

The Secret Life  
of  
Zurrie Dresden



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## Dedication

This book is dedicated to my brother, Timothy Richards. Like a work of fiction, our lives were kept separate due to paternal secrets that were kept hidden throughout our time on this earth.

For a brief time, I was blessed to have been in your life and that of your family; even though we didn't know our relationship to one another. Although it wasn't until the final chapter of our lives that the truth was finally revealed, I am thankful to God, the lock was finally broken, and the box opened.

Like a well written book, twist and turns kept us on separate paths. Until we meet again, you will be forever in my thoughts and prayers dear brother. We will have an eternity to "dance in the rain".

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Published by Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing

## Chapter One: Azrael- Call Me “Zurrie”



I'll never forget the night we left The Order. I have to say, it certainly was one of the best days of my life. The rules, the preaching's and the daily observations were maddening. Ok, let's be real and put reality into perspective. Doesn't it seem bat shit crazy that a pure breed vampire would be raised by those created to destroy them?

My thoughts exactly.

Don't get me wrong, I understand why we were there, but why we stayed as long as we did, is a question I may never know the answer to. To be honest, I don't really care enough to

attempt to figure it out. All I know right now is that life for me is finally starting to feel normal. Normal as life can be for a vampire born of a half breed mother and an angel.

Yep, you heard me right, an angel; Nephilim if you choose to use the biblical term. One would think it impossible for the two to mate, right? Well, another dose of factualism, it happens. I understand it's rare, but for whatever reason, here I am. Oh, by the way, I have a twin.

Take a seat for this one! He's an angel. Yep, that's right- two twins; one a pure breed vampire and the other a Nephilim. Fucked up, huh?

Well, hopefully I've gained your attention, as my story gets even better from here. My name is Azrael Dresden, but my friends and real family call me 'Zurrie'. This is my life.

## Chapter Two: Zurrie- A Bit of Family History



We left The Order when I was six. My mother, Selene, thought it best to enroll both my brother, Euriel, and me into the public school system. She had a strong belief that we needed socialization with children our age.

When we were younger, our differences from the other children didn't stand out as much. It was when we hit puberty that things started to become more noticeable, more detectable; at least for me.

Maybe puberty isn't the right word, once again, at least not for me. Euriel, being half human and half angel had a normal, human development. I, on the other hand, am, and have

always been, quite different. There are very few things about me that are of the human race. The major one is the fact that I'm made of flesh and bone. Just about everything else, well, let's say, not of this world.

I don't have an internal thermostat that regulates my body temperature, nor do I have lungs that exchange oxygen for carbon dioxide. I do have the ability to breathe, although it's not necessary for my survival. Contrary to belief and folklore, I do have blood that runs through my veins, but it's not of this world. Vampire blood is more like liquid history. It holds a unique DNA mapping sequence that's linked to the one that sired them. This sequence goes all the way back to the beginning of our creation. Although life sustaining, we can survive on a limited amount and when more is needed, we're able to regenerate it at an accelerated rate.

Life over the last several years has been pretty challenging. The other kids in school know I'm different. Let's call it the way it is, I am. With a height of just under six-foot, platinum blonde hair and brightly colored emerald, green eyes, I stand out.

Most of the time, I feel like an outcast. Teenage girls can not only be petty, but they can be downright mean. I'll admit I, myself, am a part of the problem. I have a really hard time knowing when to keep my mouth shut and a tendency to be assertive with my words. To make matters worse, when my temper flares, I lose control. It's like a fire starts to burn deep within my veins. Once it's ignited, a part of me is no longer in control. It's just something that goes along with being a vampire.

Look, I'm not saying I couldn't have worked harder at getting the rage and emotional outburst under control, but I was a kid. Ok, if I'm going to be fully honest with you, I still struggle with it. I think I've gotten better over the years though.

I owe every ounce of restraint I have to Cameron, my BFF and mentor. For this, I am forever grateful. You see, if it weren't for her, I most likely would have lost my shit a really long time ago. Through her teachings, I learned to use restraint and harness a portion of the darkness that lives within me. I say a portion of, as the depths of such, can never fully be reined in.

