

In the End, Even the Stars Abandon You

*The
Stars
Left Us
Behind*

A Young Adult Fantasy Novel by

Gia Desa



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For permissions requests or inquiries regarding this publication,
please contact:

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

www.BlueRoseONE.com

info@bluerosepublishers.com

+91 8882 898 898

+4407342408967

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Caelidra's Annual Hietna

For the past 2,000 years, Caelidra has been filled to the brim with magical humans.

Being better than the rest is what we look for in this region.

An academy, was built for the more, 'superior' ones.

Every group under this prestigious academy must be a music group in order to perform at the Hietna.

The existing groups are:

SunGun:

Nora Foxtrot

Jade Red

Annete Windsor

Logic Lads:

Edward Mcrinnin

Danny Denver

Charlie (Micheal) Nirean

Bert Nirean

Duncan Crager

PortSport:

Lucas Windsor

Aurelia Raine

Neo Foxtrot

Georgina Luck

These are the three chosen groups for the Hietna.

Backups for each group:

Lucas and Neo: Christopher Dover

Aurelia and Georgina: Soph Rinn

SunGun: Lola Left

Logic Lads: Damani Chen

Notice: Failing to show up will lead to termination of your contract at our school.

Meet with your respective homeroom or class teachers, should you have any worries or concerns.

Reaching 1st place, guarantees a spot for your group on our 'Ace-demic Masters' wall, along with the prize of 8,900 Cally's.

Second place, guarantees, a prize of 1,000 Cally's.

Third places, guarantees your life after this. It is an utter disgrace to place last.

Winners of last year:

Lombrin, Logic Lad's and PortSport.

Good luck, to all winners and losers.

Before We Were Left Behind

(Prologue)

The morning bell on each floor rang.

Signaling the day had begun.

“Good morning!!” Annete yelled, dragging the blanket off Jade.

“What do you want, Annie?” Jade asked as she brushed navy blue hair off her forehead.

“It’s time to wake up you dork.” Annete giggled as Nora stared at her.

“Jade get your ass out of bed.” Nora sighed, getting off her bed.

“I feel like Cinderella in this stupid dorm.” Jade groaned, hiding under the covers.

“Cinderella had a Prince Charming. Oh, wait you do.” Annete mentioned.

“For the love of God stop shipping me with that idiot Edward.” Jade sighed, folding her sheets.

“Can’t help it when you two have had more romantic moments then the main character in a K-drama.”

“Jade. Ann. Get dressed and ready.” Nora declared, fixing her make up.

She wore a fitted white shirt with a navy-blue jacket, maroon tie, and black skirt.

“Is that the jacket I got you?” Jade asked.

“Yep.”

“Jade get dressed.” Annete said walking out of the bathroom, wearing a white tee and blue overalls with a denim skirt, with white stockings.

“Kay.”

“Make sure there’s blue in your outfit. We’re filming ‘Blueberries’ today.” Nora mentioned.

“Yes boss.”

Jade came out wearing a red button up and blue denim jeans.

“Good enough. Let’s roll.” Nora smirked, walking out the door.

Let’s go to the next floor, shall we?

“WHERE IS MY BLUE HOODIE.” Danny screamed.

“Charlie had it last.” Bert peeped his head out mumbling, toothbrush still in his mouth.

“NUH UH! I GAVE IT TO DUN!!” Charlie yelped, pointing at the still sleeping Duncan.

“Why do you children sleep in my clothes only...”

Bert walked out of the bathroom wearing a, black jersey, with the numbers ‘20’ written on it, and faded brown jorts. “You can’t wear your hoodie today though. We have the filming of ‘Lemon’ today.

“I FORGOT ABOUT THAT.” Danny screamed.

Edward came out from the adjacent bathroom, wearing a yellow cardigan and black cargos. “Is no one going to wake up Dun?”

“You can do it. Good luck.” Charlie smiled, patting Edward on his back.

“Dun...?” Edward asked, nudging him.

“Five more minutes.” Duncan asked, in between snores.

Charlie came out wearing a black ripped tee, black gloves and navy-blue jeans. “My hair qualifies as yellow.”

“IQ-less idiot.” Bert snickered.

“I think this looks fine...” Danny said, checking himself out in the mirror, wearing a yellow cardigan with white flowers and smiley faces and brown jeans.

“Yep, it does.” Edward smiled.

“DUNCAN WAKE THE HELL UP.” Charlie screamed.

“I’m up.”

Quite a bunch of students, aren’t there?

Let’s see the next floor.

“BEAT HIS ASS!!” a boy with brown hair and green ends yelled.

“I’M TRYING YOU DOOFUS.” a girl with brown hair and purple highlights yelled, landing a punch on a redhead’s stomach.

“GEORGIE!” the brown hair with green ends boy yelled. “TIME OUT EVERYONE.”

“Is this what you idiots do in the morning...?” a girl with dark blue hair asked, knowing it was rhetorical.

“Bluebell!” the redhead boy giggled running towards the blue headed girl.

“Neo. It’s fine if in private you want to call her that. Just don’t do it in front of others. You know what happened when Georgie and I were caught—”

“Making out on school grounds? Yes, I do.” Neo shot back. “And, Lucas, I mean; Boss, fine.”

“Good, get ready for the day all of you, we have a busy schedule.”

“Yes boss.” Neo, Aurelia and Georgina answered back, packing their stuff up.

“Well, well, well. If it isn’t Lucas and his group.” a girl with pink curly hair asked rhetorically.

“And, well, well, well if it isn’t the utterly useless Lola Left.” Neo shot.

“Pfft. You can’t even fight your own battles, Windsor? That’s probably why your –”

“Leave him out of this, Lola. You didn’t understand the circumstances, and you never will. You think you’re so great? Spoiler you’re not, your just—” Lucas was ready to fight back.

“I’m just a girl who you’re harassing. Given your record, I’d be easily believed.”

“Easily believed for the wrong reasons you –”

The bell rings.

“Tough luck, bastard.” Lola giggled, twirling her hair walking out.

Contents

The Play	1
Evil	9
Hour Before Betrayal	21
Ecstasy.....	27
Your Little Ecstasy	31
Curtain Called for the Dammed	41
Dress Rehearsals for Delinquents in Distress.....	47
Hietna, The Day The Stars Fell	55
One Day till Death	62
Children Left Behind	67
Hearts Inground Couldn't Keep.....	73
Where the Dead Learnt to Breathe.....	80
Red Lights Never Wait	89
Stars do Twinkle when they Cry.....	95
The Danger One Can Become In 10 Minutes	102
The Things One Can't and Couldn't Save.....	107
She Said She Was Her	111
Shadows of Stars.....	115
Unsaid Reasons	123
Foxtrot Family Standing on Lies	126
Ghost of Glox.....	129
Porcelain Hearts in the Dolls' Game	133
Lady of Broken Stars	138
Blinded Viewers.....	142
Walls Closing on the Gem	147

Batshit Crazy.....	152
Ball Catastrophe	157
Lunaire's Inside Relations	163
Ball Catastrophe 2.0	169
Raspberries and Us.....	175
Whoops!	180
Marco Lin and the Things We Keep in the Bin.....	186
Heartbreaks and Hives.....	192
Secrets I'd Rather Keep Hidden- Epilogue.....	200
Playlist	205

The Play

“Valerie worked at Lingrew, a café well known in the suburbs of Caelidra,” Annete began, while Jade watched her with open skepticism.

“She’d dreamed of becoming an ice skater since she was six and even took classes. But reality hit—and so did tuition fees,” Annete continued.

“She wouldn’t have had to work if it weren’t for her bratty older sister and younger brother, who forced her out. Not wanting any extra drama, she left.”

“Been there,” Jade scoffed.

“Now she lives in her parents’ old car. But it wasn’t always like this. She once had a life, a love, a future—”

“Okay, stop. It’s getting corny,” Jade cut in, shaking her head at her friend’s idea for the annual school play.

“Why not?” Annete whined. “You’re always talking about wanting to work there for some reason, your family is terrible, and you did want to be an ice skater. I’m just ticking all your boxes—just changing the name.”

“I am not doing that.”

Jade turned to leave, but Annete called after her, “Well then, I guess I’ll just have to tell my brother you copied off him...”

“Ann, I swear I’ll shove that paper down your throat.”

“Alright, alright!”

At a nearby table sat Edward—the school’s resident nerd, known by practically everyone for having a crush on Miss Popular.

She had everyone—boys and girls alike—wrapped around her finger. Edward, on the other hand, was just the guy people kept around for studying and forgotten the moment he needed help.

Was she even in his league? Or were they never meant to be?

And then there was that stupid play she was in. Damani—or some other popular jerk—would obviously get the lead.

Leeches.

“Earth to Edward?” Bert nudged him. They were supposed to be working on the script, but Edward had completely zoned out.

“Huh—oh. Yeah. Hey,” Edward replied, attempting to sound casual.

Attempting being the key word.

“When are you going to stop fantasizing and actually work? You spend more time daydreaming about Qina—”

“Wait who’s Qina? OH, WAIT QINAA!! Also, who’s to say I wasn’t thinking of the script?”

“I don’t think people blush over scripts. Or at all, really.”

“Whatever.” Edward rolled his eyes.

I don’t even have a role yet and I need to work on some idiots script. Pathetic. Edward thought to himself.

“Bert’s right, you know,” another voice chimed in.

“Oh, shut up, Duncan,” Edward snapped.

“Make me.”

“And how exactly do you expect me to do that?”

“God, you suck the fun out of everything!”

“Do I? Or are your stories just easy to pick apart?”

“Can we please get back to planning?” a deeper voice interrupted.

“Yeah—sorry, Danny.”

Their group had an unspoken hierarchy—Logic Lads.

They called themselves that because it was all they were: teachers’ pets, easy targets, the kind of people others laughed at. They’d all heard it before—especially from their own parents—that good brains were wasted on faces like theirs.

Danny was the leader simply because he was the oldest. Charlie acted as the group’s unofficial secretary, always making sure everything stayed in order. He wasn’t exactly wanted at first, but since he was Bert’s younger brother, they let him stay.

Bert and Edward were the “guards.” They’d trained in combat together since they were five and had been inseparable ever since.

Still, they’d taken different paths.

Edward used his skills to impress people—though one incident had landed someone in the hospital.

Bert, meanwhile, remained stuck as his sidekick, often overshadowed whenever he tried to stand out.

And Duncan... Duncan was just there. Not essential, but never excluded either.

“Edward, if you zone out one more time, I’m telling Jade.”

“You can try. You won’t,” Edward shot back.

“Why are you both so weird?” Charlie groaned.

“Piss off, Charlie.”

“Was that really necessary?” Danny asked, meeting Edward’s eyes.

“Yes. Now shut up before I tell you to piss off too.”

“Wow. I am so utterly terrified.”

“You should be.”

Edward was just... difficult.

He needed control—always. He’d nearly lost it when Danny became leader instead of him. His temper earned him labels like weird and rude, but no one really cared to look deeper. No one saw him as an only child his parents had quietly forgotten.

Bert and Charlie lived under constant pressure to excel. Danny just wanted people he could rely on. Duncan only wanted a place where he wasn’t judged—where he was treated like a person instead of a joke.

They weren’t outcasts, not exactly.

They were just... forgettable.

Together, though, they felt like something close to a family.

Edward’s thoughts drifted back to Jade, and Bert noticed immediately.

“You good?” he asked, raising an eyebrow. “You’ve got that look again.”

Edward blinked, snapping out of it. “What look?” he asked, feigning innocence.

Bert smirked. “The ‘thinking about Jade’ look. You’ve got it bad, man.”

Edward’s expression faltered as he glanced around. Charlie was busy on his phone, Danny was scribbling notes, and Duncan was nowhere in sight—probably in the washroom.

“Shut up, Bert,” he muttered, his face warming.

Bert leaned closer, grin widening. “I’m serious. If you’re going to do something, now’s your chance. Damani auditioned for the soldier role... You could go for the main love interest.”

Edward’s heart skipped.

“Why does Jade have more love interests in this play than we’ve had in real life?” Charlie muttered.

Danny walked over to SunGun’s table, dropping a note at Nora’s side and walking off.

“Aww, Nora’s got an admirer!!” Anette yelped.

“You’re acting like we didn’t have that one stalker send her a teddy with a camera last week.”

While the two argued about Nora’s love life, Nora wrote back on the note, smiling softly to herself.

The conversation between the two changed to the play.

“Dammit, Annete, I told you—I’m not doing it!” Jade snapped, her patience finally cracking.

“But whyyyy?” Annete dragged out the word.

“Ask someone else if you want someone for the play. Why do I have to be the ‘troubled ice skater’? Nora already puts me through enough as it is.”

“But no one fits the role! And Miss Waikov talked to Nora about toning down the fan meets and paparazzi. It’s not her fault you’re the most stanned idol in the group.”

“Why on Earth are you taking her side!”

“Maybe because she’s smart? Your explanation, nor its reasoning has no backbone, just like you.” Nora shot back.

“Where are you going?” Annete asked.

“Somewhere away from her.”

Walking down the passageway, someone called out.

“Hey, Nors!” a girl with pink hair yelled.

“Hey, Lolz. Need something?”

“Nope! Just wanted to ask if you’ve seen Dam anywhere?”

“Near the entry gate talking to Soph, at around 7:00 am.”

“Ohh. Ok thanks!”

“No prob,” Nora sighed.

Nora walked further down, till she reached a dimly lit room.

Peering in, and taking steady footsteps, she imitated the same combination she played every night.

A knock, whistle and two more knocks.

“I’ve been expecting you.”

“Yea, well sorry I have a life, Neo.”

“You actually came? I thought you’d ditch me like last time.”

“I ‘ditched’ you last time cause dad said you were in the hospital in cri— you know what, it’s fine. What happened?”

“Why do you always assume somethings wrong with me.”

“You texted me 321 in the middle of library.”

“Yea well I was bored, Re and Georgie went out together and Lucas told me not to bother him.”

“Sounds like him. Look, we can head to the library, and yap there. Kay?”

“But this is cooler. Like which siblings have secret code and a secret room?!” Neo yelled falling backwards in his chair.

“Did you seriously call me here for me to watch you rock your chair...?”

“Noo! Although—”

“Why did you call me here, Neo?”

“Georgie and Aurelia seem... off. Like they’ve become more of bullies then like how they were before.”

“Yea but what can you expect from blue haired people.”

“But Georgina?”

“She’ll calm down eventually— Are you seriously crying.”

“N-no! I’m just sweating!”

“Just come here you ass.” Nora sighed and she hugged him.

“Ay, why am I so short!?”

“Out of everything you could find fault with.”

“Hmph.”

Neo let go and crossed his arms.

“Now, what do we say when someone does something nice for you?” Nora asked.

“Not to trip on a rock and fall face first in dog shit?”

“We’ll get back to that.”

The bell rang.

“Kay, I’m heading to class. I have physics.” Nora sighed.

“I have P.E., sucker!”

Nora chuckled slightly while Neo and her ran out in different directions.

“And then she doesn’t even listen! Like she acts like she’s better than all of us! Li—”

“Jade, you called me here, to help with outfits.” Soph interrupted.

“Yea bu—”

“Do you want help with your costume or not? Accordingly, I shall clear my schedule.”

“I don’t need help.”

“Alright then.”

Evil

Have you ever wondered what people who never get noticed do to get noticed?

Some make groups. Some find peace where as some find chaos. Some wish for friends and some wish for just simple plain happiness in whatever form.

That's why Logic Lad's was formed.

For Danny it was for peace. To stop the voices in his head. To stop him from doing things he shouldn't.

For Bert and Charlie, it was for chaos. They relied on the other three, one as a rock and mentor, the others as comedic relief and someone to relate to.

For Duncan it was for friends. His family had issues to say the least, his parents were always out and his sisters were dead. Since then, the voices won't stop and nothing helped. He needed that rock and these four were that very rock. Maybe not the shiniest or smoothest but definitely the sturdiest.

But Edward? He joined for a reason.

He needed alibis.

He needed justification that the one thing that made him feel sane, wasn't wrong.

He shouldn't be thinking of that right now.

"Edward. We meet again..." Lady Lunaire spoke with disdain.

He fell to his knees, "Yes your majesty."

"What is the progress on world domination?"

"It's going ok-ish."

"You are aware your statements are lies, right?"

By the simple press of a button, the ground opened below him, metallic arms forcing him to look upwards at the ghastly demon-dragon combination in front of him.

He woke up with a sweat.

"Don't forget."

Edward thought to himself.

Would a few more people dead really matter?

Slipping on his mask and grabbing his weapons, he left.

He was currently chasing a teen sister and kid brother down an alleyway.

Where the he— Oh.

A loud shockwave echoed through the tunnel the three of them were in.

The younger kid yelped in pain as his head split open, scarlet drops drowning him entirely.

"RHE—"

The teens mouth was covered by a handkerchief.

"Shush. This will only take a moment."

"I'll be back soon." Lady Lunaire said angrily.

"What happened, sis?" a smaller voice asked.

“This idiot is thinking about other things. Not thinking at all about killing people.”

“Well, you better be back soon. Cy is almost done with supper.”

“Sure, thing. Just need to take control of his mind.”

Edward’s eyes then became pitch black.

He was now chasing two adults.

I’ve been meaning to use my new dagger.

Reaching closer to the shorter male with pink hair, he threw his stiletto dagger at his back, causing a slow and steady trickle of red liquid to ooze down his grey shirt.

“Get off my husband, you sicko!” a taller brown-haired woman yelled, pulling out her phone.

“Cass, just get home. Our ki—” the male started but never got to continue.

‘Edward’ then proceeded to shove the dagger through the man’s flesh till it came out the other side.

“A measly stupid Switner.” ‘Edward’ spat out.

“I’m calling the police!” the woman yelled, pressing buttons on her phone.

“Oh, don’t get so emotional, dear. I’m sure we can get along quite well. I believe your name is... Cass?”

“If you think I’m getting along with my husband’s killer, you’re utterly wrong.”

“We do need something to pass the time, don’t we?”

“It’s Cassandra. Cassyra for short.”

“Now see that wasn’t so hard. Oh look, the cops are here.”

“That was fa—”

A dagger was thrown at her neck as she fell face first into the moist dirt.

“Naïve. Utterly naïve.”

“Ok, I’m back.” Lady Lunaire said, returning back.

As blood started to trickle from the first one’s side, he rushed over to have some, sending the other body to Lady Lunaire.

He wasn’t a vampire just a Nycteros.

“Do I deserve some?”

“I’m just saying, being an Thonix is better than being a Nar.”

Charlie droned on.

“Oh please, like being able to control light is so useful.”

Duncan shot back, mocking Charie’s exact words.

“Yea? And colliding with your surroundings means so much!”

“Yea.”

“Oh God your wasted.”

“Being a Valyree is better then you two.”

Danny said, for some reason upside down, with his greyish black wings spread out

“Yea so you can get light headed? Hard pass.” Charlie chirped.

“I agree with Charlie.” Bert sighed.

“Just because you’re a Luminar doesn’t mean you need to take his side.” Danny groaned.

“Controlling all the light in the world sounds pretty cool to me” Bert smirked, twisting the sunlight coming from the window opposite to him.

“I’m here.”

“It’s been 2 hours Ed....” Charlie asked, “Were you putting rose petals in front of Jade’s dorm again?”

“Maybe.”

“Careful, Its Nycteros feeding season.” Danny whistled, “You can have Charlie and Bert.”

“Thanks, but I already had food.”

“How many?”

“3...”

“Less than last time. I’m proud...”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAA!” Charlie screamed as he pounced on Bert.

Bert caught him like he was used to this.

“Easy there, flame, I got you,”

“Reminder that I’m here...” Duncan sighed.

Edward then made his way plopping next to Duncan, chatting like as if he had been there for an hour.

“That’s the calmest I’ve ever seen you two....” Danny mentioned, breaking the two’s conversation.

“He’s sad and was ignored by all of you.” “Wasn’t that hard to help him.”

½ hour later Danny was sprawled on the fan sleeping, Charlie and Bert sharing a bean bag, Duncan now sleeping on the couch, and Edward contemplating life like usual.

He took out a paper, drafting his thoughts.

Not like anyone would care enough to ask what's on it.

'Hietina time was soon.

The annual war between different species. Where she- I mean, Lady Lunaire would rise to power and take over Caelidra. Lady Lunaire promised to keep the ones I care about safe, but that promise seem to be slipping. I don't even believe even believe I would be safe. I only need 40 more souls for her to rise to power to take over the world. 40.

The only reason I have taken this job was because I was at my lowest and decided to fulfil something that would be remembered in history. But then I was given a chance at life...

And then I might be the reason they die. And Jade. Sure, we've interacted in the hallways for classes. But she'd seen me. Not many did that. They've discarded me and said I was dangerous and useless. I've... I'd only ever be one of those. But I felt like the other. What else could I feel like? When everything I'm working for in the coming future would only lead to everyone I knew dying?

Would they even forgive me? When we meet. I'd probably land up in hell, it's what I deserved and they'd land up in heaven. They'd be killed for ~~no fault of theirs~~. While I'll rise in power and take over the world. But would that matter? Would they remember their time together and the times we were ~~there for each other~~? Or would they think I'm a disgusting disgrace, the same thing my ~~parents~~ called me.

The bare reminder of my ~~parents~~ sickens me. Cold hearted, ruthless, and gave two shits about the ~~wrong~~ things.

Even though I'm was quite sure I'm calm, my brain has other plans.

Would Jade think of me? Would I even be thought of? Should I even be worthy of that? I... I don't really feel that way.'

He then proceeded to hear his phone ring. Strange. His only contacts were his friends and parents...

As he walked to the far end of the room picking up his phone his face became a bright pink. Jade had texted him.

"Annete. Why the hell did you order food again for the second time this week!" Nora yelled.

"I was hungry..." Annete whined.

"I do not care. We have a model image to keep up. Throw that food in the trash or give it to Jade. Our fans have been complaining that she looks too skinny. She God damn passed out during a performance."

"You starved her for 3 weeks for not doing a backflip properly!"

"I don't see an issue. She is a big issue. I'd kick her out but you have minimal to no talent. I could go solo..." Nora sighed, checking out her nails.

"You choose me saying I had talent you nitwit!"

"Oh? Nitwit? Listen here, Windsor. I'm the reason you even got admission in this school. So shut up."

Annete started crying, tears falling down her face. Her eyes stinged as she ran out the kitchen.

"That brat's always getting on my nerves."

"She wouldn't if you would let her act her age, you know?" Damani spoke, walking towards Nora.

“Oh please. Your acting like you don’t also –”

“What I do is not your concern.”

“CHRIS. WHERE IS MY ‘Loly Lina’ MAGAZINE.”

“How on Earth am I meant to know—”

“Brown cabinet, second shelf. Next to Chris’s collection of ‘edgy’ ties.” Soph mentioned.

“THANK YOUU!” Lola yelled, hugging Soph.

“I need a break.” Soph sighed, walking out of the room.

“Did I—”

“No, Lolo Bean. Damani just yelled at her cause Nora pissed him off.”

“Awh man. I wanted to show her my new additions in the magazine,”

“You can show me.”

“YAY!!”

Christopher laughed slightly, putting his textbook aside,

A few hours later, Christopher cornered Damani in the library.

“I don’t want to talk about it, Chris.”

“Yea, nicknames aren’t going to help your case right now,”

“Ok, I’m sorry ya big baby...” Damani sighed patting Christopher’s head.

“What am I meant to feel if you come to the dorm, hot-headed and yelling at the first person you see in the room.”

“Someone’s been reading Shakespear.”

“Damani.”

“Nora, just started questioning everything I’ve done for this group. It’s not like I don’t question it enough myself,”

“What exactly do you mean...?”

“Our songs, even the new one, ‘Rumors’, it’s not like I did much to help any of you.”

“You’re kidding right?”

“No?”

“Who bought Lolo Bean hot chocolate when she got a throat ache from all the practice runs? Who stayed up with Sophy when Hietna and the release of this song were in the same week? Who stayed with me when—”

“The thunder was too loud? There’s no need to bring up every reason, buttercup.”

“I literally just said nicknames wouldn’t help.”

“You want me to stop?”

“No, it’s fi— you’re missing the point.”

“It’s not my fault you’re not elaborating on it, you goofball.”

“Call me a nickname one more time.”

“Yes, darling?”

“OH MY GOD, I’M GOING TO KI—”

“Shush. We’re in a public place.”

“I’m heading back. Study your boring physics on your own.”

Damani chuckled a bit.

“Again.” Lucas yelled.

“I—” Neo started.

“Louder.”

“I—”

“Louder, for goodness sake. We have the Hietna coming up and you all can’t even concentrate?”

“Wow what a great leader we have!” Aurelia mocked.

“You all are disastrous wrecks. None of you can comprehend basic English. We are fighting for Caelidra’s sake and you all are treating this like some joke!”

“Waa waa waa. That’s all I can hear you say. You want some milk? You acting like some toddler.”

“Am no—”

“Aww, the baby’s using baby language!! Goo goo ga ga!” Georgina responded.

“Stop it.”

“WAA WA WAAA WAA!!” Aurelia started mocking and rolling on the floor.

“SHUT UP.”

“Ugh you’re so boring.”

“I’ll just make a quick stop.” Edward sighed, walking into the dimly lit hall.

The Scarlet Court. That’s what this stupid place was called.

A rock trips him on his way to the office.

Idiots. Can’t even keep a hall in order. They can’t even keep their marriage in order anyways.

Distant chatter could be heard from nearby rooms.

“Just great. So greatly great.”

Walking into his office that was labelled in bold, ‘Edward Mcrinnin’.

“Ah! And here’s my son, Liam!” Mr. Mcrinnin sighed delightfully.

“What do you want.”

“Now, now, there is no need to be so snappy, dear. Mrs. Omar wanted to offer a magnificent business deal!” Mrs. Mcrinnin giggled.

