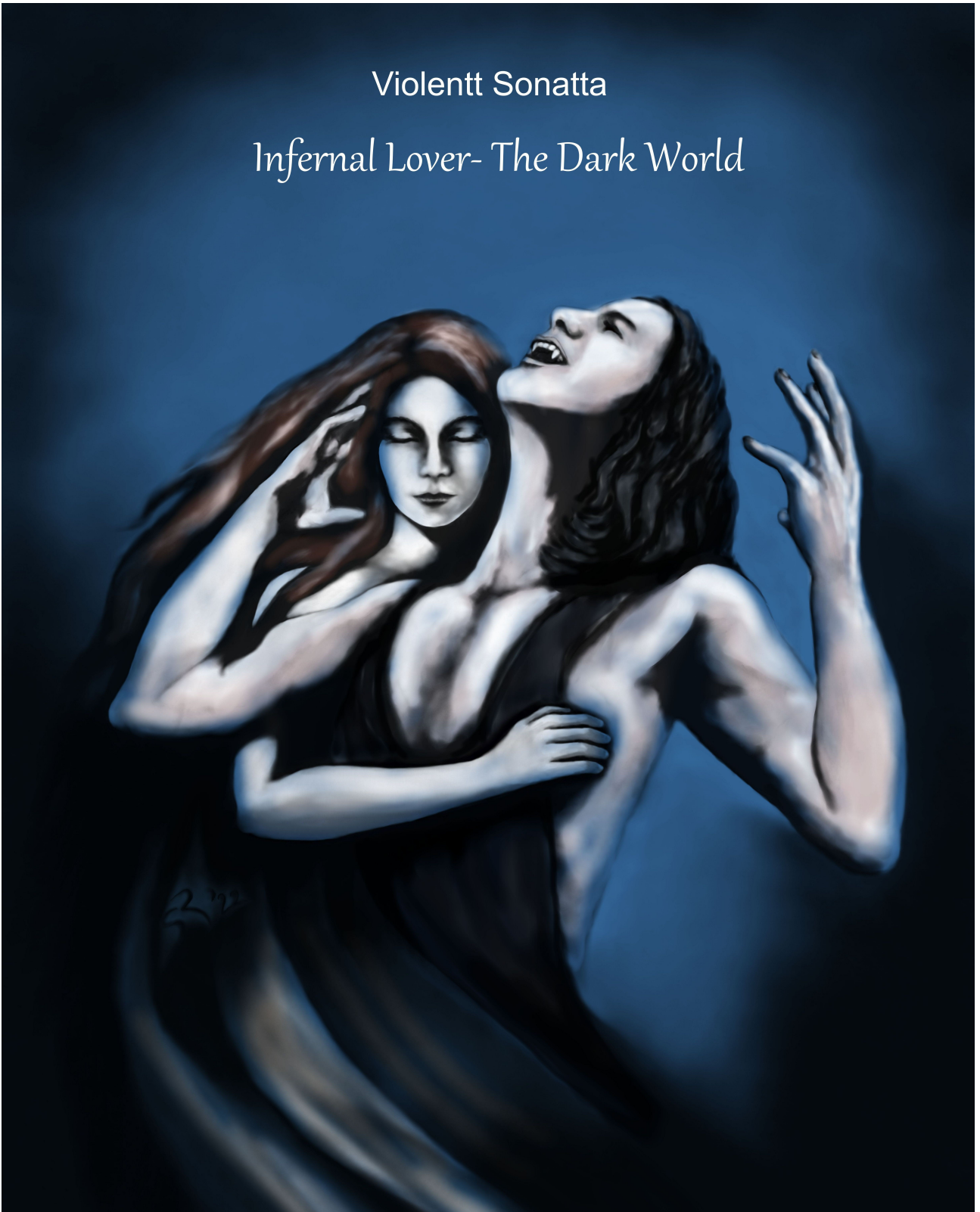


Violentt Sonatta

*Infernal Lover- The Dark World*



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#### PROLOGUE

Thunder flashed across the heavens as the waves of the ocean crashed relentlessly against the rocky outcroppings of Nevermore castle. It was a scene preluding to the impending doom of this fragile world.