You see, my mother was turned by the queen of the highest-ranking vampire coven in the world, The Nemurire Council. Oh yeah, important fact, it's also the oldest and established Order still in existence. Why is this fact important? Because the older the line of vampire lineage, the stronger and more powerful each generation becomes, and along with that, new traits emerge.

Not only was my mom turned by Queen Azurah, but she also killed her. Yep, you didn't misunderstand me; you got it right. My very own mother killed one of the highest-ranking members of the oldest vampire covenant the world. I can't really go into detail, as it's a really long story, but here's what I've come to learn. An abridged version, that is.

So, my mom, Selene Coldbane, fell in love with the Headmaster, Xavier Draven when she was no more than 21. He was her first; the first of many things. First kiss, the one who took her virginity away and her first true love.

Your initial thought may be that The Council turned her because she was human, right? You're going down the wrong path if that's what you actually think. I mean, don't get me wrong, they weren't happy about his choice for a lover, but they assumed he planned to turn her and

bring her into the fold. When after more than a year passed, it was evident he had no intention of doing what was expected of him. Even so, it's not the reason.

The fact is, Azurah had a bit of shall we say, jealousy, over the fact that he found happiness, contentment and love outside of her arms. Yep, you got it, she was in love with Xavier herself. For the sake of time, I'll keep this short; she was his sire. You know, the one who turned him centuries before.

From what I've heard, it was love at first sight for her. The story may have gotten misconstrued over the last few centuries, but this is the current version. He was the son of a prominent banker. One evening at dusk, he went for a horse ride through the countryside. He had just had an argument with his father. Over what I'm not sure, as I've never been told. Anyway, it doesn't really matter, does it?

Azurah was scouting the landside for her nightly feeding when she saw him on horseback. Although the sight of the horse stirred the animal inside of her, the desire to quench her thirst for blood didn't hold a match to the burning desire to take what didn't belong to her; him.

She became obsessed with him. Hiding in the shadow's day after day for months, she could no longer control her hunger for him.... her thirst for him. It wasn't the taste for his blood that she wanted. It was so much more. She wanted to take him as hers in every possible way. She wanted to possess him, break him and then tame him. Once she did, he'd long for her, crave her touch, crave her blood and crave the comfort of sharing her bed night after night. He'd become hers, body and soul.

Let me clarify the word soul for you just in case you mistakenly confuse vampire language and human terminology. The soul of a vampire is more complex on many levels than that of a human. What we refer to as a soul is carried in our blood, or shall I say, is a part of our blood line. This means that our blood is the catalyst that circulates throughout our bodies. The soul is where our history is stored, both human and vampire. It's how we gain the power and strength of those we've killed, an internal genealogical map of sorts. Like I said earlier, liquid history.

Ok, back to where we were... Unbeknownst to Xavier, the world as he knew it was about to change forever. As you and I both know, forever's a really long time.

### Chapter Three: Xavier- My Story



I've got to clear my head. Anger has a hold on me at this moment and I know if I don't get a grip on my emotions, I'm going to say something to father that I'll regret for a really long time, if not for the rest of my life.

The only thing that can calm my anger and nerves right now is some time alone with my girl. I head in the direction of the stables. Dusk is starting to settle in. Along with it, a cool breeze rides on the air. It pushes against my thin, white, cotton shirt, causing it to cling my chest. Goosebumps take their course down the length of my arms. I release a shiver. As much as I wish I had my riding coat to wear, there's no way I'm going back to retrieve it. For now, I'll just have to make do.

The moment I slide the heavy door open, she greets me with a grunt. I can't help but smile. She's been just about the only stability I've had throughout my life. She was a gift for my fourteenth birthday. It was the best one I've ever had. Memories of that day come flooding back.

