

HALLIE  
A TIT FOR A TAT

DEAMHAN CHRONICLES #3.5

ISAIYAN MORRISON

Hallie. A Tit for A Tat. Deamhan Chronicles #3.5

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# CHAPTER ONE

## WELCOME TO MY LIFE

Five minutes had passed since the sun set. I could feel it in my bones.

I shot up in my bed, still tired. Dead tired. The entire week I woke up this way and I had no idea why.

I heard the crickets in the front yard chirping away. That was the second signal, and yet I still didn't open my eyes. I just wanted five more minutes. Just five more minutes.

Personally, I didn't need to rush. This night would be like all the other nights in my long and supernatural life. Wake up, go downstairs, make sure Nathan was feeling better, stare out the window at the scenery for a few minutes, and wait for the hunger to set in.

Oh my God, the hunger. There's nothing like a rumbling stomach as a reminder to eat; an unbearable pain that refuses to go away. For Deamhan, like myself, it meant that I had to hunt. I had to eat. It's hard to keep that kind of mentality, but I've been working on it. I refuse to be some kind of ravenous animal, like other Deamhan I know. We Deamhan have vampire attributes, but we aren't vampires. We don't live off blood but rather the psychic energy of our victims. In my case, I had no need for fangs like Anastasia, another Deamhan I lived with. She was a Ramanga and they live off the psychic energy of their victims' blood. There's also Remy, a Lamia Deamhan who sucks the energy from his victims' mouths, and Enlai, a Lugat Deamhan who uses his hands like leeches to feed. He's a

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bottom feeder.

However, I had to do something to curb my hunger. I hated waking up tired and exhausted.

My dreams were also a huge part of the problem. They started out differently, but they all ended the same. This one had me at Blind Bluff Manor, my home away from home. The sanctuary looked a little different from what I remembered. Instead of dull wallpaper, blood covered the interior walls. There was no furniture and I was alone, or so I thought.

I saw the outline of a medium tall looking female in the corner of the study. She began to barrage me with questions starting with my name, if I was from Minneapolis, if I had a family, and if I knew the Deamhan who sired me. Yes, I was from Minneapolis. Yes, I had a family, but I had no idea who turned me into a Metusba Deamhan. This shadow person didn't believe me.

That's when my dream took a turn for the worse. She rushed at me and grabbed me by my shoulders. "Why are you protecting a murderer? Your sire doesn't care about you! Do you know how many stupid teenagers he's done this to?" She screamed at me, making me feel insignificant. Still, I couldn't see her face. It was just dark.

I wanted to get as far away as I could. I used my newfound strength to break free of her grip and ran for the front door. Before leaving, my eyes locked onto the sky. It was bright red with dark clouds which resembled demon faces. It was the last thing I remembered seeing before I felt a hand burst through my chest and yank out my heart.

Even though I knew it was a dream, it still felt all too real. With everything going on in the city, I assumed that my mind went off the edge, trying to make sense of all of it. We didn't live in Blind Bluff Manor anymore since the Dorvo vampires attacked it. Nathan's trusted vampire friend, Lambert, allowed us to live at his home in the middle of nowhere until things calmed down and we were safe.

Safe or not, I just wanted to go home.

After laying down for a few minutes, I heard footsteps approaching my door. Then a knock.

"Haaaaalliee."

"Leave me alone." I turned on my stomach and buried my face in the pillow. "Remy, go away." I heard the door open.

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“Why are you still in your bed? It’s, like, 11:30. Can’t sleep the night away?”

“I know.”

He stood over my bed and tugged at my sheets. “Get up. It’s your turn to watch our guest of honor.” He also snatched my pillow from underneath my head.

I glanced at him. He was shirtless and wore black jeans. He always walked around the place, shirtless. “Would you please put a shirt on?”

He rubbed his fingers through his shoulder length brown hair and smiled. “Why?”

“When are you going to stop doing that?”

“Doing what?”

“Piercing your nips.” I honestly believed that he loved showing off his nipple rings which looked disgusting to me. “They heal every night. Makes no sense.”

“The women love it.”

“It’s always about the women.” I remembered the first time I saw him. He walked into the manor with such swag in his footsteps. He was attractive at first glance but a little too old for my taste. He viewed me like I was some science experiment, saying that he’d never seen a Deamhan as young as me and that I was, and I quote, ‘interesting.’ He enjoyed spending time flirting with human females at Lambert’s vampire club, Dark Sepulcher. He went every night until the city became unsafe for our kind. Since then he never left me alone. He treated me like I was some kid who’d always fall flat on their face unless he was there to catch me. He always knew better and he made me know that.

He sat on the edge of my bed. “Get up my littlest Deamhan.”

“I’m not watching Kenneth.” I turned onto my back. “Why don’t you watch him?”

“Because I get bored.”

“Getting tired of torturing him, I see?”

“Exactly.” His lips pulled back into a wide smile that showed off his gleaming white teeth.

“Nope. Not doing it.”

“I can make you do it.”

“Still not doing it.”

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He reached into his jacket pocket. “Here. I picked this up off some hobo last night. He tasted awful by the way. It’s yours if you just get up, go downstairs, and keep an eye on him.” He placed a pack of cigarettes on the bed. “You know you want to.” He tried to seduce me by slowly batting his eyes and softening his voice. “It helps with your hunger.”

He knew me too well. I snatched it from his grasp.

“Don’t smoke them all in one night.”

I packed them, opened it, and pulled one out.

“You know what also helps with the hunger?” he said. “Food.”

He wasn’t kidding. Smoking helped to hold off the pains, but it didn’t necessarily satisfy the hunger.

“Where’s your boy toy? Doesn’t he go out and hunt the wee little rabbits and squirrels for you?”

Referring to Enlai in that way usually annoyed me. Now, I was just too tired to go into it with Remy. To me, Enlai was the one. I don’t know how to explain it. I felt it in my empty gut...or was that just my hunger? Anyway, he came to Blind Bluff Manor after Anastasia visited his own sanctuary, looking for Deamhan help. I will admit that seeing another Deamhan besides Anastasia and Remy scared the shit out of me. I knew enough not to trust our own kind. It didn’t take long to find myself enthralled with Enlai. I felt comfortable telling him everything there was to know about me. Soon he knew how I wanted to go out to the city and I didn’t want to kill innocent people every time my stomach knotted and twisted with hunger. That was when he went out and hunted for me. He brought back rabbits, squirrels; anything that could satisfy my cravings. Of course, Remy didn’t like nor trust him.

“I don’t know.” I sat up and took one look around my room before my hunger pains returned. This time I felt as if someone had taken the sharp end of the boot and dug into my bellybutton. I bent over slightly and soon my sense of smell took a drastic turn upward. Every scent, including Remy’s, rammed into my nose and overwhelmed me.

“You can’t hold off on your hunger forever.”

“I can hold off as long as I can.” I shrugged as if it made no difference to me.

“I’ve been around Deamhan for a long time, Hallie. Eventually, the hunger becomes too much and you snap. It’s better to quench that thirst

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before it rages out of control. You should go out there and satisfy it.”

“No. I’m good.” I stood up slowly. My entire body felt sore.

“Why are you...like this?” Remy asked. “What’s wrong with you?”

“Bad dream.” I dragged my feet as I walked toward the bathroom.

“No, this is more than a bad dream.” He walked over to me. “Let me see.” He placed his hands on my face and began to give me a thorough exam with his eyes.

“I’m fine.” I tried to pull away, but he wouldn’t let go.

“Your energy is low.” He sniffed my neck. “And you smell like you’re rotting.” His nostrils shriveled. “You need to eat something more than just squirrels. It isn’t helping you.”

“Rotting?”

He stepped back. “Yes. You do know that what you consume as a Metusba is what keeps the dark energy inside you strong and that energy keeps your body from rotting since, you know, Deamhan are technically dead. You’re not satisfying it. You can’t go on this way.”

“I’ve been doing this since I was sired.”

“And that’s the problem. I’ve told you, Hallie, we eat humans and vampires. Now, if you don’t want to kill a human then go out and find a vampire. There are plenty of them in the city.”

# CHAPTER TWO

## WE ALL DIE

It took half an hour for me to leave my room and head to the basement. I descended down the stairs, hearing the sounds of rattling chains and snarling. Kenneth's Ramanga scent along with Remy's filled my nostrils. When I reached the bottom, I flicked on the light switch. The room lit up, revealing ropes and chains hung on the opposite side of the wall next to a stack of boxes filled with Nathan's journals. Near the back, I saw Kenneth with metal chains tied around his waist and a metal handcuff around his left wrist. Remy stood off to the side glaring at him and holding a hammer in his right hand.

"I thought you said you were going out?" I planted my hands on my hips.

"I am. Did you happen to find your boy toy?" The left corner of his mouth curled upward.

"Are you going to torture him with that hammer?" I approached him.

"I was thinking about it." He inspected his weapon. "You have a better idea?"

"How about not torturing him?"

"That's no fun! He's not part of our demented family, so to speak. He's just another growing problem that needs to be erased, not coddled."

We all also had new problems to worry about at our home. Anastasia ran off to help her own offspring, leaving us to babysit her new offspring. Kenneth Dearhorn. He was her going away present for Remy. After Remy

ripped off his right arm, she decided to make him Ramanga as a form of punishment. Personally, I didn't consider him a present. He was more like a nuisance than anything.

"Do you want to try?" Remy asked me. "Torturing another Deamhan is really easy." He gripped Kenneth by the chin and lifted his head. "You just have to know what hurts us and then narrow it down by Deamhan type." He lifted Kenneth's upper lip slightly to reveal his Ramanga fangs. "He's Ramanga and Ramanga need blood. All you have to do is dangle it in front of him. Easy, right?"

"I'm not going to do that. You want me to watch him. I'll watch him on my own terms."

"Gotta move past that someday," he replied. "Hey, do you remember when Anastasia tortured Kei's minion? Damn, that was a beautiful sight to see, wasn't it? I mean, she literally broke him down, sired him, and-" He realized that I didn't take as much pleasure in his flashback as he did. He puckered his lips in thought. "Do you think you're Deamhan enough to step up to the plate?"

We heard the basement door open and somehow, I knew it was Enlai. I smiled when he walked down the stairs. He wore a black turtleneck sweater and blue jeans. He winked at me before placing his arm around my waist. At that moment that Remy's playfully behavior changed.

"Not worth the energy," he said to himself then returned back to his nostalgic memory. "Ahh, I miss those days. When it was just you, me, and Ana." He turned back to Kenneth. "Just us three hanging around Blind Bluff Manor, clawing at each other's throats. You annoying me, me annoying you, and Anastasia thinking she ruled the place."

Enlai grabbed my hand and squeezed it tightly. "You weren't in your room."

"Yeah. It's my time to watch him," I said about Kenneth.

"Speaking of which. You need to be in the rotating schedule," Remy said to Enlai.

"I didn't sire him."

"Neither did we, but here we are."

"Why don't you just kill him? Anastasia did this for you. He's your responsibility, not ours."

Kenneth snarled, forcing Remy to turn back to him. "Be quiet." He

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grabbed a rag on a nearby table and stuffed it into his mouth. He waved his finger toward him. "I have a few games we can play but not yet."

Enlai noticed the hammer in Remy's hands. "You call 'torture' a game? "Don't you?"

"No. I'm not a psychopath."

"You were sired by one of the most well-known Deamhan psychopaths in the world. I think you're closer to being one than I am."

Enlai flinched. We all knew about his sire; Kei, who was responsible for all the hardships we know experienced in the city. To me, it was unfair that Remy held it over his head.

"Remy, don't go down that route," I spoke up. "You know that our sires don't define who we are and what we do."

"Wow. Has being around him changed you this much my littlest Deamhan? Of course it defines us, and in his case, it shaped him."

"So that goes for my sire as well? Someone I don't even know. Someone who abandoned me?" My statement surprised him. I saw it in his face. "You do know that both you and Anastasia also abandoned me."

"Don't tell me you're still mad about that little stunt? You knew I would come back after I got Veronica." He didn't want to dwell further on that fragile subject. "For fuck's sake, Enlai hasn't been around long enough to abandon you."

"Things are changing and we're living in different times. You have to trust others and we need all the help we can get." I stomped toward him. "So if you need my help, Remy Durand," I jabbed my fist into his chest, "you better start treating Enlai as a friend and not an enemy. He's not beneath you and neither am I."

Impressed, Remy placed his hands on his hips. "So Hallie Mortensen. Finally grew some balls, didn't you?"

"Big ones."

He continued to chuckle. "Too bad it didn't have the same effect on your brain." He headed for the stairs.

"I'm not dumb. You can't keep treating me like I'm some delicate Deamhan."

He looked over his shoulder. "You don't know him. How can you trust him? So what did Enlai offer you? A chance to explore the world? Answers to your questions? There's no way on God's green Earth that

you could fall for a skinny and ugly Lugat like him.” He allowed himself to think for a moment.

What did I crave the most? At that moment I had my freedom. Kind of. I could leave the sanctuary whenever I wanted with whoever I wanted. There weren’t any enemies I wanted to see dead. Hell, I hadn’t lived long enough to have a number of enemies sufficient enough to worry about. But there was one thing that I wanted to know and never had the chance to find out. Remy forced his influence into my mind, expecting me not to fight back. With each push, I pushed back harder.

“What in the hell!” I managed to force him out.

He stumbled slightly back and laughed gently. “That’s...interesting.”

“You’re just like Anastasia!” I pushed him as hard as I could with both hands. “You’re a fucking asshole.”

In response, he climbed the stairs. “Well, someone needs to around here.” Taking two steps at a time, he reached the top, opened the door, and slammed it shut behind him.

