



Chapter 204

XAVIER'S POV

I hoped there wasn't life after death. I was profoundly disappointed.

I woke up in the dark. Weight pressing around me from all sides.

It made sense that I would go to hell after what I did. I thought it was supposed to be fire and brimstone. Maybe werewolves went to a different hell—a cold, damp, dark, heavy place. We're warm, soft animals. We live in packs. It's what we need. Here I was, cold and alone with my thoughts. It was no better than what I deserved. Nothing to distract me from the horrible things I'd done.

I couldn't even move. The dark was heavy. I was cold to my bones. I couldn't tell up from down. It was like floating in the vastness of space, but the emptiness around me was firm and immovable. It was a strange sensation. I felt dizzy like I was spinning. How can you fall inside something solid?

I don't know how long I was suspended in the cold dark. I started to hear things. Movement. Things scraping against each other. Droplets of water moving slowly.

There was a thump thump thump somewhere. Then a buh-bup, buh-bup. Suddenly I was aware of life. A heartbeat. Blood pumping through its body. I heard it, but I felt it too. I couldn't smell anything, but I had another sense. A new sense. I didn't know what it was. I just knew I had to get to that heartbeat. The life. The blood.

My limbs moved toward the sound and feeling of life. Where a moment ago I didn't have the strength to move through the thickness, the Need



for life gave me power and strength. I swam through the cold dark, clawing my way through toward the warmth I sensed. It moved away quickly. I clawed faster, harder. I had to get to it.

My hand broke through the solid, damp cold and into nothing. I brought my hand down and hit the dark solid. My other hand broke through. I pushed against the damp cold and lifted my head out of it into what I recognized as air.

It was dark, but some light reflected off the moon, and I could see. There were trees. Owls. Bugs. I was in the woods. Most of my body was still in the ground. I had been buried. I realized the sounds I heard earlier were worms churning the Earth and water working its way down into the Earth. I got myself the rest of the way out and sat on the ground.

I recognized these woods. It was right outside my pack lands. They must have buried me, thinking I was dead.

I listened for my heartbeat and heard nothing. Then I realized I wasn't breathing either.

I was dead.

Yet somehow I was alive?

It didn't make any sense. Was this hell? It wasn't like anything I'd ever heard of.

That extra sense spiked again. Like the feeling you get when you know someone is watching you. I could feel life near me. My senses sharpened. I could hear the heartbeat clearly, the blood pumping through the veins. I looked toward the feeling, the sound, and saw a deer. This other sense came with a Need for life, for blood. Maybe the sense was the Need—they



were one and the same.

I Needed the blood of that deer as clearly as I could hear it and sense it. I felt my canines grow and extend.

Wait, I didn't have canines anymore. I brought my fingers up to my teeth. My canines were different, but they were there.

Then I remembered. Whenever I went to the city, I usually hooked up with some underground no-gooders and got vampire blood to get high. I must have had trace amounts of it in my system when I died. That's why I was dead and yet somehow not.

I was a vampire.

Dear goddess. A vampire. A newborn vampire.

It started to sink in. I remembered the stories of newborn vampires.

Everyone knows newborn vampires are uncontrollable, violent, killing machines. They kill everything. They gorge on blood. They're insatiable. I put the stories together with what I was feeling. The Need. How I could sense life. Blood. The Need for it. I was smart enough to know I wouldn't be able to sate the Need no matter how many I killed. No newborn vampire could. It took years, decades for some vampires to control the Need.

I had to get away from people. I couldn't be responsible for any more death.

Who was I kidding? There was nowhere I wouldn't be a risk. Humans existed everywhere. I'd eventually come across one, and I'd feed and kill him. Once I got started, I wouldn't stop.



I needed to die. I should be dead anyway.

How do you die as a vampire? I can't starve to death. I can't hang myself because I don't breathe.

How do you kill a vampire? Werewolves knew you had to tear them apart and burn the pieces to nothing. It would be impossible to do that to myself. I needed someone to do it to me. I needed someone to kill me.

Instincts are strong, though. The survival instinct was probably the strongest. I'd fight if someone tried to kill me. Being a vampire, I'd win that fight.

Thea.

Thea could do it. She was the strongest wolf I knew. I needed to get to her. New Dawn was next to Moonlit, on the other side of the neutral territory. I headed toward New Dawn. I passed rabbits, squirrels, deer. I fought the Need for their life. I knew if I fed, I'd become stronger. I needed to be as weak as possible so I couldn't fight back.

I reached the border of New Dawn. I was afraid to enter their pack lands. There would be patrolmen, maybe random people running through the pack lands. I didn't know if I could resist the Need if I sensed a person.

I thought back to being tied to the poles. When Thea came and made me feel. I didn't know what she did or how she did it, but she had some kind of power. Maybe she could sense me if I called to her. I just had to wait for her to be awake. It was still night.

I paced around New Dawn's border. I started chanting a mantra.

"Thea. Thea. Thea. Please. Come help me. I need you. Please. Thea. Thea. Thea."



I focused on the mantra, not the Need.

I don't know how long it was before I sensed Thea in the woods. I latched onto her presence and pushed the mantra out to her.

"Please, Thea. Come help me. Please. I need you. Please. You fixed me once. I need you to do it again. Please. Thea. Please."

Then I saw her off in the distance. Wolves surrounded her. Finally, I would get peace. 1



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