*Told to go to the old barn to gather wood for the stove, I kicked my shoe against the floorboard in defiance. I knew enough not to say a word, for if I dared, when my father found out, there'd be hell to pay. After all, it was my birthday.*

*Not realizing how much energy I put into that kick, I looked up to catch the eyes of my mother bearing down on me. "Xavier, do you have something you want to say?"*

*Breaking all visual contact, I looked down at the floor. "No, just stretching my legs before I head out mother."*

*With her head still tilted down and her hands knuckle deep in the bread she was kneading, she shifted her eyes in my direction. "Hum, better get on with yourself."*

*We both knew it was a line of bullshit. I'd have said anything to keep her from telling my father.*

*More motivated now that my actions were witnessed, I quickly tossed on my coat and headed out the front door.*

*At that age, anything and everything was an unwelcome chore. Being it was so close to dinner time and the fact that he'd be home soon, I decided it best to keep in line.*

*The wind whipped through the open field and its touch was bitter that January day. Plunging my hands deep into my coat pockets, I bowed my head and pushed on against the*

*frigid late afternoon air. Standing in front of the enormous barn doors, I recall scanning the immediate area to ensure no one was in eyeshot. Feeling confident my actions weren't going to be witnessed, I pull my right leg back and give the old door a kick. The sound of something grunting and scratching on the floor was loud enough to reach my ears as I stood just on the other side. I was instantly hit with fear and my stomach did a flip flop. "What the," trailed from my lips. A large cloud of exhaled, steamy, breath swirled in the air around me.*

*"For goodness' sake Xavier," echoed through the air as my mother stepped up right beside me. "What on earth is taking you so long? I could have had the wood in the stove by now," she spouted out in a bit of frustration.*

*"Well go on in."*

*Still shaking from the menacing sounds that had just occurred a few seconds ago, I'm frozen.*

*"Xavier, open the door! What on earth is wrong with you? Stop dilly dallying. It's cold out here. Her frustration was evident by the way in which she gave me a light push on the back. "I said open the door!"*

*The grip of fear that had a hold of me broke when she raised her voice and spoke in such an aggressive tone. Without another thought, I wrapped my fingers around the icy-cold barn door handle and gave it a hard tug.*

*That's when I saw her. Well, father was there holding onto her rein's, but everything around me faded into the background. Well, everything but her. There she stood, the most beautiful creature I had ever set eyes on. Without hesitation, I approached her and slowly placed my right hand out in her direction. She didn't flinch at my advancement, but rather*

*took a step towards me. As I gently stroked the length of her face, her eyes met mine. Letting out a gasp at her exquisite beauty, there was no mistake that she had already captured my heart.*

To this day, twelve years later, she's still, and always will be the number one girl in my life. Just like all those years ago, I take hold of the numbingly cold metal handle and pull open the barn door.

Strolling down to greet my girl, I can hear the clicking of her hoofs against the flooring. There's not a doubt in my mind that she doesn't know it's me. Before I can make it to her stall, she's already at her gate looking in my direction. Approaching, I reach out instinctively to greet her. "Hello there, my Miss Blue Eyed Beauty." I look into those big round eyes of hers and all the weight on my shoulders seems so insignificant now.

Not only is she beautiful, but she's also the definition of regal. She's as white as falling snow and has the most magnificent eyes. One is blue and the other brown. Horses don't have varying eye colors like humans. Most have brown eyes but, in some instances, they have blue. My Miss Blue was born with one of each color, hence the name of Miss Blue Eyed Beauty. It may be a long name, but it suits her just fine.

She nudges her head into the palm of my hand, her way of communicating she's ready to go. Opening the gate, I saddle her up and jump atop. After so many years together, she knows that once I'm in position., it's time to ride.

The moment my foot slides into the stirrup and rest on the tread cover, Miss Blue takes off towards the wide-open door. Once her back legs clear the flooring, her pace picks up. The cold air presses against my entire form. Second guessing my decision on going back to the

house to gather my riding jacket does me no good. It's late fall and the temperatures drop quickly. At the pace we're moving, we cover a good deal of distance in a short period of time.

We're close enough to father's hunting shelter that I can push on a bit further. With the deteriorating conditions the way they are, there's no way I can make it back to the house without freezing to death. Although it only takes around twenty minutes to reach the rickety old shack, I couldn't be more grateful that it's still upright. Although it's a dilapidated mess on the outside, it's a dry place to stay for the night. This worn-down hovel consists of two rooms, if you can refer to them, as such.

