

Vampire Night

We went downstairs and into the teahouse. Nixie had stayed long enough that Maya could get her dinner break, but was gone by the time we got there. There were a couple customers in the teahouse, who looked up when the little bell rung, but looked back after a moment.

Emmalyn went to one of the tables and set out a little sign that read 'rune castings' and a tip jar. She laid out her cloth and settled in to offer her skills to customers. I went up to the counter.

"How long until they start coming?" I asked.

"The older ones will be here within the next fifteen minutes. The younger ones could be up to an hour. Is this your first time around vampires?" Maya asked.

"It was that obvious?" I chuckled.

"They're just like normal people, but dead. They'll come in, place their orders, drink their tea, and visit with friends. This is where the vampires who are over clubs come. It's not a rowdy crowd." She replied.

I nodded. Slipping to the back, I did another load of dishes, so they'd be ready. The bell rang and I dried my hands before heading out from the back.

A young man stood at the counter. He was tall, with dark hair and bright pink eyes. His skin was very pale.

Maya talked with him a little while she prepared his tea. He was very polite and left a tip. He then walked over to Emmalyn and chatted with her for a moment before taking a seat across from her.

I was pretty excited that someone was already here. Emmalyn told me that vampires have the same eye color as their sire and they come in all sorts of colors. When they feel strong emotions, their eyes will glow, and vampires all have some sort of magic that is fairly different from witch magic, but is still rather similar to the magic of witches with spirit anity, like my little brother.

Walking around, I straightened things and tried not to be a bother. It felt like it had been an hour, but the clock on the wall said about ten minutes, when the door opened again.

A very small woman came in. She had to be a whole foot shorter than me. Her hair was a copper color and she had a cat-like smile. Her purple eyes were glowing.

Maya didn't even wait for her to get to the counter. She started to mix up a pot of tea instead of just a cup. The woman went and sat at a table in the corner instead of ordering.

When the tea was nished, Maya loaded the pot, cream, sugar, and a cup, onto a tray and brought it out to her. I watched curiously. The woman handed her a bill and Maya went back to the till. She made change and put it into the tip jar.

It seemed like this was something they did often enough. I returned to straightening out the cushions on the couch and chair. Only the bell on the door made any noise as vampires came in silently and lled every table and seat.

I passed by the table the small woman was at.

"You're the new owner, right?" She asked.

I turned and smiled. "Yes. I'm Clover Harrison, Tonya's great niece."

"Have a seat. I would like to get to know you better." She said and looked over at the counter. "Maya. Please bring tea for Clover."

There was a line, but they all turned and chatted with each other instead of being bothered. I didn't realize that vampires would be so cool with having to wait like that. Maya made me a cup of tea and came quickly to drop it by the table.

"Is there anything else you need, Talia." Maya asked.

"No, thank you. You may serve everyone else now." She smiled.

Maya rushed off to the counter and started taking orders and making drinks again. It was as if the whole room had frozen to wait for Talia's order to be carried out. I wondered at how often this happened at vampire night.

"I'm Talia, the Traveler. I'm the oldest vampire in the territory and a member of the High Council. Every vampire in here is terried of me." She chuckled.

"Wow. That's impressive. Why are you telling me?" I asked.

"Because you needed to know why I have priority here. This isn't a threat. I don't need that with you. Tonya told me what a friendly and intelligent young woman you are. We're very opposite, from what she says, and very similar." Talia said.

"Oh, really?" I replied.

"Yes. I feed on blood, but you only eat plants. My magic is more mystic and yours is earthier. You are extremely tall and I am extremely short." She snorted.

"And how exactly are we similar?" I questioned.

"We are powerful and that makes people think we owe more to them than we do. Bellamy told me about your... diculties. Being a triple anity witch can't be easy. How are you doing with your transition?" Talia asked.

I blushed. It wasn't like I could swear the Queen to secrecy. I'd still expected something like that, though.

"Everything is going ne." I told her.

"And this 'beast' that's after you?"

"How do you know about that?" I gasped.

"You sent in a request for assistance. Bellamy is so close to giving birth that she's started delegating tasks. It was between me and Stanton for who was better equipped to deal with this. I won the toss." She chuckled.

"Won? You wanted to deal with this?" I asked.

"Of course. It sounds like fun. Monsters, curses, things like that, are so much fun. When you've been alive for as long as I have, there is very little that is truly entertaining. Tell me everything about this beast." Talia requested.

I started with the first time my father saw the beast in the ames. I told her about how he had been eager to see what my future would be, since I was a powerful witch. Then I told her about the panic my parents had. I told her about all the different seers and diviners we'd seen, even Emmalyn's reading.

Finally, I told her about the soulmate search and the result. Talia listened intently. She didn't ask questions, just waited for me to nish telling her everything.

"Intriguing. And you have no idea what this beast could be?"