“I’m so tired of this.” I sighed out of exhaustion. I glared back at Kenneth, wondering what disastrous goals Remy had for him.

Enlai did his best to cheer me up. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s not your fault. He had no right to invade my mind like that!”

“Hey, don’t worry about it.” He placed his hand on my right cheek. “Go upstairs. Relax.”

“Someone needs to watch him.” My eyes moved to Kenneth.

“He’s not going anywhere if he knows what’s good for him.” His sultry brown eyes could wipe away any misery and sadness within me. “We can talk about what’s going on with you later, okay?”

I placed my dreadlocks in a ponytail and headed up the stairs. Before I had the chance to take another step, I picked up on Remy’s Lamia scent. He stood against the wall with his back up against the wall.

“Never thought you had it in you.”

“That’s the problem. You don’t think.” I walked around him without stopping my stride.

“Don’t be angry that I read your thoughts.”

I halted. “You invaded my mind!”

“You look so cute when you get angry. It’s almost scary.”

I didn’t want to hear any of it. “Stop it.” I pretended not to care, but

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that did no good. Instead he continued to revile me like he always did in the past. I walked down the hall and turned the corner.

“I saw something else my littlest Deamhan.” He followed me. “Something that didn’t look right.”

I climbed the steps.

“I’m serious this time.”

I stood on the landing.

“You’re seeing shadow people?”

“So what if I am? It’s just a dream.” I didn’t want to talk about what was going on with me. It wasn’t a big deal.

“It felt more like a nightmare. It was little concerning. Even for me.”

I raised my head and looked him in the eye. “I’m fine.”

He tapped his index finger over my mouth. “I’m telling you now, Hallie, it’s what you’re consuming. It’s harming you.” What he said had some truth to it, even if I wanted to admit it or not. What Enlai brought me to help with my hunger wasn’t working. I never felt as strong as I could be and my Deamhan senses weren’t the best.

“I can’t kill just anyone, Remy.”

“I’m not saying you have to. You just need to lay off the squirrels for a bit.”

“I’m not killing humans.”

“Vampires and Dorvo vampires aren’t human.”

“Yeah, and neither are we. You all say that Deamhan aren’t supposed to have any emotions, right? That’s what everyone around here keeps saying. ‘Deamhan don’t have emotions.’” I mocked Anastasia’s voice. “I never believed that. I always believed that we still think and care about other people. This is how I care about other people, by not killing them.”

“No one is telling you to not believe that. That’s what makes you different. You force yourself to have trust in people, to believe that we’re responsible for our own actions. But you are a Deamhan and that doesn’t automatically exclude you from what you have to do to survive.”

“All right Gandhi. Tell me who I should kill.” Bothered, I waited for him to come up with a better solution.

“You should take little from many.”

“What?”

“If you don’t want to kill, which I find funny, then you should take just

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a little from each victim. That way you'll get the sustenance you need and they won't die. It's a win-win."

"I don't know-"

"You don't want to smell like rotting skin forever, do you?"

I nodded.

"Then that's what you have to do unless you want to die."

"Of course I don't want to die."

"Eventually you will if you keep this up. It's just a matter of time." He headed for the front door. "No one is truly immortal," he opened it, "not even us."

# CHAPTER THREE

## TIRED OF WAITING

I waited in my room for Enlai, thinking about what Remy said to me. Maybe it was possible to take little by little from my victims without harming them. I was apprehensive about taking the risk. The last time I fed from a human I couldn't stop. I drained every drop of his essence, his being, into my own, and it felt damn good.

My bedroom door opened and Enlai stood in the threshold, carrying a black backpack. I ran into his arms and he rubbed my cheek gently. I saw comfort in his eyes. "I fed Kenneth and checked his chains so he should be good until tomorrow night."

"Thank you." I loved the way his body felt when it was up against mine. We walked back over to my bed. "I just don't...I don't know what to be more concerned about. Remy's behavior or the fact that I don't know what's going on with me."

"Remy is the type of Deamhan who likes to be the center of attention. When he doesn't get it, he reacts outright," he commented. "As for you, don't worry. I got something special for you." He placed a backpack on the ground, opened it, and pulled out a small Mason jar filled packed with mice.

I hesitated.

"What's wrong?"

"There's something I need to tell you." I couldn't help but think about what Remy said. Still, seeing my food just sitting there...it was too good

to pass up. I unscrewed the lid and went to work. Absorbing the psychic energy into my own dead body made everything horrible and Remy related go away. When I finished eating, I fell back into the comfort of my bed and glared at the ceiling with a smile on my face.

“What’s going on?” He sat next to me.

“I’ve been having these bad dreams for the past week and every night I wake up tired.”

“What are you dreaming about?”

“Same thing. Same shadow looking person,” I replied. “I can tell it’s a female, but I can’t see her face. She questions me about who I am and my sire. I run from her, but in the end she kills me.” I closed my eyes.

“A female?” He leaned back with his elbows on my bed.

I nodded. “And tonight Remy said I smelled like rotting skin. He said it’s because I’m not eating enough and that’s why I’m having these dreams.”

“Rotting skin?”

I leaned toward him. “Smell my neck.”

He sniffed and quickly jerked his head away. “There’s an odor. He’s right about that. I can’t really smell it unless I’m up close.”

“I don’t know what to do. He said that if I don’t want to kill anyone that I should feed from a group of people, take a little from each.”

He nodded. “Yeah, that’s how I do it.”

“Maybe I should...”

“But there’s something else going on with you.” He added. “I’ve known Deamhan who don’t feed off any human. Period. And this doesn’t happen to them. Plus your dreams.” He sat up.

“It’s so weird. Also, the woman gets pissed because I don’t know anything about my sire.”

Enlai exhaled. “I didn’t want to tell you this. Not yet because I’m not sure, but I think you need to know.”

“What?” I asked, intrigued.

“Your sire.”

“What about my sire?”

“I think I may have found him.”

My eyes widened. “Don’t lie to me.” Suddenly I grew excited. I couldn’t wait for him to spill it out. I also couldn’t help but think what was going on with the dreams couldn’t be a coincidence. “Well, what are we waiting

for? Let's go." I jumped to my feet and was ready to run out of my room when he stopped me.

"No. You can't go with me. Not yet."

I was confused.

"It's just a speculation for now," he remarked. "I need to make sure."

"Sure about what?"

"Hallie, there's more to it."

"What more can there be? If you found my sire I want to know where he is, what he looks like."

"You don't know much about your sire." He gently forced me to sit on my bed. "I need to make sure it's safe for you."

"Why wouldn't it be safe?"

"Your sire used to work for Kei back in the day," he replied. "And we all know what Kei did. We know that he forced other Deamhan to sire humans, you included, to create a Deamhan army in the city."

How could I forget? "I'm not a little kid who needs to always be protected. I'm a Deamhan, right. A creature of the night?" I backtracked. "Wow. That sounds really cheesy."

"If the information is good I promise you that we'll go together and track down your sire."

"It's not like I don't believe you. I'm just..." I held my tongue and searched my mind for the right words to say.

"You think your dreams have something to do with him?" He finished my thought for me.

"Yes."

"Hallie, I promise you--"

"I know you do, but that's not going to be enough. Not this time."

He placed his index finger over my lips. "You do understand what's going on, right?" His eyes dived deep within mine and for a moment, I felt lost. I nodded childishly and he continued. "It's not only Dorvo vampires we have to deal with. Lately, I've been coming across weird scents in the city. They aren't human. They're different and there are many of them. I don't know what they are."

I had to show him that I wasn't scared, even though the idea of something else out there, like us, sent shivers up my spine. I held my head high and narrowed my eyesight. "So?"

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He placed his hands against my face and whispered. “You’re beautiful when you lie, you know that?” He then dropped his hands and nodded. “But hun, I have to go alone.” He walked to the door and peeked his head outside in the hallway. “You should get some rest.” Then he went all mental communication on me. *I’ll be back before sunrise. Promise.*

“Enlai-”

*Don’t worry. I’ll be back soon.* He disappeared from my view.

That was the first time I doubted his sincerity. I agreed, but in my mind I knew I couldn’t just sit back and wait. I was tired of waiting.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## MY DEAMHAN IN DARK AND DEADLY ARMOR

I waited until the coast was clear before secretly making my way outside. No one was around which meant that I, Hallie Mortenson, had more freedom than I knew how to deal with.

I saw Enlai in the distance and when he took off, I immediately followed him, careful to allow enough space between us. I had no intentions of just waiting for him to get back.

Traveling long distances isn't hard for a Deamhan to do. We can run really fast. I guess that's the best thing about all of this. First, I like to start off at a slow place to get my bearings. Then I use the energy that keeps my body from rotting to increase my speed until everything around me becomes a huge blur. I don't know what we look like to others who see us run in Deamhan speed. Someone said we looked like floating mist. Regardless, I followed him as he zigzagged through the dense forest before reaching the freeway. He took a quick left, jumped over a small embankment, and continued on, squirming through two fast moving cars.

Scared, I stopped briefly to get a good glimpse at the vehicles speeding by. I didn't trust myself enough to take the risk of getting hit (like it'd kill me anyway). Instead I waited until I saw an opening before dashing off to catch up with him.

He circled by downtown Minneapolis, just one of the two major cities in Minnesota, then he ran across an extended bridge over the Mississippi

River until he reached the warehouse district. Suddenly it came back to me. Before becoming a Deamhan, I used to sneak out and go to underground parties in the area. One of these parties was in this same location. It was also the place where my life changed forever.

I stopped but not before I mistakenly crashed right into a human male standing on the corner, sending both of us to the pavement. He landed on his back and I landed on his chest.

“I’m sorry.” I immediately jumped off him.

“Where did you come from?” He stood to his feet and brushed the dirt from his pants.

“Sorry.” I immediately walked off.

I glanced at the large buildings around me. I noticed the street was uncomfortably dark and desolate. The smell of urine and old trash circled the air along with the sweat of humans, which didn’t help my hunger pains. That’s when I caught something I’d never smelled before. It was a strong pungent odor and it made me slow down. Maybe this was what Enlai referred to when he spoke of weird, unusual, and new scents in the city.

Just then my hunger pains returned. “I’m not killing any humans,” I said in a whisper to myself. I didn’t even want to steal a dab of their essence. Then again, I didn’t need to. The city was crawling with Dorvo vampires. Not to mention that regular vampires were here as well and both were edible. Food was all around me. There had to be just enough so I could do what Remy suggested but I had to be careful. I didn’t want to step on anyone’s toes, let alone those of Lambert who was the head honcho vampire in the city.

Up ahead I saw Enlai walking down the street. He didn’t look frightened or scared. In fact, he looked the opposite. I sighed and just before I began to follow after him, I heard the sound of metal clanging to my right. When I looked, I saw a medium sized teen with short brown hair. He wore black shorts and a dingy white shirt in the alleyway. In his right hand, he held a half lit cigarette and in the other a brown paper bag crushed into the outline of a tall can of alcohol. He was rummaging through the trash before he stopped and our eyes met.

He looked normal, but he wasn’t. He was a Deamhan, just like me. His Metusba scent told me so.

## Hallie. A Tit For A Tat. Deamhan Chronicles #3.5

My eyes immediately turned pitch black. I didn't know who this boy was or if he wanted to harm me. Upon seeing my change, his eyes changed as well. We stood there, locked together in a staring contest, waiting for one of us to make the first move.

"Hallie?"

*How does he know my name?* He didn't read my thoughts, which most Deamhan did when they wanted information. Cautious, I took a step back. "Who are you?" There weren't that many Deamhan in the city anymore and the ones who remained behind were in hiding. He had to be new to the city.

"Well, damn. I didn't think we'd run into each other like this."

I moved back again and he reached out to grab my wrist. "I'm not going to harm you."

I pulled against him, but he was stronger which meant he was older. With his power, he yanked me into the alley. My first thought was that he planned to kill me, so I acted out by screaming loud enough for Enlai to hear me or so I hoped. In response, he placed his hand over my mouth.

"Don't do that!"

He pushed me up against the brick wall of a building. "Relax." He then took a quick sniff and his eyes widened. "Oh...fuck."

I used my feet and kicked, forcing him to release me. I turned and noticed a wooden pallet leaned against the wall.

"No, you don't!!!" He then tossed me with such force that I flew toward the ground and landed on my stomach.

With his hard foot pressed again my lower back, he towered over me and spoke. "Be quiet. You don't want those Dorvo vamps to know we're here, do you?"

I tried to squirm my body away but he kept the pressure up and I looked over my shoulder.

"I'm going to move my foot but promise me that you won't run and you're not going to scream."

I remained quiet.

Finally, he lifted his foot, stepped back, and held out his arm.

I flipped onto my back.

"You're looking good Hallie. It's been a long time."

"Do I know you?"

“Not really, but I know you.” He squatted and rested his hands on his legs. “Damn girl, you have some fight in you.” He leaned forward huffed. “Made me tired and shit.”

With my elbows, I crawled back and still kept my eyes on him. “What do you want?”

“I told ya, I’m not here to hurt you.” He huffed again. “Get up. Let’s talk.”

Obviously I hesitated. I didn’t know who the hell he was and better yet, how he knew my name. I said the first thing that came to mind. “If you hurt me, my friends will kill you.”

“I doubt that, but like I said, I’m not going to hurt you.” He searched the ground around me. “Now, where is my damn cigarette? You made me drop my damn cigarette.”

I stood up and watched as he picked up his cigarette from the ground and scratched the dirt off from the filter. “I didn’t expect to run into you like this.” He stuck it between his lips. “Honestly, I didn’t think you were still alive until I heard Enlai talking about you.”

