I knew they were still there. The energy on Earth changed and would no longer sustain the energy a dragon needed to live in this 3rd dimension.

Long ago, all creatures in the past sought survival in caves and any place that wasn't on the surface of the planet as a fiery asteroid passed close enough to change the entire planet's tilt, so poles shifted to where the equator once was and the hot equator moved to experience colder times. Vampires and humans that read the signs right had

prepared for the long duration underground, waiting for the skies to no longer be on fire and the red dust was washed away with the oceans that changed shores, receding back to a more stable level. Gradually life returned to the surface, and with it, new enclaves for vampires, high in the mountains and in the valleys where humans lived.

"I wanted to let you know the plan is to let him enter the building. Tilda wants him to come in to claim his prize. We've led him to believe that he has a way in and we don't know it."

"I can feel he's near," I said. I hadn't realized I said it out loud until a ghoul nodded her head.

"I can feel him too," she whispered. "He will send his soldiers to test our defenses."

"Fodder," I said, feeling a fighting energy infuse me.

Tilda came sweeping into the room, her energy causing the lights to blink and the hairs on my arms to stand. Her clothing shimmered and her sword was held at ready. Like most of the people filling the large room, she had knives hanging from every available space on her body.

Some of the vampires and ghouls that followed her in had sniper rifles. They would have to be good to be able to get the shot off that would kill, otherwise the shooting was a waste of a bullet...a special bullet. Vampires move fast. The shooter would have to be operating on intuition of where their target would be by the time the bullet reached its mark and hope none of your own would be there instead.

"Tilda, we can defeat his army by shouting out the Unbinding," I said.

"Just who is going to have time to do that?" But she turned to a ghoul that stood next to her, dressed up with shiny knives.

"We'll need a quorum with ready volunteers to take the place of someone that falls out. We'll also need to protect the room as much as we will protect Bertie," she told him.

"I'll see to it."

"You two snipers. Find your places and know he's going to be targeting you as well." Tilda looked at me. "We've been getting ready for this fight since we heard he was let loose. Some of us were responsible for his capture the last time."

"Is that why he's after Bertie?" I asked.

"She's his way in. Bertie. Come here," Tilda said.

Bertie was dressed in the same cloth that covered all exposed tissue from the sun. I was hoping Bertie wasn't going to be the knife in our backs.

"I'll be part of the quorum," Bertie said. "That way you don't have to spread our defenses thin."

"Are you up to this?" I asked doubtfully.

"If I'm chanting the Unbinding, how is that not helping?" Bertie asked, picking up my doubt on her loyalty.

"You could be chanting anything and no one would hear above the others. You're the question mark in all this," I said.

"Then join me," Bertie said.

"I think I will."

Those that were going to chant quickly filed in and made a circle. Extras stood outside and lent their energy. The chanting began immediately and loudly. The energy shook the walls. I walked next to Bertie who was saying the chant as she paced around the circle.

Tilda came in for a moment and nodded. "We have it on a loudspeaker so it's going to be shaking the resolve of those he's sent sneaking up on us." Then she left.

It would seem nothing was happening when they reached the hundredth verse but everyone could feel the energy shaking the room and could hear clashes of steel on steel from outside the room. When they reached the hundredth they started over, some of those on the outside taking the place of others.

Bertie had moved to stand beside a new member that had sustained injuries from the fight going on outside. I could see that Bertie would rather be out in battle but that was exactly what Mullen would want and the reason for this particular war.

I knew about wars being pivotal on one person. Life is complicated because other issues always come up. You can try and focus on one issue at a time but by ignoring others that are just as vital you end up with a worse situation.

The clashes outside the door became louder and an explosion sent the door and everyone near it flying further into the room.

Those chanting continued on, with those still standing outside the circle taking the place of those knocked down from the blast.

Shouting chants, I raced to the gaping hole as vampires and ghouls came running into the room. It was rather funny to see them wearing earplugs, as if that would stop the chants' affect. My sword cut off the head of the first person that passed over the threshold. I realized that this room was built over a power base and the threshold was a real threshold. Purple energy from my blade drawn from the room sliced a thin cut through the next person. In battle you remember little but the techniques and my body remembered past battles as I fought the hoards pouring over the threshold to claim or kill Bertie.