“Are you certain m’lady?” Thomas asked. He knew what the answer would be. The lady would not take such drastic steps if she knew that something could be done. “I am sure Thomas, If we do not do this then we are all doomed, and there can be no hope for rebirth,” she said, her silver hair flowing ethereally in the moonlight.

“Then it will be done,” Thomas said as she handed him three ornate keys, one silver, one golden, and one black. “It is the only way this world can be saved, and it is the only way they will learn, it pains me but it must be done,” Isabella said closing her eyes and hoping that maybe now this world would one day have a chance.

Thomas Elliot and his men walked towards the basement of the castle, now under siege, they were tasked with one thing and one thing only. To seal the gates and break the sacred crystal within. Once that was done, this world could heal, and the inhabitants perhaps learn the value of their specific talents and powers, without crossing the lines of pride and arrogance.

“You know there is no going back my love,” Raye said. “It must be done, if Darkworld is to survive, and if they are to learn and be humble. It may take time but, I hope that when the chrysalis appears that they will have softened their hearts and learned that no creature or human is above anyone, they must learn to adapt, and see their wrongs,” she said holding her hands in prayer hoping that one day this world could coincide in peace with the others.

As the last key was placed and the last shard of the crystal shattered the king and queen of the darkworld could only hope that this would change things for the better.

## Chapter 1

A millennia later....

New Orleans- The French Quarter

"You really should join us, the paranormal vibe we got yesterday was off the charts, the ghost radar wouldn't stop beeping!" Jonah said. Jonah Hawks was part of the supernatural ghost hunting group set in the heart of the French Quarter suburbs. "You know I do not believe in such things, there are no such things as ghosts," Lucia said her voice monotone.

"Well, that's just because you won't open your mind to the possibilities of it! You can't tell me we are alone in this big blue ball of water and dirt, not only are aliens a real gig but there have to be others out there," he added sternly. "I am happy with my job at the local bank thank you," Lucia said as politely as she could. "It did not use to be that way with you, it's like you closed up for good!" Jonah said grumbling.

Lucia was about to snap, but she did not want to bring back those memories. "I have asked you to not bring that up, what is done is done, I lost interest in all, I was wasting my time on lies and fairytales" she added not really wanting to continue this conversation.

"Suit yourself, one day I am sure life is going to prove you wrong and then you'll stop being so pigheaded and wake up!" Jonah said hoping he hadn't gone too far. Lucia was a good friend to him, but damn had she changed.

It was not long ago, that Lucia was their group leader, and had a love for the supernatural and a strong belief in it. Yet, after the death of her parents in a strange and horrible accident about three years ago she changed. She had quit the team and decided to quit the library and move to work in a bank.

It was as if she was distancing herself from magic, or anything related to it with all her heart. To this day they had no idea why, but it hurt to see her so lifeless and being consumed by the drab grey of the corporate world.

"I have to get to a meeting, we will talk later see you, Jonah," Lucia said leaving behind a very frustrated friend. It was not her fault though. Why did he have to keep bringing it up? If he and the gang wanted to keep hunting for the leprechaun then fine! She did not need to waste her time on such foolish fantasies.

Lucia POV

Lucia worked at the Hancock Whitney Bank in the French Quarter neighborhood of New Orleans. Founded in 1899 the bank was not only a place for people to go make money transactions, investments, and or engage in loan arrangements. The bank was also famous for its many charity events and programs that worked to help empower the community and the people around it.

The white and blue offices of the building greeted Lucia as usual as she headed to the teller's site. She had her own office but she enjoyed helping customers face to face. It was a way of feeling that she was being productive and it kept her mind from wandering, as it always did. It also helped reduce her social anxiety and gave her exposure to other people.

It was business as usual for Lucia today and the lines were rather long, but she was used to it by now. The ringing of the phone and doors opening and closing were comforting and familiar sounds to her by now. "Next in line please," she said as the next customer pulled up.

"I am here to open a new account, miss," a male voice said. Lucia froze up for a second. It wasn't that the inquiry was strange. It was not that she did not know how to help the client, but his voice. She had never heard such a deep and beautiful voice before. When she turned to look at her client, she almost lost her breath. Standing before her was the flesh and blood of Adonis.