“Enlai?”

“Yep. Believe me, I was surprised.”

“He’ll kill you if you hurt me.” I wanted to end the freakish conversation.

“That douchebag?” He laughed. “I have fifty years over him. He can’t take me.” He combed his fingers through his short brown hair.

“I have other friends who are twice, three times older than he is.”

“Stop with the threats will ya?” He moved to my left and glanced down the street. When he was satisfied that we were alone, he relaxed and held out his hand. “The name is Tank. Pleased to meet you.”

I viewed his gesture as an oddity. “Tank?”

“Yeah, that’s my name.” His cigarette dangled from his mouth.

“Who would name anyone ‘Tank’?”

“It’s a nickname my mother gave me before I ate her.”

I looked down the street. I had lost Enlai. Things didn’t look so good or so I thought. “So...Tank. You said you wanted to talk? Start talking.”

“Oh, we can’t talk here,” he replied. “We have to get off the streets.”

“I’m not going anywhere with someone I just met who likes to search through garbage.”

“Hey, I do what I have to do. Plus, you’d be surprised what stuff people

throw away. Some of it is still good.”

I had to find Enlai. I backed away from Tank. “I don’t know you and I don’t want to know you, okay?”

“If you want to survive the night, I just wouldn’t go down that way.”

“Thanks for the warning,” I replied in a snark tone.

“I’m serious. I know what I smelled.” He pointed to my neck. “And if I’m right, you’re going to need me.”

Tank’s eyes shifted passed me just as Enlai’s scent tickled my nose. Before I could react, my knight in shining armor sped by me, almost knocking me off my feet, and collided with Tank. They dropped to the floor and I watched them roll around on the pavement like two catty high school teenage girls.

I couldn’t believe it at first. Suddenly I began to scream at Enlai to end Tank’s life; however, as the fight progressed, I realized that it wasn’t going to be that easy. Tank managed to kick him away and Enlai went flying through the air and into the wall.

Their struggle caused enough noise to grab the attention of humans walking down the street. I panicked thinking that finally someone would see two Deamhan going at it and that wouldn’t be a good thing.

Enlai quickly recovered and pushed me away from the fray before he went in again. I saw the piece of wood Tank managed to take from me earlier, on the pavement near my feet. I quickly snatched it and held onto it tightly, waiting for the right moment to strike. Something didn’t feel right about the situation. Suddenly I didn’t feel that Enlai was there to protect me. I felt that he was fighting Tank because they had history, bad history. It made no sense to me. I didn’t understand it.

“Stop it!” I yelled, which did little to stop the fight. “You’re causing too much attention!”

Enlai snapped his head in my direction and his black eyes narrowed on me. “Get out of here!” He yanked the sharp piece of wood from my hands.

My outburst caused a long enough distraction for Tank to take off down the alley, jump over a fence, and disappear from our site. Angered, Enlai spun around toward me with the sharp pointed edge of the wood aimed at my chest.

“What are you doing?” Scared, I held up my hands.

Isaiyan Morrison

“Sorry.” He dropped the wood. “What are you doing here? Did you follow me?”

“I...” I looked at the pavement.

“Hallie!”

I lifted my head high. “Yes, I followed you.”

“Why? The city isn’t safe for us.”

“You mean, it isn’t safe for me? But you and Remy go wherever you want to go. I don’t see why I can’t go where I want to go.”

He closed his eyes and slowly opened them. The darkness was gone, now replaced with the warm brown I was used to seeing. “Just go back. Please.”

“You know what?” Angered I turned around. “Never mind. Why should I care what you do, right?”

“I just don’t want anything to happen to you.”

“Yeah, that’s what they all say.”

“You don’t have experience as a Deamhan in Minneapolis. What more do I have to say, to show you, that it’s not safe?” He placed his hand on my shoulder.

“Who was he?”

“He’s someone you need to stay far away from.”

“He knew my name and he knows you,” I said. “And he said he knows my smell...what I smell like...the rotting smell-”

“That’s who he is,” he replied. “It was his job to know Deamhan in this city.”

“So, he’s not new to Minneapolis?”

“No. Hallie, he’s extremely dangerous to not only you and me but to all Deamhan.”

For the second time that night, I didn’t believe him. He was keeping something from me. “No, that’s not all I need to know, is it?”

“Yes. That’s all you need to know...for now.”

# CHAPTER FIVE

## YOU SMELL LIKE DEATH

I opened the front door to the sanctuary and took in the scents in the air before walking in. I expected Remy to jump out at me and question where I've been so I was surprised when I heard Alexis' voice behind me. "I won't tell if you won't tell."

Being Lambert's vampire consort came with perks. Since he was considered the head of all the vampires in the city, this also made Alexis extremely powerful and influential. Deep down, she hated all Deamhan and never understood why her beloved would bend ass backwards for our kind.

"You Deamhan think I'm just here to babysit you and be at your beck and call?"

"I don't need a babysitter." I headed for the stairs when she called out again.

"Are you sure about that?"

"Oh, I'm sure." I felt a gust of wind tickle the back of my neck. Suddenly she appeared in front of me, on the stairs, and blocked my path. Vampires moved just as quickly if not, more so than Deamhan at times.

Her nostrils flared and she took a quick sniff. "Why do you smell like death?"

"Death?"

"Like rotting flesh and something else." She sniffed me then moved

down to my abdomen. “Someone else, actually. A Metusba. A male one at that.” She moved back then moved in again. “Who did you run into?”

“That’s none of your business.” I moved around her, but she placed her hand up against my chest.

“It is my business. Don’t forget that you’re in my home.”

“More like Lambert’s home.”

Her full lips pulled back into a smile. “I’ll forget you said that. It’d be a shame if I were to rip off your face. Now, who did you run into?” When I refused to tell her, she moved in closer and her fangs dropped, showing her dominance. “Don’t make me ask again.”

Although I didn’t fear Alexis, I did fear how my actions would shake the relationship between Lambert and Nathan. It’s unusual for a Deamhan to place anyone first besides themselves but like I said, I’m not a usual Deamhan. I didn’t want to be. I was different. I still held onto my human emotions, no matter how hard. I decided to give her a crumb or two.

“Another Deamhan, that’s all.”

“I can smell that. I’m asking who.”

I swallowed hard. “He said his name was Tank—”

“Tank?” She moved back. “Did you say, Tank?”

“Do you know him?”

She nodded. “Unfortunately. I thought that annoying boy was long dead. Looks like I was wrong.”

“Who is he?”

“He was here long before the shit hit the fan in the city.” She leaned against the wall and studied her hands while she thought. “From a long time ago. He’s just one of those Deamhan who...” she flicked her fingers as if disgusted, “...likes to be involved in too much drama.” She lowered her voice. “He’s not a friendly one...as if any Deamhan is really friendly.”

“What kind of drama? Enlai said he was dangerous and he’s a traitor.”

She nodded. “Traitor is too kind of a word. Listen to your boyfriend. You don’t want to get involved with that one.”

“I don’t intend to.” I walked around her and climbed the stairs.

“He’s an outsider to not only vampires but his own kind.” She called out to me. “And to others. Don’t let his boyish look deceive you.”

“What others?”

“Others.” She followed me. “Enlighten me. What did he say to you?”

## Hallie. A Tit For A Tat. Deamhan Chronicles #3.5

She maneuvered around me and again, stood in my way.

“Nothing,” I finally replied. There was no way in hell I was going to tell her that he knew my name and he knew Enlai. If he was that dangerous, I wanted nothing to do with him. Desperate to escape the conversation I walked around her and continued heading up the stairs but she placed her hand against my chest to stop me from moving any further.

“Whatever you two talked about, I’m positive he didn’t tell you everything.” She lowered her voice. “Let me give you a word of advice. Tank loves dumb and young Deamhan like you. He used to run around the city with hordes of them, ravaging and killing whomever they wanted, thinking that nothing could stop him. Sooner or later, he fucked with the wrong person. It was bound to happen. There are a lot of people who want him dead. Do not trust him unless you want to be on their list as well.”

#

I stormed into my room and slammed the door shut behind me. It was eerily silent and I needed the silence to think. So much had happened in the city and I found myself torn on what to do. For some odd reason, I wanted to know more about Tank. I guess that’s because everyone kept telling me to stay away from him.

I stared out the window, watching the sunrise on the horizon. By now the Deamhan inside me tugged and begged me to close the windows to shield myself from the harmful sunlight, but I didn’t listen. I didn’t want to. What I wanted to do was go back out there and learn more. I also wanted to know if Enlai ran into Tank.

Finally, my body couldn’t take it anymore, so I closed the blinds and hopped into the soft comfort of my bed. Laying on my back, I closed my eyes and just when I was about to drift off into darkness, I felt that someone had run into my room.

My eyes shot opened and just in time to see Remy standing near the edge of my bed. His face was blank, but I could tell that he wasn’t a happy camper. I lifted my body up and pulled my sheets up to my neck.

“Alexis told me you went out. Did you?” The question floated from his lips in a solemn and caring voice. Hearing it made me not want to tell

him the truth. He sat on the edge of my bed and placed his hand on my lower right leg.

I remained quiet.

“Don’t try to lie.” He glanced around the room. “Where’s your boy toy?”

“I don’t know. Still in the city.”

He took one whiff of the air. “She also said you smelled like another Metusba and death.” He covered his nose. “You do smell awful. Worse than before.”

“So what.” I blurted out.

“You don’t listen.” His behavior fizzled and he hunched his back, disappointed in my actions. “Did you at least find someone to eat?”

I shook my head.

“Hallie, you can’t go on like this.”

“I know. You’ve told me about a gazillion times. I’m just tired of everyone telling me what to do. I’m tired of people telling me that this is dangerous and that is dangerous and I shouldn’t do this and I shouldn’t do that.”

“There is some truth to all of it.”

“All of you just like being in control. You all like telling me what to do. I’m tired of it. Not anymore. Fuck that Remy.”

He didn’t charge at me with more orders and insults. He still looked tired at the ordeal and he tapped my lower right leg. “Alexis said that you met a Deamhan by the name of Tank?”

I nodded.

“And where was your boy toy during all of this?”

“He was there. He fought him and Tank ran off.”

“Did he?”

I nodded again. “Enlai said that he’s a traitor and dangerous. Alexis said the same thing too. He also knew me. He knew my name and he mentioned something about the way I smell. He wanted to talk to me.”

“Woah, wait a minute.” He held up his hand to interrupt me.

“What? What is it?”

He rubbed his chin and marinated in his thoughts. The only time I’d seen him so preoccupied was when he tried to save Veronica’s life.

“You know him, don’t you?” I asked again.

Hallie. A Tit For A Tat. Deamhan Chronicles #3.5

“Wow, I finally agree with Enlai on something.” He dropped his hand.  
“This is...interesting.”

“Who is he?”

“Like they said, he’s a dangerous Deamhan that’s not worth mentioning.”

“So everyone knows about him, but me? Who is he?”

“He’s someone who should’ve died a long time ago.” His eyes lit up.  
“If you go back out there, promise me that you won’t try to find him.”

“I don’t plan on it.”

He smiled. “Hallie, I know you.”

“I’m serious. I won’t.”

“If you had the chance, you would.” He sighed. “I’m sorry my littlest Deamhan, but I have to do this.” In one quick moment, he had moved from sitting on the edge of my bed to straddling me. He pinned both my arms to the bed and moved his face close so that his lips barely touched my own as he spoke. “Believe me when I say this, but I’m doing this for your own good.”

I found my body frozen at his hasty movement. He had never held me down before and I didn’t like that feeling. Just mentioning Tank’s name had changed his behavior. I was beginning to wonder why this Metusba was someone to be avoided.

My head started to buzz as he pushed his way into my mind in a dire attempt to read my thoughts. I tried to push him out, but I knew I was in a no win situation. I was never good at reading and invading the mind of another Deamhan. I had yet to master that trick. He dug deep and eventually pulled out, now knowing the secrets that I had tried so hard to keep.

He froze, took a moment to collect himself, and replied. “Again, I’m sorry about that.” He let me go, moved to the edge of the bed, and stood to his feet.

“Fucking asshole!” I screamed.

His demeanor had changed back, just like that. He swiped his brown hair back and licked his smooth lips. “I got a glimpse of your dream and what Enlai told you about your sire. You still want to find him? I mean, after all this time?”

I lowered my eyes to the ground. “It’s crossed my mind.”

“It’s done more than that. It’s invaded your dreams. You sure you want

to go down that route? Deamhan sires aren't equivalent to your parents. They aren't obligated to be bonded to you for eternity. There's a reason why your sire abandoned you. He wanted no part in it. I was with my sire for many years before we finally parted ways and throughout that whole time, I never felt like he cared for me. I was just there for company, for his enjoyment."

"What does this have to do with my sire?"

"You went out tonight because you thought Enlai would lead you to your sire. Instead you ran into one of the most untrustworthy Deamhan in the city. Who or what do you think you'll run into if you go out tomorrow night?"

"You just don't get it."

"I get it. I just don't understand it." He shrugged. "I've told you before, that type of thing happens all the time. Bonds between two Deamhan are rare."

"But they exist. You were bonded to your sire, weren't you?" I pulled the covers back and raised myself from my bed.

He sighed. "No wonder Anastasia felt the need to snap your neck. You are hard headed." He scrunched his lips. "I miss the old Hallie; the girl who never asked questions and just did what she was told." He used his speed to move quick and his strength to grab my sheets and rip them in half. He wrapped one around my right wrist and the other around my left to the baseboard of my bed.

"What the hell!" I pulled against the sheets, but he had tied them so well that my fight was useless. "Are you freakin' crazy?"