“Which is...?”

“Oh, well hi dear! My name is Jenniffer Omar, mother of Opal Omar. Your father invited me to discuss your marriage with my daughter, Opal!” Mrs. Omar cheerfully said.

“I’m sorry what?” Edward choked? “I’m still in college.”

“Well, don’t be stupid son! You need someone chosen by our family heritage. Your uncle and aunt agree of him, and you know how tedious it is to get approval from them!” Mr. Mcrinnin mentioned.

“Oh, you two would make the cutest couple! I—”

“Nope.”

“Dear, what do you mean by no?”

“I’m not marrying someone I barely know. And if you think I’m adhering to the stupid family tradition, father you are deeply wrong.”

“Edward, it is for your benefit. Think about someone else for a change other than yourself for once!” Mr. Mcrinnin yelled.

“It’s not my fault you and your wife don’t understand me. My full life has been dictated by both of your stupid life choices. Marry Ivy off if she wants.”

“Son, she’s dead....” Mrs. Mcrinnin said softly, dabbing her crocodile tears with a handkerchief.

“Yeah, thanks to you.”

Hour Before Betrayal

“**Y**ou wanted to meet?” Edward said as he teleported behind Jade.

They were now in the middle of a dense forest—a perfect place for murder.

“Right, I forgot Nycteros can teleport,” Jade mentioned.

“I thought Cybertorix knew everything?”

“Well... yeah.”

“So?”

“I needed someone to talk to, and Annete’s busy. You’re always following me, so I called you.”

“Oh.”

“It’s the anniversary of my sister’s death,” she let out.

“Oh... I’m sorry to hear that,” Edward spoke softly.

“Can you stay? Just for an hour?”

“Of course.”

“Thanks.”

The silence that followed was different. It was heavier than usual, filled with more tension. Jade’s usual unfazed expressions slipped, though only someone paying close attention would notice, Edward thought.

Oh, right. He had to respond.

“Anytime.”

The two walked down the mossy pathway, the silence heavy and full of unspoken questions.

“I wanted to know something...” Jade asked.

“Yeah...?” Edward responded.

“Why did you kill them?”

“Who?”

“Those people. Don’t play dumb with me, Edward.”

“You knew...”

“Yes. Like you said, Cybertorix knows everything.”

“And I sensed your DNA,” Annete said, almost cackling, appearing from the trees.

It wasn’t long before both of them were knocked out on the grass.

“Good job, Edward.” Lady Lunaire sighed.

“Thanks.”

“Take them to the lair. We’re running out of time.”

“Just what do you think you’re doing Edward?”

Following the sharp click of heels and the cutting tone came Nora, leader of Annete’s, Jade’s, and her band: SUNGUN.

Nora tried speaking again, but something struck her in the chest.

A sunbeam had been blasted at her.

The three of them were now knocked out.

“I won’t repeat myself.”

“Right, sorry, ma’am.”

“Uh, my head hurts...” Jade groaned, opening her eyes after two hours and taking in the scene before her.

There were two chairs near hers, with Nora and Annete sitting, their hands tied behind their backs with metallic-looking wires.

Edward appeared. He walked over to Jade, looking her in the eyes.

“I gave you my heart, yet you never accepted it. You accessed it, believed it was a toy, and used it for your pathetic life,” Edward said, looking Jade in the eyes.

“Tell me—do you think I’m a pawn in your game of chess that I never knew you were playing?”

Her breath hitched. She didn’t have an answer yet.

He dragged his dagger down her cheek to her neck, stopping directly at her pulse point.

“Tell me why I should let you be free?” he whispered, almost to himself.

“I—I didn’t know,” she managed. “I didn’t even know you had feelings!”

“Feelings?” He chuckled lowly. “Birdy, even if the world were ending, I’d end it faster so I could spend eternity with you, in hell or heaven.”

“That’s not ‘feelings,’ that’s obsession. The type of thing that keeps you awake at night, dreaming about that one person until everything you’ve ever done with them—reality or not—feels real and out of reach at the same time,” he continued.

“How was I meant to know if you never gave any signs?”

Edward knelt down.

“You don’t need to act so flabbergasted. If this—if us—is in your future, your heart will know that your brain made the right choice.”

And with that, he teleported them to his room.

Then Annete woke up.

Cue the walk of pride by Charlie and the walk of curiosity by Duncan.

“Well, well, well,” Charlie drawled as he leaned against the wall. “If it isn’t the great Annete, stuck in our basement with no way out.”

“Let me go!” she screamed, but Charlie just laughed.

“Aww, we haven’t even had our fun yet!”

“Such a buzzkill!”

“I’m not joking, Charlie. Let me go!”

“But why would we do that so quickly, Annie?”

“Are you hungry?” Duncan asked, trying to intervene in the potentially disastrous conversation.

“Y-yeah...”

“Perfect.”

With that, they untied her but kept a close eye on her so she wouldn’t try anything.

By the time they left, Nora had already untied her wires and broken through a window to escape.

Her instincts flared when she heard the sound of a crash.

“Berry. Don’t you know you should stay in your lane?” Danny spoke sharply, looking her straight in the eyes.

“Leave her alone.” Bert sighed, “Forget that—we need to find a new outfit for the play!”

“Why do you care so much about appearances...” Danny sighed, following them.

“Maybe because this stupid play is thirty percent of our grade? Besides, her outfit doesn’t give ‘ice skater’s best friend’ at all...”

“That’s probably a giveaway that we kidnapped her from a forest. Frick you and your delusional brain.”

“Aww! Frick, really? You can’t even say the real word...”

“Bert, genuinely keep quiet. She doesn’t even want to be here, and yet she is.”

“Something called grip. Something you wouldn’t have since you make Edward take over everything.”

“Ber, I will hit you.”

“Not like you haven’t before.”

“UGH! I’M SO FREAKING BORED.” Lola yelled.

“Had your meds?” Damani asked.

“No, their yucky.”

“Lol, you need to—”

“OOH WHAT IF WE GO TO THE ARCADE?!”

“No—”

“WAIT. WE CAN PLAY VIDEO GAMES!!”

“Lola—”

“WAIT HEAR ME OUT - WE GET ICE CREAM!!”

“Are you done?”

“Kinda?”

“We can do all that once you finish practicing for Hietna.”

“NOOOOOOOO!”

“Yes.”

“Hmph.”

“I’ll get you a strawberry ice cream if you pay attention.”

“Promise?”

“Promise.”

“Okay!”

Damani chuckled for a bit before getting hit by a rock.

“Ow-?” Damani gasped.

“DAMMMM!!!! CHRISSY FINNALLY MANAGED TO USE HIS TELEKENIS POWERS!” Soph yelled.

“Oh damn.”

“It was only for 10 minut—”

“TEN— WHY THE HELL WERE YOU MAKING A ROCK FLY FOR 10 MINUTES.”

“I-I was bored...?”

“Well, congrats. Lol, over here hasn’t even started training yet.”

“The world is so big and you expect me to stay crammed up in this small room!”

Ecstasy

“Where are you, Birdy?” Edward asked cunningly as he walked around, knowing very well where she was.

“Somewhere you will never, ever find me,” Jade whispered. The exit to his room seemed to move every time she looked at it. Was it even real?

“Got you, Birdy,” Edward sighed as he dragged Jade out from under the bed, making her yelp.

“Just let me go!”

“Fraid not.”

Edward now placed her on his couch, looking at her with a mixture unrecognizable.

“You think I don’t know about all your shenanigans?”

“Oh, please. Like what?”

“Your sister. Weren’t you the one who pushed her in front of the car?”

Jade’s breath hitched. It had been three years since the “accident.” Her sister, Emilia, and she had been playing tag in the yard when she appeared. They ran for their lives. Jade was only six; her sister was ten. She had pushed her to ‘save’ her, but a car came. That was when everything went pitch black.

“Shhhh,” Edward cooed at her. “That’s why I have to keep you here—to make sure you don’t hurt anyone else intentionally.”

“I—I’m a monster...” Jade whispered, crying into Edward’s amethyst-colored jacket as he wrapped her hands around his neck, smug with the amount of chaos he’d stirred in her mind.

“You’re not a monster; you never have been, alright?”

“You want a lullaby so you’ll go to sleep?”

“Mhm.”

That’s when he started. His voice was different, almost as if he’d been practicing the same lines over and over to make this a fantasy moment—for her, or maybe just so she’d believe it was a fairy tale, if only for this moment.

Edward always had a talent for singing, which Lady Lunaire had made good use of. She enabled him to use his voice as a sedative—anyone who heard it would submit or do as he ask.

Slowly, the singing began to work on Jade. Slower than usual.

In the nearby room, Annete sat uncomfortably on a plush sofa.

“Was it necessary to kidnap the three of us just to revise lines?” Annete asked, falling backward and raising her legs into the air.

“Yes, it was—Sun—Annete, what the hell are you doing...?” Charlie asked.

“Called stretching, ya doofus. Have you both found the props yet?”

“Would’ve been faster if you helped, Annete,” Duncan grumbled.

“Would’ve been faster if you five weren’t self-absorbed jerks who could’ve waited till tomorrow for practice. But noooo, you had to KIDNAP us in a forest!”

“BUP BUP BUP. ‘Kay, here are the lines... Your role is?” Charlie asked.

"I think the waiter for Edward and Jade's scene where they have their first date?"

"Imagine being a waiter," Duncan laughed out loud.

"Imagine being a soldier who gets two lines in a three-hour play," Annete shot back.

"No fighting, you two. Duncan, you take the others' lines since you don't have any in this scene. We two have lines, so commence," Charlie sighed.

"Perhaps you could call Ra and the other two?" Annete asked.

"Fine," Charlie sighed, teleporting the three of them to their room.

"Where the hell are we?" Danny hissed.

"Chill, dude. You act like we disrupted your full moon," Charlie sighed.

"Maybe you all did," Danny grumbled.

"You're so stupid. Our drama teacher had to revolutionize your speaking and dialogues to Shakespearean format," Annete sighed, grabbing the paper of lines from Charlie.

"Pfft," Charlie chuckled, while Duncan rolled his eyes in annoyance.

"Can we start already?" Duncan asked, already bored with the running chaos.

"Yeah, actually... Charlie, you and Annete can have your love story later," Nora said.

"Ughhhh. Damani was so much more fun than you boring idiots," Annete dramatically cried.

“First off, they’re not having a ‘love story.’ They’re just acting like idiots. Secondly, I’ll do cues and narrations since I don’t have lines,” Duncan remarked.

“I’ll do Jade and my lines,” Annete said.

Your Little Ecstasy

“**A**lright, can we go home now?” Nora asked as she carried a very sleepy Annete.

“Tomorrow—it’s too late,” Danny mentioned

“Yeah, right.”

Edward came out of his room, smelling faintly of strawberries.

“You three can sleep in the guest room. Jade is there already.”

“Alright. Thanks.”

As Nora entered the room, she was met with the sight of three beds and a small table with a glass of water.

“Jade? You awake?” Nora asked as she placed Annete on the bed closest to the wall.

“Mhm.”

“Oh.”

“I was thinking... isn’t Hietna coming soon?”

“Three weeks...”

“It’s our first time. We’re against the very ones who are holding us captive.”

“Maybe we should practice our entrance song?”

“Of course you want everything perfect,” Jade rolled her eyes.

“If this is about me scheduling extra concerts for us during our prime era, then too bad—you should know better. As a matter of fact, I’m signing you up for solo concerts. Enjoy extra training.”

“You know I can hear you both arguing? Tone it down for once... you both make it seem like you hate each other...”

“I don’t hate her, bug,” Nora remarked sadly.

“Same, I guess,” Jade sighed.

“Okay, now let’s start!” Annete exclaimed, knowing very well they were lying.

Liars. *Liars.* ***Liars.*** *Liars.*

[NORA]

You painted me in gold lines

Told me never step outside

Every time I chased the sunset

You'd pull me back and ask me why

Woah oh oh

[JADE]

You handed me a mask and smile

Said that's what the world would like

So, I hid all of my feelings

And disappeared a little each night

When will I heal?

When will I be whole?

When will I stop carrying this weight inside my soul?

[ANNETE]

A silent room, a storm inside

Watching all my dreams collide

All these memories in my head keep calling, calling

Even when I'm falling, falling

Ooh, don't you know these scars don't fade away?

Ooh, don't you know I fight them every day?

As if I'm not enough

As if I'm not too much

As if I don't get lonely

When nobody notices me, me

[JADE AND NORA]

When will I heal?

When will I be whole?

When will I stop carrying this weight inside my soul?

"I forgot—what's Hietna?" Annete asked.

"It's the annual war between groups of three to six. We're against... them and your brother's group," Jade said.

"Weren't there ten groups last year?" Nora asked.

"Yes, but this time they're only taking the first three who sign up."

"WAIT—MY BROTHER..." Annete said.

"Yes."

"There's no actual death, right...?"

"No. Unless that thing rises from the dead."

“You mean Lady Lunaire?”

“I’m going to sleep,” Annete said, clearly shaken.

“You scared?” Jade asked.

“Yes! My brother could die!”

“What about us?”

“Yes, I am worried, but I don’t want to lose him!”

“It’ll be fine, bug,” Nora said, walking over to Annete’s bed and placing a hand on her shoulder.

“Like I’ve always said: through thick and thin. If you’re dying, we die with you.”

“You’re both so corny,” Jade said. But even she was scared.

“Yet you deal with it. Now shush—I need sleep!” Annete exclaimed.

“Aight.”

From the nearby room, the Logic Lads were planning their own song.

“What if we do a soft start, then an epic mix?” Bert asked.

“No.”

“Epic, then soft?”

“No.”

“At least I’m giving ideas, Ed,” Bert said.

“You’ve been staring at that sheet and just drew a bird in a cage.”

“Inspiration.”

After a few hours, they made one—or at least a draft.

[DANNY]

Heard your lies like a liar on repeat
Clicked stop, begged, yet you never listened
God, I pray everyday for your doomsday
Yet I fall and fall into this blackhole
Being locked in this cage
Being one of your dolls to use
And I'm as useless as any of your messy promises you kept to love me

[DUNCAN]

Spin me all around
Your little ecstasy
Spin me all around
Your little ecstasy

[CHARLIE]

You thought I'm like a resin mannequin
Hard on the outside, soft on the inside
God, I pray every day to prove you wrong
You think my life's easy?
Yet I fall and fall into your endless flame
Being locked in this dollhouse
Being one of your dolls to use till I run out of batteries
And I'm as useless as the promise you kept to love me

We used to be close

Used to be the reason anything for you existed

But then you left me to rot away

[BERT]

Spin me all around

Your little ecstasy

Spin me all around

Your little ecstasy

[CHARLIE]

Did we ever mean a single think to you?

You made me search for an escape key you threw away

[ALL – CHARLIE, LEAD]

Spin me all around

Your little ecstasy

Spin me all around

Your little ecstasy

“Can we please sleep?” Charlie pleaded.

“No,” Edward said. “We need **perfection.**”

“No one’s perfect.”

“Yes, but things can be perfect. Especially music.”

“Bert and I are going to sleep,” Charlie said, teleporting Bert to his room.

“I can stay with Edward,” Danny said.

"I'm going to sleep," Duncan added.

"Sleep is for the weak," Edward muttered.

"Guess we're weak," Duncan replied.

"UGH."

"How's 'perfection' going for you?" Danny asked after two hours.

"Good..." Edward replied, despite barely making progress.

"I was just thinking... who all are there for Hietna?"

"PORTSPORT and—oh."

"Hm?"

"SUNGUN..."

"Oh."

"Can we back out?"

"It's too late."

"But—"

"It's too late. Don't make me repeat myself."

"Oh please, your word has no value. We are against the very people who made most of us feel whole, and you think I won't overreact if we literally have to fight them?"

"YOU THINK I'M NOT?" Danny yelled.

"OH MY GOD, YOU'RE SUCH AN IDIOT!"

"AT LEAST MY PARENTS DIDN'T LEAVE ME!"

The silence that followed was consuming.

They had all promised never to use things like that against each other. And yet it had been said—so easily.

“Too far,” Edward said, trying to choke down a sob.

“Wait, Ed, I didn’t mean that!” Danny said softly.

“Save it.”

In less than a heartbeat, Edward teleported to his room.

“Calm down. Calm down. CALM DOWN!” Edward shouted as he punched the window

Glass shattered everywhere, and blood followed.

“I haven’t even had my meds... Forget it.”

He quickly changed into his night clothes and passed out.

Danny paced in the hall where they had been writing the lyrics.

“I’m such an idiot...”

As he looked to his left, he saw the light in Edward’s room go off.

“I should probably do the same,” he thought.

As Danny’s head hit the pillow, the voices came alive—one after another.

He was eleven again. His messy brown wolf cut covered his big blue eyes, which sparkled under the study light. He had fallen asleep while studying. Again.

“Danny! You’ll be late for school. Hurry up!” his dad, Micah, called, handing him his teal-colored bag.

“I’m going, Dad!” Danny replied, resentment in his voice.

School was where the bullies were—the ones who made fun of him for his power.

They would tug at his still-growing wings, turning them redder than the usual whitish-blue. His teacher, Miss Waikov, let it happen, claiming it “built self-respect.”

It didn’t.

‘Self-respect’ as she called it, didn’t make you want to die when you were only eight—the same age your own mother said she hoped you’d be gone.

A year later, she beat him until he bled and couldn’t see straight. She killed his only companions—a black-and-blue terrier fish and a goldfish his father had given him.

His father knew. But what could he do, knowing the courts would side with her?

School wasn’t any better. Charlie and Duncan, his only friends at the time, were closer to each other than they were to him. It felt like more of a duo than a trio. The “closeness” they thought they were showing him made him want to scoff.

Tick-tock.

The clock on the bus ticked, signaling that the arrival of hell was near—where one needed to pretend everything was fine.

Any time he tried to vent to his friends about what was happening at home, they ignored him.

He knew he was more mature than the others. But that didn’t mean they couldn’t defend him when others tugged at his shirt and treated him like an invalid.

Tick-tock.

Would he have enough food to eat? His father had given him some money to buy something at the canteen, but he was sure he’d lost it by now. And even if he hadn’t, someone would take it, and he’d starve for the tenth time that month.

He felt drowsy. His mother had shoved nearly five cups of black coffee into him—too much for a thirteen-year-old—just so he could pass a test he had the next week. The hours of sleep he got, he could count on one hand.

Charlie and Duncan sat beside him, complaining about how their mother only let them sleep eight hours the night before.

Eight hours of sleep was a luxury he couldn't afford.

How could he?

When every night he heard screaming, yelling, and crying—two voices belonging to his mother, one to his father.

When every morning there were broken shards of glass, and his father had a new scar or wound every single time.

Danny woke up, his breath coming in short gasps.

"I really need to start taking my sleeping pills," he muttered, reaching for the blue pill bottle near his desk—the one Edward had taken him to get after the first time Danny opened up to him.

Edward had been nothing but kind to him.

And he had been nothing but a jerk in return.

A selfish, disgusting, revolting jerk

Curtain Called for the Dammed

The room where SUNGUN lay was engulfed with sunlight from outside, which landed directly on Nora's face.

"Ugh," she said. "You two, get up."

"I've been up watching you sleep," Annete said.

"That's not worrying."

"JADEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!"

"WHAT! WHAT DO YOU WANT?" Jade screeched.

"Good morning!" Annete said, giggling as she opened the door of the room. "We should go soon. We need to... practice."

A soft knock came.

"Come in," Nora said.

"Do you want breakfast before you go?" Bert asked.

"No. Thanks."

"Aight."

As the three entered the hall, Duncan appeared, dragging Annete by her arm and plopping her between him and Charlie. Charlie, who took more of a black cat persona, cuddled up next to her immediately.

"Ew," Duncan said.

“Oh, shut up, Dun,” Charlie sighed.

“Thou art stupid if thou believes that I would do so.”

“Wrong terms, bud.”

Amidst this conversation, Nora was arguing with Danny.

“Nora, I said you’re eating and that’s final.”

“Stop it with the tone. You think just because you have an authoritative voice you can make me do whatever you want?”

“But still, you’re eating at least two pancakes.”

“Ugh, fine.”

“Thank you.”

Jade, however, was walking around, trying to find... she didn’t know herself. Was Edward who she was looking for? Could he be trusted? Did what he say actually mean something? Did he actually have feelings for her? She couldn’t find one thing that made her stand out from most people.

Her hair? Dark blue, dyed by her mother. Her eyes? Just a light grey. She always wore black or red oversized clothes. Her personality was hardly there; she just molded herself into other people’s fantasies and thoughts. And exactly like right now, she overthought everything and—

“Looking for me, Birdy?” Edward asked, appearing in front of her.

“Maybe...” Jade said, trying her best not to make eye contact.

“Are you prepared for the Hietna?” he bluntly asked, totally not like he was going to summon Lady Lunaire, who may or may not kill them all. He didn’t think this through at all.

“Uh... that’s going well,” Jade said, a little shocked.

“Ok.”

As SUNGUN left, the boys immediately started talking.

“What happened between you two yesterday?” Duncan asked.

“Nothing,” Edward said. “Can we leave this topic?”

“Not when it’s getting good,” Charlie sneered.

“I’m pulling the leader card. Everyone go practice your verse for the song Ed made.”

“Ughh.”

With SUNGUN, it was different.

“Ok girls, summon your weapons in 3... 2... 1!”

In almost perfect synchronization, Jade summoned her neon-red katana, the brown-colored handle shimmering. Two seconds too late, Annete’s muted-down mix of light pink ninja stars glistened, and Nora summoned her black daggers.

“AND CHARGE!” Nora screamed as she played their anthem.

“NOW PLAYING: BARBIE’S WORLD!” the speaker screeched.

“Wait, what?” Nora said, slightly confused.

Jade started chuckling, then fell down, her sword next to her.

Annete started laughing like a maniac while trying to apologize, but it was of no use.

“I’m sorryyyy,” Annete laughed as she tried to play the actual anthem.

“It’s fine,” Nora said, facepalming—or more appropriately, face-smashing.

And finally, it happened. First, Jade's weapon, then Annete's weapons, and lastly Nora's.

"AND CHARGE!" Nora screamed.

"NOW PLAYING: SUNSET BY SUNGUN!" the speaker screeched.

They marched down the make-believe runway, with Nora in the center, Jade to her right, and Annete to her left. At once, they stopped. Nora got into battle position, Annete ran off to practice her flying kicks, and Jade ran at full speed, slashing her sword at thin air. Then Nora started singing along when her part came, followed by Jade, Annete, and finally all of them together.

"That was really good," Nora said. "I should have recorded it."

"Our performance at Hietna will be better," Jade reassured her.

"I'm hungry," Annete mentioned.

"Yes, we know. I ordered your favorite ice cream; highly doubt it'll be enough for you."

"Thanks, mom," Annete said.

"You're welcome, termite," Nora snickered.

"I feel left out," Jade whined.

"That's your fault, Jade," Nora sighed.

"We need to practice," Danny said, gathering the other four into the hall.

"Whatever," Bert said.

"NOW PLAYING: ECSTASY." the speaker screeched.

The five walked confidently, with Danny in the front, Duncan and Bert on his left, and Charlie and Edward on his right.

Danny stopped, walked two steps backward while the others walked forward. A black staff appeared in his hand.

A flash occurred, then in both Bert and Charlie's hands, bright yellow bows and arrows appeared. In Edward's hand, glass knives appeared with silver handles. Last but not least, Duncan held an emerald-colored energy sword, lighting up in neon green.

They practiced this again and again till late evening, and passed out. Edward almost fell asleep when he was teleported to Lady Lunaire's lair again.

"Well, well, well," she said. "Where are my bodies, child?"

"I-I've been busy, practicing for the Hietna."

"Lies. You speak nothing but lies."

Edward gulped, too afraid to say anything. What could he say? That he fell for the enemy and spent valuable time with her instead of killing?

"I want the bodies by tomorrow. And SUNGUN killed during the Hietna."

And that was it. He couldn't even fight back, because what was the point? How was he—or how was any of them—meant to kill the ones that made them feel something other than murder? Around each other, they were comfortable—but them? They were the first ones ever to know they could be maniacs yet not be judged.

And now they had to plan their deaths, which made him question... if the roles were reversed, would she listen to Lady Lunaire?

"Yes, ma'am."

"What the hell are you three doing." Damani asked,

Lola, Soph and Christopher lay on a plush couch, moonlight shining on their faces, with different aerated drinks in their hands.

Christopher had passed out on Lola, while Soph was upside down on her phone,

“Are those two even awake?” Damani asked another question.

“Probably. Or they just had a sugar crash.” Soph sighed, blowing bubble gum.

“At least sit up if you’re having bubble gum. It’s gonna get stuck in your hair.”

“Fine, you old man.”

Damani chuckled slightly, carrying Christopher over his shoulder.

“Take Lolz to bed.”

“Yuppers.”

Damani lay Christopher in his bed, covering him with a blanket and turning off the light.

“Sleep well Chris.” Damani whispered.

“Night night Dam!” Christopher exclaimed, falling straight back to sleep,

Damani shut the door and walked straight to his room, collapsing on the floor.

Dress Rehearsals for Delinquents in Distress

It was 6:30 in the morning, and SUNGUN was training already. It was their first time and they were all nervous wrecks. They had three options: die, die or live. And the last seemed more difficult.

"This is stupid." Danny mentioned as he looked at the custom outfits Bert had ordered.

5 shirts lie on the bed, with plaid black jeans, in red and black sequins. The knee caps tore thru the pant that was probably made by a company that sold one ply tissue paper. The shirts had large 'Ls' on them, that were probably painted on by a closed eyed toddler. And last but not least: the head gear was supposed to be ensembled by them. Right, because everyone knew how to do that.

"Blame the tailor." Bert snickered as tried his best not to laugh.

"Who's Taylor?" Charlie asked: not to mock, but with curiosity.