Long curls the color of autumn mahogany with crimson highlights. His skin was so pale it resembled snow. A stubborn jawline, full lips, and high cheekbones with the most mesmerizing set of sunken, green eyes she had ever seen in her life. She almost forgot to breathe or answer.

“Um..oh yes right away sir. Your name, please? I will also need some documents, erm...” she said trying to avoid these ridiculous reactions that she was having. There were many handsome men in New Orleans, so why was he so different?

‘Well because he seems to come from a vampire novel, duh!’ She said to herself almost laughing at her silly girlish behavior.

“Vincent Lehtinen,” he said smiling. “If it is not too impertinent of me to ask, is something the matter darling?” he said in that velvet voice that sent shivers down her spine.

“Not at all sir, please forgive my unprofessional behavior. I will help you open an account right away,” she said. Even his name is beautiful, she thought and hoped to the gods she would not be facing him every day. He resembled a vampire angel, an infernal lover, of those stories she no longer believed in.

## Chapter 2

Never in her life had she felt so self-conscious and so tense. Her client wasn’t to blame well, not completely. Lucia could not stop blushing. It was absolutely ridiculous and unprofessional. “Your account is set up sir. Is there anything else I can help you with today?” Lucia said trying to look into his forest eyes without melting.

“Not at all, thank you, darling, you are very thorough and polite. Though, I do get the feeling I am making you nervous, and forgive my blunt behavior, I find your blushing very cute, I hope we can do business again?” he said, with a smile that could melt a snow demon.

“I well...of course, it is my job sir, and you are welcome,” Lucia said trying to bypass the whole “your blushing is very cute” thing. She had no time for romance.

## Vincent POV

Blood. The vitae of life. The lifestream that keeps the heart beating. How could any unassuming creature know of its power over him? Over them? The Nosferatu, The Vampyr, The Undead, The Ghouls. Yet in the last 400 years, Vincent had not smelled a scent so intoxicating. To Vincent and his brethren, the creatures of the moon, blood need not be exposed to arouse them with a sense of hunger and desire. Yet, over the millennia vampires have had to learn to control their urges or risk being exposed. The world was not as it once was.

Perhaps the legends were true and they were long ago expelled from DarkWorld, the plane of existence, where the vampires, fairies, demons, werewolves, and other supernatural creatures once dwelled. It was said that their arrogance and abuse of power had led the queen of Darkworld, the source of all mana on earth to expel them, to teach them, as she said a lesson in humility. Yet Vincent’s blood boiled at the thought, had they not suffered enough? He hated that tale, to him it tasted of oppression and tyranny.

Yet, due to that Vincent could not do what he would have done in the dark ages. He could not satiate his hunger even as this innocent creature sat before him, filing away questions. Her blood smelled of cherries and wine and kept rising to her cheeks, and forced him to surreptitiously hold on tighter to his leather sofa.

It was the law, vampires were bound by a curse, they could not randomly satiate their hunger, they could not stay out in daylight for long, and their memories were impossible to keep as their reflections had been taken from them. To this day Vincent wondered if this was all part of that tale, or if years of evolution and adapting forced his kin to be more cautious.

Her name was Lucia. She was a beautiful young lady, with chocolate curls and skin that was neither too pale nor too dark. The perfect balance of an exquisite meal, I thought holding my hunger back. Her eyes were big and dark and her voice soft and innocent, her lips were pink and filled with her blood which was driving him mad.

Yet, years of training under his maker Draven had taught Vincent to control his feelings and urges. They lived in a different world now, and civility was important. Courting was to be kept amongst creatures of our kind, and not mortals. Most importantly, the main goal of the Silverite coven was to set up their headquarters here to seek out more information on the 'chrysalis'.

As ridiculous as Vincent found the legend to be, the possibility of finding that place where all of the creatures of Nyx could live in peace was a sought-out dream. Out of all the races on this plane of existence called Earth, Vampire was the most concerned with finding the sacred keys. The werewolves were too prideful to help them, and the fairies were lost in delusions of their own. As for the demons, witches, and other spirits, they were afraid of persecution.