"There is a reason behind my madness," he replied. "Tank is no ordinary Deamhan. In fact, he was a well-known participant in the sanctuary fires a few years ago." He then tightened my new straps.

Before I knew it he had me confined to my bed, helpless and unable to move. "He burned a lot of homes, killed a lot of our kind. He's a bastard that should've been put down a long time ago. If he knows you, Hallie, that isn't a good thing. In fact, that means that you've been on his radar for quite some time now and I'm going to find out why."

"Remy, please let me go."

Again, he ignored my request. "Your curiosity is going to get you killed and I actually care about you too much to stand back and let that happen."

## Hallie. A Tit For A Tat. Deamhan Chronicles #3.5

“Care? Is this how you show that you care?”

“Now, don’t go anywhere.” He wiped his hands on his legs. “I’ll be back tomorrow,” he walked toward the door, “before sunset. Scouts honor.”

# CHAPTER SIX

## DEAMHAN SIBLING

I had no choice but to lay there, in anger, until I fell asleep.

And I dreamed.

This time it was different. I stood in the middle of a dark street in a neighborhood that looked like the neighborhood I grew up in. It was! I remembered the white and pink two-story house on the corner and Mr. Graves' Labrador who always barked at the kids across the street. Everything was still there. It felt and looked normal, but it was far from normal.

I saw a shadow down the street, standing underneath a tree. I called out to it and received no reply. As I tiptoed in its direction, I noticed that my own shadow reflected on the street, grew in size. Suddenly pale and elongated arms reached out from my shadow and they wrapped around me. I screamed and struggled and eventually fell back. I couldn't move as the shadow I saw before took a human form and stood over me. It straddled me and placed its hands around my throat. Heat began to build in my chest and up to my throat and this figure opened its mouth and placed it slightly above my own.

It was feeding from me. It was killing me.

The sun setting in the horizon triggered my body awake. I opened my eyes and remembered what had happened the previous night (plus my sheets wrapped around my wrist reminded me as well).

## Hallie. A Tit For A Tat. Deamhan Chronicles #3.5

Again I felt weak, but this time my entire body ached as if I'd been thrown off a hundred story building. I called out Remy's name in anger, demanding that he release me, but no one came. I pulled and yanked with all my strength and still the sheets didn't rip. I wasn't strong enough to break free. The sound of thunder followed by a downpour also grabbed my attention. I looked toward my window. Lightning flashed in the sky, illuminating dark roaring clouds in the distance.

"Remy!!" I screamed out again. My hearing picked up on footsteps walking down the hall and stopping in front of my door. I saw the doorknob turn and the door slowly open. A shadow stood in the threshold with the hall light shining behind it.

It didn't smell like Remy nor did it smell like Alexis. However, it was familiar. The shadow moved forward and upward, revealing its stomach, chest, and finally its hard chin. When it moved over its face and I finally knew it was.

"Enlai?"

His hair was wet and matted. He placed his index finger over his lips and tiptoed to my bed. He ripped the sheets away from my wrists. "Who did this to you?"

"Remy." Finally free, I rolled out of bed and stood on the other side, glaring at him. "He found out about last night."

"Of course he did." He made his way over to the window and unlatched it. "I need to show you something."

"Look, I want to apologize for last night—"

"No. I should apologize. I should've never kept any of this from you."

"What are you talking about?" I quickly dressed myself and watched as he climbed through.

Again he placed his index finger over his mouth.

I walked over to the window when he jumped. I watched him land on the lawn and he looked back up at me. I hesitated. He motioned frantically for me to follow him. I was in no mood to get wet, but I swallowed my fear, climbed through, and also jumped.

I closed my eyes on the way down and didn't open them until I felt the bottom of my feet hit the ground. It didn't hurt. In fact, it felt pretty good. I opened my eyes, feeling the warm droplets of rain splattering my face, and smiled.

I didn't know what to say. Part of me wanted to thank him while the other part of me begged for caution. I was afraid Remy was hiding in the bushes somewhere.

Picking up on my thoughts, he shrugged his shoulders. "Remy isn't who we should be afraid of."

Another lightning strike in the distance illuminated the area and the sky above. The clouds were dark and rotating above our heads. There I was, alone with him. I had so many questions about last night that I didn't know where to start. He sensed this and waved at me to come closer. However, I stood still as the rain continued.

"Remy freaked out when I told him Tank's name," I said.

"Did you have the same dream again?" He made his way over to me. The question felt out of place.

He placed his hand on my cheek. "Did you have the same dream?"

I was afraid to tell him. I didn't know how he'd take it or even what the dream meant. I held onto his hand. "No...Well...yes. Sort of."

"How so?"

"I dreamt that a shadow looking person fed from me, just like a Deamhan."

He looked amused by my reply. "I've been out there," he pointed to the distance, "and I've come across some really disturbing things. Things that you need to know."

"Like what?"

"Disturbing."

Suddenly I felt like I was going down the same path he dragged me on before. I felt like he didn't want to tell me, or couldn't tell me. "Enlai, I'm not made out of glass. I don't break easily."

"Just know that the city is changing. There's something coming."

"Yeah and we know exactly what that is. Pure Deamhan, rituals..."

"No, not just that. Other things." He placed his hands in his pocket and began to rock back and forth on his toes. "I was thinking about your condition and..."

I tapped my foot impatiently. "You want me to eat someone?"

"You're going to have to if you want to get better. Come with me. I need to show you but not here and out in this rain." He looked up at the sky. "We're in a tornado watch, so I don't want to be out all night."

“Neither do I.”

He took off at quick speed across the vast front yard and toward the freeway.

#

We both ran at our fastest speeds toward the city.

I had no idea what to expect or where he was taking me. Suddenly I remembered. We stopped just down the street from where I ran into Tank the night before. The city was dark and the rain has stopped momentarily. The thunderous sounds of lightning strikes and pouring rain were replaced by a distant tornado siren.

Enlai leaned against a building with boarded up windows. The brick walls were covered with graffiti. Curious, I watched him light one and he began to quickly puff on the other end.

“When did you start smoking?”

He exhaled. “A few nights ago. I need something to counteract my stress.”

I looked to the sky, feeling the raindrops splatter against my cheeks. “Why are you stressed out?”

“You felt that, don’t you?” He tilted his head back and looked at the clouds.

“The wind.” Yet that same wind picked up and pushed me slightly off balance. I looked down the road, finding it empty except for litter and trash scattering across the ground.

“It helps us by carrying scents, some from miles away.” He closed his eyes. “But this one is close. Super close.”

I picked up on it as well. “Dorvo vampires.” I then pointed down the street. “Tank said they hung out down there.”

“I’m sure he didn’t mention how he knew that.” He sniffed the air again.

“He did actually. He said you go down there.”

“And you believed him?”

“I don’t know what to think. I don’t know who he is.” Many more questions filled my head. However, one popped to the forefront of my mind, “Tell me about him.”

“I’ve already told you. He can’t be trusted. You don’t know what’s going on in the city, but I do. I’ve been here long before you were sired.” He tilted his head back in thought. “I was here during the sanctuary fires. I helped my sire almost destroy what little Deamhan had in this city. There were many Deamhan around that time, all willing to serve and follow my sire. Tank was one of them. Back then, he was pretty much out of control, always trying to do one up on any other Deamhan, including me. I did a lot of bad things back then. Most of us did. When I finally realized that my sire cared nothing for me, I was out. I was done. But not Tank. He loved what he was doing. He loved killing other Deamhan and siring Deamhan just to increase my sire’s Deamhan army.”

“The way Remy also talked about him...he also made Tank out to be like you said.”

“He was brutal and cruel. I thought he left the city, so I was surprised when I heard he was back. I had to see for myself. I’ve been following him for a few nights. That’s when I put two and two together.”

A crackle of thunder pushed us out of the conversation. I turned back to the road. The wind was steadily decreasing. “You’re telling me this as if it has something to do with me.”

“It does. When you ran into him, did he look scared to you?”

“No.”

“A few nights ago my sanctuary was burned down. Only two of my friends survived.”

I covered my mouth. “I’m sorry. Do you think he did it?” I heard about the sanctuary full of orphan Deamhan from Lambert. He convinced Anastasia to go there, believing that she could find Deamhan who were sympathetic to our cause against what was happening in the city. That was how she met Enlai for the first time.

“No. This time it wasn’t him,” he replied. “He was there that night because he was running...from someone.” He turned and walked down the street. “I’m going to take you there.”

Uncomfortable, I began to follow him. “Why?”

He looked over his shoulder. “I think it’s time you met your Deamhan sibling.”

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## UNLIKELY COMPANIONS

A Deamhan sibling was just that. A Deamhan who shares the same sire. In this case, Enlai was taking me to his sanctuary to meet someone who I had that close connection with. At first I was angry. He knew all this time but didn't tell me? Why would he keep this from me? However, I soon found out the reason why.

I didn't tell him what I already knew about the area. Instead I followed him blindly to the location. It was just the right type of environment I expected to find a sanctuary. Each home stood empty for a few years. There was several construction vehicles parked in an empty lot to our right and next to that, a home that carried the scent of 'new and vacant.' However, another weaker scent hit us just halfway down the street which made us slow down our approach. It was a mixture of burnt wood, grass, and plastic. The aroma drifted from my right and when I turned to look I saw a boarded up home, settled near the back. The house didn't fit in with the other dwellings on the block.

"This is it." His eyes scanned the home. "Believe me, it was beautiful once."

The home was all but burned. I was surprised that the walls were still standing. Part of the roof had collapsed and left a gaping hole.

"So two of your friends are still here? The place doesn't look livable."

"Looks can be deceiving."

“You said Tank was being followed. Did that person do this?” The smell of a familiar Lamia scent engulfed the air around us. I looked to my left, across the street. There, standing alone, was Remy and for the first time in a while I was glad to see his face. He wore a dark black shirt and loose faded blue jeans. Sunglasses adorned his head (which was an odd addition to his wardrobe.) His hair was stringy and some of it stuck to the side of his face.

He folded his arms and the largest smirk I had ever seen appeared on his face. “My, my. Having a party without me?”

Enlai sighed.

Remy took a bow. “Please, please. Don’t let my appearance stop you.” He slowly crossed the street.

“Were you following us?” I asked.

“Hmmm, kinda. Actually, I was out minding my own business, tending to my hunger, when I saw him,” he pointed at Enlai, “walking here and you following him like a lost puppy. Didn’t know what you were up to. I thought you were in danger.” He shooed me away. “Go home. I’m going to have a little chat with your boy toy.”

I stepped back into the argument. “I’m not going anywhere.” I knew what he meant by a ‘chat’ and I wasn’t having any of it. “For the last time Remy, I don’t need your protection. I know what I’m doing.”

“Do you now? I told you that finding your sire isn’t going to end with a rainbow and a picnic at the park, but you didn’t listen. Instead you keep listening to what he says, knowing damn well that he is not your friend. He’s your enemy.”

“Enemy?” A bewildered look overcame Enlai’s face. “You still think of me like that?”

“You’re Kei’s offspring. I’ll always think of you as that.”

“I can’t change my lineage.” Enlai shrugged. “I can’t reverse the bad things I’ve done.”

“Redemption doesn’t suit you. I mean, you were just one of the main players in the city when Kei went on his psychotic rampage. You sided with him and you think that doing good deeds would make all of that go away?”

“I’m not looking for redemption,” he repeated. “You know how it was back then, Remy. You were here. Most Deamhan had to if they wanted to

live but like I told Hallie, I'm not like that anymore."

"So you brought her here because, what? You think showing her a burned sanctuary is going to somehow help her? Aren't you a special type of stupid?" His eyes darkened and in response Enlai tensed his upper body. "What do you get out of all of this?"

Enlai grew muted.

"Oh c'mon! It's an easy question."

Enlai grew impatient. "She needs to know the truth."

"And you, a Lugat with a shady past, are going to tell her this truth?"

"Yes."

I quickly placed myself between them. "Stop it."

Enlai shook his head and his wet dark hair lifted slightly. "He always thinks this is a game. This isn't a game."

"Well, not anymore. It's gotten boring," Remy replied. I grew worried and to comfort my uneasiness, Remy placed his cold hand against my cheek. "My littlest Deamhan, your sire isn't here." He kissed me on my forehead. "Now go home before this gets ugly."

"He was here," Enlai added. "And whoever did this was trying to kill him." He pointed at the sanctuary. "That's what I'm trying to show her. There's someone out there who wants not only her sire dead but anyone he sired as well."

I looked back to the house. "That means that..." My voice drifted off.

Enlai lowered his head. "Yeah, that Deamhan, that bastard...he's your sire. Tank is your sire!" He walked around us. "And your last remaining sibling in the city is in there, scared out of his mind."

#

The loose boards barely covered the broken windows. Black soot, remnants of a fire, stained the walls around the orifices of the home. The grass was knee high and an orange and black "Keep Out" sign hung on the outside gate. Something wasn't right but what I felt in my gut didn't matter. Enlai pulled back the large board covering where the front door would be, and walked in.

Reluctant, I followed him, but Remy slowly placed himself in front of me. "If your boy toy is telling the truth, are you sure you want to meet your sibling?"

I nodded, even though I really wasn't a hundred percent sure.

The interior reminded me of my home where I lived with my foster parents and foster sister before I was made Deamhan. Although the inside was torched almost beyond recognition, I was still able to see the outline of pictures that once hung on the walls. Only a few couches and other assorted furniture remained along with the remains of curtains and a broken flat screen television. The scent was now stronger and Enlai tracked it to the basement door in the kitchen located in the back of the home.

"The soot adds a sort of mystical cloak about this place, doesn't it?" Remy joked.