Suddenly they stopped coming. The sun was up. Ghouls and vampires led by Tilda and Frank went through the rooms that were physically blasted into rubble and began to administer to those that were not entirely gone, no matter what side. Chants continued as new voices replaced old.

Bertie touched my arm. "You need to get some fresh blood."

A ghoulish passing looked at her in askance. "You gave enough," Bertie said kindly. "We need you strong."

She took me to the kitchen where there was a blood feasting going on.

"How certain are you that these people are safe? It would be a strategic blow to contaminate your source," I worried.

William looked up from his task of wrapping the wound of a ghoulish that didn't heal as quickly as vampires.

"We've been through enough wars to be ready for that," William said.

I knew the moment he said that what role he played in Mueller's imprisonment. I wondered how Bertie felt about that or if she knew. I still distrusted Bertie. When you're under someone's control for so many years, breaking the connection doesn't end the dependence or familiarity.

I retired to a bedroom that Bertie was using. We both rested with our liter of blood. I added to that my own mixture of herbs.

"You're absolutely glowing," Bertie said, leaning close to my ear.

Lust before and after bloodletting is part of the passion. We both wanted it and I didn't see any danger in it. How stupid. While I was in her power she entrapped me. I could feel it the moment I opened to the ecstasy. Talk about people who should know better than go to bed with the enemy...I knew that.

My premise is that stupid people should be weeded out of the nations, whether vampire, human, werepeople, any *supernatural*. It's a natural predator thing that the strong survive and we vampires are predators.

"So, my sweets, I know all there is to know about you. The beautiful Helen whose face and body was lusted after by millions over..." Bertie laughed in my face, "over millions of years, and now your time has come to an end."

She lifted over my frozen body, for whatever was in the blood or perhaps my own brew, left me without any muscle movement. She held before me a silver knife from my mother's house. I recognized it as once belonging to me in another time period.

When I as Helen, was desired not for whom I was as a person, but for what my position represented, was reborn in a kingdom high in the mountains to an old family that survived many Earth changes, I thought I would no longer have to be bandied about as if I were the lambskin they used in desert sports.

I was brought into a family of vampires. I became a vampire at five. I was an intelligent child due in large part because my parents were thousands of years old and they shared their knowledge with me through *transmutation* and anyone who chose to learn at their feet.

The knife she held against my throat was given to me by my brother when he lost a bet with me. The knife was spell bound. It should not have been able to cut me, but it did and I was sick for months until Father's second divined the cause of my sickness.

Father's second, Arman, whispered to me of a new spell he put on the knife. I could not die from it, and anyone that wished me harm would be rendered powerless when they lifted it.

In that moment that I looked into Bertie's eyes I knew more about her than she probably knew about herself. I could feel the pain of the knife and its plunges into me. I could feel her lips sucking my blood up. I thought of what this all meant because there was a comingling of our blood. I don't know how that occurred but it was there. Her

blood was tainted with Mueller's and all the others he had consumed. What was Bertie doing? I couldn't figure it out.

I don't know for how long this went on, but it was painful. Bertie stayed with me as my life eked out. I wondered what she was waiting for, and then it occurred to me that maybe it was for Mueller.

I must have lost consciousness some time but when I thought I should be gone, I could actually feel strength beginning to seep into me. I kept my eyes closed and body relaxed as I could, listening intently to what was going on around me.

"I want her dead," a voice I knew commanded.

"Then kill her yourself," Bertie said. "I told you I've stabbed her and she is dead. Since you don't believe me than do it yourself."

"I can see she is not! Don't contradict me!" Mueller was back to his full self.

"I used her knife just as you said."

"Then it was the wrong one," Mueller accused.

"Give me yours then. Give it to me and you can watch. Do you want it done or not?" Bertie demanded.

Bertie must have gotten what she wanted because I felt her lean against me and prick my skin with a knife.

"Well, it's sharp enough," Bertie said.

In my hand was placed a knife that wasn't mine. The switch was done where our bodies prevented anyone from seeing it.

As she lifted herself to plunge the knife into my already bloody body, a door opened behind us. I opened my eyes and saw Mueller pulling his sword up to slay whoever was at the door. Bertie rolled off me and as weak as I was, my aim was true. I stabbed him in his heart through his ribs. Arman's spell was true, and a paralyzed Mueller fell to his knees.