Yet, he could not help but notice her and use his powers of persuasion to entice this to not be their last meeting. After all, he liked to know whom he worked with. "I would like to hand you my business card. I am looking to have a personal banker and you seem capable," he said.

Lucia stuttered as if surprised but politely replied. "I, well I would be glad to help. However, I do not have that experience. I'm somewhat new to this place. As such, I would hate to get your hopes up," she added her smile sweet and sincere.

He smiled his lips turned up in a lopsided sensual grin, "I am not a picky client and you could consider this job as experience," he said in a silky voice.

#### Lucia POV

Why was he being so insistent? She was not accustomed to long-term relationships with clients. Most of them just wanted a new account and or a withdrawal or deposit. For any other questions, they would seek out other agents. Still, this man was a client, and as unnerving as he was she was bound to her duty. She could not lose her job. "I will talk to my supervisor and contact you as soon as I know if it's possible, Mr. Lehtinen," she said nervously, hoping he would not continue to chat. "Very well then, have a wonderful day Ms. Clerisse," he concluded, leaving behind a very flustered and red-faced Lucia.

### Chapter 3

#### Vincent POV

"You do realize by staying in contact with her, you will begin to crave her more, my son," Draven said as he and Vincent sat in his manor located in the far corners of Upper New Orleans. The lavish estate was an inheritance from Draven's grandfather and served as headquarters for the coven's meetings. Vincent lived in his own private estate some blocks ahead. It was agreed by the coven that too many vampires or supernatural creatures living in close proximity could cause humans to notice.

"I know that, but it is the first time I have felt so drawn to someone, and yet dear father I understand the rules, so you should not be concerned. I won't approach her romantically, or feed on her, despite it all I promised myself to never mate with another warmblood," Vincent said mournfully clutching the quartz pendant he always carried in his pocket watch. His eyes seemed to grow a pale green, as one blood tear traveled down his pale cheeks.

It was the only memento left of his one true and first love, a sweet memory of what they could have been and a reminder to never falter again, or fall in love, lest what remained of his vampire's heart became shattered into pieces. Draven was not related to Vincent by blood, but it was customary to use terms as father and son between maker and newborn. Draven had given Vincent a second chance at life when they had met during the 100 years of war.

To historians, this war was recorded as a conflict between England and France over the crown. To those like Draven, it had been a bloody war to bring peace to their kind in exchange for fighting for king and country. Everyone chose their ideals and sides, but many vampires, werewolves, demons, fairies, and other creatures had perished in not only this war but many others throughout the ages, fighting to gain the right to exist and preserve their secrets and livelihoods amongst humans.

Vincent had been close to death when Draven had met him fighting for the French king, his ferocity in battle and willingness to rescue and protect refugees who had fled in hunger and fear, had drawn Draven's attention. The tenacity with which the young man fought and bled for them led him to realize this young one would make an honorable vampire. Yet, even after all his mentoring and training, Vincent had once been a hopeless romantic. He pursued women, even women no matter if they were human, werewolf, spirit, or fae.

His hunger for lovemaking and blood surpassed his hunger for knowledge and power. Draven respected his poetic heart and pursuits but made sure the young man found a focus. Still, Catherine D'Abney had been Vincent's near downfall, an affair with this lovely French woman had almost cost Vincent to betray his commanding officer to run away with the latter's wife.

It was Draven who was there when Vincent's missteps led to her public hanging and execution, and he was the one who saw how guilt had eaten at his soul and made Vincent swear to never fall again, for woman mortal or not. Amelia, Draven's mate and vampire bride whom he had recently met during the modern era at a coven ceremony, had felt compassion for the young man when she met Draven and she was told his story.

"The reason I care so much for him you ask me, goddess, well, his story is what moves me for I was like him once and I almost lost myself," Draven said as Amelia had asked him why he continued to care for Vincent despite his stubborn streak.

She saw how broken he was and was moved by his plight, and along with her mate had been like family to Vincent. Though to Vincent she was more like a sister than a mother, brave and fierce she had no issue getting into squabbles with him when he behaved foolishly. To this day Amelia, his vampire bride was Draven's greatest advisor and only love.