With my two feet planted firmly on the ground, I make my way to the stable portion of our shelter for a security check, prior to escorting Miss Blue Eyes into her sleep quarters, her safety is my top priority.

Surprisingly, the door pulls open rather easily. Taking a quick glance at the roof and the large stall area, I feel confident we can bare the accommodations for one night. It's got everything it needs; hay, a water supply and wood burning capabilities.

After a few minutes of making sure it's not going to fall down around her by dawn, I head back in her direction to find her in a frenzied state. In all the years we've been together, never once did I see her act like this. Her gaze is locked onto the wooded area just off to our left. Her ears are pinned back, and her neck is arched. Her heavy breathing causes her chest to expand and retract with each loud, snort she makes. Her eyes are locked onto the surrounding darkness in a precision like fashion.

I make sure to use caution when I approach her, as her full attention is directed elsewhere. One strong motion or step on my part could exacerbate her fear and turn the situation extremely dangerous.

“Hey there Miss Blue,” flows upon the air in a soft-spoken tone. Slightly turning her head at the sound of my voice, she hastily moves in my direction; it’s like she’s attempting to protect me from something. Of what, I’m not certain. I quickly scan the surface area for any signs of coyotes or wolves. It’s now pitch black out with minimal visibility. I don’t see or hear anything out in the thick brush that surrounds us.

She leans into my form in a true protective state; this time she lowers her head and begins moving it in a snake like fashion. Getting in a rearing stance, she stands on her hind legs with her forelegs off the ground, batting at the air, baring and snapping her teeth.

I reach my hand out and gently touch upon her shoulder. “Calm down girl, it’s ok. It’s ok.” My own heart begins to race, as I hate bearing sight to her fear.

Her breathing starts to slow as I stroke her mane. With her anxiety starting to diminish, I myself allow the taunt muscles in my chest and back to loosen. Feeling confident she’s got herself once again under control, I lead her through the door and into the covered stall. Once she’s secured behind the gate, I can’t help but wonder what the hell spooked her like that.

Leaning her head down she places her large, white face just in front of me. Almost nose to nose she locks her eyes onto mine, almost as if trying to communicate to me. She doesn’t move or break her gaze. “It’s ok Miss Blue. I’m not going anywhere tonight. I’ll stay

right over there,” I whisper, pointing in the direction of the piled-up bales of hay and the stone walled fire pit.

After she nudges my cheek with her cold nose, she circles the area a few times and places herself on the hay covered floor.

It’s not until I turn around that I notice the walls. Line after line of bows and arrows, along with gun paraphernalia, greet me. Before the thought even forms in my brain, the words trail from my lips. “What the hell...”

## Chapter Four: Azurah- The Beginning



I haven't fed in days. The burn deep within the lining of my throat is close to unbearable at this point. Nothing but a fresh kill will douse this flame. The last three days have been nothing but chaos within the coven. It's not every day that the body of the coven's headmaster is found on the front step of main entry door. Not only was he drained of every ounce of blood, but he was decapitated. Alongside his body was a blood-spattered note with a single word- "War". Whoever did this must be a complete, fucking idiot to think that it would be anything other than a declaration of such.

It didn't take me long to realize this was more, much more, than a simple act of bloodshed. This is a message to all members of the Nemurire Council. The fact that this rival, rouge, clan got as far as they did with no detection, signifies that this is a game of cat and

mouse. The body of the headmaster in clear view for all to see, minus his head, is a bold and reckless act that speaks volumes.

Since the moment he was discovered, every member has been on high alert and hasn't left the security of our sanctuary. Most of the elders retreated to their chambers and haven't been seen since.

I need to clear my head and the only way for me to do so is to ensure I can focus, but at this time, focus isn't a luxury I have. The only thing I can think of is the warm blood of a human upon my lips and the smooth liquid running down the back of my throat.