Bertie grabbed up his sword and cut off Mueller's head. Blood sprayed everywhere.

Bertie dropped her sword and grabbed me as I sagged.

"Are you tired of being bandied about?" Bertie said softly in my ear.

Chapter 6

While the ghouls repaired the house in the daytime and got rid of the massive amount of bodies left from the battle, I spent the time healing my wounds both physical and psychological. Before my hibernation I repaired as quickly as the next, but then I was living on blood only. I'm still interested in not being dependent on blood to survive so I mixed my intake to help with the healing.

Mother had come and gone. She brought me a few belongings because Bernard had moved into her apartment and my things needed to be moved out. Apparently, he liked my bedroom for his study.

It was months later that I was able to move around without twinges and aches. I spent most of the nights with William and Adam, honing old skills and learning new ones and memories that ingesting toxic blood at my waking had dimmed, were coming back to me. William was a master herbalist. His memory was sharp and I didn't feel it was waning as his assistants were prone to tease. He recalled plants that no longer existed that had properties that were relevant for the period in which they flourished. In this lesson he taught that an herb that was good for one moment may not be for another.

It was an old herb he had given me that made the leaps in my recovery from bad blood. I do harp on that, but it really irritates me that as my memories from many lifetimes became clear, I realized how silly my attitude had been with mother who was patiently steering me to a full recovery.

Adam was a ghoul that had taken a liking to me and taught me about the mechanical maintenance of my motorhome. I'm sure I can't put the engine back together in the dark as he can, but I can tell the difference between problems with the electrical and with the motor. Now, should I have a break down I would know what direction to point the mechanic in. They wouldn't be able to lie to me and create repairs where they needn't be done, but I'm a vampire and they wouldn't have been able to lie to me anyway. Adam had also remodeled the inside of my motorhome so that the back bedroom would be used by Connie, the magician's assistant, so she could store her needed stones and other accessories that she would need to keep up her lessons, and a private space for Eric to sleep in and keep his belongings. His space was across from the toilet facilities and

next to the kitchen stove. Two coffin spaces were added to the storage area under the bedroom for myself and Bertie if she chose to join me on my tour. However, whether she liked it or not, Tilda's council were ordering her to accompany me. As usual, clan politics.

Bertie was having bouts of depression and periods of happiness that she was free of Mullen/Mueller. We hadn't had sex since she stabbed me, but the comingling of our blood gave me a connection to her so I was always aware of her as she was of me. Bertie thought cutting herself and giving me some of her blood would show me that I could trust her.

My thought was that Bertie was the bait but it turned out that I was the bait. I didn't know there was bad history between Mueller and I. That story needs to be buried along with the curse that no longer holds power over me. I could feel Bertie wanted to ask me about it but I avoided the discussion. Eventually, she would hear it, but to me right now, it was past and gone.

As the summer was coming to an end, tornados, hurricanes, and general bad weather was forecast for the entire area around us. I didn't care. I wanted to resume my journey. I also wanted the list of names Bertie had in her memory that Mullen had manipulated into his service. Not all his followers were disbanded with their sense of self restored. There was no more Mullen or Mueller. There was no magic or conjuring that could bring him back. From the wisdom of vampires, we made certain there was nothing left to bring back a ghost of that entity. Mueller was gone. Those on the other side where vampires go when slain affirmed a confused and changed Mueller was there for a brief moment and then vanished as our chants and spells ordered it.

"What are you doing there," a voice asked from behind me.

I turned to face a thinner and paler Bertie. I straightened up, and walked into her space to give her a hug, holding on as I could feel her body stiffen and then slowly relax into mine. No one bothered us so the hug was for as long as we both could stand it.

We both stepped back and I regarded Bertie with an appraising eye. She really did look like she was on the mend.

"I'm looking over the changes Adam made."

"I hear you have your own coffin here," Bertie said.

“Yes, Adam had turned one of the storage areas under the motorhome into a sleeping den.” I opened up the storage to show her. “Totally black with no light leaking in. Access to it is here from the storage area and under the bedroom floor.” I opened up a flap for her to see more of the proper vampire sleeping area. We don’t really sleep, we just withdraw from daylight activity.

