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Chapter 1

It is a crisp clear fall night. There is not a cloud in the sky and the stars light up the night from what seems like just an arm's length away. I used to only admire these kinds of nights through my window nestled in the warmth of my room. Now these are my favorite kinds of nights to go hunting with Gwen.

Gwen, my best friend, is a better hunter than I am. She does it with such relish that few can resist her charm. I need only stand by and let her work her magic. Gwen is one of those few people that are born to be a vampire. At a very petite 5'3" her charm is stronger than any man's physical strength. With just a look and a nod of the head, she can get just about anyone to come to her without a second thought as to why they are doing so.

"There! I think they'll be perfect. Don't you Lila?" Gwen sets her sites on two middle-aged men who are quite clearly on the prowl tonight. They're not wearing wedding rings, but the tan lines that have faded enough for human eyes not to notice are still visible to us. We are waiting on line at a New York City club that we have no intention of going into. We could easily skip the line

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altogether if we wanted to go inside but it's less of a fuss to pull our victims off of a line unnoticed by prying eyes.

"Easy pickings Gwen! How are we going to play this one? Tag team or good girl, bad girl?"

Gwen doesn't even hesitate. "Good girl, bad girl. Let's give them a sporting chance!" She can't help but laugh as she says this because she knows just as well as I do that they don't stand a chance either way. She was a man-eater long before she ever sank her teeth into her first victim!

I stay put, letting Gwen approach the two men, acting the part of the shy friend too nervous to go with her, while she introduces us. We play our roles well because they reflect who we were before the change. Although I was always told that I am beautiful, I never felt comfortable in my own skin and so I was very reserved. Once I was changed though, I no longer felt the same awkwardness. But the memory of that feeling has never left me, not even after my 2 centuries as a vampire.

Although Gwen is only 1 century old, compared to my 2, we look almost the same age. This is because I became a vampire at the age of 30 and I changed Gwen when she was 25. In all my centuries roaming this earth, Gwen is the only person I have ever changed. As I said, she was born for this life.

Her human life was full of battles, which having overcome made her strong, independent and almost completely fearless. She knew what she wanted and

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wasn't afraid to go after it, making her the skilled hunter that she is today. I see a lot of myself in Gwen. The me that I was always so afraid to show, that only a rare few got to see if they took the time to get to know me.

Even now, I don't go out very often; only when I get hungry or bored enough to leave the comfort of my home in the underground complex created by our clan. Tonight is one of those few nights that Gwen has convinced me to join her. Unlike me, Gwen goes out often either hunting for herself or for other members of our clan that are too young to be seen wandering the streets late at night without drawing suspicion. Her frequent outings help her to keep up with the latest fashions and adapt to the current vernacular so that she blends in easily.

Gwen is talking to her latest victims and from where I wait, my eye catches a glimpse of a tall man in his late twenties. It appears that he is one of the bouncers working the door tonight. He looks Hispanic, with a clean-shaven head and a well-trimmed beard. He's gorgeous with beautiful green eyes and I find myself wondering what color they would become if I were to change him.

My own once dark brown, almost midnight black, eyes are now a deep purple that often cause people to take a second look. The color is still dark enough that most people convince themselves that they are actually brown and the purple tint must come from my clothes or is a trick of the light. When the thirst takes hold or I become overcome with intense emotion though, there is no disputing their color. They become a light shade of

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purple and take on the appearance of amethysts. This is the first sign my victims get that there is something not quite human about me.

For a moment, I get so lost in my thoughts and observation of the tall stranger that I almost forget about Gwen and the two men.

“Lila?! Earth to Lila!” I hear Gwen calling my name and snap out of it. “Come here! I want you to meet Simon and David.”

I walk over to them. Gwen has already gotten them to leave the line and they are waiting for me to join them. “Sorry, I guess this cold air is getting to me!” I smile and David offers me his jacket. I take it only to play along since I don’t actually feel cold.

“So what are you ladies up for tonight?” asks Simon. I look at Gwen, letting her answer. She shrugs her shoulders. Then looking coyly at Simon, she says, “Well, what would you boys like to do?”

Simon and David look at each other as if they can’t believe their good luck. “There’s a motel a few blocks over if you ladies would like to get out of the cold and have a few drinks with us.” David says this as his eyes roam up and down my body. Although, I am the same height as Gwen, I’m much bustier and his eyes come to a full stop at my chest.

