

Prologue

Tiara

I got closer to home after returning from school with a backpack slung over my shoulder when I noticed something unusual - a gathering of people clustered near our front yard.

Frowning, I quickened my pace. I didn't understand why people had gathered around my house until the voices reached my ears - the anguished cries and frantic screams that pierced the air. Anxiety tightened its grip on me as cold beads of sweat formed on my forehead, sliding down my face. My heart thumped loudly against my rib cage at the thought of something untoward happening.

Pushing through the crowd, I managed to make my way into my house, only to be confronted by a scene that made my blood freeze with agony and fear.

Inside our cramped living space, seven intimidating gures loomed while two of them mercilessly pummeled my father. Without a second thought, I threw my backpack away and sprinted toward my dad, throwing myself over my father's battered form, and shielding him from further harm.

"Please, stop!" I pleaded desperately as tears began rolling down my cheeks. "Why are you hurting my dad? Just stop, please!" I cried out in pain as punches and kicks rained down upon me, intended for my father.

"Tiara!" My father's weakened voice pierced through the chaos. "Leave me be. Stay away. You'll only get hurt," he gasped in his obvious pain.

I couldn't leave him to suffer alone and disregarded his plea, continuing to implore the assailants to cease their attack.

"Stop!" Finally, a man, presumably their leader, issued the command for them to halt.

"Girl, leave right now if you love your life. We won't hesitate to show you and your father no mercy," he growled, his voice taking on an unnerving, animalistic quality.

I mean he literally growled like a wolf!

Oh, no!

It suddenly dawned on me. My tearful eyes observed intently their menacing stature and appearance, and I realized they were far from human. The extraordinary appearance of those people was very large and scary. They weren't just ordinary men—they were shifters.

"Then don't stop. You can kill me instead of him, but please leave my father. He is old and sick," I sobbed, wrapping my arms protectively around my dad.

"We don't care about whether he is old or sick. We want our money back. Why did he take a loan when he was never going to pay? Now bear the consequences," The boss howled.

I knew exactly why my dad needed to take a loan. His condition was deteriorating day by day, and we needed money for his treatment and my education.

"How much money does he owe you?" I asked.

"Ten grand," he grimaced.

Ten grand?!

That was a big amount!

"Please give me some time. I will pay you back the entire sum," I begged.

He laughed cruelly before spitting out, "You will pay me back?! Huh! Okay, you have two days. Give me the money, or I'll kill your dad."

Two days?!

That was too soon. I hesitated, but then I saw the boss step toward my dad. I panicked.

"Wait! I... I promise I'll repay you ten grand in two days. But until then, please leave us alone," I blurted out, feeling the urgency of the moment.

"Are you sure, little girl? Can you manage to get ten grand in two days?" He laughed, and his men joined in, mocking us for our poverty.

"Yes!" I armed. "Now leave us alone," I whispered.

"Alright, girl, we'll leave for now. But if I don't get my money after two days, I won't listen to any more excuses, and your father will pay with his life," he threatened, growling dangerously. His eyes turned red showing his killer instinct, making me swallow hard with fear.

"T-that will never happen," I muttered, gathering all my strength. "I will pay you the money."

He gave me a mocking stare before he motioned his people to leave our place.

I didn't know how I would accomplish this, but I knew one thing: I would do anything to save my father.

My eyes landed on my dad's bruised form lying on the oor. My heart ached. Holding onto my dad's shoulder and upper arm, I helped him slowly rise to his feet. Gently, I tended to his bleeding mouth, hands, and legs, carefully cleansing them with antiseptic.

The sight of his wounds made me worry. They were worsening his condition because the disease had slowed down his natural healing process.

"Dad, are you alright?" I asked, looking at my father with helplessness. "I think we should go to the hospital. Your wounds are bleeding badly."

"No, Tiara! We can't afford the treatment. I... I will be ne. Don't.. don't worry," he murmured, his voice lled with pain.

A sense of despair washed over me. Given my dad's condition, we couldn't even seek help from the supernatural hospital, as he had been banned from the supernatural realm due to the curse.

"Who were those people, Dad?" I inquired, handing him some medicine that could alleviate his pain.

"Tiara, I'm sorry you had to witness all of this. I wanted to shield you from them, but I failed as a father," he cried, and I embraced him tightly.

I couldn't bear to see him so vulnerable and in tears. He was my hero, my everything—undoubtedly the world's best father.

"No, Dad. You've done everything to protect me, and now it's my turn to repay you. I will do everything a dutiful daughter should to safeguard her father. So don't worry. I'm here," I reassured him, pressing a kiss on his forehead.

"Please, tell me who they were?" I insisted.

"They are the Hybrid Maa," he revealed, causing me to gasp in disbelief.

The hybrid Maa?!

They were the most cruel and dangerous among shifters.