“In here emergency blood can be stored as well. As you can see, it’s the size of two coffins. I had asked for one, but Adam is an optimist and added another. Even if the storage from the outside is opened, the sleeping area is sealed.”

“Dark is it?” Bertie asked, sounding uncertain.

“Connie and Eric, one a magician’s apprentice and the other a Goth, have been assigned to drive the motorhome in the day and take care of any business in the daytime, so that the motorhome appears normal.”

Bertie nodded. She looked thoughtful and I could feel her on the brink of asking me something.

“I conjured up my own protection by putting a code on the outside design that announced who I am and warns off anyone that means to do me harm.” I gestured at the design which to most people would not look unusual.

I’m hoping Bertie will come, but Bertie isn’t what I would call stable. I knew she was flying at night for her blood source. Though it was to nightclubs and places ghouls were, I didn’t want to find police chasing down my motorhome because of the coincidence of it being seen where people with bites on their necks were found. But I could feel the pressure of Tilda, her clan leader, in wanting me to mentor Bertie.

“Do you want to come along?” I asked, thinking she would say no, knowing how I really felt about it...conflicted.

“I thought you would never ask,” she answered. “I’m going stir crazy with all the family watching out for me. I’m not suicidal.”

“We’re leaving in an hour. By then it’ll be dark enough for me to drive. Can you be ready then?”

“I can see where your sword is so that must be your coffin.” Her grin at me made my heart melt. Me. I find this utterly irresponsible. I need to be vigilant and...

Bertie's kiss was possessive and passionate. We needed to talk before we left. Ground rules needed to be agreed to. I followed her back to her room where she could pack and I would talk.

It was midnight when we started off. Bertie and I decided to have our first sexual romp since the stabbing just to clear the air. That was the excuse I gave.

Connie and Eric took that time to drive the motorhome to the gas station and fill the tanks with diesel and fill the refrigerator with things they liked. They were human and needed their own food. Eric, the ghoul, would provide Bertie with her nutritional snacks and me with an occasional tap into their psychic energy when we weren't hitting the local night clubs for our mix energy supply.

By midnight, all my cousins were around the motorhome giving me last minute suggestions and reminding both Bertie and me to keep in contact. The Tilda Clan and Vincente Clan, my family clan, were related. Fancy that. Bertie had her cellphone and a laptop, and her responsibility was to text message everyone and track some of the people who had come under Mullen's influence but still lived. Connie and Eric would drive during the day or setup at a trailer park during the day while at night we traveled. I loved to drive the motorhome and that was what I was going to do.

We were on a mission. We were to connect with the names Bertie had in her head and locate Howard, who no one had heard from for months. In the news, in some cities and towns violence was up and it was something an out of balance vampire would do.

I let out the air brakes and pointed the motorhome in the direction of the road. Connie and Eric were too wound up to sleep, so they entertained Bertie and me with stories of some of the Goth clubs Eric had visited and tests Master Frank gave to his magician trainees, that were a mixed group of supernaturals and humans. Bertie and Eric had their contacts with clubs and private parties to visit. We would leave no stone unturned for vampires or friends in trouble. And Connie, as a magician's apprentice, would protect and see that harm that could be prevented was prevented.

It was three in the morning when the two finally retired. Connie had the bed in the back and Eric had a covered space of his own across from the stove. I had my window down and could feel in the wind the changes of temperature. It reminded me of tornado weather.

"So what are we going to name this journey?" Bertie asked.

"Name it? Why do we have to put a name on our journey? I can see naming the motorhome. Is that what you mean?"

"All right we'll name the motorhome too. But every journey has a name. It's named after the intent of the journey. Why are you on this journey?" she mocked.

"For the same reason I started out. I have property scattered around this continent and I want to make sure it's ready for what I have in mind for it."

"Right. Seeds, tools, food...I think you started out on this trip for another reason."

"No. That was the original reason," I insisted. I'm sure that was the reason.

"You're forgetting you can't hide things from me," Bertie whispered close to my ear.

"What am I hiding?" I scratched the ear her breath tickled.