"You're an idiot, your brothers an idiot and I don't get paid enough." Danny said as he flew to the cupboard, taking out 3 red shirts, with plaid ties and 2 black shirts with blue ties. He also took out matching grey cargos with white markings on them.

"Here. We're gonna wear this. No excuses." Danny said.

"Why are we fighting in suits?" Duncan said as he took his choice of combination.

“We fight in glamour, and nothing less.”

“Can we take a break?” Annete begged.

“Would you like them to ‘break’ your bones?” Nora asked, mockingly.

“No, but it’s been SEVEN HOURS.”

“Ok, and?”

“Ann’s right. You know?” Jade mentioned, visibly exhausted

“SEE!”

“Ok, fine. Take a breather and come.”

“THANK YOU!” Annete exclaimed hugging Nora.

After ½ hour they were back.

“Oh great. This again.” Jade sighed.

“No, we’re trying on outfits”

Annete sighed off relief, taking the clothes bag containing her clothes from Nora.

She came out wearing a dark green off shoulder tank top which matched with her light green brown hair. Black, lens-less glasses covered her brown eyes. Last but not, least she wore a green and brown skirt.

“I look good,” Annete mentioned checking herself out in the floor length mirror, exaggerating the last word.

“Yea for the first time ever.” Jade said, taking the bag from Nora, leaving Annete flabbergasted.

She came out wearing a blue off-shoulder blouse with a dark blue skirt. Her dark blue hair was tied up in two braids, matching her blue bracelet.

“How is your fashion sense so good?” Annete asked.

“My mom was an actress and my dad the CEO of ‘WALLACE’ the most trending fashion shop in town. Need I clarify more?”

“Fair point.”

“Mhm.” Nora sighed, taking her bag from a nearby table.

She came out wearing a denim jean with pockets in the shape of heart, a black turtle neck with full arm sleeves, and grey kitten heels.

“Damn.” Annete whistled.

“Ok, now we have to practice.” Nora declared.

“NO!”

“I found us *better* outfits.” Edward snickered, side eying Danny.

“Alright. Let’s see them.” Danny said, ready to take up the challenge.

“I’ll go first.”

“Go home instead.”

“Nah, you’d be doomed without me.”

Edward came out wearing a black sleeveless top, chains hanging from his tied jacket and denim jeans, black gloves, his brown hair tied up at the back with a few strands hanging loose and his lashes perfectly complementing his dark purple eyes.

“How much mascara did you use...?” Danny questioned, while also questioning his sanity.

“Who cares. Your next!”

“Shoot.”

Danny came out wearing a black flannel shirt matching his maroon cargos with a studded and belt, and hiking boots. His brown hair was perfectly combed and covered his full forehead and half his eyes. Like, Edward he used too much mascara, which made his blue eyes come out a little wonky.

“How much mascara did YOU use.”

“Shut up.”

“Imma go next.” Bert sighed.

He came out, wearing a black oversized tee, dark red cargo pants with pockets and a silver choker. His orange hair was curled, covering his yellow eyes.

“Ok Ber I see you.” Charlie said.

“Good, otherwise you’d be blind.”

“How about I make you blind.”

“Imma just go.” Charlie copied.

Charlie came out wearing a white shirt, black jacket, studded belt and leather boots and pants. Like his brother he (tried) to copy him but ended up burning the brownish part of his blonde hair. Last but not least, he stole mascara to style his lashes.

“Why are you all using mascara.” Bert asked

“It’s in the name MASScara.” Charlie said

“It’s mascara....”

“Oh.”

“Imma just leave.” Duncan sighed.

Duncan came out wearing black fingerless gloves, black fitted shirt that was unbuttoned at the top, grey track pants and silver skull earrings.

“Ok Ed. You got good fashion sense.” Danny exclaimed sadly.

“Why thank you!”

“GEORGIE. WHERE ARE THE TIES.” Lucas, the leader of PORTSPORT screamed.

“THEIR IN THE WASHER. LET THEM RINSE.” Georgina said.

“WE NEED TO TRY OUR OUTFITS NOW.”

“I JUST PUT THEM!”

“DOES IT LOOK LIKE I CARE?”

“WELL, YOU SHOULD.”

“Shut up.” Neo said rolling his eyes at the two of them. “You both act more like a married couple than 2 people who’ve only been dating for 2 weeks.”

“At least I could land someone.” Lucas shot back.

“Who am I then?” Aurelia said as she appeared behind the three, her blue hair tied up making her look even more menacing than usual.

“RE-RE!” Neo said as he ran to her. “THEIR BULLYING US!”

“Cringe.”

“SAYS THE ONE WHO ALMOST DROWNED GEORGIES FISH YESTERDAY?”

“Luc what?” Georgina said as she slowly walked away from him.

“I CAN EXPLAIN.”

“How do you manage to drown a fish...?” Aurelia asked.

“Well, you see... I, being a good citizen of this household, went to go feed Lina. I uhm, by mistake dumped a cluster of food on him” Lucas said in his overly dramatic sing-songy voice.

“Suree.”

“Hello.”

“LUCAS WHY ARE YOU UNDER THE COUCH.” Neo screamed.

“Bed bugs.”

“It’s a couch...”

“Migration.”

“Lucas Windsor. Where are you?” Georgina said she slowly approached the couch.

“Oh shit.”

“Damn you got the full name” Neo sighed.

“SHUT UP.”

“No.”

“How about we start practicing?” Aurelia asked, trying to change the topic to avoid future murder.

“Fine.”

“I’ll go first because- “

“Your old?”

“No, because I’m the leader.”

“You’re the leader cause you’re the oldest.”

“ANYWAYS.”

Lucas summoned his green sword, his green highlights in his hair becoming neon, and his brown eyes turning yellow.

“WOAH.”

“That didn’t happen last night when we practiced.”

“You know what else didn’t happen last night?”

“Neo shut up.” Georgina said.

“My turn.”

Aurelia summoned her blue powers, they weren’t in a solid form, so they were easier to use. Her blue hair lit up and her eyes darkened.

“DAMN!”

“OK, somethings going on.”

“Or maybe we could have managed this yesterday if LUCAS didn’t pass out!”

“Fair.”

“I’ll go next.”

Neo walked in front, summoning his grey nuck chucks, his eyes becoming lighter and sharper as he swung them around.

“Can you stop showing off for one day please?”

“No.”

“My turn.”

Georgina summoned her purple-colored powers, similar to Aurelias they weren’t solid. Her purple eyes lit up and the blue bangs that neatly rested on her forehead became a pink.

“Woah.”

“We need to start practicing.” “Now,” Lucas declared.

“WE JUST PRACTICED!”

“Practice makes perfect.”

“We’re better than perfect,” Neo said.

Hietna, The Day the Stars Fell

“This is it guys! Everything we’ve trained for comes in handy today.” Nora exclaimed.

“Can I go say hi to my brother?” Annete asked.

“Sure!”

“Lucas!!”

“Yes, nice to see you also sis.”

“Annie?” Georgina said.

“Georgie?”

“There goes my will to live I guess....”

“Thought it went long ago doofus.” Neo sighed.

“Neo shut up before I throw you out the window.”

“Fine fine.”

“Nora?” Jade asked

“Yes Jade?”

“Can I go to the washroom?”

“Sure, be back in 10.”

“Ok.”

As Jade walked to the bathroom, her mind raced with thoughts, Was Edward here? Could- Would he even hurt her?

She fell down, and sat with her back against the cold brick wall.

“I need to calm down.”

“Awh, we haven’t even had our fun yet...” a voice well hidden in the shadows said.

That made Jade jerk, hitting her head giving her a slight concussion.

“Who’s there...?”

Edward appeared, holding a knife. He looked her in the eyes, but his eyes weren’t the same. His eyes had become fully black, his purple pupils becoming darker by the second.

They were darker. More... desperate.

“I’m sorry Jade...” He whispered sadly as he threw his glass knife straight at her heart, as she fell on the ground. Cold, and never to be heard of or seen.

Ever.

He teleported the body to Lady Lunaire, and met up with the other four.

“Ready?”

The other four sighed but agreed.

“ANNETE, HAVE YOU SEEN JADE ANY WHERE!?” Nora screamed.

“No?”

“WE NEED TO START NOW; I CAN’T FIND HER.”

“She’s probably waiting for us there...”

“Fine.”

As the two rushed to the fighting grounds, they were met with the Logic Lads.

“Good luck you three” Bert said, none of them even knowing that Edward had killed Jade.

“Thanks, I guess.”

“Hello and welcome to the annual Hietna!” the judge said.

“Up first we have SUNGUN!”

Nora and Annete made their way on to the stage, fully aware people wondering where the third person was.

“You need at least 3 people to participate, Miss Foxtrot.” a short brunette asked, her face clearly a symbol that she did not want to be here.

“I’ll go find her; Ann stays here”

“Ok.”

“With that we proceed to PORTSPORT!”

Neo, Georgina, Aurelia and Lucas made their way to the stage.

As they were about to start, their performance, the lights from the top, fell and crashed, splinters scraping all of them, making them bleed and eventually die due to blood loss.

“LUCAS!” Annete screamed as she ran towards him, however the judge held her back.

“Miss, we need to have someone clean this up, please refrain,”

“GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME!”

Annete fell to the ground as close to Lucas’s body as possible.

“ANN!”

Nora rushed over to Annete, taking in the scene. Her brother was dead.

"I'm so sorry Annie..."

"THEIR GONE!" Annete choked, her voice cracking. "THEIR GO-G-GONE"

"Come here Annie..."

Annete slowly walked over to her collapsing in her arms, before crying again.

"I'm so sorry Annie..."

Why am I saying sorry. My brother died as well.

Duncan ran over, trying to console her, but Annete pushed him away.

"Leave me alone."

That stirred something in him. Something menacing. Lady Lunaire had taken over.

Without thinking, he summoned his sword, stabbing a hole through her heart, as she fell backwards.

"The hell is wrong with you...?" Nora asked, breathing heavily.

"Don't scream at him." Danny yelled panicky.

"You did not just have your best friend and your brother die in front of you. Shut the HELL up."

"Oh!"

"Don't 'oh' me, Denver. You probably helped him with all his murders! You—."

"Danny. Now."

"With pleasure,"

Danny then shoved a small glass object into Nora's side, causing blood to gush out.

"What the hell?" Nora gasped, her hands intertwining with the liquid.

"It's for the best. You saw too much." Danny sighed, but his voice sounded distorted.

"I didn't see shit!"

"Too late to mention that now."

Nora then proceeded to kick Danny his ribcage, the sound of bones cracking only increased her anger.

"This is probably what that hoe did- that's pro-probably..." Nora started but she had lost enough blood. She collapsed on the floor. And then finally they were in control.

"What... WHAT DID WE JUST DO"

"Duncan!? W-Why would you KILL HER!?" Charlie screamed.

"I-I didn't me-mean t-too..."

"OH WHAT, LADY LUNAIRE TOOK CONTROL?" Charlie mocked.

"I don't know ok!?"

"As your leader I command you to shut up."

"WHAT THE HELL DO YOU MEAN LEADER. SOMEONE WHO YOU GAVE YOUR LOVE AND TRUST TO IS DEAD AND YOU THINK I CARE ABOUT THE LEADER RIGHT NOW?"

"SHUT UP!" Danny screamed, accidently shoving the sharp part of his staff into Bert's gut.

“What.... WHAT DID YOU JUST DO TO MY BROTHER!? HE DIDN’T EVEN DO ANYTHING!” Charlie screamed, clamping his hands over his ears, a tear threatening to slip.

“Stop yelling.”

“CAN WE ALL JUST CALM DOWN?!” Duncan begged.

“You killed her, and you’re asking us to calm down?” Danny screamed, his voice rasping and hitching.

“YOU THINK I DON’T FEEL ANY REMORSE?”

“NO, NO YOU REALLY DON’T, YOU HEARTLESS IDIOT!”

“SHUT UP!” Duncan screamed, shoving his weapon in Danny’s chest.

At least that’s what he wanted to happen.

Charlie jumped in the way, receiving the blow.

Through the heart.

Just like his lover.

“WHAT IS GOING ON!” Edward asked in uppercase, suddenly appearing from the shadows.

“WE KILLED THEM, BUT I DON’T EVEN REMEMBER ANYTHING!”

Edward suddenly started chanting in a language unknown to many.

“What the hell are you doing Edward?” Danny rasped, purple branch-like structures, latched around his throat.

“Doing exactly what you two did to them, even for the same reason, it’s almost comical.” Edward answered, sounding nothing like himself.

One Day till Death

Danny fell to the ground, mud splotted all over his hair and clothes. Duncan stayed silent most of time, while in the last few seconds holding back a sob.

“FINNALLY!” Lady Lunaire exclaimed. “Took you long enough!”

“You never ever said something about killing them...” Edward muttered, regaining consciousness.

“Oh please, family’s overrated.”

“THEY MEANT THE GOD DAMN WORLD TO ME YOU IDIOT.”

“You don’t seem to have learnt your place.” She said, flicking him to the ground. “Alas, I don’t need your useless services anymore.”

“Just kill me already...”

“But you see, I’m nice!”

“Then I must be blind, your nothing but a blunder of lies.”

“Cute that you think I care. Anyways, I’ll let you choose how you would like to die...”

“I don’t even care anymore.”

“Whatever. Tomorrow, you’ll die, and world domination will be reality!”

Edward teleported to the Logic Lad’s lair, taking in every picture, everything that was supposed to be home. It could- it would have

been, if he didn't mess it up so much. That is what he always did: mess things up, and make others clean up after him.

As he walked further, he reached a room. Not an ordinary one, however one which hadn't been there the last time he checked. Curiously, he opened the door.

"A-anyone here" He asked, stuttering because of shock not fear.

"Well, well, well"

"WHO IS THERE"

"Are you the infamous Edward?"

"Depends on who's asking"

"I'm Iris, Lunaire's younger sister. I heard what happened"

"Great someone's here to keep an eye on me till the day I die."

"What if you didn't die?"

"But I want to..."

"To end this nightmare of living and because they're also dead?"

"...yes. How old are you...?"

"There is a way to kill her."

"How."

"You can kill her, she'll go to the realm, your tectonic family will be back and I'll have something to show off"

"That sounds great and all, but don't you mean platonic?"

"Apologies, it is my first day on earth."

"No problem... Can we talk about this over food please?"

"Sure"

“You like Chipotle?”

“What’s that?”

“JADE?! IS THAT YOU?” Nora said running.

“Nora?”

“WHERE WERE YOU?”

“Some random person shot me or something I-I.... don’t really remember...”

“Alright... where are we now though?”

“Inground.”

“Oh”

Nearby, Georgina and Lucas were protecting Annete from Duncan.

“She doesn’t want to talk to you. Leave her alone” Lucas said.

“Just let me explain!”

“EXPLAIN HOW YOU KILLED MY SISTER?”

“I DIDN’T MEAN TO!”

“YOU KILLED HER JUST BECAUSE SHE PUSHED YOU AWAY. WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU!?”

“EVERYTHING! IT’LL ALL BE FINE IF I CAN JUST TALK TO HER.”

“Just- just go away. You disgust me”

Duncan walked over to Danny facing a similar problem, except Neo and Aurelia were protecting Nora.

“I didn’t mean it I SWEAR!” Danny screamed.

“You probably planned it the first time you saw her, you freak” Neo murmured, looking Danny in the eyes. “You sicken me.”

“Dan, let’s just go. We messed up.”

“DAMN RIGHT YOU DID. YOU KILLED MY SIS. WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU!”

Far, far away, Charlie and Bert sat together.

“I’m scared.”

“Same.... What can we do?”

“We were just practicing and everything, and then this.”

“It’ll be ok bud.” Bert sighed scooching over to the side, opening his arms in a warm embrace.

“Ok...” Charlie whispered, slowly trotting towards him.

As Edward and Iris walked down the passages of ‘Present Crescent’ mall, Edward’s curiosity only had more and more questions being formed.

“Lunaire can be defeated, using an ancient spell chant!”

“Where can we get that from?”

“I thought you’d want to eat first?”

“Iris, I’m gonna die tomorrow, my friends are dead, I killed three of them under the influence of-.”

“PEOPLE WILL CALL THE COPS ON YOU, YOU DUMBASS!”

“And that matters?”

“Wow you really gave up on life....”

“Since 1900 baby!”

“Your high, AND YOUR 20.”

“Can we go already?”

“Fine.”

Iris teleported her and Edward to an abandoned closet.

“DAMN, THAT’S TOO MUCH PERFUME. WHAT DO YOU DO HERE”

“It’s to cover the poison, idiot. NOW HELP!!”

Children Left Behind

“Don’t humans need to eat?” Iris asked, floating slightly above the floor.

“Yeah?” Edward responded, distracted.

“It’s been seven hours... aren’t you hungry?”

“I’m fine... just...”

“Scared?”

“Yeah.”

Silence fell after that, heavy and deafening.

“Where even is this language from?” Edward finally asked.

“Jewe. How haven’t you learned this in history?” Iris raised an eyebrow.

“I don’t know!”

“Well, anyways... it’s been around since 1200.”

“And I care because...?”

“Because this determines whether you can perform the chant properly or not.”

“Chant?!”

“There’s no cult involved. What’s the big deal?”

“Forget my earlier reaction. What does the chant consist of?”

“We need to make one.”

“How long does that take?”

“A week... lucky for you, we can use ready-made ones.”

“Paid subscription?” Edward snickered.

“Huh?”

“It’s a human thing.”

“I want to know,” Iris said, pouting as she floated up to Edward’s level.

“How old even are you?”

“I was five when someone killed me... and Lunaire’s parents adopted us.”

“Us...?”

“Yeah! I have a brother! He’s with your friends right now.”

“Oh... you want to know more about the human world?”

“YEAH!”

“Okay, come here, little one,” Edward chuckled, carrying her to the makeshift couch.

“Jade, you awake?” Annete asked.

“Yes, Annie,” Jade replied groggily.

“Okay!” Annete said with a wide grin. “Where’s Nora?”

“She’s with Neo.”

“She’s not one to willingly allow comfort, right...?”

“She’s been too strong for too long—HEY, THAT RHYMES!”

“So, humans just make random memos and assume they’re funnee?” Iris asked.

"It's memes, and funny. But yes," Edward replied.

"That's kind of sad..."

Edward let out a soft chuckle. Then he asked, "What's the name of your brother?"

"Aruther! We can contact him if you want."

"Would we be able to contact the others?"

"Yeah! I can work on the device; you can work on the chant."

"Alright..."

"Uhm... Jade?" Bert asked hesitantly.

"Yes, Bert?" Jade replied.

"Are you two bored?"

"...Depends."

"There's some kid here who says he can connect us to Edward."

"We're coming," Nora declared.

"Alright, I made it!" Iris exclaimed, triumphantly holding up a small gemstone.

"Hm?" Edward asked.

"The device!"

"That's a gemstone?"

"Yeah! It's used for non-earth communications."

"You've done this before?"

"Yeah... they always abandon me after I help them."

"Aren't you five?"

"When I died, I've been doing this for two years... so I'm seven!"

“I won’t leave you. I promise,” Edward mentioned, hugging her.

“Promise?”

“Promise.”

“So, your name is Aruther?” Annete asked.

“Yep. My sister is with Edward right now.”

“And we want to contact him because...?” Nora asked, wrinkling her nose at the mention of Edward.

“He has a plan to kill Lunaire.”

“Lunaire?” Jade asked.

“Yeah. The one who made him... she even possessed Danny and Duncan.”

The room fell silent.

“How did we not even know they were possessed? That doesn’t make any sense!” Charlie shouted, hyperventilating.

“Char, come here,” Danny sighed calmly, taking charge as the others looked away, giving Charlie privacy.

Charlie sank to the floor, hands clutching his head, trembling violently. The voices in his mind grew louder and crueler:

‘Useless.’

‘I hate you.’

‘You don’t matter to me or your mother anymore.’

‘Your mother died because of you. Pathetic.’

He curled into a ball, shaking.

“I’ll get him. Aruther, you continue,” Danny said, like this was normal.

“Alright. As I was saying, Lunaire’s our sibling. Her parents adopted me and my sister because they needed new recruits as their time was near.”

“You have a sibling?” Duncan asked.

“Iris,” Aruther clarified.

“Oh!”

“She wanted you all dead. Caelidra is the only area containing human with powers—people usually control water or air, hardly anything else. So, when she found you and Edward at his weakest, bada bing, boom... world domination planned.”

“I don’t even know how to respond...” Jade sighed, leaning back on a floating cloud.

“You could just say yes to meeting him. Hear him out—either way, you’ll see him.”

“I don’t want to see him!” Nora screamed.

“Didn’t Danny kill you?”

Danny tensed.

“Yes, but what if—”

“Nora, it’ll be fine. Come here,” Jade whispered gently.

“Okay...”

“So, is that a, yes?”

“Your speech made two people pass out and you’re still stuck on that?”

“Yes? I don’t know much about humans, so I don’t really know how to comprehend.”

“You talk like a robot, you know?”

“Apologies.”

“How old even are you?”

“Four...”

“Oh...”

Hearts Inground Couldn't Keep

“**A**lright I'm calling them!” Iris exclaimed.
“I'm not sure anymore, what if...” Edward started rambling, about every single scenario that he thought would happen.

“It's too late, shush.”

Iris clicked the side button, which lit up.

“Hello?” a voice sounding familiar to Jade.

“Bir – Jade?” Edward asked, his eyes welling up with tears.

“Yes, Ed, it's me.”

“Oh my God, I'm so sorry...”

“We know you didn't mean it, Arthur told us about Lunaire.”

“Us...?”

“MOVE I WANT TO TALK TO HIM!!” Charlie screeched, snatching the phone from Jade. “HALLOOOOOOO!”

“Duncan did you give Charlie alcohol again?” Edward asked.

“Maybe...” Duncan whistled, his voice hardly above a whisper.

Edward chuckled before asking.

“So, you all know about her...?”

“Yeah. And we’re willing to help with revenge.” Nora snarled, cracking her knuckles.

“Alright.”

Iris took the phone now,

“All we need to do is for Edward to say the chant, then I’ll break this device, and you all will come back to life, and take her out with your powers.”

“Alright...” Jade sighed.

“C-can I just talk to Jade for a bit?” Edward asked.

“Sure!” Iris exclaimed.

“Arthur, let the lovebirds talk.” Nora smirked.

“Huh? Oh-Ok!”

“Hi...” Edward started.

How do you talk to a dead person, which you killed? Well not really him, but still.

“I know Lunaire possessed you and all that crap.”

“So, you’re not mad?”

“I’m mad you couldn’t tell your friends. Me. Who you supposedly had a feeling for. Did you even mean it? What even is there to like about me? Do you even trust anyone? You’re not alone, yet you make it seem that way, you never reach out, you’re always in the shadows—”

“One question at a time please. I didn’t tell you all because it was in the contract. Yes, I do have feelings for you. Yes, I do like you, your smile, your laugh, your personality, you’re everything to me.

No, I don't because trust's been broken too many times. I make it seem that way, so that when someone doesn't leave me like they always do, I don't feel hurt. Does that answer everything?"

"Well yeah. I do have more questions."

"Go on."

"Why. Why would you go to Lady- whatever the hell her name is..."

"My sister- Ivy died. My parents would fight every day. Bert had problems he wouldn't talk of, but acted like if I hid mine, it was a sin. Charlie, Danny and Duncan weren't known to me yet. Next."

"You had a sister?"

"Yep. Died at 7. My 'mom' killed her, and blamed it on the cat. We didn't even have one. My dad wanted custody of me, but the court decided for her to have full custody. They met midway, I'd meet my dad on weekends. 'Mom' was caught driving an ice cream truck that wasn't legally approved. Got sent to jail. I lived with my dad. He started working late, the court deemed him unfit. They had two choices, send me to a parent with a criminal record and supposed medical issues, or a parent who was an ok dad yet worked long hours so couldn't appear for many school events. I stayed with my dad again."

"Half of that answered my question but ok."

"You want the other half?"

"If you wa—"

"I met Lady Lunaire outside Glox, when I was 5. Ivy was 2. The court had decided to make Ivy stay with 'mom' for half the year, me with dad and then vice versa in June. I needed to protect Ivy from *her* in any way I could. So, I signed up to be part of the Starities. Kill anyone and everyone I met to protect Ivy. Heck, she was the

only reason I kept living. But then she died. That asshole of a ‘mother’ hired someone to kill Ivy. I was about to leave the Starities, leave this whole country and leave this planet maybe. Then Lunaire suggested I continue. Said that if I kill 280 people, she’d continue her plan with world domination and would give ‘mom’ and the ones that killed Ivy a slow and painful death.”

“For a distant introvert you sure do talk a lot.”

“You know, it isn’t fair you get to ask all the questions.”

“Fine. I asked three you ask three.”

“You asked more but ok.”

“That amount and three are basically the same number.”

“Right. Anyways, first question, why do you keep chasing after me? Even when you know, you, of all people, should have given up on me.”

“It’s the chase of knowing someone actually wants me. Not for what I can do, but for just me. The thrill of knowing someone is there to listen. Not to see my faults or fears, but so that I don’t go to sleep with a pounding in my head and chest.”

The silence was deafening.

“Th-thank you.”

“It’s just the truth.”

“Moving on, would you go out with me? After this... mess is over.”

“Yes.”

“Simple and direct. Choose the right person.”

Jade rolled her eyes, but her smile was visible.

“Last question, how do I make up for what I did at the washroom?”

“Out of context that would sound weird, but you don’t have to. You didn’t do anything. Generally speaking, if I have a nickel for every time, you blamed yourself, I’d be rich. If you still want to do something, ice cream on Saturday?”

“Y-yeah!”

“Alright then. It’s a date.” Jade smiled as she disconnected.

“OHHHHHHHHHHHHH SOMEONE’S IN LOVEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!” Iris squeaked.