Pushing the current situation that's deep in the throes of madness, into the back of my mind, I focus on my task at hand, feeding. With my attention diverted elsewhere, I hadn't noticed the crispness in the evening air. Refreshing. A cool breeze swirls around my body, caressing my back and arms. Delicate snowflakes rain kisses upon my cheeks every so often. This is my favorite time of year, as the blood of both humans and other worldly animals' hearts pump harder to push their blood through their veins. The narrowing of the blood vessels and arteries cause their hearts to instinctively work harder to protect them from the harsh elements. This of course makes for an easier mark and an easier mark means an easy kill.

On most days, I'd want to take my time and enjoy the hunt but knowing I must return to ensure order is restored to my members, there's simply no time for being lackadaisical. Responsibility and duty await me.

I quicken my pace and move through the downtown streets and alleys at a pace that's undetectable to humans. Nothing. There's not a single human out.

Not to worry, just two towns over offers an array of “fast food” opportunities. Not my choice to feed on the drunken, drug induced homeless and prostitutes, as their blood is polluted with the shit they take to numb the pain of their very existence. Beggars can’t be choosers. My pace slows as I head into the thick brush of the wooded land owned by the Draven’s. Just the thought of the old man stiffens my spine. The last time I stepped foot onto his territory, the bastard almost took me out. Literally.

Vampires typically don’t have many threats to their existence. In most cases, we have one and that’s the Nephilim. Nephilim are creatures created in the heavens that have two jobs: eliminating my kind and protecting man. That was it, one threat; at least that’s what we thought until I came face to face with old man Draven. The memory of that night still haunts me.

I remember the smell of his sweet blood pumping through his veins. I could hear it the moment I entered the thick brush that outlines and borders his property. Weaving in and out of the trees at speeds undetectable to the human eye, it was only seconds before I stood face to face with him. Chills run down my spine as the image of that day replays within my mind.

*I flew through the door with my target in sight. Being faster than the blink of an eye, he shouldn’t have even known I was coming. As if in slow motion, he fearlessly lifted his head from his bowl of soup, locked eyes with me and lifted the handmade firearm he had tucked at his side. Without a moment’s hesitation, he fired off a single round. His eyes were like gray steel as they penetrated mine in an icy stare. His finger already poised on the trigger, clicked the moment I entered. Hitting me straight in the abdomen, just under the ribcage, the blow to my body tossed me out the door I had just entered.*

*The moment the fragmented pellets contacted my skin, there was no doubt in my mind who and what he was. Unable to stand and almost completely immobilized, I used my ability to connect with the minds of my coven members for help. Attempting to get away from him, I started to scoot backwards. Everything seemed to move in slow motion that night.*

*The legs of the chair upon which he sat, scrapped along the rough wooden floorboards as he quickly rose from his position and shadowed me as I tried to put as much distance as I could between the two of us. He kept a slow and steady pace with each step he took in my direction. Those cold gray eyes never broke their unsympathetic, executioner glare. Using what little, remaining strength I had left in my arms and legs, I drug myself just outside of the property line; all the while keeping my eyes locked onto his.*

*Although not one that falls prey to fear, it was an emotion I felt when I took a moment to assess my injuries. Blood continued to pour out through the open wound in my torso. Under normal circumstances, I would have healed within a few seconds, but the damage was too significant. Pain had a firm hold on my entire body; inflicted from the silver fragments which were embedded not only into vital organs, but into my interior and exterior flesh. A small stream of smoke continued to rise from the gaping hole and into the cool evening air.*

I shudder, knowing it's a miracle I'm still here, still in existence. Over the last decade or two I've thought of what it would be like to have vengeance on the old man for what he did to me that night, but the head elders have forbidden it. To deny this demand would be a death sentence, even for me, as the coven's Queen.

I'm not sure why he's been protected all this time, but it's been made clear that no harm shall ever come to him or his family. The old bastard isn't worth the wrath of Marcus,

one of the highest-ranking members of the council body. Marcus is an old school rule follower, no exceptions, and no mercy.