"It won't distract me from our main goal, father. I will find the 'chrysalis' and we will all go home, to a place where we can all be free of prejudice and persecution. A place where we can start over and love, and live without fear" Vincent said sighing deeply as he looked at the fireplace, which for vampires was only meant for aesthetic purposes. "Though to be honest, my hopelessness grows every year. It almost seems as if this 'chrysalis' is intended to mock us, to search for a tale that never was," Vincent said sipping on his favorite red wine, Chateau Margaux.

"If we start thinking like that Vincent, all of our efforts to unite our people will have been for nothing, already there are dissenters amongst the covens, and that is not even counting the rebellions taking place within other species. I recently heard from my scouts, that there was a pack of werewolves who kidnapped and attacked some humans recently, claiming we should take over this world instead of seeking a fairytale," Draven said disappointment in his blue cerulean eyes.

"It is only a matter of time before dissenters and those who lust to stay here and take over from their own packs, it would be a disaster. Yet, please do not blame me for doubting this tale father, even if we find this chosen one, finding the keys is a whole other dilemma," Vincent replied.

"We will worry about it when we find him or her, for now, we must keep looking for the maps to these keys, and remember Vincent when you do find him or her, your blood will tell you, it will sing to you in such a way as it never has before, and you will know it is them, for it was said that their aura will resemble that of a rainbow," Draven added.

"I will keep looking father, I only hope I find him or her soon," Vincent said wistfully as he looked out at the rain that had now begun to fall over the city.

#### Lucia POV

While Vincent was restless about the future of the supernatural species, or in his tongue, the 'Mithyas' a lonely brunette was trying to get him out of her mind and was being teased by her friends, who ensured her that only a real vampire could have made her this nervous.

"I tell you there is no such thing!" Lucia said. "In all these years I have never seen you so drawn to a guy you just met, I am sure he used vampire allure on you, his appearance fits!" Ellie her bestie from work said. She was also part of the "Cazadores de Los Abismos" which was the name of the supernatural ghost hunting group her other friend Jonah led. It meant "Hunters of The Abyss" in English.

“Well, I don’t know all I know is that this guy really wants me to work with him and Charlotte my supervisor said the customer gets what he wants, especially this one, he seems to be a hotshot artist and he also plays in some band overseas,” Lucia said pouting. Part of her wanted to see him again and it was pissing her off, she was not that needy for male attention.

“I’m sure Jonah and Ashton would agree, Samara too if you let me tell them,” Ellie said. “Don’t you dare! I don’t want this out! The guy might sue me if you guys start following him, so please keep your superstitious nonsense to yourselves,” Lucia said trying to not be mean.

Ellie sighed deeply. It had not always been so, the founder of the group that now sat before her had once believed in a world beyond this dull gray one. Lucia had once sought out the occult, but after that accident, with her parents, she had changed. Ellie also knew that her ancestors had dabbled deeply into Wicca and had witch blood, she wondered if Lucia had inherited any, with her new persona though it would be impossible to know. All of a sudden she had shut out and thrown out anything having to do with the supernatural. It wasn’t as if she had gone on a rampage and had burned it she had just stopped believing in it, as if a switch had turned the magic inside her off. She became stoic, focused on facts over myths, and drawn to life so drab and repetitive that the others thought she might have been taken by aliens that night and replaced with an emotionless clone.

“I will just deal with it the best I can, I don’t need all of these crosses, and garlic in my purse. If we can’t come up with a logical way in which to deal with this, I will just have to face this, maybe it’s part of my growth as a banker, I don’t know,” Lucia added shoving the items into Ellie’s bag. Ellie had been certain that the man was a vampire, and wanted Lucia to be protected, not knowing if he was good or evil, but Lucia of course had waved it off and told Ellie she needed support and a logical solution, not inane and fantastical advice and baubles.

I can tell you one thing though, I have never met someone whose emerald eyes had made her whole body feel as if an aura of roses and silver had wrapped her in a gentle light, chaining him to her, when she would look into those eyes, framed by the face of a vampiric and angelic creature.

## Chapter 4

### Lucia POV

As such, two weeks later Lucia found herself sitting across from Vincent for the third time while trying to not let him get to her. If this was a test to keep her job then she would do what she could.