“Shut up.” Edward grinned, but the blush under his eyes was visible, his grin wider than usual.

“You have 2 hours till your death and your love story you know?”

“Right.”

“And you have to take care of me and Arthur!”

“It’s Aruthur and I, and yes I know.”

“I’m hungry.”

“Mood change is crazy, but there is a hot dog stall nearby.”

“I’m going there, you finish off the work.”

“Ri, you’re not even 18. You need an adult.”

“Dang. Cosmic Stores are better.”

“Oh, I hated that Ricky guy that owned the place!”

“YOU KNOW COSMIC STORES? AND RUDE RICKY!”

“Indeed.... I’m going to get the hot dogs.”

Meanwhile a different conversation was going on in Ingroud.

“Dammit, Jade! Your stupid ass couldn’t have gotten killed another day?” Nora yelled.

“How the hell do I control when I get killed?” Jade argued back.

“Oh, I don’t know. Probably stop being such a loser? You’re almost 18. An adult. And you cannot even protect yourself? You’re overthinking for a boy who’s in a rival group and, to make matters worse, you think he’s in love with you!”

“Edward is though.” Danny backed Jade up.

“Yeah yeah. You’re just waiting to pounce and steal the spotlight, aren’t you Danny.”

“At least I earn it. I don’t force my members to do stuff they don’t want to.”

Jade ran off before more drama could occur.

“Oh please. Jade’s a crybaby and our fans deserve to know the type of pop star they’re following.”

“A pop star in your group which you’re the leader of. Which you’re overworking.”

Charlie spoke up, “Even in Oko Idol. You literally pushed her to the side and gave her the most hideous piece of clothing known to man.”

“It worked.”

“Yeah, like you know fashion.”

“I’ll have you know-.”

“No, you won’t have him know shit, Nora. Get your story straight. You can’t even take care of your ki- members so, shut up.” Danny yelled, walking in front of Charlie.

“How about we calm down...?” Annete asked getting in between the two.

“Why you little shi-.” Nora hissed.

Jade dragged her away.

"Are you both fine?" Danny asked Charlie and Annete.

"Yep!" Charlie responded rolling his eyes.

"Yeah, I guess." Annete sighed.

"Genuinely what is your problem, Christopher?" Damani asked.

"Nothing! I. am. Fine. So can all of you just stop pestering me!?" Christopher yelled.

"Fine?" Damani chuckled. "You haven't touched food in 2 weeks, you've not even left this freaking dorm, and you are 'fine?'"

"Pardon me for trying to help myself!"

"Help yourself from what?! You've been avoiding all of us and you won't even talk to the teachers!"

"I'm leaving. Don't even try and contact me."

"Oh no. You don't get to screw up everything and leave just like that."

"No, I do. Since I've messed up everyone's life so badly, then maybe I should just end myself. Shouldn't I, Damani?"

"That's not what I me—"

"But that's what you wanted to say. So, help you if this is our last time meeting. Tell Soph and Lolo what happened. Goodbye Damani."

"Chri—"

"Shut the hell up."

Where the Dead Learn to Breathe

“IT’S LE KE RUD VODO NEITRA LI CANTA MO IDRA.
NOT LEAKY VOODOO NAITRA LI FANTA, EDWARD!”

Iris screamed.

“I’M TRYING I’M TRYING!” Edward screeched.

“WE HAVE 2 MINUTES TO KILL HER AND POSSIBLY SAVE
HUMANITY, NOT THE TIME TO BE TRYING.”

“STOP RUSHING ME.”

“Ok we are here.”

“Wait WHAT.”

“Hello peasant.” Lady Lunaire rolled her eyes.

“I’M NOT PREPARED!”

“Shush. Sis, Eddie has something he wants to say!”

“Eddie? That’s.... a first. What did I tell you about getting attached
to mortals, Iris?”

“Eddie, start before I fling you across the window...”

“What window?”

“START.”

“Uh-UH LE KE RUD VODO LI CANTA MO IDRA!”

“LOUDER.” Iris growled.

Lady Lunaire tried protesting, her powers weakening.

“LE KE RUD VODO LI CANTA MO IDRA!”

“LOUDER FOR THE PEOPLE IN THE BACK.”

“LE KE RUD VODO LI CANTA MO IDRA!”

And with that, Iris broke the diamond, releasing 7 humans, each ready to fight.

“You’re going down.” Charlie said.

Charlie had hit Lady Lunaire with a lightning bolt.

“DUNCAN HOW MUCH BEER DID YOU GIVE HIM?”

Edward screamed as Charlie ran to him giggling.

“NONE!” Duncan screamed back.

“That’s because he gave him vodka.” Nora smirked.

“HE IS 19 DUNCAN.”

“SO?”

“So, she’s dead now?” Jade said walking up to Edward.

“Yeah, I guess?” Edward responded.

“You don’t sound sure?”

“Nothing like this has ever happened.”

“There is a first for everything” Jade said, winking, leaving Edward flustered.

“DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE!” Charlie said, whacking the lifeless entity in front of him.

“Duncan.” Bert said, warningly, before chasing him around the block.

“Hey Ed.” Danny said. “I’m so...”

“Shut up.” Edward said, giving him a very much needed hug

“So, what now?” Nora asked.

“Isn’t summer break ending soon?” Annete asked.

“Yes...?”

“CRAP I NEED TO MEET CHRISTOPHER!”

“Christopher?” Duncan asked, pushing Bert off him.

“Yeah! My boyfriend.”

“Your what now?” Charlie asked, his calm and composed demeanor coming slowly.

“I didn’t date him willingly, my aunt and his aunt are business partners, and for the betterment of the company we started dating.”

“Oh.” Charlie said.

“I’ll ask if he can meet tomorrow.”

“For what though?”

“I don’t really know, he said he wanted to meet for some reason.”

“Oh. Ok”

“Ok! We are meeting tomorrow!”

“Do you like him?”

“GOTTA GO!”

“Ok then...”

Annete sat at her porcelain white dressing table fixing her makeup, wearing a black tank top and grey denim skirt, white socks that reached her knees and a rose gold chain.

“Why do you even have to wear makeup + ‘that’?” Charlie asked

“He likes it better, I mean it is his exact words.”

“I don’t think you should care what he says...”

“It’s not- YOU’RE JEALOUS!”

“NO, NO I’M NOT!”

“OH, YOU’RE SO JEALOUSSSSSS!”

“Ok fine, I am. Happy?”

“Oh.”

She hadn’t planned for him to accept it so quickly so the further conversation wasn’t planned.

“Of what though?”,

He broke into a humorless chuckle before Charlie looked her in the eyes.

“What’s there not to be jealous of, love?” Charlie asked.

“I- THAT’S WHAT I’M ASKING YOU DUMB DUMB”

“No need to yell, he’s right there.” Duncan said, walking into the scene of commotion.

She was about to come up with a snarky comeback when she saw Charlie holding her phone.

“Ooooh, his username. ‘Love of my life’ Aww!”

“OH, YOU THINK THIS IS FUNNY? GET HERE” Annete screamed, tackling Charlie to the ground.

“DUNCAN CATCH” Charlie said as she threw her phone.

Probably not the best idea, since Duncan could not catch to save his life. The phone ended up breaking into a million pieces.

“...”

“Sunshine, I didn’t mean to...”

“Oh.” She said, gathering the fragments of her phone. Tears streaming down her face for another reason.

“YOU IDIOT! YOU DROPPED THE SILVERWARE! WHY DID I GET SUCH A DISGRACE.” Annete’s mom, Avina screamed.

“I-I’m sorry!”

“I DON’T CARE ABOUT YOUR SORRIES, THIS IS THE THIRD TIME.”

“I didn’t mean to!”

“OH! YOU WANT TO SCREAM AT YOUR MOTHER?”

“NO MAMA NO!”

“I’m getting the belt.” “Lucas hold her.”

“Ma, she’s just a kid!”

“Do you want to be hit also?”

“No.”

“Good.”

“ANNETE! WAKE UP!” Charlie screamed, genuine worry in his voice.

“I’M SORRY I’M SORRY I’M SORRY!” Annete said, covering her ears, trying to make herself as small as possible. “PLEASE DON’T HIT ME AGAIN! I DIDN’T MEAN TO!”

Charlie tensed. Duncan smirked, and walked out of the room.

“Sunshine it’s ok, no one can hurt you here, ok?” Charlie said, stroking her back. It wasn’t that anyone could hurt her here, they wouldn’t be allowed 3 ft near her.

"I-I didn't do anything wrong?"

"Nope. Not at all"

Without thinking, she just attacked Charlie with a hug, so tight he couldn't breathe.

"W-What happened just now?" Charlie asked.

"I had a panic attack. If something falls, I just have this same thought from my childhood, when my mother or father would hit me if I wasn't quiet or model-like or not pretending to be perfect."

"You don't have to be perfect around anyone, sunshine" Charlie said.

"I can be me?"

"Yes. You don't have to pretend everything's fine. I'll be here, ok?"

"Promise?"

"Promise."

"Thank you..."

"Idiotic lovebirds." Duncan sighed, but he felt a twinge of *something*.

"So... are your parents still alive?"

"No... Lucas killed them when he first got his powers."

"Remind us to get him something, when we meet"

"Don't you all live here?"

"To think I loved a fool like you." Edward spoke sadly, clutching a piece of paper in his hand.

"Darling, no! It was never meant to end this way!" Jade screamed, her paper long forgotten on the floor.

"Don't call me darling." He spat, walking off the stage.

“Jade! What the hell happened?” Nora asked.

“He found out I used him... I-I di-didn’t mean to!” Jade whispered, as she fell down breaking into a sob.

[The curtains close and it is only Danny, Edward and Bert.]

“Sire, ’tis time you retire to the cabin. Old villagers and scandals live near.” Bert whispered.

“Ay, me fray not. ’Tis gentleman too broken down by thy fair maiden, Jade.” Danny sighed.

“Hold your horses, thy frail gentleman....”

[Curtains close, and Nora stands on a balcony, approached by Danny.]

“Thou a friend of me master, Edward?” he asks.

“That’s correct. Why do you speak like that, and your reason for being here?”

“You ask wonderful questions, thy fair maiden.... I talk like this as ’twas bestowed ’pon me to act like Shakespearean folk. Sire Edward administered a meeting with your friend, Jade, this recurring evening.”

“Impoverished is his name. I will tell Jade of this news.... What’s your name?”

“My name? It’s Danny.”

“Mine’s Nora. Pleasure to meet you.”

“And.... Scene!” the drama teacher cried, clutching her tissue.
“Heavens, that was the best run we have done so far!”

“Miss, can we do the next scenes?” Bert asked.

“Of course, my child.

[Scene sets in an enclosed room with a large dining table and delicacy-like food.]

“Soldier?” Edward asks.

“Yes sire?” Bert responds.

“Where is Jade?”

“I’m here! I’m here. Apologies for the delay, thee bastard” Jade pants.

“Thee dare call sire a bastard...?” Bert raises his sword.

“Halcyon down Bert. Peasants like her are not used to royals.” Edward smirked.

“Some ‘royal’ thou art, thee sicken me Edward” Jade mocked.

“Very well... the meal shall commence!” Edward sighs.

[Curtains close]

“Marvelous! I shall finish the end for you all tomorrow!” the teacher cries.

“Ok miss.” Bert sighs.

The sound of shuffling and scuffing of shoes followed, short words spoken between them about carpooling.

“Do vampires that bite zombies turn into zombies or stay vampires.” Bert asked.

“Stay vampires.” Danny answered.

“But then they’ve digested zombie blo—”

“Children, after you are done with your ‘intellectual debate’ please leave.” The drama teacher sighed.

“Yes miss.” The five of them dragged on their words.

The teacher left, handing the most responsible one the keys (Jade).

“I haven’t heard from Neo in a long time.” Nora remarked.

“Chill Ra... He’s with Georgina.” Jade comforted her.

“Contact the English dictionary. Blue-haired teens make assumption that ‘long time’ means one night! Experts claim that she is stupid!” Edward yelled.

“Tough talk coming from a guy with more bald spots than ways for his career to go.” Jade snarled, opening the door.

“Jokes on you, I don’t have any.”

“Jokes on you, that’s the point.” Jade fake-smiled, dropping the keys in his hand and walking out.

Red Lights Never Wait

“We do?” Duncan asked.

“Yeah...? I mean I think.”

“We’ll stay anyways” Charlie said, piggybacking her to the bed.

“Right now, we stay here.”

“But I have to go?”

“Nah. Too late. It’s 11:00. Are you trying to die?”

“Ugh fine”

“Good. Submission looks good on you, love.” Charlie said with a smirk.

“Tape would look better on your mouth”

“You’d look better on my mouth.”

The silence was deafening

“Huh-HUH”

“CHARLIE, I TOLD YOU NOW WAS NOT THE TIME TO ASK HER OUT” Duncan screamed.

“Shush, she hasn’t said anything yet.

He looked at her. Waited for her answer. The one answer that could change everything for better or worse.

“I still don’t know what I’m meant to answer...”

“Will you be my girlfriend.” Charlie asked.

“Oh.”

“I know it’s sudden, and we haven’t even had a proper outing and all but...”

“Yes,”

“Wait WHAT”

“Yes, you doofus, yes.”

He had been asked out, dated multiple times. But this time, he was not the one calling the shots and breaking hearts. This time he was the one feeling sparks. The good kind, not the one you get during something serious.

“Oh my God.” Charlie said. Duncan teleported outside, letting them have their moment in the sun.

“So, what does that make us?” Charlie asked.

“I don’t really know” Annete answered.

“We can figure that out later, can we sleep?” Charlie asked.

“I can’t, I need to pack for my trip”

“Which one?” Charlie inquired.

“School trip, we’ll be going to Jewlna, to learn about history and all I guess.”

“I’ll come.” Charlie said.

“Oh. Yay.”

“You don’t sound too excited...?”

“I just don’t think it’s something you would enjoy.”

“If you’re there it’s fine.”

“Okey! We need to pack.”

“Tomorrow...” Duncan said, reentering the room, fed up and willing to fling something at Charlie if he kept the conversation going on longer.

“Ok ok.” Charlie said.

“You both can sleep; I’ll go pack and come.”

“Ok then.” Duncan said, before passing out on a bean bag.

“Oh” Charlie said before doing the same except on the plush chair.

Two hours later, Annete had packed everything she needed, and had packed extra for the other two.

“I’m hungry”

Annete walked down the spiral staircase into the kitchen, nearly slipping on the blue marbled floor.

‘I need to stop wearing socks in the house’ she thought to herself.

Opening the fridge, she came to the sad discovery that there was nothing except two milkshakes and rock-solid frozen noodles.

‘I’m just going to go to the convenience store.’ She thought to herself.

“CHARLIEEEEEEE!”

Charlie appeared behind her like a satan spawn.

“What.”

“I’m going to the store,”

“I’ll come.”

“Me too.” Duncan said.

“Okey!”

The three walked down the stairs, talking about the upcoming field trip.

“Dad I’m not going to marry her! I barely know her, and I have my eyes on someone else anyways!” Christopher screamed at his father.

“Christopher. Johanes. Dover. You will follow what your mother wants.” His ‘dad’, Ralph Dover said, with a face that could kill.

“NO!”

“That Damani is the one you have your eyes on... Why do you always go after the useless ones? His parents work in some stupid bakery. Just because two have been dating for a few months doesn’t mean he’s the one.

“He isn’t useless. He’s smart, and his personality makes me smile. His parents’ bakery makes the best food ever; better than any food you could make.”

“Fine, do what you want. Bring dishonor to the Dover residence as much as you want. But don’t complain later. I can’t stand your whining.”

“I’m going out.”

“Tell someone who cares.”

Christopher got in his Dianio, speeding on the highway.

Wait was that, Annete?

“Ok here’s where we have to pass!” Annete exclaimed.

“Finally, we’ve been walking for hours!” Charlie said with an exasperated sigh.

“I know, it’s a long way but at least we get food!”

“No NO!” Christopher screamed, the brakes not functioning properly.

Just then, he received a message:

You got what you wanted.

"It's a red light, let's go!" Annete said.

"There is also a car there, that's rapidly approaching- ANNETE NO!" Charlie screamed.

"No no no NO!" Christopher screamed, trying to turn the car, but in the process hit Annete in the head.

It happened in slow-mo. She fell, blood rushing from her head, her skull and brain visible. Her green hair becoming brown by the minute. Her laced socks damp with blood and sweat. Her eyes rolled back, her breathing slowing.

Christopher had already sped off, too scared to deal with what happened.

"ANNIE!" Charlie screamed.

"NO THIS WASN'T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN" he said, holding her in his arms, crying into her shoulder violently.

"IT WILL BE FINE. YOU CAN'T LEAVE PLEASE" Charlie screamed.

"LOOK THE AMBULANCE IS APPROACHING JUST STAY WITH ME FOR A FEW MORE MINUTES PLEASE, PLEASE!"

"I-I'm sorry I-I ca-can't."

"ANNIE PLEASE. YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE LIKE THIS, WE- WE COULD HAVE HAD A LIFE TOGETHER. YOU CAN'T GO PLEASE!" Charlie screamed, but it was of no use.

"D-do-don-don't mi-miss m-me t-to-too mu-muc-much, k-ka-kay?"

Her body went limp in his arms, breathing—any sign of her being alive gone.

She was gone for good or bad. Whatever you wanted to call it, she was gone. And there was nothing no one could do to save her.

“Char I’m so sorry...” Duncan whispered.

Charlie gave no response.

His vision went black and he passed out.

“CHAR!” Duncan yelled.

Stars do Twinkle when they Cry

“Char, you need to eat something.” Danny said.

It had been a week since Annete’s death. Jade and Nora stayed in their practicing rooms. Lucas had gone into a state of deep depression, and the other 3 tried their best to help. Bert, Danny and Edward were close with her, but not enough to understand the pain they were going through.

Charlie didn’t talk, sleep, eat. He just existed. Hating himself for not stepping in. And the worst part was that no one even tried lying to him that it wasn’t his fault. He wouldn’t believe them anyways. He could have saved her and they didn’t.

Why? Because they were slow.

“Are you even listening?”

“Huh- Oh yeah.” Charlie said.

“How much did you sleep yesterday?”

“Sleep?”

“Why do I try.”

“Sorry....”

“It’s ok, I guess. Can you try and sleep?”

“Fine.”

“Thanks.”

Charlie teleported to his bed.

It hadn't even been a month since they were together, or even a week, Charlie thought to himself.

"What's the point of even staying here" Charlie said, plopping himself on the bed.

"She wouldn't want us homeless, Char."

"It's my fault" Charlie said, laughing like a maniac. "If- if I had just been more careful- I"

"Charlie Nirean, it's not your fault I promise. If anything, it's both of ours, or whoever was driving that car. I'm not letting you blame yourself only."

"There's no point..."

"You need sleep. Take some rest, I'll make sure to protect you from the nightmares."

"Thanks Dun."

Charlie dozed off the second he allowed himself to.

The nightmare started slow and steady.

"Micheal Nirean Jr. You need to start acting more mature. You're 13 and still act like an 8-year-old." Micheal Nirean said sternly.

"Papa, I'm sorry..."

"Sorry won't fix this. Just because you're a teen now doesn't mean you get to eat whenever you want. You need to keep to the model training agency. They know what is best for you, okay?"

"But papa, I want to be a surgeon, not a model..."

"Does it look like I care? Your brother's got his mind around his studies all the time. Thank God I don't have 2 brain-dead sons."

"But papa, why can't I follow my dreams?"

"You are just a useless piece of trash, who will never amount to anything. Your mother's death was all your fault, remember. You caused her death with your birth; therefore, you must fulfil her dream of being a model."

"But papa..."

"SHUT UP!" he said, raising his wine glass and 'accidentally' dropping it on him. "I'll hurt your brother the same way every time you ruin my plans."

"IT HURTS!" Micheal screamed. Blood and wine dripping down his clothes and hair, splinters of glass stuck in various parts of his clothes and skin.

"Good." "It's time I caused some pain."

"MICHEAL!" Bert said, screaming and running to Micheal.

"Let him be, he's just having a tantrum"

"He's crying... WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY BROTHER?!"

"I'm so sorry... You won't rat out your father, right?"

"We would!" Bert screamed. This had happened way too many times, hadn't it?

"BERT NO!"

"Brat." He said, before throwing Bert into the basement. "You're staying there for a week." "As for you, hm, I'll leave you out for some time. Maybe some sense will knock into that brain-dead skull."

For a full day, Micheal (Charlie) stayed there in the freezing cold, the blood on his clothes and skin drying, his hair becoming red. Glass clinked every time he breathed.

The window opens. Bert steps out with a packet of biscuits and water. It's the only food their father would give them.

“Char, eat something please. Dad left some food for me, but you need it more”

It’s no use. He’s already passed out in the cold.

Another nightmare comes.

It was 2020, and he was 14, walking down the street with the other members of Logic Lads. When life had been simpler. When no one knew secrets were being hidden from them.

Danny and Duncan were laughing about their own jokes. Edward kept zoning out, to the point where he fell and hit his head. Bert was walking near Charlie, trying to start a conversation about anything that could come to mind.

Sure, he tried participating, but he had more on his mind. To the point where he thought so much, he didn’t even realize he’d been injected with some purple fluid in his left arm. The sensation he received afterwards was painful, his veins burning and now visible through his skin.

He’d fallen to the ground; a group of masked criminals appeared. The other four fought them off, ensuring Charlie wasn’t hurt in the process. Made sure he was fine.

His full arm went numb; a huge scar appeared on his leg. Made them worry. That’s what he always did. Made others worry. Just because he was the youngest, the others always thought he needed protection, treating him like he could break.

Another one.

He walked past the school he studied at. Monstars Academy. He saw her, Annete Windor. He wanted her, but at the same time knew he shouldn't.

Someone as sweet as her shouldn't have to deal with a menace like him. People feared him, yet she treated him with the same level of importance she gave others. Somehow, being treated differently by others didn't matter as much as being treated the same by her.

And he saw her die. Could have—should have stopped her. He tried thinking differently. It was the car's fault. But he should have stopped her, regardless of who caused her death.

He woke up with a start, immediately noticing Duncan passed out near the foot of the bed. Out of natural instincts, he teleported him to the bed, got up and went to the washroom.

Throw up after throw up. Till all he thought of himself was nothing. Till he didn't think of anything, till he was brain-numb. That never came. How many pills could one have till they should stop?

He had taken a Geovich, without water, hoping he could catch at least 30 minutes of sleep.

He lay on the purple-colored bean bag.

No matter how many times Duncan or anyone would tell him it wasn't his fault, he wouldn't believe them. Lucas hadn't spoken to anyone. His sister was dead. And the last time he spoke to her was during the Hietna.

"I should probably try and get some sleep." He spoke, not like anyone would care.

But instead, he let his thoughts wander.

The contract would end soon. The break would be over and he'd be on VOGUE and other magazines. Just as an icon, persuading people to do the same things he was forced to do or say. He didn't want any of this. No one wanted a different life more than him right now. To see the love of your life die in front of you, then know very soon you'd be leaving everyone who helped you get through the process. And for a fantasy he didn't want but his father forced upon him since he was five.

"Everyone's probably wondering why we're here..." Nora sighed, looking at Jade.

"Huh, what?" Jade asked, she'd been phased out completely.

The hoods of their jackets felt heavier with the silence.

"Do you think she's in a better place?" Nora asked, looking out the window.

"Pfft." Jade sighed, "Any place is better than this dump."

Nora laughed along.

"I always imagined her outgrowing us." Jade sighed.

"Hmm?"

"That she'd grow up and marry her lover boy, Charlie."

"Maybe have a dog called Pluto?"

"And a cat called Mars..."

"She'd always been amazed by the stars... said the stars twinkled when they were crying."

"Just glad Lunaire never got her. She'd have Annie round her finger with the number of times she would leave her starstruck."

"Mhm..."

“Charlie, are you awake?” Duncan asked.

“Yeah... I saw you passed out by the way. Your eyes were red-rimmed... Everything ok?”

“Yep! Totally.” Duncan responded, a little too quickly for his own liking.

“Alright. If you say so. I’m going to the cafeteria to get some food. Are you coming?”

“I-I don’t feel like it. You can go”

“Okay then...”

The Danger One Can Become In 10 Minutes

Lucas Windsor. Are you paying attention?" Miss Hernes asked, the 8th time in one class.

"Yes," he replied.

Yes, because your sister dying really helps with paying attention to something that doesn't make sense anyway. He'd sent an email, merely stating that she'd got into Yoque College. Her dream college. Something believable. Something that doesn't raise questions. Because questions raise worry. Worry brings hatred. He'd seen it with his own eyes—the day he killed their 'parents'. Annete couldn't look him in the eyes. Through those rose-colored glasses, everything seemed fine. That training a 5-year-old to walk and talk like a lady was normal. That calling everything that didn't please them a sin.

"Lucas, are you coming, or no?" Neo asked.

"Yeah. I'll just use the washroom and come."

"Alright!"

He walked down the spiral staircase, leading to a small bathroom. He walked over to the mirror and gave himself a look. How long had it been since he'd eaten something? Since he'd paid attention in class? Since he—he was himself?

"I should go."

As he walked out, he met a familiar face. Charlie's.

His eyes were red and puffy, his hood up—something he never did.

“Char? Are you ok?” he asked, sitting next to him. He knew Charlie didn’t do anything. Kid was too in love.

“I found out who ran over Annete,” he said in such a fragile voice Lucas almost missed it. Key word: almost.

“Who?”

“It was her ex, Christopher Dover. The cops took photos of the incident, found his license plate on the car. He blamed it on his father. The cops didn’t believe him at all. However, his dad bailed him.”

The silence was filled with anger, hatred, and something one could not name.

“What color was the car?” Lucas asked.

“Pink.”