"Not funny," Enlai remarked. "Deamhan died here. Deamhan I knew." He stood in front of the charred basement door.

"So, let me see if I understand this. You thought it'd be wise to tell my littlest Deamhan, Hallie," he pointed to me, "all about it because she's the only one in this godforsaken city that can handle the problem?" As Remy continued to belittle him, it was quickly clear Enlai wasn't having it. "So, this is your disturbed way of handling a situation that really has nothing to do with her? Good call."

"Did you hear what I said earlier? Tank is her sire."

"Yet she isn't bonded to her sire."

"But whoever is after her sire will come for her." Enlai grabbed the knob and slowly opened the door. "And her sibling."

I turned to Remy, but before he had the chance to speak, a gust of air rushed out. Someone or something ran right passed us.

I turned just in time to see the blur disappear toward the living room. Enlai pushed me aside as he picked up speed, caught up with the individual, and tackled the person to the floor. I watched, realizing that the blur was a woman. A Lamia! Somehow Enlai managed to get on top and pin her arms to the ground with his left hand. With his right he grabbed a handful of her dark multicolored braids.

"Get off me!" The Lamia snarled and her black filled eyes gave me the once over. But he didn't let her go.

Remy placed his hand on Enlai's shoulder and threw him off her in just a flick of his wrist. Enlai landed on the opposite side of the room and jumped to his feet.

## Hallie. A Tit For A Tat. Deamhan Chronicles #3.5

“Now, that’s no way to treat a woman. A Lamia woman at that.”

“I’m not going to kill her. I would never do that to someone I know.” Enlai’s eyes turned black and as if in response, Remy’s eyes also turned black. “She needs to calm down.”

Everyone, including me, knew about the violent history between all the supernatural groups in the city. I knew a lot about Lamia Deamhan, thanks to Remy. They usually liked to remain in the foreground, watching as the chaos ensued and looking for the right opportunity to get what they wanted. Sometimes sexual, other times maniacal, getting their hands dirty wasn’t an option they considered unless it was their only one. This Lamia woman had those attributes, from what I could see, but what she also had was the will to fight back — which made her unpredictable.

Remy held out his hand to her, but she ignored his kind gesture and stood to her feet. She spun around to face us with her back slightly hunched forward. Her waist length braids slapped against his face.

“You’re interesting looking.” Remy studied her nice physique, her smooth teenage looking face, and her full lips. “What’s your name?”

She stood a few inches shorter than him and she smelled like burnt wood.

“Her name is Ji,” Enlai said.

The Lamia, Ji, snapped her head in his direction. “What in the hell are you doing here Enlai?! You’re not supposed to be here.”

“I’m not here to argue with you.” He jabbed his thumb into his solar plexus. “I’m here to help.”

At that time I caught another scent in the air which made me look over my shoulder. It didn’t belong to another Lamia. Instead, it was thick. This Deamhan was a little older than me yet not as old as Enlai. He was also a Metusba, like both of us. Suddenly I knew he was my sibling.

Remy caught onto the scent as well. “Tell your friend to come out. We don’t bite and we don’t like playing Hide and seek either.”

Ji refused.

*Okay, what now?* It was clear that she didn’t fear us and would fight tooth and nail until the end. I started to turn annoyed and aggravated. Sunrise was on its way and I didn’t have the time to drag this on. I had no other choice but to invade the Lamia’s thoughts but before I could, I heard the floorboards creak behind me. I turned to look, seeing an average size black

male appear in the kitchen. He moved in frightening speed toward me.

The Lamia skittishly moved out of the way as the Metusba made his attack. It happened too fast that I found myself shrieking in fear. However, Remy came to my rescue. He too moved quick and managed to place his hard hands against the male's shoulders and push him violently into the wall.

The Metusba snapped and pushed back against Remy's strength, but it didn't work. The other Lamia raced toward the front and yanked a piece of burnt wood from the wall. She ran back over to Enlai who easily managed to subdue her and rip the weapon from her grasp.

"We're here to help!" He held the pointed end to her chest.

Feeling the sharp edge, the Lamia calmed down. "We don't need your help. You abandoned us, remember?"

He tossed the piece of wood aside. "I never abandoned you."

Remy, who now had his attention toward Enlai, let the Metusba go. "Let's all calm down."

The Metusba motioned for Ji to come to him. She followed his request.

"You weren't here when we watched our friends burn to death." Ji snarled.

I slowly made my way over to Remy, confused and uncertain at the growing tension. I couldn't keep my eyes off the male; my sibling.

"Okay, every Deamhan who isn't me needs to shut up." Remy held up his hands for silence. "I'm Remy and my littlest Deamhan here is Hallie." He pointed at the Lamia. "Ji, right?" He then pointed to the Metusba. "And you are?"

"Malik."

"Malik." Remy's eyes dissected him. "Tank is your sire?"

"What is it to you?"

"Just answer the question. Is Tank your sire?"

"Why? You after him too?"

"No." I stepped forward. "He's asking because Tank also sired me."

He eyed me suspiciously then turned to Enlai. "Why would you bring anything remotely related to that idiot here, to our home?"

"Hey now! No need to insult my Hallie," Remy said.

"Yeah, he's my sire. I wish he wasn't, though." He held his arms out to the side. "This happened because of him."

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“Enlai told us,” I replied. “We just want to know what happened and then we’ll be on our merry way.”

“This is what happened! Now that you’ve seen it, you all need to go. Now.”

“Tell them what you told me,” Enlai said to him.

Malik still couldn’t take his eyes off me. “I’m not telling you anything.”

“Oh yes, you are,” Remy demanded. His Deamhan eyes were now dark; black. “Start talking or I’ll start maiming.”

“Fine. Then we’ll leave.” Malik and Ji tried to maneuver around toward the door.

“You’re not going anywhere.”

“We don’t have to listen to you,” Ji exclaimed.

Remy cackled. “Well, I like her attitude.” He smiled. “But between us two Lamia, you know how we can get when we don’t get our way.”

She rolled her eyes. “A few days ago Tank came here. He said that something tried to kill him when he was in New Orleans. He came here, trying to find those he sired for protection.” She folded her arms. “Of course we didn’t want him here. We didn’t want that kind of attention but Malik...Tank is his sire. He couldn’t say no so we agreed for him to stay but just for one night.”

“And that’s all it needed; whoever is after him,” Malik added. “We woke up to smoke. The sanctuary was on fire. Tank ran like the coward he is, leaving us all to die.” He rubbed his fingers through his hair. “He spoke to me before the fire. He wanted me to go with him. He said that we were stronger in numbers and whatever was after him wasn’t like us or any other supernatural creature he’s come across. But I told him I would never leave my family. I should’ve said yes. I should’ve gone with him. If I did my friends would still be alive.”

“It’s not a Deamhan or vampire?” Remy asked.

“I don’t know,” Malik replied. “It didn’t smell like any Deamhan I’ve run into.”

“Tell them about the shadow,” Enlai suggested.

“Why?”

“Malik.” Ji calmed him by placing her hand on his chest. “Just tell them so they can get the hell out of here.”

He sighed. “For the past week, I’ve had dreams. More like nightmares.

There's someone there, questioning me about Tank and in the other dream, there's a shadow looking figure."

I had to interrupt him. "And it attacked you, right?" I asked. "Arms grab you from the shadows, hold you down, and it feeds from you?"

"Yeah," he replied, further cementing my darkest fears. "You have the same dreams too?"

I nodded. "I wake up tired. I'm always tired."

The world in which I existed, the world that I was dragged into, not by choice, had just turned more confusing. I heard about the bonds that Deamhan have with their sires, siblings, and with each other, but I had no idea Malik existed until tonight. There was no way we could dream the same thing and be affected by it in the same way. Whatever it was...it had to be bigger and stronger than all of us combined.

"Like I told you before Hallie, there's something going on," Enlai said. "Whatever's happening to you is somehow connected to your sire."

"So, let's kill him." Remy suggestion wasn't what I expected to hear, even coming from him.

"Kill him? He's being hunted."

"And for a good reason," Remy replied. "You don't know everything your sire has done to not only his own but to others. The only reason you two," he pointed to me and Malik, "...are Metusba is because he wanted to grow his ranks. He wanted to please Kei. Now he's here for you two. He wants you both to help him fight whatever's chasing him." He folded his arms. "All of you are young Deamhan; under 100 years old. You don't know how sires react when their lives are in danger. They seek out the ones they've sired because it's an innate thing for our kind to do."

"I'm not helping him." Malik lowered his head. "I made a mistake of letting him stay here. That's enough for me."

"Did you happen to see what the person chasing him looked like?" Remy asked.

"It moved too fast. All I saw was a blur."

"But there's something else," Ji added. "When the others tried to fight back, it fed from them. It literally sucked the life from them, like a Lamia would do to humans and vampires when we feed."

"Aaaand that's our queue for us to go." Remy headed for the front door. He pulled the board covering the door slightly back to make sure he

had enough room to pass through.

But I didn't follow him. I wanted to know more. "We can't just leave them here."

"Oh yes, we can."

"Whatever Malik saw scared him."

"And there's a good reason for that. Now, let's go Hallie."

"What about them?"

"What about them?" he replied rudely.

"Remy, they can't stay here."

"If they know what's good for them, they'll leave too." He waved at me to follow. "Now, let's go."

"They aren't staying here," Enlai spoke up. "I'm going to help them find a new place tonight and tomorrow they're going to get as far away from Tank and this city as they can."

"How noble of you." Remy smiled.

Malik's eyes widened. "First, I want him dead. I would kill him myself but it's just us two and we're not strong enough to take him."

"Have fun. Hallie, let's go."

"You're scared of it too, aren't you?" Ji asked him.

"Me? I'm not scared of anything." Remy's explanation did little to convince her. "I mean, if you want to die tonight then by all means, do you, but my littlest Deamhan isn't going to join you in martyrdom."

"And what about what I saw?" Malik asked.

"I don't know what the hell you saw," he replied. "Good luck. I mean it, really." In a blink of an eye he ran toward me, grabbed my arm, and yanked me from the sanctuary.

Now standing in the front yard, I'd all but had it with his random behavior. "I wasn't done in there!" I yelled at him.

"You were," he replied. "We're going to find you someone to eat and then we're going back home."

"No."

He sighed. "Why do you always have to be so difficult?"

Enlai climbed through the door seconds later with Ji and Malik behind him.

"I'm not going home," I growled.

"Hallie, I think I may know what is hunting your sire." He lowered his

voice. “If I’m right, then you need to go back home. Now.”

Just then the wind picked up. I thought it was the storm which had all but dissipated until the scent carried by the air smelled nothing like rain. Instead it was foul and wretched. I didn’t know what it was, but they all seemed to know. Someone or something was near and it made everyone on edge.

“It’s here,” Malik cowered.

We saw a figure appear underneath the street light. However, its entire body remained hidden, cloaked in darkness. It sauntered toward us and with every step it took, we all stepped back.

“What is that?” Enlai lifted his head to catch a scent. “I can’t place the scent.”

“I can.” Remy’s eyes grew dark. “Have no fear children. It is killable. Hallie, take our new friends back to the sanctuary.”

“And leave you two to fight whoever that is?” I didn’t have a choice and this time I had no intention of disobeying Remy. I moved back to Ji and Malik. “Follow me.”

All of the sudden the shadow being charged at us. I stood in sheer terror and watched Enlai and Remy charge at whatever it was. All I saw was a blur. Ji screamed at Malik to run away, but he refused. Instead, he moved in to join them.

It easily pushed Enlai to the side, but Remy put up a fight. I’d never seen him in a brawl. He always spoke about himself as an excellent fighter and he was right. He fought this creature tooth and nail, punching it, scratching it, and keeping it as far away from me.

Whatever he managed to do made this creature stop its wild movements. Finally, we were able to see what we’re up against. It was a teenage girl who looked no older than me. Her eyes were dark, just like a Deamhan, and in them I saw nothing but rage. She wore a fedora and her shoulder length brown hair rested on her shoulders. She was dressed in a short ruffled skirt and a bright blue shirt. She looked like your average every day teenager rather than a killer.

“Why are you still here?!” Enlai screamed at me. “Go back to the sanctuary!”

“But it’s just a girl!” Who was I kidding? The girl managed to grip Remy’s right arm and twist it around his back. I heard a bone snap which

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made his eyes shift to the darkish color that all Deamhan had. He managed to break free and but she placed her hands around his throat and began to feed.

As swift as she started, she let him go and pushed him back. I watched helplessly as Remy hunched over and began to gasp. Enlai and Malik charged her just as he fell to his knees. Seeing this made the dark energy inside me double and I let its darkness fill my own eyes with rage. No one hurts my Remy!

This girl struck Enlai and sent him flying toward the sanctuary. She stood face to face with Malik, Ji, and myself. “Where is he?” she asked in a low grumbled voice.

“He’s not here. I don’t know where he is,” Malik replied. “Why did you do this? Why did you kill my friends?”

“Collateral damage. Just like my family.” She moved too fast to stop. She was on Malik in a blink of an eye and had him contained. There was nothing both Ji and I could do. Just like my dream she had punched straight through his chest and ripped out his heart.

Ji’s scream tore through the air.

Just then another blur shot past us so quickly that I had no time to react. I felt a cold hand around my upper arm and it yanked me off my feet. Whoever it was now had me and I was going for a ride. My feet flipped widely in the air and several times I tried to find my footing. However, this person ran too fast, and I tumbled.

The voice, which I recognized later as belonging to my sire, Tank, spoke. “Don’t let go.”