Ruminating thoughts are put to an abrupt halt at the sound of a thudding heartbeat. It's close. Real close. With a few leaps and bounds I'm able to locate the source. Keeping off to the side and well hidden, I set my eyes on the magnificent creature. She is beautiful! Although I may be a vampire, I still appreciate the things in life that are easy on the eyes. Due to her milky shade, she almost blends into the backdrop. Taking a slow step out from behind the large oak tree I've been using as my camouflage, I attempt to gather a better look at her.

The moment I do so, she jerks her head around and looks in my direction. Her ears go back as she intently listens for any sound coming from the heavily wooded area. Although she doesn't see me, she knows I'm here. Her heartrate increases as she arches her neck and begins to snort. Each time her chest heaves up and down, I can hear the free-flowing blood that circulates throughout her vascular system. By instinct alone, my mouth begins to water.

The mesmerizing trance she has me under breaks, as reality sets in and my mind questions as to whether this could be a set up by that bastard Draven. Why would his horse be roaming freely?

My answer comes within a split second as the door to his beat-up old hovel begins to creep open. Not taking any chances, I dash behind the large oak once again. Snow crystals that have started to accumulate on the trunk stick to my exposed back as I lean against it. To gather in his scent, I close my eyes and inhale the surrounding air. Having the ability to track, I have his physical aroma now locked into the recesses of my mind forever.

To my surprise, he's an unknown; at least from this distance. What a pleasant surprise.  
My luck may have just turned. Do I hear the dinner bell ringing?

## Chapter Five: Xavier- Uncovered Secrets



It takes me a few minutes to pick my lower jaw off the floor before my lungs take in a full breath. Although willing myself to move my feet, it's as if they are bolted to the ground. Try as I might, I'm having trouble processing the site in front of me. Eyeing up the exterior wall of Dad's deteriorating, old "hunting cabin", a thousand thoughts are coursing through my mind. Each one so fast that I'm rendered incapable of registering even one of them.

Line upon line of handmade weaponry is secured to numerous, thick, reinforced wooden panels. The arsenal in front of me consists not only of handmade guns, but bows, arrows, swords and metal plates that I assume contain some sort of explosive materials. My eyes trail all the way down to the end of the wall and come to rest on a large wooden crate.

With my feet finally in motion, I hesitantly walk in the direction of the sealed container. Although my body advances closer with each step I take, it feels like I'm carrying a hundred-pound weight upon my shoulders, dragging me down and slowing my pace. After what seems like a hundred miles of rough terrain, I finally come to the end of my journey. Taking in a deep breath, I attempt to get my nerves in check. Standing directly in front of the massive crate, I take my stance. With both feet planted firmly on the floorboards and my knees slightly bent, I exhale one last time before removing my hand that's positioned on my hip, out in front of me, a few inches from the lip of the lid.

Like a hand gliding up the length of my left arm, a slight breeze sweeps alongside the length of my body. Goosebumps erupt from my head to my toes. The hair on my arms stands on end; before I can fully recover from the first waft, I'm caressed by another. This time it appears different. It doesn't feel like a breeze or gusts of the snow laced air that's been consistently drifting through the floorboards. It's more like a presence. A presence of something, or someone, that's trying to communicate to me. My inner alarm begins to sound; it screams for me to stop. Something in the recesses of my mind fights to push forth some sort of memory. Caution clutches onto my inner core, doubts lend themselves to questions. What if it's not a memory at all. What if it's a warning?

"Fulfill your destiny Xavier", is whispered into my ear by the unknown entity. Hesitation has a grip on me, yet I can't seem to follow my own free will to back away. Try as I might to block out the endless chitchat, it's futile. Voices of generations past come flooding into my mind. "Take your birth right boy," is bellowed out over top of the other chatter. "Grandfather?" The warm breath that flows from between my lips' hovers in the frigid air that has encompassed me. Silence greets me.

Not certain if I'm dreaming, or if what's happening at this very moment is real, I'm jolted into reality by the image of my father. "The time has come Xavier. The bloodlines of those before you will be your guides and your protectors. Time is running out son. I will always be with you. This is your destiny. You are the sole heir to the line of Draven men."