“Before we begin, Ms. Clerisse I would like to apologize for my untoward comments last time, I was wrong,” Vincent said.

Though he had meant to call her cute and was intrigued by her cold outer exterior the words of his maker were ringing in his mind. “It is all in the past, Mr. Lehtinen, let us move forward,” Lucia said politely. She admitted that it stung a little that he was retracting his comments, but it was for the best this way.

“I do not mean to say they were a lie, but I realize we barely know each other, and my behavior was uncalled for,” Vincent added sheepishly smiling and making her blush.

“As I said, it is water under the bridge. Now, to business, Mr. Lehtinen, you said you were looking to invest?” Lucia said trying to move to a topic that would not make her feel like jelly.

“Yes, I am as you know by now interested in art, as such I would like to invest in the local music venues and museums,” he said, trying to not make another unwarranted comment towards her. Yet today she looked so delectable in a white tight fitting off-the-shoulder dress, and his eyes were trying to avert his gaze from the vein in her neck, pulsing with the invitation of a delightful feast.

“I am sure I can help you with that, I can set up a call or a meeting with the local museum and bar owners, to begin,” Lucia said as confidently as she could, she had never really delved into investing for clients, and then there was the way he had looked at her upon walking in as if she were a feast served on a silver platter.

It was then that she began to wonder if maybe he was a vampire. It was hard to not try to avert her eyes from his gaze and his voice was hypnotic. The first two times they had shaken hands before leaving her skin felt electrified at his touch, and upon his departure, she had felt as if something inside her had been severed.

It was absurd, positively laughable to be so affected by a stranger, and it really grated on her nerves that she had been assigned to this task. Ever since her parents' deaths, Lucia had taken an oath to focus on her career, leaving romance aside. She wanted to focus on living her life because death was so unpredictable and final.

It is not that she was frigid and unattracted to the opposite sex. In reality, she simply did not want to suffer the burden of illness and death knowing she could leave someone behind or hurt someone else by attaching herself to them. As such children were also out of the question for her. And now this man....Lucia thought sighing as he sat down across her.

#### Vincent POV

Yet, she was not the only one to feel such tormentous emotions. Despite what he had told Draven and despite the rules he had for himself, he had not stopped thinking about her. Even though he had remained monotone and distant during their second visit, he could not deny a spark. He knew he should not. He knew he should stay his word, but before he could stop himself, he found he was breaking his own rules.

"As lovely as this office is, I feel it is too suffocating to discuss business affairs, Ms. Clerisse. As such I would like to discuss this over dinner if I may be so bold, this coming weekend?" he said making her body dance with goosebumps.

"I am afraid that is not appropriate, and even if it was allowed, I would have to get permission,"

Lucia said trying to not stutter. "I am sure I can get you that permission, so please think about it,"

Vincent said getting up to leave and shaking her hand before he left her there breathless once more, and confused as to what kind of dinner was he talking about, and if she should accept. "Don't be silly Lucia, it's not like he is going to bite, business is business," she said to herself taking back the breath he had stolen.

#### Chapter 5

Unbeknownst to creatures magical and non-magical on Earth, unseen forces were watching attentively over the events transpiring since the doors to the Darkworld were closed a millennia ago. Within the confines of a dark cavern, a council of seven figures sat around a large round table, carved from the ancient limestone that had sat and molded within the Void Caverns.

Ruled by one they would not dare betray they were once again in session, awaiting his command.

Within these abysmal chambers, the Grogthligian Coven of Necrotopia had made their home. Like most of the inhabitants of the supernatural population within Darkworld, these sorcerers, warlocks, witches, and necromancers, had been banished from its confines.

Yet, unlike the other creatures that had been banished with the hope of a second chance and a hope for renewal, these men and women had been banished with pure hatred by the Queen of Neverworld Isabella. It had been their manipulation and tactics of control after all that had led to her decision to seal away the gates to the world of the unknown.

These men and women lusting for the crystal and keys which held all power and control over Neverworld had slowly steeped into the lives of those creatures within the world whose lust for more power and thralls had led them to poison the minds of their covens, packs, villages, and towns. Their main goal however was not only to gain control of Darkworld and its power but to unleash a catastrophe upon the world of humans, with the intent of gaining absolute control over those they saw as beneath them.