“You haven’t killed him yet?” Lucas asked mockingly.

“We were going to wait for you to form a plan since we don’t have any yet.”

“I’ll get the other 3 on board, you get the other 5. Meet at the cricket pitch in 10.”

“Jade and Nora didn’t come to school today.”

“I’ll tell them the plan later.”

“Wait, but what plan?”

“MEET ME THERE IN 10, CHARLIE.”

“Alright.”

Charlie took out his phone, messaging on the Logic Lads group chat.

. Logic Lads.

CharlieTheGreat: Meet me and Lucas at the cricket pitch ASAP!

DunAteTheCan: You told him without me ☹️

DannyTheOldUncle: Alright, sure Char. Bert and Ed, are you both coming?

Losah: I'll be there soon.

McBert: Yeah, same.

CharlieTheGreat: Alright, thanks! And Duncan, sorry.

DunAteTheCan: No problem.

Grinning to himself, he headed to the cricket pitch. On his way there, he met a familiar face. He tensed. Christopher Dover.

He saw red. His fists clenched, but he walked off. No point in trying anything that could mess with the 'plan'. What even was the 'plan'? Lucas didn't even say anything—he'd hardly finished saying the name of the bastard, and in his easy-bake-oven of a brain, he had come up with an idea. It had hardly been 10 minutes and—

He felt a large hand on his shoulder.

"Char? You're heading the wrong direction..." Bert said, looking at Charlie with concern. "Are you ok...?"

"Y-yeah, I'm fine, don't worry. Sorry. Which way is the cricket pitch?"

"...You're literally right in front of it. Are you sure you're fine, Char? Have you had your medication? Have you slept? Have you eaten?"

"I said I'm fine, Bert."

“You’re not, ok? Your skin is pale, I haven’t seen you eat anything, and if you were fine, you would have had the energy to teleport instead of walking so much. I’m asking again, Charlie—are you ok?”

“What do you want me to say then? That I’m breaking apart, that everything and everybody around me is going to disappear in less than a year? That I never got to experience my childhood, that all I’ve lived up to till now is just to follow our parents’ dream? I’m supposed to have those medications, which you’re SOOO worried about, on a full stomach, yet Dad never sends money. What. Do. You. Expect? I’m trying not to make everyone worry about me—you’ve all got your own worries, and you’re trying to make me the center of attention, when you know I hate that. In short, no. I’m not ok. Happy?”

“Dad affected us both, ok? If you think it was so hard to be the center of attention, try not getting any attention. You think I don’t want to help you? I’m trying my best. You’re not special, Micheal—WAIT I DIDN’T MEAN TO SAY THAT.”

“Save it. Damn it, forget I ever tried reaching out and telling you something. I’m going to my dorm. Don’t follow me. And tell Lucas I won’t be there.”

“Charlie, wait, please—”

“Save it. If you want to help, help by staying away.”

Charlie walked off to the dorm and stared at the window. Memories of her kept appearing. When she’d walk with him back home because he was alone. When she’d shared her lunch with him when his dad didn’t pack much

While his mind rambled on and on about her, his gaze fell upon a certain object. A pocket knife. The exact one Bert gave him when he was 8 to protect him from Dad. To protect him from danger.

“Too bad no one’s ever going to let me be in danger,” he said, following up with, “Unless I’m the danger to myself... or I’m just danger.”

That’s when he felt it. A power from the sky slowly taking over him. The grasp felt like five daggers being pushed into his skin, stretching and tightening till it was inside him.

“OW!” he screamed. But no one could hear him. His arm lit up a mix of orange and pink in the dark. His eyes had become dark blue with white dots sprinkled around, looking like mini stars.

“O-ow...” was all he could manage to say before collapsing against the wooden wall.

The Things One Can't and Couldn't Save

“Where’s Charlie, Bert?” Aurelia asked. “Lucas has been waiting for him.”

“We had a fight, and we took a break.” He responded, but the look in his eyes made it clear that the fight wasn’t small.

“I’m here.” Charlie said, teleporting behind Bert. “I just needed a breather.”

“What happened to your arm...?” Georgina asked. “I’m pretty sure that wasn’t there before.”

“It’s nothing, can we start?”

“No. Your eyes also, they were yellow, you were born with them. You even mentioned Dad never sends money, so you couldn’t have bought lenses. None of us would buy lenses, we don’t have that kind of money. And your hair... it’s becoming purple. We’re not starting till you tell us what happened.” Bert said, or more appropriately, demanded.

“Then you can start without me. I’m leaving.” Charlie said as he left.

Edward appeared in front of him.

“I know what happened to you.” He spoke.

“Yeah right.”

“It’s Lunaire. You’re at your weakest right now, and there’s one less of us right now. You’re also more powerful than me, so it’s way easier.”

“How on earth am I more powerful than you?”

“Lightning beams. Things that can grab people, push or pull them, burn them and make them blind, compared to me, who can just teleport and kill people with my voice. That too, I have a weakness for blood.”

“How did you get possessed by her?”

“She spoke to me. It happened before I met you, Duncan and Danny, I think when I was 15. My sister had just died, my ‘mom’ in jail and my dad not really acting like a dad. Promised me power and wealth.” He paused before going on.

“As for you, I think what happened was when the three of you got together, it formed a star. I read about it, Duncan can control the moon, you can control the sun and Annete can control Earth. When three people with these exact powers come together, in whatever form—friends, siblings, dating, whatever—it forms a star. If one of the three dies, the one who blames themselves the most will get affected. The star should have reached you in one piece, but I think Lunaire affected it, allowing you to be possessed. And since you were alone, it was even easier. Any questions?”

“N-no, not yet.”

“Bummer.”

“I have a question. Didn’t we kill her?”

“We killed her physical embodiment. Her soul can take the physical appearance of any dead person. Any dead person—make you go

insane and then make the others worry. Then they leave you alone, where you're even more weak and she takes over."

"You're repeating the same lines again and again, you know?"

"Right. I just needed to warn you a lot. No one warned me, so imagine jumping into the deep end of a pool without learning how to swim."

"Didn't you do that at Neo's birthday? The one that happened last week and also managed to get us in jail?"

"The cops came because you somehow learnt my chant, started chanting it at a street lamp, saw a cop car, broke the light, then told the officer to give you a piggyback ride."

"Not my fault he looked like Danny."

"Char, Danny has brown hair and blue eyes. The cop had green eyes and red hair..."

"Practically the same. Regarding what you said earlier, how did you manage to control your powers so well?"

"I tested it. Became aware of my weaknesses, possible signals of her appearing. The basics. I could train you to go against her if you want?"

"Yes. Yes please. If I need to fight against an interstellar bastard like Lunaire, I need help."

"You do. Mentally and physically. Meet me at the cricket pitch for practice at 4:00 am."

"Do you hate sleep?"

"Do you want to die?"

"Answer my question, Ed."

“Your questions include something that could be fixed with a good one-to-two-hour nap. Mine includes something that determines if you live another day. I fail to deem yours so important.”

“Fine fine, I’ll be there.”

“Good. And bring food and a jacket and sprinkles.”

“Why in the frickety frackety frook do you want sprinkles...?”

“We need it to summon Iris and Arthur. I took her to Gleck last week to thank her. And now she buys their stupid chocolate-sprinkled donuts all the time. Arthur likes them but gives most of his share to Iris. One day she’s going to take his organs with how generous he is.”

She Said She Was Her

“Charlie, I’m not going to say it again. Put the donut down.” Edward said, struggling to hide the tug of a smile playing on his lips.

Charlie, Iris and Arthur were sitting inside Gleck, with 3 full boxes of donuts and strawberry milkshakes.

“We’re supposed to be training, not eating...” he continued.

“Not my fault,” Charlie said, while slurping down the last of his milkshake. “Besides, doesn’t one need food for training?”

“One needs food during or after training, not before. And besides, this is your 7th donut!”

“My stomach hurts,” Aruther whined.

“See! Now, tell them to pack the rest while I take Aruther to the school infirmary. You both meet me there in 10 or 15 minutes.”

“Bummer”

“Charlie?”

“Oh- oh.”

In front of the two stood no one other than Christopher Dover. With his stupid brown, edging-into-pink wolf cut, covering his green eyes.

“Yeah, hey. I saw you at the staircase earlier, all good?”

“Mhm.”

“Damn, someone woke up on the wrong side of the bed.”

“What?”

“What are you so mopey about?”

“You killed her, and then you just walk in acting smug for no reason and think I’m acting off?”

“Oh. You heard that.”

“Heard that? I saw that. You don’t deserve to be bailed; you should have been publicly humiliated and executed.”

“Listen here, Micheal, your parents’ dream of making you a model is all in my control. While I may hate my father, he is wealthy and owns most of the modeling agencies here, even partnering with your ‘love’s’ best friend, Nora’s dad’s company, Wallace. If you have any intention of having a clean slate, I suggest whatever ‘ideas’ you have, keep them to yourselves, or else—”

“Or else what?” Iris spoke up.

“Oh. This little idiot is your bodyguard? Cute.” He said that before flinging her across the room. Thank God she had wings.

“What the heck is wrong with you!?”

“Everything. Now, goodbye.”

Charlie ran over to Iris to check up on her.

“Are you ok, Iri?”

“Iri? That’s new.”

“Shut up. I think you should be caring about your head more than nicknames.”

“Fair.”

“The donuts have been sent to my dorm, come there at noon, I’ll give you some.”

“Yippee.”

Charlie’s phone buzzed; his dad was calling him.

“Iri, you can go meet Ed, I’ll be back soon.” he said, before running off to a nearby alleyway.

“Okey.”

As Charlie reached the alleyway, his heart pounding. He and his dad hadn’t spoken in a year, and that was to make sure he wasn’t too badly hurt in the face. What if Christopher had said something? His father was one to choose power and money over his own kids.

Reaching a less crowded place, he called his dad again. No answer. Another call? Nope, straight to voicemail. The same annoying message played again and again with every call.

You have reached the fastest fashion designer. Click 1, 2, 3 or 4 to place an order, click 5, 6, 7 or 8 if this is a prank call.

However, this call was different; the voice was also different. More lady-like and metallic.

“Come to Glox, to prove your worth. 5 minutes. If you do not come, I’ll ensure everyone you know and cherish will be dead. Do not underestimate me, Micheal Charlie Nirean Junior.”

He tensed. Only Logic Lads and his dad knew about his full name, and they all knew he changed it to Charlie when he became 18. So, who on earth was that...?

He reached there, summoning his weapon. His lightning arrows glimmering in the sun.

“Welcome, Charlie.” A very, very familiar voice said.

Whipping his head around, he saw no one other than Annete

At least he thought it was Annete.

She had metal instead of skin, blue glowing eyes, hair that looked smoother than usual, and her freckles—which she displayed always so cheerfully—gone.

“We meet again,” she continued. “You seem.... shocked?”

“W-who are you...? And why do you sound like her...?”

“Because. I am her.”

Shadows of Stars

“**Y**ou’re not her. She’s dead. I saw her die...” Charlie said, though even he was questioning himself.

“Or did you kill her? Like you claim.”

“Then you’re not her, because if you were her, you would have used ‘me,’ not ‘her’!”

“Wait... so I’m you?”

“NO! I AM ME. YOU ARE YOU. OR WHATEVER OR WHOEVER YOU ARE, YOU ARE NOT HER!”

“But I am her!”

“No, because she is dead!”

“Wait, so she is ‘she,’ she is ‘her,’ but I am ‘she’ and ‘her,’ but you’re saying no...”

“What—NO! You are something or someone I don’t know. I don’t even want to know—WHY AM I HERE?”

“Right. You’re here... to die.”

“WHAT?!”

“Well, in some time! Not now. I’m nice like that!”

“I would recognize that statement from anywhere,” Edward said, stepping out from the shadows with Iris and Aruther floating beside him. “Char, that’s not even a person—that’s an illusion. I TOLD YOU TO HAVE YOUR MEDS!”

“Oh...” ‘Annete’ said, before vanishing.

“Well, it looked real. Besides, how exactly did you find my location...?”

“Iris. You sent her to me...”

Meanwhile, Nora’s tension was building.

“Nora, you need to eat something. At least get some sunlight?”
Danny said, genuinely worried.

“I don’t need all that,” she mumbled back

“It’s a basic human requirement, Ra...” Bert added.

“I don’t really care.”

Her phone buzzed. Her dad was calling.

“One second, please,” Nora said, walking off to her room.

“Two years. Two goddamn years I’ve known her, and she’s never said ‘please.’ Not even to Jade or Annete...” Danny muttered.

“Let it be. If it’s important, she’ll tell us. She’s learning we’re trustworthy like that.”

“I’ve known her two years. Have you even known her for two minutes? Nora, of all people, isn’t one to ask for advice or comfort...”

“I knew her when Ed went mental, stalked Jade, three of us got put in a group for that school play... then we kidnapped them and... yeah.”

“Ah, the good old times.”

“Grandpa...”

In Nora’s room, a more tense conversation was unfolding with her and her father.

"Hello, Father..."

"Hello, Nora. I needed to speak to you."

"Go on."

"Do you remember the Dover's?"

She tensed. "You mean the family that my childhood best friend... hic, kind of hard to forget."

"Save me the sob story. You're studying law—get him out. His father's got me on this made-up story. Not really make-believe, since I did do it, but who cares."

"I am not proving him innocent. He killed her in cold blood! And didn't a court hearing already go through?"

"Yes. But then that stupid Lucas had to file a lawsuit again. God, the things people would do for their siblings is sickening. I'm glad I only adopted you and not your other siblings. Your brother Neo is, anyways, such a handful."

"Yes. Really nice thing to say to someone who has your life on a thread."

"Try anything against your father, Nora. I'll have you out of this country before your next heartbeat—or I'll have you six feet below. Do not test me."

"Of course not, Father. I apologize."

"Good enough. The lawsuit is next week."

"Understood."

He disconnected. She fell on the floor, crying—the first real tears since the funeral. She'd known Annete her whole life, and now she had to go against her somehow? And it was clearly Christopher's

fault the cops had even proved it! This would just ruin her career even more. And as if it wasn't ruined enough when Charlie got arrested at Neo's party...

A knock came. Another. Then another.

"Come in."

"It's us..." Danny said. "Can we come in?"

"Do I have a choice?" Nora asked, though even she felt happier—these were the only two, other than Neo and Aurelia, that cared about her feelings. Duncan and Jade had just dissolved into the shadows.

"No."

"Come in, you goofballs."

"So, what happened on the call?" Danny asked, floating to the fan.

"I have to prove him innocent. If the cops and literally every detective in the world couldn't, how on earth am I meant to?"

"Don't do it," Bert said.

"Bert, I have to. He said he'd have me dead if I didn't cooperate."

"Then I'll teach you how to fight." Danny spoke up.

"What if he goes after everything, I've had to fight for..."

"Then I'll help you get it back."

"Ok..."

"Ed's been training Charlie recently, so I'll need to borrow the room, or we could get a personal trainer?"

"C-can we talk about something else, please?"

"If you go eat something—"

"I'll eat today."

"Fine."

"I'm going to sleep."

"Bert and I need to go work on some assignments; we'll check on you at 9."

"Alright. Thanks."

"No problem, Ra."

"Jade? Are you alive?" Duncan asked.

"Yes, Duncan..." Jade answered.

"As I was saying. Before all the Hietna happened, Edward killed 2 kids. Well—minors, they were below 18—but anyways, one of which he sent to Lady Lunaire. Then the other, a boy—he threw a dagger at the poor guy's head, also sent to her. The teenager was around 14, but interstellar transport can make one become younger. Since the other could have been sent after, and since he was the youngest, I think the two could be Iris and Arthur?"

"That could explain why they're really attached to him... many souls don't leave the person who killed them till they die..."

"A couple that has two people who want to kill each other. Perfect."

"We're not dating."

"Anyways, we're getting off point. Edward even told me about this: when the three of them met, they formed a star. And with two interstellar kids—or whatever they are—around us, I think Lady Lunaire's back..."

"We killed her, remember?"

"Physical presence."

“How do you know so much about her? Edward isn’t one to usually share a lot of information, and you clearly know a lot.”

“My sisters, Josephine and Clara, were under her control. They were known as the ‘Twin Killers.’ I found their masks under the oak tree the three of us used to play around at when time was more innocent. I wanted to join them, but they’d already been captured by Lunaire. That’s why I usually stay nearer to Edward. He’s like the wonky uncle of our group. Still, the other four, including me, can’t imagine our group without him. So, I try and ensure he doesn’t get kidnapped by her.”

“Ok then. How exactly do we find out... whatever format she’s in right now—sorry, that sounds too weird.”

“I’ve heard people say worse things. Including the person you’re ‘not dating.’”

“Yeah, right. Like what?”

“You act just like Clara. I’ll tell you later.”

“Ugh, fine.”

“Going forward, we go at midnight. Be ready.”

“And if I’m not?”

“I’ll cut off your fingers and feed them to Charlie.”

“Why—WHY IS CHARLIE HAVING MY FINGERS?”

“Because you won’t use them to get up and pack.”

“What does one even need to pack for finding interstellar humans?”

“Water. And lots of glitter and slime.”

“Don’t tell me we’re going to be playing with slime while finding a goddess who can kill?”

“No, you dumb shit. We’re using that as a trap. It’ll catch the radiation of the aura she emits and trap her in place. We take a photo and run for our lives—if we still have one.”

“Alright, this conversation got as comforting as comforting can get.”

“Perhaps I was being too gentle?”

“Duncan, if you go on, I will not hesitate to throw the glitter in your eyes.”

“Then I’ll sparkle. Unlike you.”

“I SHINE BRIGHTER THAN A DIAMOND.”

“Diamonds don’t shine; they reflect. Do you even pay attention in class, Jade?”

“Miss Hernes’s classes are so freaking boring—I DO NOT WANT TO KNOW THE PROCESSES OF OSMOSIS.”

“Jade, she teaches PHYSICS. Sir Donald teaches Biology.”

“Sir Donald Duck?”

“SIR RYAN DONALD.”

“Wait, isn’t that our Chemistry teacher?”

“That’s Miss Nevrick—ok, who’s our English teacher?”

“...Miss Minnie Mouse?”

“NO! HER NAME’S MISS LYN.”

“Same thing.”

“How...?”

“You’re questioning my answers when you’re the one who has ‘can’ in their name—how original.”

“Says the one who wore jade while fighting during the Hietna,
WHILE HAVING JADE IN THEIR NAME.”

“AY, JADE’S ARE PRETTY.”

“TALK ABOUT SELF-ADMIRATION.”

The two ended up laughing their butts off on the wooden floor.

“Hey Dun, have you seen Ja—oh.” Nora was about to ask but stopped. Then continued, “Why is my best friend and a can vibrating on the floor...”

“I’M NOT A CAN.”

“Ok then, DunCAN,” Nora smirked while walking out of the room.

Unsaid Reasons

“You’re telling me your brilliant mastermind plan is to let my goddamn sister’s killer into our house?” Lucas asked, running a hand through his sage-colored hair.

“He didn’t do anything! It was just his dad!” Neo argued, visibly annoyed—this was his life.

“Just his dad?” Lucas had to bite back a laugh that mingled with anger. “He has mind-control powers. You don’t think he could have...”

“If he could have, he would have told us. There’s no reason to be such a bastard to him, Lucas,” Neo cut him off.

“Tell me—would such an innocent person tell Charlie that whole story for fun and games? He’s Annie’s killer. He will never be accepted in this dorm, or in this house.”

“Oh my God! You’re such a nostalgist! I get that your sister’s dead—do you want me to write it on the flag of Caelidra?”

“If you think I’m angry just because she’s six feet below us, you’re heavily mistaken. Imagine if someone killed Nora, and I invited them into our house?”

“I’d be a better brother and wouldn’t let that happen. Of course, you’re too much of a coward and an idiot to see that you’re the worst brother Annete could have!”

“What the hell would you be able to do that I couldn’t, in this scenario?”

“I’d at the very least make sure I wasn’t out bowling with my girlfriend instead of spending time with her!”

The words cut deep.

Lucas hated himself every day for that foolish choice—going out with Georgina instead of staying with Annete to help her study for the upcoming finals. Something so small, yet it contributed to a death. Again, he was to blame.

“...And I’d at least make sure she knew I cared!” Neo’s voice trailed, only fueling the torment in Lucas’s mind.

“Can you just shut up for once?” Lucas whispered.

“Shut up? You’re one to talk! You’ve been talking about yourself ever since the day you were born.”

“Big talk from an asshole. This conversation is over. I’m retiring to my room,” Lucas muttered.

He didn’t want the conversation to end. He wanted to tell Neo how much his words hurt. But he never did. No one ever really cared. Maybe they did, but they were terrible at showing it.

“Fine. See if I care. I’m heading to Chris’s dad’s office. Don’t expect me back at the dorm anytime soon.”

“I’d like it better if you were dead, Neo.”

“Of course you would. Everyone wants me dead for no reason.”

“There are reasons,” Lucas said, his chocolate eyes piercing Neo’s purple ones.

“Dun?” Jade called out.

“Hm?” Duncan answered.

“What did you want to be when you were older?”

“That’s a nice thing to ask while everything’s falling apart.”

“No, I mean seriously. I mean, look at us. No human, or child for that matter, wants to become something like us.

“You mean?

“Left outs? People who no one gives two shits bout?”

“I give a shit for you.”

“Same here, Dun.”

Foxtrot Family Standing on Lies

“Mr. Foxtrot, we meet again,” Ralph Dover said, his voice smooth, cunning, dripping with fake care.

“Well, of course we do. Are you blind?” Nickson replied, irritation barely contained

“Careful with the attitude, Nickson. Unless you want your little fashion empire—‘Wallace Enterprises’—to crumble, considering all the fake transactions you’ve run under your dead brother’s name. Putting a dead man in debt. Shameful, isn’t it?

“I only used his name because he gave me permission, you idiot.”

“Was the permission verbal? Consent matters, especially in financial dealings.”

“No one needs to know about this, Ralph. Nora’s working on clearing your son from the records. He killed her in cold blood, and you still think he’s innocent? You sicken me.”

“Ah, but you see, no one knows I loosened the brakes. And yet, I feel that’s not enough.”

“What more could you want?”

“This,” Ralph said, pressing a button. In seconds, assassins flooded the room. Moments later, Nickson Foxtrot lay dead on the floor.

“Easier than I thought,” he muttered.

“Is he dead yet, Dad?” Christopher asked, stepping in, face unreadable.

“Yes, son. God, you do the killing, and I still have to commit a crime.”

“You really think I’d take the blame? I have audio evidence of you admitting it.”

“You wouldn’t go against your own father...”

“Oh, I would.”

“This is why you’re adopted,” Ralph said, burying his face in his palms thinking this day couldn’t become any worse. His son never failed to prove him wrong.

“Speaking of which, Nora and I are siblings, and Nora is my half-sibling. Care to tell me when I was supposed to know?” Christopher asked.

“You were not supposed to find out...”

“But sadly, for you, we did,” Neo said, entering with Nora. “Sixteen years you kept this from us. I found out in Papa’s journal—where he even mentioned you held him at gunpoint if he ever told.”

“I’m dropping the lawsuit—and filing it against you, Ralph. You don’t deserve the title ‘dad,’” Nora said.

Neo continued, “We’ll be taking Chris under my care until he turns eighteen. He deserves a family that actually cares, not one that frames him for murder.”

The trio left the room, locking Ralph inside.

“Chris, we’re changing your name. Everyone in the Foxtrot family starts with N.”

“Wait, actually?” Chris asked.

“Yes. What about Nicky? You’re the youngest, so it suits you.”

“Ok then!”

“Wait—Nicky’s the youngest?” Nora asked.

“Yes, Ra. You were born January 24th, me July 17th, and Nicky December 8th.”

“Oh, you’re the middle child. Fun.”

“Yes. Yes, I am.”

“Do I even have a dad?” Nicky asked.

“Nope. For now, you, my wonderful younger brother, are officially family-less.”

“Ah, shit,” Nicky muttered.

“Shit is appropriate right now!” Neo said.

“Does anyone else have spontaneous and awful urges right now?” Nora asked, disdain clear.

“Yes, very much so, Nora,” Neo admitted.

“Fish sticks,” Nora declared.

“Ooooh, can we get some?” Nicky asked.

“Yeah, sure,” Nora said.

The newly-formed sibling trio walked down the street, unaware of the horrors still lurking ahead.

Ghost of Glox

“Jade? Are you there?” Duncan called.

“Yes, Duncan,” Jade replied.

“Okey then! First off, we need glitter.”

“WE HAVE FIFTY POUNDS OF GLITTER!”

“We need more. It’ll catch her faster. Oh, and slime!”

“Let’s go already, please,” Jade begged.

“Yes, yes—come on!”

As they headed to the door, clad in black hoodies and gray sweatpants, they bumped into Lucas, Bert, and Danny.

“Where are you two going?” Lucas asked.

“Uh... supermarket!” Duncan said, trying to sound casual.

“All right... don’t do drugs,” Lucas muttered.

“GO GO!” Duncan grabbed Jade by the hoodie and leapt out the window.

“The door was right there... we’re following them, right?” Danny asked.

“No shit, Sherlock,” Bert replied, grabbing his navy-blue jacket.

“In other words—yes. We go now,” he added.

“Oh, can we also get some decorations? I was throwing a party before the Hietna... and then Annie—well, that happened,” Lucas said.

“Sure, I’ll pay,” Danny offered.

“LET’S GO! You two can act lovey-dovey later!” Bert screeched.

The trio left the apartment, descending the stairs. Nearby, they spotted Nora and the others.

“NORA!” Danny yelled.

“Oh... oh, hey,” Nora replied, flustered.

“Hey... how’d it go?” Bert asked.

“Good. Meet the newest member of the Foxtrot family: Nicky,” Nora said, nudging Nicky forward.

“Oh—that’s happening now? Okay—hi!” Nicky said cheerfully.