"I'll arrange the money," I asserted, nodding rmly. "So don't worry about a thing and take care of yourself. You know I only have you and no one else. I can't live without you, Dad," I sobbed, pouring out my emotions.

"I'm here, my child," he comforted, his hand soothingly rubbing my back.

"But, Tiara, how will you do it? The amount is substantial. Where will you nd that kind of money in just two days?" His brows furrowed, his gaze searching mine.

But I didn't have an answer for him.

"I will gure it out, Dad." I could only assure him.

After preparing dinner and feeding my dad with my own hands, I tucked him into bed. I had to take care of him like a child, as he was frail and unable to care for himself properly. Once the dishes were washed, I got ready and headed to work. During the day, I attended school, and at night, I worked at a bar.

Tonight, I planned to speak with my manager about the possibility of receiving an advance payment. Perhaps he would understand my situation and be willing to lend me some money.

Unfortunately, as soon as I made my request for an advance payment, it was swiftly rejected upon mentioning the amount—ten grand.

Damn it!

What now?

Where on earth would I nd such a signicant sum of money?

"What's the matter, baby girl?" Shirley, my best friend, asked teasingly as we served drinks to our regular clients. "You seem really down tonight. Did you break up with Jeremy?" She winked, attempting to lift my spirits.

"I had a long day," I sighed, slumping into the chair beside her.

"You can tell me," she said, placing her tray aside, her eyes lled with concern.

She was a half-breed, living with her human mother in the human realm.

"You know everything about Dad's condition." I hadn't hidden anything from her. "Now his condition is deteriorating day by day. The doctor has given up and stopped treatment. My dad needs advanced medical care, and that will cost a fortune. I don't know how I'm going to nd a decent job as an undergraduate. I have no idea when our miseries will ever end," I held my head worriedly, contemplating the chances.

"Tiara! You've told me this before. But I feel like there's something else you're hiding," she pushed gently, her voice lled with understanding.

Oh, she knew me so well.

I looked at her, and she nodded, encouraging me to share. So, I poured out everything that had happened today.

"Babe, you've gotten yourself into deep trouble," she remarked, shaking her head in disbelief.

"I know!" I sighed. "But at that moment, I didn't have any other options but to agree to their condition. They were about to kill my dad."

"So?! What are you going to do now?" She asked, her eyes xed on me, searching for a solution.

"I don't know, Shirley. I'm still searching for a job. I'm even willing to leave my studies if it means working during the day to earn more money," I told her, shaking my head slowly, overwhelmed by the weight of my responsibilities.

"But it will take a considerable amount of time to save up the required amount, and you need it in just two days," she enlightened, widening her eyes as if I had lost my mind.

I shook my head, closing my eyes in frustration.

"Ah! I don't know." I shifted closer, desperate as I reached out and grasped her hands.

"Shirley, do you know someone who could lend me some money? I will return the money very soon," I pleaded with my best friend, hoping for a lifeline.

She studied me intently for a long minute before nally speaking.

"Tiara, I was never going to tell you this. But if you're willing to make quick money, I have an option," she revealed, and a glimmer of hope ickered in my eyes.

"Tell me, Shirley. I'm willing to do anything," I insisted desperately.

"Tiara, don't freak out, okay?!" She alerted me with concern on her face. "Listen, every weekend, there's an auction on an alerted me site, where men bid for a virgin," she whispered, casting wary glances around to ensure our conversation remained private.

Of course, among our human clients, there were some supernatural creatures as well whose hearing was sharp, as the bar was open to everyone. However, humans remained oblivious to their existence among them.

"That sounds creepy and bizarre," I gasped, taken aback by her suggestion.

Shirley smiled, shrugging her shoulders.

"I know, Tiara. But I believe this might be the only option for you to make money in two days. It's the weekend, and the auction will go live. I know you're a virgin. Nothing has happened between you and Jeremy yet. So, if you're open to it, we can register on that site and set the bidding price at ten grand. If you're lucky, you might even get fty or a hundred grand, as some men are desperate and willing to do anything to spend a night with a virgin," she explained cautiously.

"No, Shirley! I shook my head. "I would gure out something else."

The mere thought of sleeping with a stranger was very scary. I had always imagined my rst time with a man I loved.

"Babe, you don't have time," she pressed.

"I will try for a loan from the bank," I mumbled with uncertainty.

But how would I get a loan without anything to pay for the guarantee?

"Tiara, you know it's not possible. The only option for you is to auction yourself," she enlightened. "And it's only for a night. That's it. You will get enough money overnight, and all your problems will be solved."

Her words echoed in my mind. Whatever she was saying was right. My heart thumped loudly when I contemplated the pros and cons. I took a moment to process it all.

But selling my virginity?!

I could never have imagined myself doing something like that, but nothing mattered more than my father's life.

"Okay, Shirley, I'm ready to do it," I declared resolutely, without a second thought, because I didn't have a second choice.