I screamed for Remy and Enlai. I believed that this girl would kill them as well until I realized that she wasn’t after them. She was after Tank and anyone he sired, including me.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## TANK

My head jerked back, and I thought I felt my neck snap. Tank came to a complete stop, but my body felt as if it was still in motion. He let me go and dizzy, I stumbled and fell to the ground.

Suddenly I felt pain followed by searing heat. It felt as if my insides were on fire. I screamed and fell back on the ground, my eyes glued on a piece of wood protruding from my stomach. My eyesight came to focus and I saw him standing over me.

“Don’t worry. It’s just a precaution.”

Another surge of pain engulfed my entire body. I’d never been staked before, but I’d heard from those who had that it felt like a bitch. This was searing pain that I’ve never felt before nor did I want to feel again.

“I’ll take it out after you promise to not do anything stupid.”

I nodded. At that moment I was willing to do anything just to have it removed. He grabbed the stake and yanked it free. I grunted and examined my wound. It had already begun to heal.

“We’re safe here. For now.”

So this was my sire. This was the person responsible for turning me into a Deamhan. I expected the stars to fall from the sky, for my world to be turned upside down, but nothing changed. I didn’t feel any different. I felt the same. In fact, I was angrier than I’d ever been. He would try to drag me smack dab in the middle of this chaos and I wanted no part of it.

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“She killed him!” I cried. “She killed Malik because of you!”

“Relax. It’s not like you two knew each other. You weren’t bonded.”

“He was your offspring!”

“And now he’s dead.”

I eyed the large and empty place he called a home. He didn’t just take me anywhere. He took me to some building in the warehouse district. It was unkempt and looked like no one had lived here in a long time. The place was disgusting, and I mean disgusting. First, the floor had stains as dark as the nighttime sky. The trash can in his small kitchen was filled and overflowing with garbage. I couldn’t help but cover my nose. The air smelled old and waterlogged boxes were piled up against the walls. Three large windows were covered with dirty white sheets and in the middle of the room was a thin mattress with black stains.

I walked forward and felt a slight pain in my abdomen. It wasn’t the after effects of the wood. It was my hunger.

“Sorry about stabbing you. I had to. I know you’re a runner.” He eyed me as if I was some piece of meat. “And if we’re going to survive this, we have to stick together.”

“What do you mean ‘we’? I have nothing to do with this.”

“Just being my offspring means that you have everything to do with this.”

“Who is she? She looked like a Deamhan, but she moved too fast to be one.”

He smiled. “She’s Deamhan, but you’ve never met anyone like her before.” He made his way to the kitchen. “You don’t sound grateful.”

“Why should I?” I attempted to study every detail I could about him. What if Remy didn’t come? What if no one came? I couldn’t rely on anyone but myself at that moment and I had to know if I could take down my sire.

“I just saved your life.”

“Yeah because of something you did.”

He opened the fridge and pulled out a can of beer. “You want one?”

The question threw me for a loop. Deamhan could eat. We could enjoy the food we used to love before being turned. However, our bodies couldn’t digest it. We were dead.

He grabbed an opened loaf of bread and slammed the door. “I miss

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food. Don't you?" He shoved it into his mouth and closed his eyes. "Cheeseburgers are my favorite. Sometimes I forget to regurgitate the shit from my stomach." He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and walked to the thin mattress. "Come. Sit." He plopped down.

"No thanks. I'll stand."

"You want to know who she is, right? If so, then sit." He opened the can and took a sip. "You ever regurgitate human food and drink?"

In Deamhan speed I ran toward him. "I don't care about that." I slapped the can from his hand and it flew across the room. "Why is she after you? Does this have something to do with the sanctuary fires?"

"You're angry."

"Oh, I'm more than angry. I'm pissed. You have the nerve to come back here, thinking I'm just going to open my arms and accept you as my sire."

"You wanted to find me, didn't you?"

"Yeah but...but that was before I knew what a disgusting asshole you really are."

"I'm not here to bond with you."

"Duh. You're here because you think that together we can kill that girl. Well, I'm not doing that. I'm young but not stupid."

"That girl is stronger than she looks." He acted unaffected by my display of anger. Instead he laid back on the mattress with his hands behind his head. "She's killed every Deamhan I've sired. Ever! Now, you're the last one left."

What he said didn't faze me. I was too caught up in my anger to be afraid. "So you need me to be a distraction so you can run off again." I turn around on the heels of my feet. "I'm done talking to you." I headed for the door, expecting him to make an effort to stop me. He was older than me and stronger. If he held me down, there wasn't anything I could do.

Instead he called out. "Don't you want to know why she wants to kill you?"

I stopped. "I know it's because of something you did." I grabbed onto the door handle.

"Don't you want to know why you and Malik dreamed about her?"

My mind raced. It was an odd question, yet one that seemed to fit

perfectly with what was happening to me when I closed my eyes during the day.

“Of course you do. Every living, or in our case, dead thing, on this planet dreams. A Deamhan’s brain is still active, you know. Just like a human brain.” He stood up. “You know scientists have no idea why humans dream so they come up with ways to explain it. They listen to dream experts who tell them that their brains are trying to process information, deal with conflicts and issues. Shit like that.” He approached me. “To me, I thought it was all bullshit. Nothing more than guesses to make us feel comfortable, to make us think that we’re in control.”

According to Remy, Anastasia’s dreams caused her to crave other Deamhan, even though Ramanga like herself weren’t able to do so. My dreams weren’t exactly refreshing, to say the least. Feeling like I was on the brink of death every time I closed my eyes damaged my psyche and affected how I felt the entire night.

“All of this started with a dream. One fucking dream.” He stood behind me and I felt his presence tickle the back of my neck. “In my dream, this little fucking girl chased me, caught me, and then fed from me.” He placed his hand against the door. I felt like I was partially trapped. “I couldn’t get her off me. I tried. But you know, she never took enough to kill me. She took just enough to leave me drained and hungry. I went through this every night, for months, until one day she finally came. It was morning and I had just fallen asleep.” He closed his eyes. “Until I heard screams coming from my offspring in my sanctuary. When I got to them it was too late. She had killed all of them and was in the middle of killing the last one. I saw her on top of my offspring, doing exactly what she did to me in my dream.”

I slowly turned around. “Feeding?”

“More like sucking away the dark energy.” He dropped his hand. “Like an Empusa Deamhan does.”

“Empusa...Deamhan?” I’d heard that exact phrase before, weeks ago, from Remy and the others. He didn’t really explain much about it to me and I wasn’t that interested at the time.

“That young girl is older than dirt.” He continued. “I’m not talking centuries. More like a few millennium.” He studied his nails. “Most of those type of Deamhan are though. You know, the Second Four. You

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know what they are, right?” He waited to see what I was going to say, but I didn’t respond. “Anyway, they’re Estrie, Ekimmu, Empusa, Adze Deamhan. According to Deamhan history, they’re supposed to be extinct.”

“Well, they aren’t.” I finally said.

“Yeah, I found that out the hard way when she came for me.”

“So you ran?”

“Wouldn’t you?”

I went to open the door, but he stopped me.

“You can’t leave.”

“I’m not staying here.”

“The sun will be up in a few minutes. Go out there and you burn.”

I glanced at the sheet covered windows. He was right. It was barely dark and there was a tint of blue and orange in the air. “What do you want from me?”

“A tit for a tat, Hallie.”

I had no idea what that meant.

“You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.”

I rolled my eyes.

“I need your help and in return, I’ll help you.”

“There’s nothing I want from you.”

“Don’t be so sure about that,” he replied. “There’s always something.”

“I have everything I need. Besides, even if I wanted to help you, how could I? You said she’s old as fuck. I can’t stand up to that.”

“No you can’t, but you have friends who can. I know you live with a researcher who knows a lot about us. Nathan, right?”

“He’s an ex-researcher,” I corrected him.

He moved his body closer to me. “Whatever. Either way, you’re going to get your ex-researcher friend, Nathan, to pull some strings for me.”

I felt his chest rub up against the side of my body and it made me feel uncomfortable. “He can’t help you with this.”

“I know he can.” He sniffed me. “Once he knows that I’m not the only one of this hit list.”

“You must be desperate.”

“You have no idea.”

“If you want my help then I have to go back.”

“Sure. No problem. Once the sun is down, we’ll go together.” He

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turned and headed back to the mattress.

“So, what did you do for this Empusa to come after you?”

He lay down and placed his hands behind his head. “Nothing.”

“This isn’t nothing! You must have done something.”

“Nothing that Deamhan don’t do on a regular basis.” He closed his eyes. “Get some rest. You’ll need it.”

# CHAPTER NINE

## DUMB DEAMHAN

I slept wonderfully and when I woke up, I felt fully refresh. I hadn't felt that way in a long time. I didn't reveal this to Tank and I didn't have to. He also looked fantastic and unaffected. The Empusa Deamhan didn't invade our dreams and I wasn't sure why. Then again, I didn't know how she managed to do so in the first place.

Tank told me that it was something ancient Deamhan could do. With age came a plethora of different abilities, some I could never imagine. If this Empusa was this strong to affect him and me in such a way, I could only imagine what else she was capable of.

He wanted to see Nathan and I agreed to take him there just so I could leave this hellhole. However, all of Nathan's journals on Deamhan were at my old sanctuary, Blind Bluff Manor, and I didn't want to reveal the location to him. At the same time, I didn't want him to know where I was staying now. He noticed my hesitance and instead of waiting for me to clear my thoughts, he picked me up in his arms, and zoomed out of his crummy loft.

"You don't know where you're going!" I said to him.

"I know it's not in downtown Minneapolis."

We zipped in and out of traffic. The way he traveled was like he had no care in the world. He sped by humans and sometimes we came into such close proximity to them that I could reach out and touch them. Eventually,

just outside the city, near an underpass, he stopped and let me go.

“Now. Where to?”

I straightened my disheveled clothing and gave him the evil eye. Then I ran as fast as my legs could carry me. He was close behind; close enough that at one point he passed me, turned as he ran backward, and smiled. Now I wished I would’ve listened to Remy’s advice about finding my sire. All it did was drag me into a conflict that I wasn’t strong enough to stand up against. He was nothing like I imagined.

My hunger pains began to set in and I waved at Tank to stop. We were almost there, but I had to recharge.

“You should’ve eaten someone back in the city,” he replied to me.

“No.” I concentrated my hearing to pick up on what was available around me. I heard the sounds of trucks and cars on the highway about half a mile away and a plane overhead. However, I didn’t hear what I needed to. “Never mind. Let’s just...let’s just go.”

He placed his arm in front of me. “You’re one of them, aren’t you?”

“One of what?”

“Deamhan who eat rodents.” He gave me a surprised look.

“And so?”

“You don’t know what you’re missing.” He dropped his arm. “So, what kind of rodent do you like to eat?”

“Don’t worry about it.”

He chortled. “Probably squirrels, right? They are easy to catch.” His eyes wavered back and forth. He was searching the area and when he found what he was looking for, moved swiftly and disappeared from my sight for a few seconds. He returned holding a rooster by the neck. The bird flapped its wings violently. “Ever tried wild rooster?” The more the bird struggled, the more Tank smiled.

The rooster looked pretty damn good. At this point, anything living looked pretty good to eat. But I didn’t want his help. “I’m good. Let’s go.”

“You sure?”

I nodded.

“Okay.” With his other hand, he snapped the head off the rooster and tossed both parts of its body over his shoulders.

We continued on and soon made it to my home. From the outside it looked like it was just Tank and I besides Nathan, who remained bedridden,

and Kenneth, who I hoped was still chained up in the basement. However, I knew that wasn't the case. I expected to see either Enlai or Remy, but I didn't know if they managed to escape from the Empusa who attacked last night. What if they didn't? It was an unnerving thought.

"You live here?" Tank whistled. "Looks nice. Cozy."

We crept slowly along the vast front landscape to the door. The closer we got to the home, the easier it was to pick up on the scents I was used to including one, a Lamia scent that didn't belong to Remy, which permeated in my nostrils.

Before I knew it, Ji came running from the row of bushes to our right and slammed into Tank. They fell and rolled on the ground. Seeing an opportunity, I ran for the front door in hopes of finding someone in there who could overpower my sire. Instead I felt a strong arm grip my shoulder and yank me back through the air. I landed hard on my back, next to Ji.

Tank stood over us, his eyes darkened, and his mouth wide open. "It's not going to be that easy to get away from me."

"You son of a bitch!" Ji went at him again. He kicked her square in the stomach and snuffed her next attack.

"You can't take me so don't try," Tank said. "I don't want to have to kill you but I will if you come at me again."

Ji wiped the shards of grass from her face. Dirt clotted her multicolored braids and a trail of blood traveled down her right nostril. She looked exhausted and enraged at the same time. "It's your fault!" She screamed back at him. "You killed my friends when you brought that thing to our sanctuary!"

"An Empusa Deamhan." He knelt in front of us. "That's what she is."

I wanted to ask her about Remy and Enlai and if she knew what happened to them yet I was afraid to. I couldn't take hearing that they died along with Malik.

"I don't care what she is. You're the one who brought her here," she said.

The front door creaked open. We all turned to look, finding no one standing in the threshold. Instead we saw a blur rush by us, lifting our hair in its wind. It also left the scent of a vampire.

Whether it was Lambert or Alexis, I didn't care. I was just happy to know that someone, just as strong or perhaps stronger than Tank, could

take him down.

We saw the blur, but this time it rushed behind him, pushing him off his feet. He landed on his side and unaffected, he stood up again. "Come on out vampire." He hunched his body in a full blown fighting stance.

It flew by him again and again until he had enough. He sped off in Deamhan speed to the front door. Fearing for Nathan's life, I went after him. I ran inside just in time to see Tank in the hallway, standing in front of the door to Nathan's small bedroom just underneath the stairs. He tore the door from its hinges.