“Hi...” Lucas muttered reluctantly.

“Aren’t you three having an off day?” Nora asked.

“Yeah, but we needed décor, and those two—Jade and Dun—ran off, so we followed them,” Lucas explained.

“That’s called stalking,” Nora replied. “But we’ll join.”

“We don’t get a say?” Neo asked.

“As the oldest, I say no,” Nora answered.

“Oh.”

“Shouldn’t we be going after Jade and Duncan?” Nora asked.

“Yeah. Okay, let’s go,” Danny said, spreading his bluish-white wings and floating into the sky, scanning for their friends.

“Well, that happened,” Bert muttered, sprinting after him.

“Why am I friends with idiots?” Lucas sighed.

“Number one: that’s my boyfriend. Number two: those are my friends. And yes, we should chase after them,” Nora said, trying to hide her panic.

“Oh, what happened to my sister?! YOU WOULDN’T EVEN SAY SORRY WHEN YOU BLEACHED MY BABY, SNOWY, AND YOU’RE APOLOGIZING TO THEM?!” Neo screamed.

“Shush,” Nora said.

“Fine. Can we go already?”

“Fineee,” she relented, running after the others.

“Wait—you have a dog?” Nicky asked.

“Two actually—Snowy and Nyla. And a cat called Smokey,” Neo replied.

“I LOVE CATS!” Nicky screamed.

“There’s an adoption center nearby. We could get a kitten for you,” Lucas offered.

“Can we?”

“Sure! I’ll message them while we head there.”

“I can do that. You two lead the way,” Neo said, pulling out his phone and a packet of cigars.

- CHAOTIC IDIOTS -

FindingNeo: Me and Nicky are heading to the adoption center

McBert: Hurry, we almost have a lock on their location

NoraIsNotNormal: Why are you giving our sibling up for adoption already?

FindingNeo: He’s getting a kitty, okay?

NoraIsNotNormal: Fine, fine. We're heading to Glox, meet us there ASAP.

SHINEBRIGHTLIKEAJADE: Wait—but we're already there?

DunAteTheCan: JADE!!

SHINEBRIGHTLIKEAJADE: SORRY

McBert: Rapidly approaching your location

DunAteTheCan: JADE, MOVE

NoraIsNotNormal: We're behind you—

@NNE+E: yOu f00ls

"ISN'T ANNIE DEAD?!" Duncan screeched.

"DUNCAN, we had a funeral. THIS IS SOME GHOST—I DON'T KNOW!" Jade yelled.

"WHY WOULD YOU TWO GO AFTER A LEGIT INTER-
STELLAR GODDESS THAT TOOK A DRUNKEN TEEN PLUS
US PLUS CHANTS WE DON'T KNOW, BY YOURSELF?!"
Nora screamed, checking that they were okay.

"Awh! Such a cute little get-together!" Annete appeared. "Too bad I'm here to end it all."

"W—who are you?" Jade asked.

"Not this stupid conversation again. I had it with Charlie," Annete said.

"That doesn't answer her question—who are you?" Lucas demanded.

"Awh... all I can say is your youngest member is dead, and you're all going down with her."

Porcelain Hearts in the Dolls' Game

“And then- oh you guys are here?” Charlie said while walking into to the tedious scene with his friends.

Annete's appearance changed. Her eyes started glowing blue, purple claws emerging from her hand, her hair becoming less green and blacker and her clothes more *metallic*. She somehow made clothes metallic

“Well, well, well. Look what the cat brought in.” ‘Annete’ said, her voice dripping of sarcasm. “If it isn’t my murderer...”

“Wait Ed, is this the clone we were talking about earlier?” Charlie asked.

“Yes. She is Annete but a more tailored version. Tailored to someone’s needs. Tailored to Lady Lunaire’s needs.” Edward responded.

“Try and keep up, idiots” ‘Annete’ said before everything vanished into to darkness.

Then everything turned pitch black. Metallic bars appearing separating everyone from each other, closing in. Playing right into the fear Jade had.

“Jade. Breathe.” Nora said before summoning her weapon, a desperate attempt to break the metallic bars separating the two.

“I’m fine.” Jade responded.

“Jade, this is not the time to pretend everything is fine. You can act vulnerable...”

“Is that how little you think of me? That I need to be coddled like a little baby anytime something goes wrong?”

“Jade, that’s not what...”

“Not what you meant? But what about what you felt? All of you! For no reason, whatsoever, you all just treat me like an invalid!”

“Jade, I’m sure Nora didn’t mean it that way” Duncan spoke up.

“No! It’s because of you we have to face this! You think just because your parents are getting divorced you can...”

“Jade!” Nora spoke up, successfully cutting the bar between her and Jade, but felt disgusted to go running to her to comfort her.

“I see. I thought for once I had someone to do this stuff with. Heck, both my siblings are dead- my parents, like you mentioned, I- can’t believe you. You said you were trustworthy- You-You lied!”

“I didn’t mean it that way Duncan!”

“Then which way Jade? There have been multiple times when we’ve fought but I’ve kept my statements short and joking, how come you couldn’t do the same... All I asked was for someone new, who I could talk to, and wouldn’t judge, and here you are... Telling something so god damn personal, and using it as bait.” Duncan choked, falling down.

“There’s no need to yell, Duncan. Jade shouldn’t have said that, yes but you’re making it worse by yelling.” Bert spoke up.

“You’re just taking her side. You don’t even realize! Do any of you know how hard it is too be the left out one?”

"You're not the left out one, Duncan... Charlie is your duo..."
Danny spoke up.

"Oh, so that makes everything better? That knowing one person has to spend their time with me, and I don't even know if they like it or not?" Duncan spoke, his voice sounding almost like a yell. A yell for help, or just to heard.

"I already apologized! What more do you even want?" Jade said.

"The thing is; you didn't. You said you didn't mean it that way... Annete, or whoever you are just pull the trigger already please."

"You're ending your life over a silly argument?"

"Please be quiet. I can't even hear myself losing my own will to live..."

"No. Also speaking of Charlie, where is he?" Bert spoke up.

"SILENCE" 'Annete' screamed. "God, I cannot believe I was friends with any of you all. Especially you Jade."

"...I apologized; you dumb shit." Jade snarled back.

"Jade, don't stoop to her level." Nora spoke up.

"Hmm. However, thanks to the person which; you all made me hate... I knew, you knew she's evil. But isn't a little evil good?" 'Anette' chuckled. She was about to continue but someone interrupted.

"You were one to always look at the good in others, Annete." Jade said. "You know she's evil. Come home. You're not evil."

'Annete' let out a kiddish giggle. The one that made the others laugh with her. The one that people got addicted to. The one people looked forward to when they cracked a joke, since they knew her, laughs were genuine.

“You see, it’s too late. Let me tell you all a story.”

In a few seconds, all of them were transmitted to an empty room.

That’s when ‘Annete’ became her real form.

She turned into a robot. Her cheeks had big, red circles on them which one could only hope was blush, her skin became more ceramic and polished... almost like she was a porcelain doll. Last but not least, her eyes became... bigger. More glassy and glossier. Her clothes changed turning into a full sleeve black top and leggings plus socks.

Following her, two people came out. Two people Duncan knew way too well. Joesphine and Clara.

They took on a similar appearance to ‘Annete’, their eyes which were usually their cloudy misty grey, were now light blue. The same eyes as Lady Lunaire.

“Lady Lunaire took us. Made us more... complete. There is, and never will be more than soul collecting and world domination. The plan you; Edward failed at.” ‘Annete’ spoke.

“You don’t even know half the story so shut it.” Edward said.

“With all due disrespect, whatever abomination, you are of our friend, we would like her back” Jade said.

“Ah, well you see. Looking at you all made me realize something.”

“And that would be?” Nora spoke up.

“You all like pinpointing everyone’s fears, mistakes as a joke. Let’s see how you all like facing them in front of the ones you claim to love and cherish.”

And suddenly.

Almost too sudden.

Everything went black.

Then white.

Then black.

Then....

It was total silence.

For once.

And only, for now.

Lady of Broken Stars

“And then—oh, you guys are here?” Charlie stepped into the chaotic scene, his friends trailing behind.

Annete’s appearance shifted. Her eyes glowed electric blue, purple claws sprouted from her hands, her hair darkened from green to black, and her clothes shimmered metallic. Somehow, she had turned her outfit into living metal.

“Well, well, well. Look what the cat dragged in,” she said, her voice dripping with sarcasm. “If it isn’t my murderer...”

“Wait, Ed—is this the clone we were talking about earlier?” Charlie asked, eyes wide.

“Yes. She is Annete, but... tailored. Tailored to someone’s needs. Tailored to Lady Lunaire’s needs,” Edward replied

“Try to keep up, idiots,” Annete snapped—and then everything went dark.

Metallic bars erupted around them, separating the group, closing in, feeding Jade’s worst fears.

“Jade. Breathe,” Nora said, summoning her weapon in a desperate attempt to shatter the bars.

“I’m fine,” Jade muttered.

“Jade, this is not the time to pretend! You can act vulnerable...”

“Is that how little you think of me? That I need coddling like a baby every time something goes wrong?”

“Jade, that’s not what I—”

“Not what you meant? But what about what you felt? All of you! For no reason, you treat me like an invalid!”

“Jade, Nora didn’t mean it that way,” Duncan spoke, trying to calm her.

“No! It’s because of you we’re in this! You think just because your parents are divorcing, you can...”

“Jade!” Nora cut in, breaking the bars between them. She ran to her side, though the disgust in her movements was clear

“I thought I finally had someone I could talk to. Heck, both my siblings are dead—my parents too—and now... you. You said you were trustworthy. You—lied!”

“I didn’t mean it that way, Duncan!” Jade shouted.

“Then which way, Jade? I’ve kept my words short, joking even when we’ve fought. I just wanted someone new, someone I could trust... and here you are, using something personal as bait.”

“There’s no need to yell. Jade shouldn’t have said that, but you’re making it worse,” Bert said, trying to mediate.

“You’re just taking her side! Do any of you know how hard it is to be left out?” Duncan’s voice cracked, almost breaking.

“You’re not left out, Duncan... Charlie is your duo,” Danny said gently.

“Oh, so that makes it better? One person spending time with me, and I don’t even know if they like it?” Duncan yelled, a plea for connection.

“I already apologized! What more do you want?” Jade snapped.

“The thing is—you didn’t. Annete, or whoever you are... just pull the trigger already,” Duncan muttered darkly.

“You’re ending your life over a silly argument?”

“Please be quiet. I can’t even hear myself losing my own will to live...”

“No. Also, Charlie—where is he?” Bert asked.

“SILENCE!” Annete shrieked. “I cannot believe I was ever friends with you all. Especially you, Jade.”

“...I apologized, you dumb shit,” Jade snarled.

“Jade, don’t stoop to her level,” Nora warned.

“Thanks to the person you all made me hate... I knew she was evil. Isn’t a little evil... good?” Annete’s voice curled like smoke.

“You always looked for the good in others, Annete. You know she’s evil. Come home. You’re not evil,” Jade said softly.

A small, almost childlike giggle escaped Annete. The one that had made them laugh before, that had drawn everyone in with warmth.

“It’s too late. Let me tell you a story,” Annete said.

In an instant, they were transported to an empty room. Annete revealed her true form: a porcelain-like robot with large, glossy eyes, red circular cheeks like blush, and sleek black clothing.

Two more figures emerged—Josephine and Clara. Their misty gray eyes now glowed pale blue, mirroring Lady Lunaire’s gaze.

“Lady Lunaire took us. Made us... complete. Soul collecting. World domination. The plan Edward failed to stop,” Annete said.

“You don’t know the half of it, so shut it,” Edward replied.

“With all due disrespect, we want our friend back,” Jade declared.

“Looking at you all made me realize something,” Annete said.

“And that would be?” Nora demanded.

“You like pointing out everyone’s fears and mistakes as jokes. Let’s see how you like facing them... in front of the ones you claim to love.”

Suddenly.

Too suddenly.

Everything went black.

Then white.

Then black.

Complete silence.

For once.

And only, for now.

Blinded Viewers

“**W**-where are we?” Jade whispered, her weapon’s neon glow dimming.

“You said you wanted your ‘friend’ back, right... Firefly?” Clara’s tone was icy, deliberate.

Duncan froze. That nickname—he’d recognize it anywhere, but not from some random person.

“Ra-ra?” he stammered

“Yes. I’m here too,” Josephine said, irritation threading her voice.

“I’m going to interfere before this gets personal,” Lucas said. “Yes, we want our friend back. But I want my sister back more than anything.”

“There is a way...” Clara began

“One second. How do we know Lunaire isn’t controlling you?” Nora asked sharply

“It is nighttime—her preferred hour. She manipulates the young, the impressionable... known to some as Annete. Two others are there: Kora and Ruby.”

“That feels oddly directed at me and Jade...”

“Intended that way. Her plan with Edward failed; now she uses undergraduates to influence teens. The teens are the easiest to control these days.”

“What’s her design plan for them?” Charlie asked.

“Looks, personality, or weapons?”

“All. Choose the order.”

“Very well. Weapon first. She plans to give them ball-shaped artifacts containing her power. Each use spreads her influence.”

“Oh,” Bert muttered.

“Personality. She molds them—sweet, kind, everything she is not—but selectively. She has the full school roster. In layman’s terms: she designs personalities for everyone.”

“That’s... a huge waste of time,” Edward said, voice cutting through the tension.

“Funny, coming from the one who’s stalked someone here,” Danny teased

“Danny, shut up before I personally make you start your medication again,” Edward snapped

“Ok, understood. Clara, please continue,” Danny said.

“Looks. Kora—blonde hair, green eyes. Ruby—black hair, red eyes. Annete... Chione. Brown hair, purple eyes.”

“Annie’s name means kind-hearted... Chione is the opposite. Why the polar opposite?” Jade leaned against a steel table, bottles strewn about.

“She wants opposites. She believes you all aren’t your best selves; her tailoring will make you perfect... in her eyes.”

“What about in others’ eyes?” Nora asked

“Others’ opinions do not matter... in the eyes of Lady Lunaire.

“Rephrase that. Why don’t they matter?”

“Others... ERROR opinions do not matter... in the eyes of ERROR... Lady Lu... ERROR... naire.”

“Nora, stop. I think she’s taking over,” Danny warned, raising his staff.

“STOP! DON’T HURT MY SISTERS!” Duncan screamed, lunging at Clara, sobbing into the clothes she wore the day she was taken.

“I’M SORRY I COULDN’T PROTECT YOU AND JOSIE! BUT I’M NOT LETTING HER DIE AGAIN!” His voice echoed, raw and desperate.

“Duncan... those aren’t your siblings,” Danny said firmly.

But Duncan’s mind twisted with memories he didn’t want to revisit.

“Ra-ra? Josie?” A smaller, younger version of Duncan appeared, clutching a black wolf plush, a sketchbook in his other hand. The echo of childhood innocence hung in the air.

“Josieeee?” he whispered, frantic, but no answer came.

Then purple and white gas seeped from beneath the door. Duncan opened it—

Standing there was Lunaire: a grey-skinned, white-haired, blue-eyed interstellar entity. Josephine’s guts lay cold on the laminate floor, replaced by cold, unnatural machinery. Clara was mid-process of the same fate, screams muffled by Lunaire’s hand.

Duncan grabbed his phone. A fatal mistake. She heard the ring.

Electricity surged through his siblings; he was pinned against the wall, spikes digging into his skin. His screams echoed against the emptiness.

Voices swirled in his mind—indecipherable, screaming, chaotic.

“HE’S CONSCIOUS!” Charlie shouted.

“Huh?” Duncan groaned, head spinning.

“Her phases have begun. Fear attacks on Firefly,” Josephine said, stern. “Clara... we should have gone. We might have glimpsed the Revok!”

“It’s not my fault! Our brother were bleeding! And all you wanted was to leave!” Clara yelled.

“SILENCE!” a booming voice shattered the warehouse. Josephine and Clara convulsed, electrocuted, then vanished in black gas.

“Where did they go?” Danny rasped. “And what the heck is a Revok?”

“Edward, can you—” Jade began

“Why should I? Cybertorix, can’t you just brain-search or whatever?” Edward shot back.

“You dipshit. Our powers can’t be used outside school or Hietna until we’ve left,” Danny scolded.

“Ed, leave her alone, she’s being an idiot.” Duncan said.

“How is she being an idiot, Duncan?” Charlie demanded.

“Our powers are useless now. Teleportation only works to school, which is locked for reconstruction,” Nora said.

“Oh, please, Miss ‘Teacher’s Pet,’ would it kill you to rebel?” Duncan snapped.

“Can you leave it alone?” Charlie interjected.

“Leave her alone, dipshit. Different opinion doesn’t mean you yell,” Bert said.

“You’re one to talk, Mallory. I didn’t order a loser brother who picks on others for choices,” Michael countered.

“I’ve told you to stop calling me that!”

“Oi, bastards! I found a route to escape!” Danny barked.

“How did you—” Bert started.

“You idiots! Spend the rest of your lives arguing! Can’t you focus for once?” Danny yelled.

“I would be focusing if Duncan hadn’t passed out on the floor!”

“Later! We need to leave!” Duncan shouted, grabbing Charlie’s wrist and sprinting down the cobwebbed hallway.

Jade followed. They passed a room that seemed empty—but it wasn’t. Something, or someone, was watching.

Metal-like arms grabbed Charlie, rustic ends poking through his eye balls.

But of course, no one saw him.

Because they never did.

Walls Closing on the Gem

“Guys, where’s Charlie?” Jade asked.

Followed by the running of thick red blood down the same path they were walking.

“SHIT!” Danny hissed.

Two metal arms reached forward at Duncan’s foot.

Closer.

Closer.

Closer.

Then they vanished.

“Hey idiots. Nicky and the others are here with me at the lobby. Where are y’all?” Lucas’s voicemail beeped.

“Ed, didn’t you say the star control works or something like that?” Duncan asked.

“Yes. Call Lucas right now. We need all four of them—Lucas, Georgina, Neo, and Aurelia—here ASAP. First two control the sky, the other two the clouds,” Edward replied.

“Yeah? And...?” Duncan pressed.

“Two people who can control Earth are under her control. Duncan, activate your powers. Nora, you have the same powers as Annete—focus on her.”

“On it, chief.” Duncan grabbed Nora loosely by the arm.

“Bert, your powers are stronger than Charlie’s. Use that against him. Danny, how strong is your metal attraction?”

“Pretty strong, why?”

“Good. Use it to pin Josephine and Clara—metal parts make them harder to move. Jade, help Danny hack into their interframe and get them deactivated. I’m going to fetch the other four to the base.”

“On it. Stay safe,” Jade said, sprinting the same way Duncan and Nora did.

“That’s new...” Danny muttered. “Anything you want to share, Ed about the two of you?”

“The hell you mean ‘two’? Bert’s gone already, like you should be,” Edward snapped.

“Right, sorry.”

“It’s fine. Let’s move,” Edward said, grabbing Danny by the collar and speeding down the hallway.

In a spacious room, the other four waited.

“Should we wait for Edward to form a plan?” Duncan asked

“Can your brain not form one?” Nora shot back. “Danny is the leader, yet you all listen to Edward?”

“Dan didn’t have a ready plan. Ed’s experience made sense,” Duncan answered.

“You’re avoiding the question. Anyways, I’m forming a plan. Duncan, you can collide with your surroundings, right?”

“Yeah... but what’s the point if we can’t use our powers?”

“Only teleportation seems blocked,” Nora said.

“I can test it,” Duncan offered.

"Where'd you go?"

"I'm invisible, doofus."

"Can you turn back now?" Jade asked, uneasy.

"Aww, is someone scared of ghosties now?" Duncan teased.

"Is someone scared of ghosts now?" Jade mimicked in a horrendous British accent. "I'm not—you're just acting like a 5-year-old brat."

Duncan didn't respond.

"Are you going to change back, or no?"

"Uh, Jade, I think he's about to..." Nora warned.

"BOO!" Duncan screamed behind her.

Jade gasped, stumbled, and fell face-first. Nora quickly threw her hoodie under Jade's head.

"To answer your question—yes, she's afraid of ghosts," Nora said, checking her over.

"I didn't know! Thought she was joking!" Duncan defended.

"She'll be fine. Same thing happened at school before," Nora reassured him.

Edward groaned. "I leave you alone three minutes and find someone passed out, Duncan missing, and no one doing what I told them."

Duncan landed, visible again. "I MADE HER DIE," he wailed, running into Edward.

"She just passed out from a harmless prank. Chill, dumbo," Edward said, gripping his shoulders.

"W-where am I?" Jade croaked, groggy.

“There we go. Feeling, okay?” Nora asked.

“Sort of... what happened—

“I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!” Duncan screamed, tackling Jade in a bear hug.

“That happened,” Nora muttered.

“Guys, the walls... they’re closing in?” Bert noticed.

“Ah, shit,” Edward muttered.

A mystical voice began singing, lulling everyone like drifting on a ship with no shore. Jade yawned. Bert followed. Edward realized Lunaire’s tactic.

He spotted a lever nearby.

“What are you waiting for? Pull it!” Nora hissed, covering her ears.

The sound shifted, high-frequency now, piercing their senses.

“We need to wait for the others,” Edward groaned, removing his purple gem bracelet. “Catch.”

“Why are we playing catch?” Nora sighed, catching it.

“The gem Iris made after Hietna. It connects us directly to the Revok,” Edward explained.

“What do you want me to do?”

“Click the button, Nora,” Edward said flatly.

“Oh! That makes sense.” She pressed it.

“Helloooooo!” Iris droned as Aruther peeked nervously from behind her.

“Yes, hi. We need help,” Edward cut to the chase.

“Most definitely. What happened?”

“Your sister is trying to kill us. Actually, not metaphorically,” Edward said.

“Oh. You need a Revok?”

“That’s the thing—we don’t know what it is. And we want proof before using it.”

“You’re doing this while Jade and Danny are already out?” Nora asked.

“Give Danny my hoodie. Bert, check on the status of the others. Take Nora if you want,” Edward said, tossing his hoodie to her.

“Aight, chief,” Bert said, heading out.

“Jade and Danny passed out because of the noise. Duncan’s testing his powers—they’re the most useful right now,” Edward added.

“Duncan? The camouflage guy?” Iris asked.

“Yes. And what’s a Revok?”

“I’ll explain later. Why the Starities outfit?”

“It’s more effective for activating powers. My singing doesn’t work on Lunaire.”

“Can’t you just activate all the planets?”

“You forgot that Lunaire, took away my powers last year when I tried lighting her office on fire.”

“And the other five?”

“They fend for themselves.”

“Oh. Ok!”

Batshit Crazy

“A Revok is basically a pendant. Looks, feels, even smells like jewelry—but it isn’t. Handle it wrong, it breaks—and releases the plants as actual humans,” Iris explained.

“So... extremely powerful humans could be unleashed, and we don’t want that because...?” Edward asked.

“They’d all be under Lady Lunaire’s control. Duh.”

“Oh! That makes more sense.”

“Before the others start thinking this is some... incest thing, can we get going already, Edward?” Nora begged.

“No time for that. Stop being ungrateful, peasant.

“EXCUSE YOU. I AM NO PEASANT.”

“If you say so... peasant,” Edward said, smirking.

“Nora, breathe,” Bert begged, trying not to laugh

“I woke up Jade and Danny, by the way,” Iris added.

Suddenly, Iris and Aruther split into two halves. Blood spurted everywhere

“Holy SHIT!” Nora yelled.

From the decaying remains, a grey goddess emerged.

“Well, well, well,” Lady Lunaire purred. “Naïve little Edward, and his stupid friends, trying to defeat me again?”

“Holy... she’s... pretty,” Jade whispered

“JADE! NOT THE TIME!” Nora screeched.

“Hmm... Edward, you have good taste,” Lunaire teased.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Jade demanded.

“Nothing,” Lunaire said, sarcastic. “Moving on. You all want your siblings and friends back, right?”

“Yes...?” Nora replied cautiously.

“A simple exchange. Two of you go to the royal banquet at El Quinco and steal the Radit gun.”

“The... what?” Danny asked

“The gun I was made from. During a celebratory dinner at Red Ox, Briana Right was shot. That soul merged with one of the celestial entities—me. I need the Radit gun to complete myself. Once I have it, the other souls—and I—can finally rest.

“That... actually sounds sad,” Jade murmured.

“Yes. I’m starting to like you. Jade, right?”

“Y-yeah! Jade Red!

“Calm down, love,” Edward warned.

“What did you just call me?

“Nothing. Just... calm down.”

“That doesn’t even make sense.

“You don’t make sense, yet I’ve been after you for four years,” Edward said quietly.

“OK, quit your love lecture, Edward. I’m sending the two of you to the banquet—as a couple,” Lady Lunaire declared.

“I WOULD NEVER DATE HIM!” Jade screamed. Edward’s face held a subtle smirk.

“He’d date you. I need at least one of you to like each other so this isn’t forced. Outfits will be here tomorrow. You’ll have rooms to sleep until then.

“Why can’t the rest of us go?” Georgina asked.

“If Edward and Jade fail, I kill you all. Simple.”

“Well... shit. This just got horrendous.”

“Off you go!” Lunaire snapped

“Wait—where do we get money to buy a gun?” Edward asked.

“I’ll credit 10,000 Callys to your account,” Lunaire replied.

“Aight,” Edward muttered.

Meanwhile, Charlie approached Annete.

“We meet again, Sunshine,” he bellowed.

“You... you actually came back for a broken soul like me?” Annete whispered, fear and disbelief in her voice.

“Why wouldn’t I?” Charlie asked, reaching for her hand. One hand metallic, the other heavy with pain—but complete together

“I missed you... so much it hurt like hell,” he continued. “Hell couldn’t keep me away. No matter how hard satan himself tried.”