Playing along I say, “Well, it is really cold, but I’m not sure if we really should Gwen. I mean, we don’t really

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know these guys.” A motel is not a good place for us to have a meal. We can’t leave the bodies there and we can’t risk being seen disposing of them.

“Sure you know us! We told you already, I’m Simon and this is David. We don’t bite! Not unless you want us to that is!” Simon laughs at his own joke and pulls Gwen close to him as she laughs along. Simon thinks that she’s laughing with him, but I know that she’s really laughing because she is going to enjoy draining him dry.

David takes my hand and says, “Come on, why don’t we just go to the car and get out of the cold for a little bit while we figure out what to do tonight. OK?” I look from him to Gwen, silently letting her know to set the trap now that they’ve taken the bait. Then I look back at David, “It would be nice to get out of the cold just for a little while, I guess.”

Simon practically jumps for joy and leads us over to his car. Gwen gets into the passenger seat next to him while David and I both get in the back seat. Simon starts the car so that he can put the heat on. He’s parked in one of those 24 hour garages that charge you by the hour.

“Well, since we’re gonna be heading out anyway, why don’t I pull the car out onto the street?” he says, mainly just to Gwen who he is eyeing like she’s a porterhouse steak and he hasn’t eaten in weeks. She gives him an easy smile, puts her hand on his thigh and practically purrs at him, “Sure!” I do my best not to laugh and stay in character.

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He pulls out of the garage and Gwen suggests that we get something to eat. I agree, “That sounds like a great idea! I am getting pretty hungry.” I look over at David who is still clearly enthralled by my D cups. “Aren’t you hungry David? Or thirsty maybe? How about we go to a diner, I would love a milkshake right about now, wouldn’t you?!” From the front seat Gwen erupts into laughter, snapping David out of whatever fantasy he was having.

“Diner?! Oh sure, yeah, let’s get something to eat.” He’s completely frazzled and practically as red as a lobster after having clearly been caught ogling.

Simon looks in his rearview mirror to see what’s going on. “You might want to wipe the drool from your mouth there, Dave,” he laughs. “You act like you’ve never seen a pretty woman before.” David gives him a threatening look and he just laughs harder.

“Well, I know the perfect place we can go,” Gwen tells Simon. She gives him turn by turn directions and we find ourselves in a rather deserted neighborhood. While cars line the sidewalks, the buildings are all dark and not a single person can be seen for blocks.

“Are you sure we’re going the right way?” David asks. He’s been looking out the window the whole way and is clearly starting to get uneasy; his nervousness permeating the air, filling me with anticipation.

“Trust me!” Gwen assures him. “This place is to die for!” David looks to me for reassurance and I flash him my biggest, sweetest smile. He relaxes a bit, but not

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much. To distract him, I let my leg graze against his. He looks down at our legs, then up at me again and smiles; our surroundings now all but forgotten.

“Oh look, there’s a spot! Why don’t you park here Simon? It’s just on the other side of the block and we can cut through there.” Gwen points to a small alley that leads to the other side of the block.

Without hesitation, Simon parks the car and as I get out, I give Gwen a quick wink that neither of the men sees. Once again, we pretend to be chilled by the cold night air. David and I enter the alley first. We both snuggle up under his jacket to keep warm. Gwen and Simon follow.

A third of the way down the alley, I no longer hear Simon’s footsteps behind us. David is too distracted by having me so close to him to notice. We approach a dumpster halfway and I make my move. Pushing him against the wall, I place my mouth against his neck. He is so startled that he freezes and doesn’t put up a fight or make a sound. I extract my fangs and sink them into his neck, tasting the sweet metallic tang of his blood.

David’s final thoughts flash through my head. It is said that as you die, your life flashes before your eyes. It has been my experience that these images usually consist of all the things a person regrets most; as if they are confessing their sins before they die. David’s thoughts are no exception. Images of his wife flash through his mind, followed by the faces of countless, nameless women; my own a reminder of his final transgression.

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Finishing my meal, I slowly lower him down to the ground beside the dumpster where he will remain hidden until someone passes through.

I stand back up; Gwen walks up beside me and smiles. “Now wasn’t that fun?!” I can’t help but laugh. “I told you, you should come out with me more often!” she says. We make our way out of the alley and head home.