As such Isabella, in her wisdom had banished them to the Fathomless Realms of The Negavoid. She believed that within these realms of the outer lands of Neverworld they would hold less of a chance to influence events within or out of Darkworld, and had sacrificed her life by destroying the crystal



to prevent their influence from spreading.

It was Raye her husband, the Lord of what remained of Nevermore that had kept order as best as he could, using what remaining mana he had to keep the world stable, with the small number of remaining creatures, whose passive and secretive nature had made Isabella not banish to Galena their name for 'earth'.

Her hope was that by the time the fated chrysalis was found, her children had learned the meaning of humility and understood that their nature and powers were gifts to change the world for good and not for purely personal gain. She hoped they would use their talents to save the world from present and past evils that might once more try to topple over Darkworld or Galena.

Yes, she had heard of the chrysalis which would not only signal the return of her children but she hoped the begging of a new era. Only those whose hearts were open to change would be able to find the chrysalis of hope and unite under one banner to save both worlds from the clutches of the shadows.

"How long must we wait? Have we not wasted enough mana looking over these pathetic creatures?" one of the shadows said her voice that of a child. "As long as we must, our Lord says he is on the verge of discovering something new regarding the chrysalis and we must obey or face his wrath Lilithian," a masculine shadow voice replied with an edge of danger in his voice.

"Ever the lapdog aren't you Morpheanus?" she said her voice childlike and yet with a hint of psychosis to it. "Watch your tongue Lilithian! We won't suffer your insolence!" another female voice said. "Calm down children, our lord would not want us to waste time with petty squabbles," another male voice said in a sing-song manner. "No one asked you Freyna! Ardonis!" Lilithian said scowling.

"Instead of wasting precious time, let's ensure that the targets we marked as possible crystal bearers do not awaken, It took me a long time to get to them!" another female voice said urgently. "Let us hope you chose right, Lamashtia," a sardonic male voice replied. "If I were a fool I would incur his wrath by ending you Aresh, but for now we must focus and not lose track," she replied with a warning in her voice.

And so these shadowy figures servants of the one who is yet to be known but feared by all awaited his orders and watched over Galena and Darkworld, like dark ravens over a field of colorful leaves. While all of these cosmic events that would soon change Lucia and Vincent's lives forever were taking place, the girl's biggest concern was what to wear to have dinner with such a magnetic man, client or not she wanted to 'impress him' as foolish as it was.

## Chapter 6

"You are totally hiding something," Samara said as she scrounged through her clothes. It was a few hours before the dinner with Vincent, and knowing she had not a thing to wear, and her nerves were on end already she contacted her fashion expert and close friend Samara. "What would I be hiding? I am telling you it's nothing!" Lucia said. As much as she needed the help of her ever fashionable friend she did not want her or Ellie to know about her dinner with Vincent.

It would just result in another ridiculous story about his nature and about her fate should he fall prey to it. "I told you it's just a date with Charlotte and the board members. She wants to make sure I take care of this important client I am handling. She wants us to look our best, and I want to impress,"

Lucia said lying as best as she could. "She never seems to mind your drab clothing, and stoic mannerisms, sorry but it's the truth, why now?" Samara said pulling out a luxe tie front red cocktail dress.

"I don't know I just wanna do my best, and that is way too much I am not wearing that!" Lucia said eyeing the provocative bare back of the spaghetti straps holding the dress. "It's the best I could think of, it's sexy but conservative so stop whining and get ready! Imma doll you up!" Samara said and Lucia sighed submitting herself to the torture of makeup, and hairstyling.

It was late evening when she heard the doorbell signaling his arrival, making her heart beat erratically.

Why she was so nervous over dinner was beyond her. Yet, she felt very self-conscious about her appearance. It was made all the more daunting by how alluring he looked in his black suit, and dress pants. The color seemed to bring out his green feral eyes, and crimson lips. Lucia tried to remain professional even as he presented her with a bouquet of lavender flowers.

"You look ravishing with all due respect Ms. Clerisse," Vincent said not being able to take his eyes off her, he had never seen her with her hair down and smelling so tempting and it wasn't her perfume, which he wished she had not worn, her skin he felt was intoxicating enough.