“You and your poetic brain,” Annete whispered, giggling softly—like they were ten again, in simpler times.

“How’s Dun’s siblings treating you?” Charlie asked, wincing as his hand throbbed

“Okay... I guess. I’d pick Jade and Nora, though,” she replied.

“Of course. You always hated change,” Charlie teased.

“You of all people should know,” she said, laughing. Memories of the Himalayan hike she hadn’t expected filled them both with warmth.

“How’s Lunaire treating you?” Charlie groaned, chest aching.

“Average... like Miss Lyn teaches us. You, okay?” Annete asked, ever curious despite horrors

“Yea... some—a lot—has happened since you’ve been gone.

“Where’s the others?” she asked, running as fast as she could to him.

“Left the second they saw my arm glowing. Pathetic, how I miss them now.”

“This means you’re the new emperor of Jewele?”

“What...?”

“Learned it in history. Don’t you pay attention?”

“History’s boring. I’d rather make history with you.”

“You and your poetic brain... for the second time,” she giggled, sage green curls bouncing.

“Do you have medication for this thing?” Charlie asked.

“I’ll check—but first, to the spare bedroom. You need rest,” Annete said.

“Alright,” Charlie sighed

They trotted down the staircase—abnormal sights, a 4-ft robot girl, a 5-ft glowing boy—but they didn’t care.

“Here we are!” Annete sang, melancholic yet melodic

“I’ll settle in... don’t forget me here,” Charlie said.

“I’ll try,” she replied. Her voice carried something he couldn’t name.

As she walked away, Charlie heard the unmistakable click of a latch.

“Uhm... sunshine? I think you locked the door...”

Ball Catastrophe

Jade emerged from the bathroom, huffing, wearing a dark green off shoulder satin dress. Mary-Jane black shoes accompanied a loose chain, and a necklace clinked with each step. Earrings caught the light.

Edward nearly choked. Usually, Jade wore shirts and pants. But this? She was breathtaking.

“Moon... do you really need all that?” he asked.

“It’s what Lady Lunaire gave me. And it’s Jade to you.”

“I prefer Moon.” Edward said softly, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear.

So fragile, yet always the first to start a fight.

He added, lifting her chin to meet his gaze. “You’re always so snarky, aren’t you?”

“Only with idiots. What... did you do to your tie?”

I... don’t really know how to tie one. No one taught me.

“Your presence ruined it,” Edward said.

Jade rolled her eyes, removing the disastrous tie and retying it expertly around his neck.

“Getting intimate, are we?” Edward teased.

“Listen, Nemesis. No one else knows how to tie a tie, so keep your words to yourself. Understood?”

“Awh, someone’s angry—OW!” Edward gasped as the tie tightened.

“There you go, Nemesis,” Jade said, satisfied.

“I’d prefer a bit of chivalry, but sure...”

“Who else would I do it for, if not myself?”

“You do realize we’re leaving later, right? No need for this full abomination of an outfit...”

“Is it really that bad?” Jade asked quietly, checking herself.

Edward smiled softly. “No, it’s fine, Moon. I wouldn’t let anyone ridicule you around me.”

“Yeah, right,” Jade scoffed, arms crossed.

“It’s good. Really. You have my word. And that’s expensive these days.”

“Oh... thanks. I’m going to change and nap until we leave.”

“Alright, I’ll change after you.”

As Jade entered the bathroom, she paused.

“Something wrong, Moon?” Edward asked.

“Can you... sing me to sleep again? I haven’t slept well since that day...”

“Of course, Moon,” he said, voice softening.

“Thank you...” Jade murmured, disappearing into the bathroom.

Ten minutes later, she returned in her previous clothes.

“How’s the scar?” Edward asked, loosening his tie.

“Healed. Should be fine by tomorrow.”

“Would you be alright dancing?”

“I’ll try my best.”

“You always do, Moon,” Edward said, walking to the bathroom, unbuttoning his crisp brown-and-white shirt.

“I’ll check on the others,” Jade murmured, heading to Nora’s room. She opened the door—a pillow flung at her face.

“Well, that’s a nice welcome...” she muttered, fixing her hair.

“JADE HELP ME! THIS BASTARD SET ME UP ON A DATE WITH DANIEL AFTER WE LEAVE!” Nora screamed.

“It’s about time, idiot,” Neo said, shoving her shoulder. “How’s you and Mister Edgy?”

“You mean Edward? Fine, I guess.”

“Yeah, right. Bet Edward’s been dreaming about this since kindergarten.”

“Nora, what.”

“Boring. Go check on the others. I’m sleeping.” Nora collapsed onto the bottom bunk.

Jade passed a room and heard a loud thud.

“Everything okay?”

Not at all. Bert had caused a deep cut on Nicky’s arm. Duncan and Danny were chained to the wall, faint burn marks on their wrists. Lucas had passed out.

“HOLY SHIT!” Jade shrieked.

“JADE! GET EDWARD!” Danny yelled.

“What the hell happened?” Jade demanded.

“He mocked Charlie,” Bert muttered.

“Mocked how?”

“That he was a mistake. That I didn’t protect him,” Bert spat blood.

“Why?”

“Because it’s true,” Nicky sneered.

Danny and Duncan freed themselves

“How about we show you who the real mistake is?” Duncan said, mock happiness in his voice.

“Not only did you kill my sister, you insult my family?” Lucas growled. “Out.

“You can’t tell me what to do. And what family? Didn’t you kill your own?”

“Or the one who murdered an innocent person?” Duncan shot back.

“Or the one whose life literally depends on us?” Bert added, yanking Nicky by the hair.

“I’m going,” Jade said, speeding out.

“It’s not like you all aren’t mistakes or burdens,” Nicky murmured. “Especially you, Daniel.”

“My full name is for someone. Someone you’re not,” Danny said.

Duncan punched Nicky’s nose—blood sprayed.

“That’s for Charlie,” Duncan said.

Danny kicked Nicky’s neck. “That’s for belittling my family.”

Before Lucas could retaliate, Georgina ran in.

“What’s going on?”

Nicky tripped her. “Whoops.”

“How original,” Bert muttered, kicking Nicky’s legs

“Everything’s okay, Georgie,” Lucas reassured her

“There’s something your so-called boyfriend has been hiding,” Nicky said, circling Lucas.

“Like what?

“This. Nicky yanked off Lucas’s gloves. “Do you want a boyfriend that cuts himself? What a disgrace.

“You have no right to do that,” Lucas choked out, rushing to the bathroom.

“Georgina, go after Luc. Then join us to end this mistake’s life,” Danny instructed

“Alright,” she said, running off.

Lucas forced himself over the sink, vomiting. Shattered mirror shards dug into his healing wounds.

“I’m so sorry...” he hiccupped, crying.

“For what? That your family’s a mess, and you tried to protect your sister? That you ignored yourself?”

“I promised I’d stop... I—I only started last week, but... stopped because I thought you’d be mad.”

“Mad about what? That your only way to be heard was... giving yourself scars? They’re not disgusting if they’re yours.”

“That’s not the point! I broke my promise...”

“Can you change the past? No. Calm down. Let me clean your wounds, okay?”

“Fine. But I’m still sorry,” Lucas murmured.

“That’s fine. I can’t change your feelings,” Georgina said, grabbing tissue and Dettol. “This might sting.”

“I know... Annie used to warn me too.”

“Hasn’t it been a week?”

“Two. Funeral was last Monday.

“Amazing. You’re doing so well, Luc.”

“You really think so? Not just empty words that everyone tells me?”

“Then I guess I’m not everyone.”

“You’re not everyone. You’re someone. Someone to me.”

“You and your poetic brain...” Georgina snickered.

Lunaire's Inside Relations

“Cleo Lunaire. How many times do we need to tell you to stop taking your siblings’ physical appearance for dramatic entrances?” Ramiro Lunaire, father of Cleo and her siblings, demanded.

“It was worth it! And besides, the two got something in return,” Cleo muttered

“A lot of things you do, you think are worth it. Like stealing my title,” Calista Lunaire, Ramiro’s wife, shot back playfully

“Mama, you gave it to me when you turned 280,” Cleo countered. “Besides, who even told you both?”

“We did,” Milo and Cyrus boasted.

“Why are those two still alive?” Cleo groaned.

“Because you love us,” Milo laughed, his reddish-brown curls bouncing. “Iris told us, and Ma and Papa warned you multiple times.”

“Lucky for you I’m your younger sibling, or I’d chop your head off by now, Milo,” Iris muttered, dreading her sister’s reaction.

“IRIS! WHY WOULD YOU!” Cleo groaned

“He promised me a new star plush!” Iris replied.

“Hold up. I promised her a moon plush. Where did the star plush come from?” Cyrus interjected.

“Iris, did Cy give you the plush... or did you lie to get a new one?” Milo asked, already knowing the answer.

“Maybe. Besides, it was Aruther’s idea.”

“Nu-uh! It was your idea!” Aruther pouted.

“Nu-uh!” Iris shot back.

“Yuh-uh!”

“Nuh-uh!”

“Okay, fine. It’s no one’s idea or fault,” Ramiro begged.

“I’d like credit for my ideas, you know?” Iris replied.

“Bingo,” Cyrus muttered. “I’m flushing you down the matrix.”

“NO!” Iris yelped, giggling as Cyrus chased her out of the meeting hall.

“Milo, could you take Aruther out? We need to speak with Cleo,” Ramiro requested.

“Yes, father,” Milo said, taking Aruther’s hand and leaving.

“Now... why are there mortal humans in our spare rooms?” Ramiro asked, though his tone suggested he already knew.

“I’m making them get the Radit gun. I don’t need Bri’s constant nagging in my head,” Cleo answered.

“You know your father and I could just remove her soul and give it to the mortals, right?” Calista asked.

“I know, but I’m not keen on mortals having the same powers as you,” Cleo replied.

“Alright. Next question: who the hell is Edward Mcrinnin?”

“The dude I’ve been controlling for five years and almost killed?”

“That’s my girl,” Ramiro said with a grin, ruffling Cleo’s dark pink wavy hair.

“DADDY!” Iris yelped, running into his arms.

“Yes, dolphin?”

“Eddie is here! Can I see him?” Iris asked.

“I don’t see why not,” Ramiro answered.

“Dad, he’s getting ready for the ball with that Jade girl—they leave in two minutes!” Cleo muttered.

“Shouldn’t you be there to tell them?” Ramiro asked.

“Right. Sorry.” Cleo’s hair shifted from pink to white, her eyes from bright yellow to blue, her skin from tan to pale white.

“Good luck, sis!” Iris chirped, hugging Cleo’s leg.

“Thanks, Ri!” Cleo said, ruffling Iris’s hair before teleporting away.

“She and you are almost carbon copies,” Calista commented.

“Who? Cleo?”

“No shit, Sherlock,” Ramiro replied.

“Well... she isn’t even biologically ours. The twins, Iris and Aruther, are. Yet Cleo takes more after me.”

“You forgot about the ‘gifts’ we got from Edward,” Calista added.

“Moving on. When did you tell her about the Radit gun?”

“I thought you told her?” Ramiro asked.

“No?”

“Again, we did,” Milo and Cyrus chorused.

“How long were you eavesdropping on your parents?” Calista asked.

“No need to eavesdrop if you talk so loudly, Mama,” Milo quipped.
“I’ll be late for basketball, so I’ll let Cy spare you the details.”

“Milo, I swear...” Cyrus began, but Milo cut him off.

“Yes, sorry for taking your spotlight. Deepest apologies. Adios!”

“Cyrus. Finn. Lunaire. Anything to share with your parents?”
Calista asked.

“It was Milo’s fault! Milo and I were talking about homework...
which was to interrogate our siblings...”

“Enough. First you swear at your brother, then make up lies?”
Calista snapped.

“I didn’t—”

“Why can’t you be like Milo? Such a good brother, and you treat
him with such disrespect. Sometimes I wish you were never born.”

“Calista, that’s too far...” Ramiro sighed.

“Well, at least the marriage deals we’re signing with those mortals—
Jule and Marcus’s daughter—will make up some amount.”

“What marriage deal?” Cyrus asked angrily.

“Calista, I told you not to go forward with that,” Ramiro said,
worried.

“Cy, your mother signed you up to marry Annete Windsor next
week,” Ramiro sighed.

“You mean... a mortal? One of Cleo’s creations?”

“Be grateful, insignificant piece of shit. You don’t matter in this
family,” Calista spat.

“Calista, don’t be a narcissist,” Ramiro cautioned.

“You don’t tell me what to do,” Calista shot back, throwing a white-and-blue basketball at Cyrus.

“Hey! Basketball got canceled today—what the hell is going on?” Milo asked, then screamed at the sight of his bloody twin.

“CY!” Milo ran over, examining him.

“Son, don’t overreact. I’ll call a paramedic when you stop panicking,” Calista said, syrupy sweet.

“Dad... what happened to Cy?” Milo’s voice betrayed that he already knew.

Ramiro looked away; Calista grinned like she’d won.

“How... long?” Milo asked. Silence.

“Dad... you knew she treated him this way?”

“You will treat your mother with respect,” Calista said coldly. “Take him to the infirmary if you care so much.”

Milo teleported him and Cyrus to the infirmary.

“Nurse? Where the hell is the nurse?” Milo muttered, noticing she’d gone on leave.

“Nurse Elise taught me how to treat burns... worth a shot,” Milo muttered, spraying cold water on Cyrus’s face, then applying aloe vera to the scarlet areas. He wrapped gauze over a still-bleeding wound on the top of Cyrus’s head.

Cyrus groaned.

“Hey! You’re fine. Just... your head’s gonna hurt, but you’ll be okay soon, alright?” Milo reassured him.

“O-okay...”

Milo laid him on the bed with brown-and-blue covers.

“I’ll stay right here till you’re better, Cy. Promise.”

“D-don’t g-go...” Cyrus whispered, holding Milo’s arm

“I’m staying. Promise,” Milo replied.

“Did mother hit you?”

“No... did she hit you?”

Cyrus just scrunched his nose—a habit since age three whenever he didn’t want to answer.

“You’re doing the scrunch thing... alright. But don’t hesitate if you want to tell me, okay?”

“O-okay...”

“Nurse Ellie’s gone on holiday, so I tended your wounds.”

“Th-thank you,” Cyrus whispered.

“No problem, bud.”

Milo and Cyrus were rarely this close—Milo the favored, bright and charming; Cyrus, the quiet, unassuming twin. Alone, though, they shared a bond no one else saw.

Ball Catastrophe 2.0

“We’re here,” Edward said, pulling up to the banquet.
“I didn’t expect you to just teleport us here,” Jade
sighed

“It’s more practical.”

“A gentleman wouldn’t care about practicality.

“Moon, I never said I was gentle,” Edward replied, tucking Jade’s dagger into his pocket. “We’re early for the auctions. The dances are probably happening now.”

“Are there no nearby stalls?

“You seem against dancing?

“You seem... an asshole?”

“Well played, Red.”

“Do you have memory loss?”

“No? Why would you even think that?”

“You usually call me Moon. Now you’re using my surname.”

“Getting tense over something as trivial as names?”

“Shut your crusty mouth before I shove my dagger down your throat.”

“I believe you’re currently unarmed, Red.”

“I would be if you hadn’t made Lady Lunaire think I was mentally ill.”

“You are. Jade, you were afraid of Danny... breathing. Breathing.”

“He always breathes loudly.”

“You think loudly. Now, come on—we’re going to the ball.”

“We have about an hour until the auction?”

“I’m not standing here arguing for a full hour.”

“Well, then you go. I’m not budging.”

“Jade. Stop being stubborn for one day, will you?”

“And why should I?”

Edward sighed, scooping Jade over his shoulder as she thrashed.

“Put me down, Edward,” she muttered angrily.

“Hmm... I don’t think so.”

Still, he set her down gently, sliding her dagger back into her pocket.

“Oh. Thanks,” Jade murmured, taking in the surroundings.

The room was dimly lit by lanterns, with a red velvet mat, chandeliers, and pink-and-turquoise curtains draped over French windows.

“Stunned?” Edward asked.

“How are you not?”

“I’ve been here multiple times. My parents run this location—it’s their celebratory ball.” Edward pulled out a cigar.

“If you start smoking that, I swear I’ll rip out your lungs,” Jade said sharply.

“Harsh, darling. Real harsh. It’s just a cigar.”

“My grandpa died from lung cancer doing exactly that.” Jade sauntered over to the trash can; Edward tossed in the unlit cigar. Then, the entire box.

“There.”

“The hell did you do that for?”

“Simple. I don’t want to die.”

“How come you didn’t think of that before I told you?”

“Shh. You ask too many questions, Red.”

“And you have too few answers. Spill.”

“Later. Focus on the moment, not your noisy brain.”

“The music is trash anyway,” Jade muttered, gripping his hand until it nearly went white.

“Red, are you alright?” Edward asked.

“Fine. Perfectly fine. I’ll just use the washroom. Be back soon.” Jade dashed off.

“I’ll get a drink,” Edward sighed, approaching the bartender.

She had short blonde hair and grey eyes—not the grey he adored. The curious, secret-holding pewter-grey eyes he’d fallen for.

“Howdy. Name’s Edward. Yours?”

“Opal. So, what’s a handsome boy like you doing here alone?” she winked.

“I’m here with a female friend.”

“Oh... girlfriend?”

“Yes. She’s, my girlfriend. And I’ll have a Blue Lagoon.”

“Gladly, on the house,” Opal said, whispering, “You’ll be paying another way.”

Edward raised an eyebrow. “What was that?”

“Nothing! Just repeating your order.”

He leaned back, eyes lighting up as Jade approached.

“Oh hey, Red!”

“Hi. Auction’s starting soon. Should probably head there.”

“I’d love to, after my drink, kay?”

“Which drink?”

“This one, you slut,” Opal teased, handing him the cocktail.

“First, I do not appreciate you degrading her—or anyone. And I never said you could call me that.”

“You’re being silly. Drink up, unless she wants some herself,” Opal giggled.

“Red, we’re going now,” Edward said, leaving the drink.

“You can’t—bar policy.”

“Lady, I’ve been here more times than you can count. My mother owns this place. Unless you have something useful to say, I’m leaving.”

“At least have a sip!”

Edward dumped the full drink into a nearby spray bottle.

“There. Not a single drop wasted.”

“...Well played,” Opal muttered

He interlaced his hand with Jade's, walking carelessly to the auction center.

"Going twice! Going once! Red McLaren F1 for 80,000,000 Cally's!" the auctioneer announced.

"How much longer till the gun? I'm bored," Jade asked.

"Didn't you bring your phone?"

"Does it look like I did?"

"Have you eaten today?"

"That doesn't answer my question."

"Answer mine first."

"No. Now answer mine."

Edward shoved a banana into Jade's mouth

"The hell did you get this?"

"Brought it. Your favorite, isn't it?"

"Yeah... Thought you were calling me a monkey."

"Favorite animal, right?"

"How do you know more about me than I do?"

"It's called perceiving, Red."

"Fine. Favorite color?"

"Yellow. Like the sunflowers you planted near school."

"Favorite animal?"

"You just heard me say that."

"What the hell are you perceiving about me that I can't perceive about myself?"

“Quite easy. I even noticed you shake your right leg when frustrated.”

“Why are you looking at my feet?”

“Hard not to, when everything else makes me fall for you harder.”

“Are you saying my feet are unflattering?”

“Attention everyone! We are now proceeding with the auction of the Radit Gun!” the auctioneer yelled

“That’s our cue,” Edward whispered, then called, “10,000 Cally’s.”

“Pfft, commoners like you make me throw up,” a rich man sneered, his wife laughing.

“I refuse to sell the gun to you,” the auctioneer said.

“The hell? Why not?”

He loaded two bullets into the gun. “I can’t sell a gun to a dead person.”

This went horribly wrong.

Raspberries and Us

“It’s been a while since jerk-face and Jade left,” Nora muttered, boots crunching over dry leaves. Lady Lunaire had sent her alone to gather raspberries for dinner.

“Great. I’m going mental. Who am I even talking to?” she huffed, trudging up the hill. Nearby, a small chipmunk caught her attention.

“How fun. I have this—what even is it...?”

Before she could react, a sharp stench hit her. Skunk. Right in the eyes

“OW! OW! OW! SON OF AN EDWARD!” Nora screamed, tears streaming and eyes swelling.

“Interesting comedy show, Ra,” Neo smirked.

“Where the hell did you come from?” Nora hissed.

“Warehouse. Thought something like this might happen, so I brought antidote.”

“Well? Are you going to give it?” she coughed out.

“Yep. Jeez, your skin’s red.”

“You gave her the antidote yet?” a voice called from behind a tree.

“Who the hell is that?” Nora snapped, snatching the antidote from Neo.

“Tarzan,” Neo muttered

“No, it’s just me, Foxtrot,” the voice said. “Are you okay?”

“Yep. How did you even know which antidote to get?”

“Oh, we didn’t! We brought a full wildlife medical kit.”

“Which I’m assuming you brought?” Danny asked Neo.

“No... I thought you—Did we leave it in the chamber?”

“Yeah, I think so. Should be fine as long as we stick together. Wait... where’s Nora?”

Danny’s gaze landed on her, hunched over a small red-tailed panda.

“The person we’re worried about is interacting with a... beast?” he murmured, pulling out a small glass object

“Perhaps I was wrong. You aren’t Tarzan,” Neo sighed, yanking Danny back by his hair.

“OW!” Danny shrieked.

“Tarzan wouldn’t mistake a little panda for a beast.

“They looked the same from this angle.”

“Your blind.”

“I left my glasses at home, okay?”

“And your brain? Figures.”

“Can we save her from the non-beast?” Danny asked.

“Save her? She loves pandas. Ever since Papa bought her a stuffed one.”

“I hate pandas. Wolves are so much better.”

“Personally, same. Except I’d prefer cheetahs.”

“Cheetahs? Wouldn’t you and Nora like the same things?”

"Papa never showed me the same love he did for Ra. He wanted Nora to take over his clothing brand. I didn't even exist. Nora was always the favorite."

"I know how that feels. My mother forgot me constantly, preferred being out with friends."

"Did your mom forget to feed you?"

"Pfft, amateur. Did yours make you sleep on concrete?"

"You're calling me an amateur? Did yours make you eat candy till your teeth bled?"

"Alright. Fine. Truce?"

"Truce. And I think Nora and the... non-beast ran off somewhere."

"Grab my hand."

"What? No."

"God, you're stubborn," Danny sighed, grabbing Neo's wrist.

"What are you trying to do?" Neo asked.

Danny didn't answer, preferring to reveal his plan in action. He opened his white-and-red wings, scanning for Nora.

"I see her. Near a raspberry bush," Danny sighed in relief.

"Oh crap," Neo muttered, running toward Nora with her passed-out body in his arms.

"What even happened?" Danny asked, confused.

"She's allergic to raspberries. If she touches them, she could break out in hives—or vomit. She passed out before it got too bad."

"Just passed out?" Danny asked, alarmed.

“Crap,” Neo muttered.

“You always say that when things go wrong. Now what?”

“There’s a group of lions coming this way.”

“Isn’t this an endangered lion zone?”

“Yes. No clue how they got here. Take Nora to base, alert Re-re, and grab my sparring knife.”

“Why can’t I help?”

“I’m more trained in combat than anyone here. Re-re would be second.

“Bert and Ed did karate...”

“Bring them too,” Neo muttered, running off toward the tree-covered area.

“Well then,” Danny muttered, carrying Nora, draping his hoodie over her reddened skin. “Not much help, but it’s something.” He soared into the sky.

“Where... are we?” Nora murmured.

“Nothing. Just heading back to base. And your brother may or may not be dead.”

“Daniel, tell me what’s happening before I jump,” she rasped, dangling her legs.

Danny tightened his grip. “What did you call me?”

“Danny,” she whispered.

“Nope. That’s not it.” He began lowering them to a nearby lake.

“Why are we going down...?” she asked, worried.

“Your hives are bleeding. No ointment. At least I can wash them and wrap them,” he whispered.

“Like hell I’m letting you touch me.

“You didn’t complain when I carried you. Don’t make this harder than it is, Foxtrot.”

“Don’t... call me that,” Nora groaned, tears welling.

“What? Don’t call you by your surname?” Danny asked.

“It was never mine. I heard your conversation with Neo. Being unwanted, adopted—it’s hard. Do you think I wanted to be chosen?”

The words hung in the air, stinging.

“I heard whispers before I was chosen—about getting rid of the redhead. Didn’t take a genius to know who they meant.”

“I should wash the hives...” Nora muttered, flicking at a tear.

“Wait, Nora,” Danny whispered, holding her arm.

“What, Danny?”

“What do you want me to call you? You said not to call you that. I need something.”

“Nora’s fine.”

“Hmmm... no,” Danny said, cocky as ever.

Whoops!

“A nnie?” Charlie whispered, his voice almost unheard.

It had been days since he was locked in here, and Annete had gone to get the antidote. If she was ever getting it, he supposed. His arm—well, arms now—started itching and burning.

The dusty black walls of the room he was in seemed to be closing in every hour. The air seemed thicker, so much so that he couldn’t breathe. The floor seemed to vibrate every time he banged on the door, waiting to be free. To be unbound.

How long had it been since she’d locked him here? How many times had she lied directly to his face, not just now but every day?

Where even was his brother... He said he’d be there for him regardless of what happened. Guess that didn’t cover having your limbs burning and being purple and pink.

“I guess being 19 is an age to die at.” He sighed, plopping back on the floor.

“Bert, if you ever hear me, just know I forgive you...” he muttered, before he fell sideways, his head hitting the floor with a loud thud.

“Ber, I’m getting worried. We have left Charlie for too long, and what if something happened to him?” Duncan asked, rounding circles around the same table.

“He’s fine, he’s just a crybaby,” Bert answered. “It probably wasn’t that painful.”

“I thought you—of all people—care.”