"You wanted to ravish me every place we stop at." She bit my ear but didn't draw blood.

"Bertie, you can't do things like that when I'm driving," my voice squeaked.

"Well, what am I going to do while you drive? I'm bored. There isn't enough room to practice sword play...you do know we're going to have kill some of them, don't you?"

"Yes. I would rather knock them unconscious and chant the Unbinding, but since the cause of their spell is no longer in this dimension, it's going to be interesting to see how to get them out of the trance he put them in."

"Did Uncle William have a suggestion?" Bertie asked.

"Death."

"Then why are you reluctant to do it? Death is a lot better than existing the way they are," Bertie said.

"I don't think they would choose death."

"What are you trying to give them?"

"I could give them some of their own thought processes back so they can choose to step into another dimension."

"Is your father happy there?" Bertie asked.

"Happy is not an emotion he feels there. There's no depth to any emotions. There's learning and preparing, but I don't know what he's preparing for."

"I have some family members that are where your father is. I've not been able to connect with them. When I asked Father what that dimension is called he said it is No Name."

"Naming one's fear gives you power over it," I said as I remembered my father telling me that when I prepared for my hibernation.

"We need a name for our trip. We all have one thing in common. The desire to eradicate the Earth of these troubled vampires," Bertie said.

"You do know there's a group of vampires that go about and clean up messes so that we keep our presence on a low key?"

"Yes. Most of my family served. Father was obligated to take Master Frank's position when he rotated off the council. He said it was the worst hundred years he spent."

"Both my brothers are lieutenants on the council for Aunt Lucile. Don't ever cross her. I did and it took a century to recover," I said.

We were silent for a while.

"So we've become a vigilante group," I said thoughtfully.

"If we do it your way, we aren't vigilantes. Vigilantes kill without asking questions."

"So we're now the Justice League," I joked.

Bertie got out a pen and paper and wrote that on a piece of paper.

"If someone should find that they will think we are vigilantes."

"They can think all they want...or not at all. Between the two of us, I think they will think what we want them to."

"Bertie, be careful how often you manipulate people like that. Taking away free-will is what gets people in trouble," I said.

"You worry too much, General Vigilante."

"We have two days until we reach the first name. We need to figure out an approach," I said.

"Well, General, send in the troops to get a feel for the place, then we'll walk right in there and make our case," Bertie mocked.

"I'm not sending in anyone. If they're as possessed as the rumor has it, I'm going to look around myself. What would Connie and Eric know about fighting maddened vampires?"

"Well you certainly aren't going in alone."

"Are you up to it?" I glanced at her and knew the answer already. She would know better how to reach them than I.

"Let me think about how we should do this," Bertie said.

"All right. You can be my Captain."

Bertie laughed and then settled in her chair staring out through the heavily tinted windows. "Vampire Justice. If there is a way to bring them back we'll find it."

"It's somewhere there in our memories," I assured her. "Between you and I and our side-kicks, we'll right the unrightable wrongs."

Bertie burst out laughing, covering her mouth so as not to waken our passengers.

"What? Don't you think this is like tilting at windmills?"

"When did you catch up on literature?" she mocked.

"When Mother told me I needed to see what history said about people rushing about attacking windmills. I had no idea what she meant."

"Do you do that often?" Bertie asked.

"I used to help the underdog so that I could turn the tables on someone that made it a habit to abuse the powerless."

"Well, I think you've stepped up to another level. Some vampires are going to get angry that we're sticking our noses in their business," Bertie said.

"We certainly are, but the only one that can legitimately complain is gone. I never did understand that attitude. That's why the vampire war got started. No one wanted to get involved when some of them became violent for the sake of violence. We share this 3rd dimension on Earth."

"Mull would have torn apart that belief. The strong inherit the Earth. There are no meek only slaves." Bertie closed her eyes as she remembered his speech that ignited her blood to...

"Stop!" I could feel the emotions boiling over in Bertie's mind. "That is what we need to put a stop to. Remembering his words."

"It's like a drug," Bertie agreed. "We need to fill the void with another passion."

I exchanged glances with Bertie. She gave me a grin and leaned over to turn on some music.

I thought of Mother. She will be rolling her eyes when she hears I found another mission.

[Continued in Vampire Business.](#)