"Where is he?" He snapped his head in my direction.

Surprised, I shook my head.

"I can smell that human. Where the fuck is he?" He stomped toward me and the blur we saw outside rushed by me again. It stopped short of running him over and finally, I was able to make out who had come to my aid. It was Alexis.

"He's not here." She stood in front of me. "I knew you'd come here eventually. Long time no see."

The darkness in Tank's eyes retreated. "Alexis?"

She pushed him hard against the wall, rattling the foundation. "You're not welcome here. You're not welcome anywhere." She revealed her fangs and hissed. I was sure she was going to end him.

Ji limped her way inside. "Kill him!" There was no hesitation in her voice.

"Don't tell me what to do," she replied in a stern voice. "He dies when I decide he dies."

Tank didn't fight against her control and did he look frightened of her threat. "You won't kill me. You can't."

"Oh, now why is that? You think we have something? You and I?"

"No. I don't fuck vampires."

"Hmmm, maybe you should try it sometime."

"Fucking kill him!" Ji blurted out again. "If you won't, I will."

"Hallie, hush your friend or I'll do it and believe me, you don't want me to."

I wrapped my arms around Ji and held her still. I didn't doubt Alexis' warning. I wasn't that stupid.

"All I want is the human," Tank said.

“That human is more important to my maker than your existence,” she said. “In fact, he said if I saw you, I could do whatever I pleased to you and since you know me, you know what I like to do to idiots like you. Question; the Heretic’s Fork or the Lead Sprinkler?”

All of us, including Tank, eyed her in complete silence.

She ground her teeth. “You Deamhan don’t know your torture history, do you? Pathetic.”

I knew she was older than all of us but I didn’t know how old. I never thought to ask.

“Not my thing,” he replied. “Either way, you won’t kill me.”

“I won’t?” She smiled. “Oh baby, I can. Make no mistake about that.”

“I know who the Empusa Deamhan is that has me and now Hallie on her hit list.”

Alexis shrugged non-caringly.

“The sanctuary fire...the human family.”

She closed her eyes. “You’re lying. That chick is dead.” She reopened them. “Everyone in the fucking city made sure of it.”

“Nope. She’s not and now she’s here.”

“Shit.” She let him go.

Tank straightened his clothing. “Now, do I have your attention?”

Alexis glared at me from the corner of her eye. “You’re a dumb Deamhan, Hallie,” she snarled. “I told you to stay away from him, but you couldn’t.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” I exclaimed.

“Of course you don’t because like I said, you’re dumb.” She placed her hands on her hips and tilted her head back. “You’re all completely incompetent, idiots. Not to mention you’re all annoying pieces of shit that shouldn’t even exist.”

“Who is she talking about?” I asked out of desperation. I saw it in her eyes as well as her demeanor. What Tank said resonated in such a way that she continued her insults.

Eventually she calmed down. “I have to call Lambert.”

“He’s still around?” Tank leaned against the wall. “Tell him I said ‘hi.’”

“He’s going to want to see you since you brought this shit to our doorstep.” She pulled out a cell phone from her pocket. “You’re going to get us all killed.”

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“Hey, like I told Hallie, I’m desperate. We all know how these things go, especially with Empusa Deamhan. That’s why I know you can’t kill me.”

“Okay. Can someone please explain who the hell this girl is?” Ji asked. “And why he,” she pointed to Tank, “isn’t dead yet?”

Alexis held up her hand for silence. “Hello,” she spoke into the phone. “This is Alexis. Get Lambert on the phone. Tell him we have a problem. Tank is back and he also brought that Ancient Deamhan bitch, Zila, back into the fucking city.”

# CHAPTER TEN

## ZILA

“Zila was the oldest thing living in Minneapolis during the sanctuary fires. No one messed with her unless you wanted to die.”

I sat on the front steps with Ji, our faces blank, and our minds traveling at a million miles per hour. I tried my best to take in every little detail. An Ancient Deamhan living in the city during a time when all Deamhan were told that there was only one Ancient in the city. Lucius.

It didn’t make any sense. Why didn’t anyone mention her before?

Ji tried to handle it better than I could. She asked the questions and to their replies, her face shriveled and her eyes glazed over. “So you’re saying that this girl, who looks no older than me, is an Ancient Deamhan?”

“Yes.” Tank stood on the bottom step in front of us, like a teacher preparing to give a lecture to his class. He liked being this role model. I could tell by the way he puffed out his chest and flashed us a smile.

“And he pissed her off,” Alexis replied. “Like I said, back then you didn’t want to piss her off.”

“This is ridiculous,” Ji replied. “Don’t you think we would’ve known about her already?”

“Is it? Really?” Alexis challenged her refusal to not believe. “She did live here at one point in time. In fact, she was here long before Lambert and I arrived.” She shrugged. “In the beginning, she wasn’t so bad to deal with. She was reserved; quiet. She didn’t involve herself in the drama and

she didn't care what other supernatural creatures did as long as it didn't affect her."

"That was before the sanctuary fires, right?" I asked. There was only one way a Deamhan like Tank could attract something so dangerous and vile. It was the only way my kind attracted people who wanted to kill them. "You burned down her home. That's what pissed her off."

"I thought I killed her." Tank added. "Well, until I started to dream about her."

"Fire isn't going to kill someone like her, you idiot." Alexis corrected him. "It'd take beheadings, disembowelment, dismemberment..."

"How was I supposed to know? I did what I was told. I burned sanctuaries; I increased the Deamhan population by siring humans. It wasn't my job to keep up with who's who."

"Every vampire and Deamhan in the city knew," Alexis said. "She tried to pass herself off as a human. She went as far as to adopt human parents and you ended that when the fire you started killed those humans she loved so much."

"But why now?" I asked. "After all this time?"

"Now is the perfect time," Alexis stated. "There aren't that many Deamhan in Minneapolis. She doesn't have to deal with Kei or Lucius since they're both dead. There's no one around who has a chance of standing up against her."

"We're paying for his stupidity." Ji stood to her feet. "Deamhan died when she burned down my sanctuary just to get to you. Malik died last night!"

"And Hallie will die if we don't stop her," he replied. "So, where is the human who lives here? The one that Hallie cares so much about? That's why I came here for in the first place."

"No. Nathan isn't going to be part of this." My quick refusal was joined by Alexis.

"Lambert doesn't want this to spill over into the city streets." Alexis rolled her eyes. "Unfortunately, we don't have any other choice but to help you Tank, even though I'd rather hand you over to her."

"Why don't you?" Ji asked.

Her threat slid off Tank's shoulders. "You want to answer her, Alexis, or should I?"

“Are all young Deamhan as uneducated about Deamhan history?” She eyed Ji. “Let me tell me a quick story. I’ll make sure not to use big words so you can understand. Back then there was a Deamhan who made the mistake of trying to out her lifestyle.”

“Don’t leave out the important part!” Tank smiled.

Alexis smacked her lips. “She not only killed him but also any Deamhan who lived in the city that he sired. That’s her way of seeking revenge. Get it?”

“And like I told Hallie, she and I are the only ones left.” His smile extended wide. “So,” he clapped his hands and began to rub them together, “what’s the plan?”

“We’re all going to Dark Sepulcher. Lambert has already called in as many vampires as he can.”

“That’s wonderful of him.”

“If it was up to me.” She approached him. “I wouldn’t lift a finger to help you fix your mistake.”

“But it’s not up to you.” He stood his ground. “I know that your Lambert cares for the human researcher and the human cares for Hallie.”

“I don’t care what happens to her or Nathan.”

“How long have I known you, Alexis? About two decades now, right?”

“What of it?”

“I know you care because anything that threatens the relationship you have with Lambert is something you won’t tolerate. So stop stalling.”

“After this is over, he’ll kill you for this. Lambert doesn’t like being forced into doing something he doesn’t want to do.”

“I need to find Remy and Enlai. Let them know.” I worried for them and I wanted to search the entire city, regardless of the danger I’d put myself in. Sooner or later Zila would come for me and that possibility sent shivers up my spine.

“No, no no.” Tank tisked. “You’re not leaving my sight.” He grabbed my arm and pulled me close to him.

“They’re probably dead already.” Alexis remained stubborn, even after I gave her the ‘do something’ look. Eventually she reneged on her stance. “I’m sure Lambert has his vampires out there, looking for them.”

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## WHAT'S DONE IS DONE

Running back and forth from one place to another would make anyone tired, but not Deamhan. There's something about running at tremendous speed, with the wind slapping against your face, which felt right. For me it felt like I was part of something bigger and better than who I was. It was liberating to be under the nighttime sky, especially when there were other Deamhan and a vampire running with you.

The city was dead quiet when we arrived at Dark Sepulcher, the vampire club of all vampire clubs. There were a few human walking about but not enough to notice or feel threatened. I was able to pick up on several different scents from the other side: food, old water, and vampires but nothing that resembled a Deamhan. Alexis knocked on the front door and soon heard slow footsteps approaching and the faint sound of someone grabbing onto the doorknob.

When the door opened, we stood face to face with a short, stocky bald black male. He was shirtless. A cigarette dangled in his mouth and his brown eyes looked us over. Alexis smiled at his appearance and he returned the gesture.

"Is everything ready?" she asked.

The vampire puffed out his chest and stepped aside. "Yeah. They're all waiting inside."

"They?" Still uncomfortable with going into what she called 'the

vampire's den,' Ji didn't want to move an inch further. I calmed her by grabbing her hand.

"Lambert's a friend to us," I whispered.

"He's your friend. Not mine."

Alexis walked and I followed with Ji and Tank close behind me. When the vampire male slammed the door shut, Ji jumped and her eyes grew dark. I squeezed her hand and continued to tell her that everything was going to be fine. However, I had no idea what awaited us when we walked beyond the black drapes which separated the front area from the immense interior. There were too many vampires to count and their scents made my own senses go into overdrive. Then came the hunger pains. They felt like my stomach gnawed on itself. Suddenly these vampires began to look delicious.

Lambert sat at the bar with his right hand holding onto a cup of blood and his left hand resting on his leg. Everything I knew about him, I learned from Remy and the others. Before he was turned into a vampire, he'd lived a mercenary lifestyle which had made him the hard and sometimes unremorseful individual we knew today. He was a warrior and raided villages with his band of mercenaries. He was responsible for the deaths of countless families and he kept the head of his victims as trophies. He was also a born leader.

"Lambert!" Tank held his arms out as if the vampire would embrace him like a long, lost friend. "How have you been? Looks like you've been doing good for yourself!"

Lambert stood up from his stool. He wore a long white shirt that extended to his knees and dark pants. His dark hair was slicked back.

"You're lucky that I have an interest in Hallie's wellbeing." He sipped from his cup. "If it wasn't for her, you'd be in my dungeon right now."

"Why do you and your vampire girlfriend always resort to torture threats?" Amused, Tank took one look at the horde of vampires under Lambert's beck and call.

Alexis sauntered over to him. Lambert took notice and he gently placed a kiss on her cheek.

I searched the vampire crowd, hoping to see Remy or Enlai. Unable to find them, I asked Lambert if they'd been in Dark Sepulcher.

"I have my vampires looking for them now. When they find them,

they'll bring them here. Don't worry." He smiled.

"So, they're still alive?" Ji asked.

"Yes. Surprisingly, Zila let them live."

"Of course she did. They aren't her targets," Tank replied. "I am."

"And what to do about that..." Lambert tapped his chin in thought. "Oh! I know." He clapped his hands and the vampires in the club moved quick to surround us. Unaware of what was going on, I prepared myself for anything.

"So, that's your plan?" Tank's smile dissipated from his face. "To kill me? You know better than that Lambert."

"Who said I was going to kill you?"

Tank continued his howl at Lambert, calling him a traitor and many other words that I couldn't make out before the vampires started their attack. I felt a cold hand on my arm and suddenly I was pushed back and out of the fray. Worried for Ji's safety, I called out to her and before she could move another vampire pushed her toward me.

We watched as they surrounded Tank. There were too many of them to fight off. While he prepared himself to fight, he also made the mistake of letting his mental guard down. I was able to pick up on his thoughts and I sighed in frustration from what I read and saw.

All he wanted to do was break down the door and run as far as he could away from the place, leaving everyone to clean up his mess yet again. He didn't care about anyone or anything and he didn't come back to Minneapolis for Malik and myself. He wanted to exchange our lives for his own. He wanted Zila to kill us both instead.

I wanted to rip his body apart. I wanted him to die by my hands.

Tank blurted out. "Doesn't matter what you do to me. Zila will still come for her."

"Let us worry about that." Lambert clasped his hands behind his lower back and made his way into the vampire surrounded circle. "You see, I made a promise to Nathan that nothing will happen to her. I plan on keeping that promise by handing you over to Zila."

Tank bent his knees, swung his arms back, and leaped. He shot off the ground quickly and I watched as he reached a second story of the club. He held onto a ledge and leaped again to the other side. With his right hand holding on, he dangled his body as if he was weightless.

Lambert motioned for his vampires and they went on the move. Holding onto Ji, we crawled to the bar for safety. The air filled the noise of breaking glass, furniture, snarls, and Lambert yelling out orders to his vampires. I looked around the corner, watching my sire doing his best to fend them off. It looked like he was right. Lambert's vampires were inexperienced and much younger than he was. He had no trouble putting down the ones who came after him. Suddenly his voice broke into my head.

*Come on out Hallie.*

My gut warned me to hide and avoid the confrontation. Lambert could handle it, but Ji thought otherwise. There was no hesitation. No second guessing. She just ran at him with frightening speed. I didn't understand why she would attack, especially when she wasn't strong enough to take him head on. Then again, I didn't really understand everything about her in the first place.