“You think wrong. Regardless, I couldn’t care less. I’m retiring to the room; call me when your little crash-out is over.” Bert rolled his eyes before walking off.

“I’m going to find him,” Duncan whispered, not that anyone would care.

Trudging through the wide corridors, a paper fell into his hands. Plans about what Lady Lunaire planned to do to Josephine and Clara, his sisters.

“I won’t let the same fate happen to him,” Duncan whispered, shoving the paper in his pocket, not even realizing he was crying till a tear rolled down his cheek.

A larger door caught his eye. Most of the doors here had the same black color with grey trimming and rusty red handles. This door had blue and white stripes, with a sign that simply said in cursive, ‘Nurse Elise’. The handle was colored the shade of light blue. The trims of a visible red and white rug were visible through the gap between the door and floor.

Opening the door, he noticed a red-haired boy sitting on the checkered floor, clutching the hand of another boy with black hair.

“What the...” Duncan muttered, but the second he started speaking, the red-haired boy teleported in front of him.

“Who are you?” the boy asked.

“Duncan... Duncan Crager,” Duncan responded.

“Oh cool. I’m Milo, Milo Lunaire.”

“Aren’t you Lady Lunaire?”

“God no! Don’t even compare me to that peasant of a sister.”

“Oh... So, you both are siblings?”

“Yep! That’s my twin in the bed; he passed out earlier.”

“And that’s common for you?”

“Eh, he’ll be fine sooner than later. So, what brings you to the infirmary, my dear sisters’ prisoner?”

“How did you know I was a prisoner?”

“Please. Tell me you’re joking...”

“No!”

“Cleo’s been at this since she was possessed by that Brianna girl. I’ve seen people come and go from this lair more times than I can count. Well, go to the cemetery. She kidnaps people to get hold of the Radit gun.”

“Has anyone made it out alive?”

“Nope! Are you going to answer my question?”

“Oh right. Would you happen to know where Charlie Nirean is?”

“Oh, that lad Annete brought to the prison.”

The simple enunciation of the name Annete made him even more worried.

“Prison?”

“Yeah! I’ll take you there now, if you’d like...?”

“Alright...”

Just then a ‘whoosh’ sound could be heard, followed by two kids standing next to Milo.

“Dunnie!” Aruther squealed, running into Duncan’s arms.

“Hey there bud...” Duncan responded, scooping him up in his arms.

“You know my brother?” Milo asked, while Iris went and ‘examined’ Cyrus.

“Why’s Cy passed out here?” Iris asked, sitting next to Cyrus.

“Ri, he’s passed out. Just give him some time, he’ll be fine soon.”

“Where’s Dunnie and Aruther?” Iris asked, floating beside Milo.

“I don’t really know...”

Duncan and Aruther then appeared, while Duncan rushed to the trash can to vomit.

“I took him for a full tour!” Aruther explained.

A loud bang could be heard from a nearby room, followed by a bloodthirsty scream, one that sounded similar to Charlie’s.

“CHARLIE!” Duncan screamed, running towards the door, his mind racing.

“Duncan stay here. I’ll go see who that is.” Milo sighed, grabbing Duncan by his arm.

“LET ME GO.” Duncan screamed, an ability he tried to hide surprisingly coming to play.

The power was one that belonged to his mother, a person he resented. Her powers could electrocute a person; a power she exercised on him.

Training—that’s what she called it. Training didn’t make you wince in pain whenever you saw your supposed mother figure come pick you up from school.

The power surged through his hands, vibrating at his fingertips, transcending like shockwaves in his arms. Slowly, yet somehow slower, then reached Milo's arms, as he jerked back, howling in pain.

"What the hell?" Milo hissed out, his arm grey and smoking, while Duncan ran out, bolts of electricity escaping from the bottom of his shoes.

Banging on the door, till the metal dented just enough for his power to burn a hole through. The bottom part of the door had just a big enough hole for him to pass through, he thought.

Ripping apart the top part of the metal, the burn pieces burning rings round his already wounded fingers.

"CHARLIE! I'M HERE!" Duncan screamed, but stopped when he saw the sight in front of him.

Charlie had half his arm severed off, blood dripping off the visible bone. His leg had deep holes formed in his leg.

Craters.

Aurelia was the only one other than him who had moon powers. Why would she do something like this to—

"Shh." Aurelia whispered at him, covering his mouth with a handkerchief.

"You—why... why would you do this..." Duncan gasped out.

"It's all your fault. No one told you to play hero with him. You could have just left him screaming."

"That doesn't answer my question..." Duncan responded, trying to access his powers, but realized he couldn't.

Budet. That's her power.

That's why she only had access to moon powers when he was around. Because her power was to—

"I see you have figured it all out..." Aurelia sighed, kicking Duncan to the floor as he fell on top of Charlie.

"Goodbye, traitor." She murmured, before injecting a purple solution into Duncan's arm. The same one Charlie had injected in his when he was 14.

"Are you done, Re?" a voice asked, appearing beside her.

"Yes. Two of them are gone. That Annete one seems persistent to get that stupid antidote to him."

"I got rid of her."

"Perfect."

"What the hell do you both think you are doing?" Milo's voice roared over the two of their conversations, holding his burnt arm.

"Christopher. Now." Aurelia murmured, aiming her net at Milo.

"It's Nicky now, sadly." Nicky sighed, before turning invisible.

Two of the Lunaires gone.

Marco Lin and the Things We Keep in the Bin

“The hell you mean dead?” Edward asked, his fists slowly balling up.

“It’s quite simple English.” The auctioneer responded, keeping his calm composure.

“No- not that that.”

“Oh! Well, that’s for me to know and you to find out.” The auctioneer chuckled.

“Seems like we’re finding out now.” Jade hissed, kicking the auctioneer in his ribcage, jabbing her elbow in his lower back.

“Protective of me, are we now Red?” Edward asked.

“Shut the hell up.” Jade responded, while the auctioneer winced in pain.

“I received orders from the Mccrinnin’s.” The auctioneer gasped out. “Miss Niana, wanted him dead.”

“What about dad...?” Edward asked.

“He... he was the one who paid me to do it.”

“Jade let him go.” Edward rasped.

“What?” Jade asked, concerned.

"I said let him go." Edward hissed, pushing her off him. "Where are they?" Edward asked, lifting up the auctioneer's head with his shoe.

"Th-they're in the office..." he responded, followed with the crack of his bones and his last breath.

"Marco Lin." Edward read out holding his nametag.

"The hell was that for?" Jade asked.

"Reasons. You stay here, ensure that anyone who was here has left." Edward mentioned, trudging towards the office.

"And why can't I help?" Jade asked, sticking out her leg making Edward trip.

"Do you ever listen?" Edward screamed. "God! I ask you for one thing and you cannot do shit."

"Oh please. All you want is some doll who can follow your every command." Jade rolled her eyes.

"At least that doll would have an alive sister." Edward hissed, taking a bit too long to realize what he said. "I didn't mean that."

"Yea... That's what they all say. That's what- you know what forget it! I'll just evacuate everyone and take the gun to Lunaire, and finally you'll be rid of the burden of me."

"You know I didn't mean that."

"No. No really, I'm fine. God, I thought we had something when Lunaire said that about you... Liar. That's what you are."

"Wait what...?"

"What." Jade asked, the resentment for him visible in her eyes.

“Nothing. Just go do what I told you.” Edward responded, but he wished he could take back what he said. Take back everything that made her hate him. That’d be a long list.

“Of course that’s what you say after saying that.” Jade responded, grabbing a nearby knife, cutting the tunic off her dress, making it easier to run in. “The second that gun reaches Lunaire, we go back to enemies. We never knew each other if someone asks.”

Trying to keep up his act of him not caring, of him not almost on the verge of tears. Tears that hadn’t been released since- forget it. “Overreaction much for such a small issue.” Edward responded, grabbing the knife from Jade’s hands. “Careful.”

“You off all people would know how to be ‘careful’.” Jade mimicked.

“Do not test me, Red.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, who are you?” Jade asked, mockingly.

“The asshole who ruined your life, I know. But I swear to God, Red, the piece of me I’ve given you, don’t break it. It’s the only part of me no ones been able to break.”

“I honestly couldn’t care less.” Jade responded, running off after a passerby.

Just then a high-pitched giggle could be heard. Coming from the office.

Right, he forgot about that.

Trudging to the office, he felt a cold gush of air run over him, covering him in goosebumps.

“That’s new...” Edward murmured.

Touching the handle, Edward burnt himself.

“Well, if it isn’t our murderer...” a voice asked.

“What in fresh hell are you...?”

“The people you killed.”

“Wh-why’s Iris here?”

“Didn’t you say you would be here with me forever, Eddie?” Iris asked.

“I did. I kept to my promise.”

“You didn’t. You’re a liar!”

“No! Not again!” Edward responded, falling to the ground.

“Repent and resent, traitor.” Iris whispered, holding a knife just above Edward’s neck.

“Wait Ri.” A pink haired 7-year-old said, his eyes fully black, with yellow irises.

“What Rhett.?” Iris rolled her eyes.

“Group meeting, for two minutes. Then see if you want to kill him.”

“Fine.” Iris sighed, chaining Edward to the floor with chains.

“Thank you.” Rhett said, grabbing Iris’s arm and running off to another segment of the room.

“Are you sure he’s the right person?” a blue haired boy asked, hiding behind his sister.

“Yea. Ri usually doesn’t make errors in finding people.” Aruther snickered. “Are you questioning my sister’s abilities?”

“No...” the boy responded, clutching onto his sister’s arm.

“We’re here!” Rhett exclaimed, latching the door.

“What did you all want to meet for...?” Iris asked.

“We found more info about him.” A pink haired teen said. “He had a sister, who he cherished a lot. That is until she died.”

“Cause of death?”

“I-I couldn’t find it...”

“Moving on, Iris, his sisters name is Ivy, and she died because of her and Edwards mom.” Aruther mentioned, reading from a thin grey diary.

“Edwards relationship with his mom, is horrendous, became even more horrendous after his sister’s death.” The pink haired teen whispered.

“We aren’t killing him yet.” Iris sighed, throwing her knife into a wooden slab.

“Are you kidding me?” Aruther screamed. “Do you know how long we have planned this for?”

“Yes, I do. Instead of killing, we torture him. Make him relive everything he’s ever gone through. Then kill him.”

Iris chuckled, while the others nodded their heads in agreement.

“Ma’am, you can’t be on these premises.” A security guard screamed running after Jade.

“Oh, alright. I’m just heading to the washroom, and I’ll be on my way.” Jade sighed, smoothening her skirt.

“If you do not leave the premises, we will have to give your name as a suspect of our auctioneer’s death.”

Jade landed a hard punch to his jaw, running off to the exit.

“Exit 403, we have Miss Red, possible suspect for Marco Lin.”

As the guard turned around, he noticed the lights in the office becoming dimmer, and purple.

“That’s not my problem.”

Heartbreaks and Hives

“Damn it, Nora. Can you listen for once?” Danny hissed.
It had been the third time Nora had tried to escape from his grasp, to go help her brother.

“He told you to get Aurelia. Why the hell haven’t you gone to do that?” Nora asked.

“We would have reached by now, if you hadn’t been ruining the mission so much.”

“You of all people who know about ‘missions’.” Nora rolled her eyes.

“What the hell is that supposed to mean...?” Danny asked, feigning innocence.

Didn’t take a genius to know who she was talking about.

“I overheard you and Duncan talking about knowing Edward was going to kill Jade.”

Perhaps she doesn’t know.

“We knew after she died. In fact, Edward doesn’t even know most of us knew about Lunaire before he told us.”

“Wait what...?”

“I was the first of the five to meet her. She gave me the mission to kill two adults.”

“Would you happen to know who they were?” Nora asked slyly.

“That’s for another day, berry.”

"I told you to call me Nora."

"Rather not."

"Would you rather, I whack you in the face?"

"Depends with what."

"You are insufferable, Denver."

"What, you steal my full name, now my surname?"

"I didn't 'steal' it. I'm just using it."

"Suit yourself."

The rest of the walk to the warehouse was silent, followed by the crunching of leaves, the howls of crying coming from behind them, and the soft blow of wind.

"Ugh this wind is insufferable." Nora sighed, removing strands of hair from her face.

"Would be more sufferable, if you had just used that hair tie on your wrist." Danny whistled.

"Right forgot I had that." Nora mentioned, plucking it off her wrist.

"Don't. You look better with your hair down."

"What was that?"

"Nothing. Your hearing is shit."

"Your personality is the same."

"Nice to know you notice the small stuff."

"That doesn't even make sense."

"Neither do we. Yet, here we are."

"Shit..." Nicky murmured looking at the goopy yellow and white mess before him.

“Chris, when I said deal with him, I didn’t mean melt him.” Aurelia sighed, smacking her head with her fist

“Well, sorry. If you could have been precise with your request, we wouldn’t been in this scenario, now, would we?”

“No one would ever, in their lives, interpretate ‘dealing with someone’ as melting them into a pool of goo.” Aurelia sighed.

“Shit.”

“What now?”

“Bastard 3 and 8 are here.”

“You mean Danny and Nora?”

“What the hell did we create codes for, if your gonna suck out the fun...?”

Just then, a loud crash could be heard. A blonde-haired specimen walked out holding an object, that looked too similar to a shotgun.

“Is that Bert?” Aurelia asked.

“Yep. I do wonder what the hell he’s doing with a gun though...”

“Well, go ask him? It doesn’t take a genius to ask a question.”

“Would take a genius to understand that I cannot just asked, ‘Hey Ber! Quick question, why do you have a shot gun?’”

“Shut up. Nora’s interacting with Bert right now.... The gun seems to have disappeared.”

“And bastard 8?”

“He’s.... not there?”

“Don’t be preposterous. We saw him with bastard 3 earlier.”

“Well then go ask.” Aurelia said, throwing Nicky straight at Nora.

“Oh, hey bud!” Nora exclaimed, steadying Nicky’s stance.

‘Play it cool’ rasped voice groaned through his ear piece.

“Oh-uh h-hi!” Nicky said, though it felt like he was questioning her.

So much for playing it cool.

“Nick, would you happen to know where Aurelia is? Its urgent.” Nora asked.

“I-I saw her in the dorms earlier...” Nicky sighed.

“Aight. I’ll go find her... See if you can find Lucas and the rest.”

“W-why?”

“We’re all gonna die soon, since Jade and Edward decided to take their sweet time for that gun. Might as well bond in whatever time we have to bond, right?” Nora chuckled.

“I heard my name?” Aurelia answered, arriving from her dorm. Where she supposedly was...

“Oh right. Neo’s being attacked by some beast. Go help him.”

“Amazing introduction to my life...” Aurelia sighed, walking out the warehouse.

“You know... I should ask Luc, if he has some spare clothes for you. You have been wearing that same hoodie ever since... well you know what.”

“It’s fine. The hood just had some personal meaning to me.”

“You... want to talk about it?”

“No thanks.”

“You know I am here if you want to talk right?”

“Nora, can we please drop it?”

“Fine. I’m going to be with Georgie.”

“I didn’t mean to make you mad...”

“Just forget it.”

‘Powerless. That’s what she was always.’ Jade remembered her father saying, her head spiraling.

She’s always been referred to as the treasureless daughter. Her sister, Emilia was the placeholder. The only daughter in the Red family who had powers. Who was not an outcast. Who was the wanted one.

Jade was ordinary. That’s the first thing her parents said, or even thought of.

What if... the car didn’t hit Emilia that day. What if she was still living, and Jade was still... nothing.

Tripping over a stone, she regained consciousness of where she was. She was in front of her house.

The worn-out ones with creaking wooden floors and cracked windows.

The same home she lived in before Emilia’s death.

Walking in she drank every detail. The pathway to her room seemed longer as she ran through it.

“Where the hell is it...”

What she was looking for even she didn’t know.

Suddenly the door creaked behind her.

“Blue Jay...?” a tiny voice called out.

Jade flipped around so hard she crashed her back with the wood behind her.

“Emilia...?”

“Where the hell am I....?” Duncan whispered, his eyes burning due to the blinding white light.

“No one knows...” a voice spoke.

“Ch-char?”

“Hey Dun...” Charlie exclaimed softly, opening his arms.

“Oh m-my God...” Duncan gasped, running towards him.

“Hey there bud...” Charlie ruffled his hair.

“You have no clue... how much I missed you...”

“Think I have some clue bud.”

“Shut up....”

Charlie laughed lightly, blonde curls bouncing.

“Who sent you here?” Charlie asked.

“Aurelia... she’s a Budet.”

“Didn’t she have the same powers as you?”

“Afraid not...”

“If it makes, you feel any better, Annie’s here.”

“She saved you before me...”

“No, bud. That ass of a Christopher killed her. So, she can come here and go back to Earth whenever she wants.”

“K.”

“You tired?”

“Ye-yep...”

“I’ll call for a bed. Or you can stay in my room?”

“The second one? I’m new here so I don’t want to be alone... sorry.”

“Nah its fine... You need your stuffy?”

“I do *not* sleep with a stuffy.”

“Oh sure ya don’t. what was his name again? Raspberry, right?”

“It was blueberry you dipshit.”

“You’re just proving my point, Crager.” Charlie murmured ruffling Duncan’s hair.

“Whatever. How often does Annete come to visit you?”

“Ever since she gave the intro to this place. That was the last time.”

“Oh. But you said...”

“God knows what I’ve said. I’ve been alone for so long everything seized to exist. Least you’re here.”

“Yep... I’m here...”

“Did you see Annie before you came here?”

“N-nope...”

“Aight. I’m heading to sleep. Blueberry should be here for you in a few minutes then you can head to my room.”

“Y-yea sure.”

“Goodnight, Dun.” Charlie said before walking off.

“Goodnight, Char.”

“Cleoooooooooooo?” a teen like voice echoed in Cleo’s head.

“Yes, Bri?” Cleo answered back.

“I want to be let out.” Briana whined.

“Bri, you had your daily 5 outings a day. It’s also still 3:00 pm.”

“Ughhhhhh!”

“Fine. One more outing, then straight back. 10 minutes. Where ya want to go?”

“YAYAYAYAYAY, I LOVE YOUUU!” Briana screamed, as she was let out, hugging Cleo.

“Love ya too nerd. Where do you plan to go...?”

“The library!” Briana yelled as she skedaddled down the passage.

“Nerd, that’s the other way...” Cleo chuckled.

“I KNEW THAT!”

“Mhm. I need to check up on Ri and Ru so take your time. And she’s gone...”

“L-lady Lun-lunaire!” a voice called out.

“Who is it?” Cleo asked, strangling the person behind her with neon white rope.

Secrets I'd Rather Keep

Hidden- Epilogue

“It’s me, Aurelia!” Aurelia choked out.

“Oh, sorry...” Cleo sighed, dropping Aurelia to the floor.

“How’d you recognize me?”

“You’ve shown me your human form...?”

“Right sorry.”

“It’s actually the two of us...” Nicky came out from another tunnel in the warehouse.

“Do the two of you plan to give me heart attacks?” Cleo asked, changing back into her celestial form.

“Yes. My query was what exactly is the plan now...?” Aurelia asked.

“Status of everyone?”

“Edward and Jade are at the banquet, the trackers on them have been destroyed somehow. Nora, Danny and Neo are still out in the forest. Charlie and Duncan are dead and Annete is just... living I guess.”

“Living how...?”

“The serum makes them be in a permanent coma, yet not be able to be declared dead.” Nicky murmured.

“So, their dead. Stop exaggerating the truth just so people will listen to you, Dover.” Lady Lunaire groaned.

"It's been a long-time habit, your majesty. Apologies." Christopher sighed.

As Aurelia and Lady Lunaire chatted, Christopher blanked out.

"Dada! When will my friends be here?" I saw myself giggle.

It was my 5th birthday. I had finally made a group of friends.

Lucas Windsor, Damani Chen, Lulua ... or was it Lola? Lola Left and Soph Rinn.

This is how it went every night didn't it?

When he had the same nightmare every night since this... happened.

"Soon kiddo..." my dad sighed dad ruffling a younger version of my hair.

"Are you excited?"

"Yea!" I saw my younger self raise my hands spilling orange juice and pretzels everywhere.

A carefree moment with my dad. My last carefree moment with my dad.

"Honey! Lucas's dad is here. He messaged me saying Lucas wouldn't be able to attend since he has a fever."

Fever my ass.

"Luca won't be here..." I saw my younger self welling up.

"Chris, he's unwell... maybe he's getting extra better to play with you in school!" my dad skillfully lied to me. For the last time.

"Okey dada!" my younger self yelped as my dad brought me down from my baby chair.

At 5, I had outgrown it. Yet my mother begged my dad to make me use it till my baby sister came. Till she would need to use it. Yet she never came.

A louder knock was heard. Then even louder. My younger self started crying.

I walked over to myself. Sounds funny, doesn't it?

It wasn't.

I covered his eyes, knowing that was as helpful as nothing in the moment.

"Yes....?" My mom's last words were spoken as Lucas's dad shot her in the stomach.

"MAMA!" I felt salty tears on my hand. Wet.

Screams. Scenes no 5-year-old should witness.

"VICTORIA!" My dad screamed as he ran to my mother, as she clutched her stomach.

"C-call the am-am-ambulance. M-m-ma-make sure Syn-Sy-Sydney is fi-fine fo-for me..." she rasped out collapsing in my dad's arms.

"No, Vict listen. You and Sydney will be fine. Fine! You hea-hear me? L-look the am-ambulance is almost here!"

"Ta-take care of the Do-dovers for me..." my mom took her last breath.

"N-no... Vict. VICT. YOU HAVE TO STAY ALIVE FOR ME. PLEASE!" my dad yelled but it was of no use.

Lucas's dad pointed the guy at my dad's head.

"I thought I told your filthy family to leave my family alone. Didn't I, Charles...?" he spoke. The rat, that insignificant piece of shit talked.

"W-we could have t-talked about this... You didn't have to kill my wife!"

Bang. Bang. Bang. ***Bang. Bang.***

The police are here.

They always appeared on the dot, 2:00 pm each nightmare.

Only this time my uncle didn't run down to open the door.

I noticed, the tiny version of myself hide his head in my shoulder, his brown hair sweaty and moist.

"Shhh." I whisper, like it helps.

Somehow it does.

I lean against the baby chair, metal screeching.

Whisper the same song my parents sang.

"When the butterflies meet at the end of spring..." I start, feeling a hiccup of sadness coming.

"And the dew hits." I stare at his pouting face, not understanding the moment in its great extent.

"And sunflowers turn their head to the sun."

He looks up at me, his brown hair fading to pink at the end.

Strange.

I thought powers came when people were born.

"Just know I'll be there for you little one."

He sighs, content. His little arms grab on my sweater.

I slump down on the floor, letting him breathe on my chest.

It's weird, isn't it?

How the others parents and kids never came.

My uncle comes with a beer bottle and cigarette in hand, walking towards the door.

Like his sister isn't lying dead on the floor.

"Yes officer, how may I help?" he says with no care in the world.

The officer tells him the gist, telling him I'll be needing parental guardians.

The paperwork starts tomorrow.

Where I'll be no longer Charles and Victoria Dover's child.

I'll be Ralph and Winnie's.

Thrown away like I didn't have a chance at life.

That's when I realized.

Monsters aren't born.

Their created.

Playlist

Edward Mcrinnin: Bad Guy
Duncan Crager: Happier
Charlie Nirean: Family Line
Danny Denver: Enemy
Bert Nirean: What is Logical
Jade Red: Bad Child
Nora Foxtrot: Backstabber
Annete Windsor: Prom Queen
Christopher Dover: After Dark
Damani Chen: Touch
Soph Rinn: Daddy Issues
Lola Left: Gnarly (Clean)
Lucas Windsor: Light Em Up
Neo Foxtrot: See You Again
Georgina Luck: Hooligan
Aurelia Raine : M.I.A.
Calista Lunaire: Tag, Your It
Ramiro Lunaire: My Girlfriend Is a Witch
Cleo Lunaire : Royalty

Cyrus Lunaire: Dollhouse

Milo Lunaire : Sweater Weather

Iris Lunaire : Fireflies

Aruther Lunaire: Counting Stars

Joesphine Crager: Control

Clara Crager : Brutal

Acknowledgements

It's the end of "The Stars Left Us Behind"!

*I've been DREADING this day since October 25th when I started writing,
And looky here, IT'S OVER.*

Moving on,

Hi guys! I'm Gia, G.D. for short.

*If your chronically online, you'd know I have a channel called:
<http://www.youtube.com/@thestarsleftusbehind> or @thestarsleftusbehind
and on Instagram, @thestarsleftusbehind or Pinterest
@thestarsleftusbehind (atp the stars ran away only)*

This book genuinely took me out like a bomb,

I once even considered making Charlie blow up the school once.

#sendhelpforcharlieinthenextbook

Words cannot express how grateful I am, you picked up this book.

*Every word here, every title even this acknowledgement, has been planned
for at least 8 hours per day.*

*To think of it, this book was never meant to have Nora, Bert or Danny, or
PortSport or Lombrin!*

Shocker!

Anyways, moving on to the main purpose of this;

*A huge thanks to my dad, who made this whole book possible, helping me
with plots, giving me advice, and motivating me.*

To my grandma, for helping as well, with spelling checks and reading this whole book for mistakes.

To Uncle Hanzel, Uncle Dan, Uncle Geoffery and Aunty Lorin for helping me in small ways.

To Hudsyn. Thank you for bearing with me and the valid crashouts I had during writing this book.

To BlueRose Publishers, for publishing this book and providing help with every detail.

To the person reading this, you are a legend for picking up this book. No, genuinely! I feel this book could make it big, even become a fandom. (if it ever does reach more than 100 readers :p)

Ooh! And, if this book does become a fandom, the fan-name is "Caelidrians"!

Also, could you tell I am a Gacha kid?

P.S.= I plan to make this book a fandom!

Check out my channel for more details!