"Before, we could only see the teeth and claws. The body of the thing is huge. In the soulmate search spell, we were able to see more. It was thick and hulking. But, it was covered in so much blood and viscera, that I couldn't clearly make out what it was. I don't think it's a natural creature." I replied.

She looked thoughtful for a moment. I had a lot of hope that she would be able to help me. We'd only had witches working on the issue before. Now, I had the power of this collective and its allies to fall back on.

Before she could say anything, the door to the shop opened and there was a squeal.

"Emmy! What are you doing here?!" A young woman called out.

I looked up. She was plump in a sweet looking way. She had curly blonde hair, that reminded me of what mine had been like before I cut it, and sparkling blue eyes. There was a cheerful pink tinge to her cheeks.

"I'm working, Amelia. Bother someone else." Emmalyn said in an even, bored, tone.

"Talia!" The girl grinned, changing her focus immediately.

"Amelia. Where's Finn?" Talia asked.

"Parking. He didn't want me to have to walk too far. There are a lot of cars out tonight." Amelia said, coming closer. "Hi! I'm Amelia Grove."

She stuck out her hand to me. I accepted it and could feel a small surge of her power. It was like a secret handshake for witches. Only people with magic could feel it. It was how we made ourselves known without saying we were witches.

"I'm Clover Harrison." I replied.

I returned the small surge with one of my own and she grinned at me. Amelia pulled out one of the chairs around the table and sat down with us. I didn't know how to tell her to leave without being rude.

"I am so happy to meet you. Emmy told me a little bit about you. I know another triple anity witch. He lives a couple hours away. He has re and plant magic, too." She smiled.

"Oh, really?"

"Yeah. But his third is water. So weird, right?" Amelia went on. "Anyway. I'm glad you hired Emmy. It's hard for her to nd a job in a witch run business. It's all my fault, but there's nothing I can really do about it. Everyone thinks I'm going dark, so they won't associate with my sister."

That was the first I'd heard of it. I was sure if it were big news, Jen would have told me. Amelia certainly didn't seem like the type of witch who would go dark.

"What did you do to make them think that?" I asked.

She turned in her chair and pointed at the door. Not even a moment later, a huge, blond, man came in. He was built with thick muscles and broad shoulders. His eyes were the same dark purple as Talia's.

He looked like a real man and all the deliciousness that implied. I realized my mouth was open and closed it, looking around quickly only to see Talia smirking at me. She'd seen it.

"Amelia." He said as if he'd missed her for even the short time they were apart.

The man came over and bent down, wrapping his arms around her and kissing her deeply. I tried not to stare at them, but it was hard. I glanced over to Talia, who was sipping her tea and rolling her eyes.

"They're always like that. He just found her. The new takes a while to wear off." She explained.

"Just found her?" I asked.

"Amelia is Finn's Solus Amor. His only love. The vampire equivalent of a soulmate. They found each other around this time last year." Talia said.

The couple pulled away from each other and Finn went up to the counter to order something. Amelia was beaming. I'd never seen anyone so happy.

"Everyone thinks you're going dark because your soulmate is a vampire." I sighed.

She nodded solemnly. "I'm not. Finn is a sweet and caring man. I know the morality of vampires is different from the morality of witches. That's why people all think I could turn. The goddess wouldn't have put us together if that were the case, though. I've always been a good witch and I will continue to be a good witch until it's time for me to turn into a vampire."

"You're planning to be turned?" I asked.

"Of course! I can't just have this short life with him. I want to be with Finn forever. I just wanted a few more years to experience the world. Then, I'm going to have him turn me." Amelia replied.

Finn came back to the table with two cups and a cookie and set the full cup and the cookie in front of Amelia. He poured some of Talia's tea into the empty cup and sipped it. He seemed to dote on her. They were really a sweet couple.

"So, what's up? Talia's eyes have been glowing since I got here. Tell me there's something fun to do." Finn grinned.

"Can I include him, Clover? Finn is really good at tracking things down." Talia told me.

"Sure. Every little bit helps. I want the beast gone." I replied.

"Ohh. A beast. I love it!" He laughed.

Talia lled him in on everything I told her. I answered questions he had that she couldn't answer. He started looking really excited.

"Can you use your tracking ability to nd out more about this beast?" Talia asked him.

"Well.... I'm using it for another thing right now, but I can try to wrap that up faster. Give me a few days. I promised the guy I'm working with results by Friday, I'll just push up my timeline." Finn said.

"I've managed to survive for twenty-four years, I think a few more days is doable." I sighed.

"Can you do the soulmate search spell again? We can use the oil and crystal to lead us to the beast." Talia suggested.

"I can't do it for another month. It's one of those spells that keeps going outside of the materials it brings. The outside inuence fades after a month. It may bring the beast to me, or let it know of my existence if it's really tied to my soulmate." I told her.

"Then that will be something we use if we must. I will talk to Bellamy about getting some rogues to watch over your business and your home. Don't worry, Clover, we won't let the creature get to you." Talia promised.

I smiled and nodded. That was the most I could hope for right now.