Tank landed on the ground and overpowered her. She fell at his feet and didn't move. I thought he'd killed her right then and there. All Deamhan behaved this way. Just pick whoever is weaker than you, smells good, and looks ripe to satisfy your hunger. We make it seem like a breeze. Even a Metusba Deamhan like myself had the dangerous ability to make the most ferocious vampire look like a fairy in comparison.

*A tit for a tat, Hallie. Your life for mine. That's all this is ever going to be.*

"Shit." With my eyes on him, I focused my rage and the little energy I had and ran toward him. From my peripheral, I saw Alexis. In a moment's notice, she pressed her hands against my shoulders and pinned my back against the bar counter.

"As much as I'd like to see two Deamhan rip each other apart, I'm going to have to ask you to stay still," she replied.

"You want a piece of me vampire?" Tank snarled at Lambert. "I'm going to kill you then I'm going to torture your bitchy consort."

Lambert tilted his head from side to side and cracked his neck. "As much as I'd like to feel your blood on my hands." His fangs embedded into his body lip. "I'm going to have to sit this one out."

The creaky sound of the front door opening caught our attention. Just as I took my sweet time gathering my bearings, a blur shot by me and collided with Tank. I witnessed another one who also ran at him. When

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my vision came into focus, I smiled at the sight of Remy and Enlai.

In one movement, Remy had Tank pinned against the wall by this throat with his left hand as he held a sharp wooden stake with his right, pointed directly over my sire's heart. "Sorry I was late." He looked over his shoulder and smiled at me. "My littlest Deamhan, are you okay?"

I had never felt so thrilled to see him in my life. On my feet, I nodded like an overexcited teenager.

Enlai held Ji in his arms. "I'm here. I'm here." He carried her away to a nearby table.

Tank struggled against Remy and unable to break free, his eyes reverted back to normal. "You can't kill me."

"No, no I can't," Remy replied. "But I can hold you." He kned him in the stomach and I heard what sounded like bones cracking underneath his skin.

My sire grunted. "Bending ass backwards for her?" He nodded in my direction. "That little bitch isn't even your sibling."

"But she's my littlest Deamhan." He pressed the tip of the stake into his chest. "And her name is Hallie. You will show some respect."

Enlai gently slapped Ji's face to wake her. "Open your eyes." He rubbed his hands through her dark braids as if caressing a baby. The only time I'd seen him be so gently was with me, so it was uncomfortable to see him in this way. The compassion he showed for her in her time of need...that's was just one of the many things I adored about him.

I walked from behind the counter to greet Remy, but he urged me to stay back.

"Did you manage to talk to her?" Lambert asked him.

"You could say that." He nodded.

"And?"

"She's on board."

That was when we all smelled it; a thick aroma that was hard to ignore. It crawled through the air and crept into our noses. Within this fragrance I could pick up on anger, desperation, pure rage, and age. Zila had arrived.

The curtains near the front of the club pulled back. I watched in silence as this Ancient Deamhan strolled into the nightclub. It still boggled my mind on how young she looked. She had cleaned herself up and looked rather normal. In fact, she was attractive to say the least. All eyes were on

her. Knowing who and what she was made me see her in a different light. I had some pity for what Tank did to her and the humans she lived with. I understood her need for revenge.

She made eye contact with me and feeling irrelevant, I lowered myself to the ground. She stopped short just of the dance floor and demanded everyone's undivided attention, including Ji who had awoken just seconds before.

"Here he is," Remy said to her "Like we promised."

Zila returned her gaze to me. "Yes. Like you promised."

"So you will keep your end of the deal, right?"

She continued to eye me carefully. "Part of his essence is inside her."

"The essence of our sires is always in us," he replied. "That's how we sire humans. As a Deamhan, you know this. So, you will keep your end of the deal?"

She snapped her head in his direction. "Yes."

I had no idea what deal they were talking about. What I did know was that it obviously had something to do with Tank and myself and he appeared to already understand the details.

"No!" Tank screamed out.

"Yes." Zila hissed.

He begged for his life but no one listed. "She'll still come after her!" He pointed to me. "You can't trust them! Ancient Deamhan always lie!"

"All Deamhan lie," Remy replied. "But if this will finally get rid of you, it's a chance I'm willing to take."

"If you're going to kill him, do it now." Lambert straightened his posture. "We don't have all night."

Zila approached Tank. "Nothing you'll say will stop me from marinating in this moment."

I wanted her to take him out. I just wanted his betraying ass gone and out of my sight. Sire or not, he caused the predicament we found ourselves in. However, Zila's hesitation proved to us just how strong and uncanny an Ancient Deamhan could be.

She placed her hands on his head and closed his eyes.

"No! Don't!" Tank moved his head back. Soon his body went rigid and Remy moved back. Whatever Zila did, she did so telepathically. His eyes rolled into the back of his head and he let out a terrifying scream which

filled the air and made us all, including the vampires, uneasy.

His scream didn't stop, even after she dropped her hands. He remained against the wall, his body shaking uncontrollably. Blood began to stream from his nostrils. She had executed her own brand of torture.

Zila turned around and faced Enlai. "You have until tomorrow night." She calmly walked toward the exit but before leaving she paused and I felt my head beginning to throb. You must be an important Deamhan to him, Hallie Mortenson. I have seen and felt this type of love before. For Deamhan it is something that we can't take for granted or ignore. She pulled back the curtain and exited the club.

Cautious, Remy studied Tank. "Did she just...give him a mental lobotomy?" He waved his hand in front of Tank's face. "Weird. Didn't know Deamhan could do that."

"She is Ancient." Lambert added.

"Yeah, but this?" Remy watched Tank's body shake uncontrollably. "This is too much, even for what he did."

"Who cares?" Ji stood to her feet. "Now, can we kill him?"

"Why didn't she kill him? That's what she came here for?" I asked out of confusion.

"That is her way of killing him," Enlai replied.

Frantic, I asked him. "What did you do?"

"What do you mean?"

I knew he was lying, but I didn't know nor understand why. "Zila said I was important to you. I think that's why she didn't kill me. You...you made some kind of a deal with her, didn't you?"

"It's nothing you have to worry about." He held out his hand to Remy. "The stake, please."

"Relax, kid." Remy placed the weapon in his hand. "You did the right thing."

I screamed out just before he pushed the sharp edge into Tank's heart. It was all so sudden and also unexpected. Blood gushed from Tank's fatal wound and covered Enlai from head to toe. His body melted before our eyes and nothing remained but a puddle of blood, clothing, and bone. Fresh road kill. It felt as if part of me separated, leaving an empty shell.

Then there was silence. Everyone, including Lambert's vampires, just stood there.

“She wasn’t going to be satisfied with just his death,” Enlai spoke. “She was going to go after Hallie, so I offered her the next best thing. My life.”

“You did what?” Shocked, I couldn’t believe what he had just said.

Enlai moved his head to the right and his sorrowful filled eyes dug into my soul. “My life for yours.”

“You can’t.”

“I can and I did.”

I looked at Remy who sniggered.

“What can I say my littlest Deamhan?” He shrugged. “He’s the embodiment of the perfect Deamhan.”

Before I had the chance to plead with him, he wiped Tank’s blood from his face. “I’m going to need money. Lambert, Remy said that you could provide me with some.”

“I guess, I can.” The vampire sighed. “My vampires will clean up here. You Deamhan, take the basement. Tomorrow night I’ll have everything arranged for you to go where you plan to go.”

“You knew?” Everyone appeared to be in on this plan.

“Not entirely,” Lambert replied. “I did know that I would have to fork over some money to make it happen.”

“Wait a minute. He can’t just leave!” I shouted. “Enlai, you can’t do this.”

“Hallie, it’s already done.” Remy patted my shoulder.

I refused to believe it. There had to be another way or something else we could do. I refused to allow Tank’s mistake tear apart what we had together.

Hysterical, Ji stomped her foot. “You’re not going by yourself. I’m going with you.”

“You can’t come with me. Stay here,” he replied, “rebuild the sanctuary. This is the safest place for you.”

“That’s bullshit and you know it.” She angrily pointed her finger in his face.

Remy folded his arms and leaned his body back slightly. I could tell that his brain was working overtime. “Actually, that might be a good idea.”

“No, that’s a bad idea,” Enlai remarked.

“If she stays here, she’ll be by herself,” Remy explained. “She’s used to being around other Deamhan. You’re the only one left from this sanctuary.”

### Hallie. A Tit For A Tat. Deamhan Chronicles #3.5

She's bonded to you. Can't you tell? Also, with what's going on lately with the threat of destruction for all Deamhan, she'll probably be dead by the end of the year. Hell, we'll probably all be dead by the end of the year."

If this was Enlai's way to protect me, it was a shitty way of doing so. He tried his best to comfort me, but all I could think about was being left alone...again. "All of you always leave me."

He placed his cold hand against my cheek. "I wish I didn't have to, but there's no way out of this. What's done is done."

# CHAPTER TWELVE

## IF IT AIN'T LOVE...

When I awoke, I noticed that Enlai, Remy, and Ji were nowhere to be found. I stormed out of the basement dungeon, up the stairs, and to the main floor. That's where I saw Remy and Lambert sitting at the bar in mid conversation.

I searched the entire area for Enlai and I couldn't find him nor could I find Ji. I marched in their direction and by the time they noticed me, I had slammed my closed hand on the bar counter. "He left already?"

Lambert's bottle of beer shook and he grabbed onto it before it toppled over. "Good evening to you too, Hallie."

Remy rested his elbow on the counter. "Before you get angry and go out there and try to look for him, I just want to let you know that he wanted it this way. He didn't want me to wake you."

I closed my eyes to gather what little strength. I thought if I moved now, I would be able to find him at his old sanctuary; however, in the exact moment I took my first step I felt Remy's hand around my wrist.

"They already left the city," he whispered to me. "They're gone."

I flung my arm away. "This is what you wanted, right? You never liked him in the first place."

Lambert stood to his feet. "I'll leave you two alone. Sounds like you have a lot to discuss." He turned and headed for the stairs. "Just don't break anything and don't eat my vampires."

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Remy patted his hand on the stool. "Have a seat."

"I don't want to sit."

"Hallie, he's gone."

I turned my head slightly away. "Where did he go?"

Remy shrugged. "Maybe he went back to Hong Kong? It's best if we don't know."

"He didn't have to leave."

"He had to. That's the arrangement he made with Zila. His life for yours." He paused. "He came up with the idea in a heartbeat. I had no part in it. Personally, I was ready to fight that chick, but we weren't a match for her. He saved your life, Hallie. He did this for you, and that scores some major points in my book." Again, he patted his hand on the stool. "Sit down."

Slowly I slid myself onto the stool. "It's not fair." I placed my elbows on the counter.

"Life isn't fair, even for us. You'd think with immortality, our lives would be better. In reality, it can be much worse than it was when we were human." He pulled a cigarette from his pocket and handed to me. "I couldn't change his mind. Believe me or not, I tried. I didn't like his idea because I knew what it'd do to you. I knew it'd hurt you and you'd have a hard time handling it."

"I can handle it, but I shouldn't have to. None of this should've happened."

"But it did." He pulled out his lighter. "And now it's just you and me. Like old times."

I placed the cigarette between my lips and he lit it. "Somehow, I think you prefer it that way."

"Don't hate me if I do prefer it that way." He pulled out another cigarette and placed it up to his lips. "I never did like him but what he did for you...I have no choice but to respect."

What he said didn't make me change my mind. I still remained headstrong against the idea of him on the run. I wanted him to stay and again, he said it was a risk. He was too dangerous to be around but what part of my life wasn't dangerous? I had experience enough in my short years since being sired to last a thousand lifetimes. I knew pain, loss, and heartache. What little more could it do to me?

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“You think he’ll make it?”

“Yeah, I think he will. I think they both will. Plus Lambert is pretty good with making people disappear if they want to. He assured me that they have enough money to take care of themselves for decades to come.” He lit his cigarette.

“Or until Zila finds them and you know she will.”

He inhaled. “Let’s not think about that.” He placed his arm around me. “Come here.” He pulled me in close.

We sat in quietness for a few seconds before I questioned him again. This time I wanted to know more about the history between himself and his sire. He never revealed the details to me. Maybe he thought he didn’t have to. I wondered if his relationship was just as confusing and dangerous as the one I had with my own.

When I asked him, he ended our embrace. “You don’t want to know that story.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t like to talk about my past failures,” he replied. “Plus honestly, I prefer to bury that dark chapter of my life and it’s a boring story. But I will tell you that I had no one who risked their life for me like Enlai did for you. Never had and probably never will.”

“No one asked him to.”

“Hallie, give it a rest. Can you just appreciate the fact that you aren’t dead-dead? There are people who care for you and who have done things for you. If you can’t see that by now, then I don’t know.”

“Like you?”

His lips pulled back into a smile. “Hallie Mortenson. My littlest Deamhan. You’re unlike any Deamhan I’ve known in my entire existence. You’re different and for being a Deamhan, that’s a good thing. You don’t want to live up to the ‘can’t trust a Deamhan’ stereotype. You want to be you and even though you probably think I don’t respect that, I actually do. Enlai saw that in you. He saw that you were worth saving. If that ain’t love, then I don’t know what the fuck that is.”

~end~

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Isaiyan Morrison was born and raised in Minneapolis, but her heart is in the impressive magical worlds she dreams up. She hopes to share her love for world-building with her readers and help guide them through the extraordinary settings she creates.

Her other passions include reading, and researching historical events. She also enjoys gardening, gaming, and spending quality time with her three cherished cats and beloved pitbull.