Confused and dazed by all that's transpiring, I call out into the frosty air. "Destiny for what.... Sole heir to what? You can't just drop this in my lap!" Although every fiber in me wants to be brave, the truth is, I'm falling apart right now. Destiny? Destiny for what?

"You come from a long line of hunter's Xavier. On the twenty-sixth birthday of an heir, he takes his rightful place as the next generation of hunters and slayers."

"Hunter? Slayer? Are you crazy? Hunter and slayer of what, Father?" As the words are trailing from my mouth, I can't believe I'm the one asking such absurd questions.

"Our lines go back thousands of years my boy. We are the highest-ranking lineage of protectors of mankind. We are vampire hunters. Well, we don't do it all alone, we work alongside the Nephilim; half angel and half man. All you need to know will be bestowed upon you once you accept your birthright. Time is running out Xavier. The human race is depending on you. The Order in the heaven's, is waiting on you. Every moment without you, places an imbalance in the world and tips the scales. Go on now and do what you were born to do."

With his final words spoken, he's gone. The surrounding air returns to its normal temperature. The only sound present is that of Miss Blue Eyed Beauty, as she grunts and prances about the stall.

An inner peace settles over me and I know what needs to be done. Taking my place in the books of history, I fix my gaze onto the box that holds the key to my future; what I was placed here to do; be a protector for all mankind. A future that's uncertain and comes with many risks.

Integrate symbols are carved into the top of the heavy timber covering. I've never seen anything to the likes of them before. Slowly extending my arm out and touching the large emblem in the middle, it's evident that it was burnt or branded into the lid. The sharp, rugged edges tear at the base and sides of my delicate skin. Pulling away isn't an option. My hand is cradled and led by an unseen form. As my finger gently glides down the center, a red substance begins to surface. My heart feels like it's going to explode in my chest. It begins to beat fast and faster. It doesn't take a genius to know what the sticky material is... blood. Lots and lots of deep, red, blood rises to the surface. It pools and ascends to the very top of the filigreed rim.

Reaching the bottom of the emblem, my skin begins to burn and sting; like that of a thousand penetrating scorpions. I can feel the rich, red substance being drawn into the sides and base of my open wounds. My head begins to spin. Confusion and disorientation overcome me. I reach my arms out for anything I can grab onto to keep from falling. I clutch at the empty air.

I stumble backwards falling against the outer wall of the second stable that's thankfully, unoccupied. The weight of my body crashing just off to the left of its center, the weakest point, causes a splintering sound. Still gripped by fear and uncertainty of what is to come; I slowly slide my body down the length of the wall until my bottom is flush with the surface below.

My head continues to spin and all that's around me blurs. My entire body's engulfed into a sedative like state. I attempt to lift my right hand, but it's too heavy and numb to move. With no other option, but to relinquish myself to the darkness that continues to envelop me, I stop fighting.

Unable to will my body to move, I'm alert enough to know that I'm in a state of altered consciousness. It feels as if only parts of my mind are affected by whatever has taken a hold of me. The parts area of my brain that're still functional provide me with the ability to hear the door open and the sound of quickly approaching footsteps. Trying to force my eyes open to focus is futile.

A thick, cloudy haze impedes my ability to see clearly. Lifting my head that feels like a bag of bricks, I squint and focus on the outlined figure that now stands before me.

The silhouette of her body is nothing less than perfect. Struggling to keep my eyes locked onto hers, she crouches down directly in front of me. Hair the color of platinum and eyes that are the color of priceless emeralds slowly fade in and out of focus as I gaze at her mesmerizing beauty.

"Help me," falls from my lips in a weakened voice that I barely recognize as my own.

She leans in close enough, that I can feel her cool respirations upon my lips. Each exhale feels as if her breath dances with mine. Her frigid hand makes it's way down the length of my clenched cheek. Her touch sends shivers down my spine. "Well, well, what do we have here. I think I smell the offspring of a Draven. Don't you worry your pretty little self. Soon enough.... Oh yes.... what a perfect mate you shall make."

Cold lips touch mine and the scent of jasmine fills the air. Within an instant she's gone. Vanished, as if into thin air. The only reminder of her presence is the scent she left behind.