"I thought this was a business meeting Mr. Lehtinen," Lucia said trying to hide her revolting girlish excitement. "It is, but is there harm in bringing flowers to a lovely lady? I think not, after all, you seem to like it," Vincent said as if he could read her mind. Lucia stuttered for a response and mumbled thanks as she rushed to place them in the water.

"Shall we?" Vincent said holding his arm out. "I...yes," Lucia said rushing past him. The flowers were one thing, having physical contact with someone who unnerved her so much was another. Vincent could not hide a wicked smile, her reluctance made the chase all the more exciting, even if he knew he should not, she was like the moth and he was the flame.

Dinner took place at Arnaud's a fine dining Creole restaurant within the French Quarter an establishment with live jazz musicians and surroundings that would be the pride of any French chef.

"Is this not too elegant for a business meeting Mr. Lehtinen?" Lucia said as he pulled her chair out.

"Ah, but what best way to discuss the boring world of business than in such a pleasant atmosphere, unless of course, you prefer we were...alone," Vincent said in such a provocative tone she had to hold back a shiver.

"Nonsense, this is best," Lucia said trying not to sound too standoffish, after all, he was a client. "As you know I love learning more about the people I work with, so why don't you tell me more about you Ms. Clerisse?" Vincent said sipping on his wine. "There is not much to tell, I was born and raised here. I love rainy days, books, felines, art, and music, though I prefer to focus on facts over such childish endeavors," Lucia said a sad look crossing her face.

"Why would you call them foolish? To me such pursuits are the pleasurable revelries of life itself, without which it would be empty," Vincent said. "I am just not interested in diversions, I need stability in my life, not fairytales," Lucia said hoping this conversation did not make her lose this client. After all, his investments were very much geared towards the arts and music. "Not to insult your pursuits, but personally I am not mad about them," Lucia said hoping she had not ruined the evening.

"No wonder," Vincent said almost as a whisper, he did not look angry or offended, he almost looked forlorn and intrigued. "Excuse me?" Lucia said confused. Vincent did not want to say it but no wonder he was so drawn to her, the light in her eyes seemed hidden but so dimmed as if a great pain had made her cold as stone.

"Never mind me, I understand your position. However as my goals involve such pursuits I would hope that you would be willing and open to embracing them, if only for our business to go smoothly," Vincent replied holding her gaze.

"I..of course, I will try, but no promises," Lucia said knowing full well Charlotte would hang her if she lost this client. Yet it was not his passions that made her nervous but more the passion she saw within those vampiric angel eyes....burning her with deep fervor...

"If this is to be fair though, I would ask the same of you..." Lucia said not knowing if she should treat such dangerous grounds. "And what is that love?" he said making her tremble in delight.

"Why are you so caught up on me? Who are you really?" she said nervously. Vincent paused smirking slightly, then taking a long sip of wine he said, "That...is part of the mystery and fun of meeting anyone don't you think so darling?" he said his eyes appearing to gleam a brighter shade of green in the candlelight...

## Chapter 7

Lucia did not feel like herself at all. At the end of the evening when the mysterious man called Vincent had left her at her doorstep she thought for one second that her friends were right, and this man was anything but human. It wasn't just the way he carried himself or the manner in which everything about him was exuding allure and grace, it was her reaction to him. Never in her life had she been so curious about someone or drawn to them. She was not afraid to admit that she had always been drawn to men she could not easily read or understand, but her heart had been broken too many times in the past to revisit the realm of love again.

Despite this, even the thoughts of romance that crossed her mind in regards to this total stranger, or wanting to know more about Vincent made her wonder if her group of friends were right about the creatures they called 'vampires'.

"If this guy is what I think he is, you won't be able to resist him much longer, to your senses he will smell of the sweetest nectar, and he will be the forbidden fruit you will not be able to hold back from tasting, its part of their power, their vampire allure, and before you know it, he will have you in his thrall! I am telling you be careful!"

Those were Samara's words to Lucia after she had described him to her from the way his skin seemed to have a translucent and pale hue to it, to the gleam that she swore she could see burning in his emerald green eyes, and the way he seemed to move and talk so gracefully. Of course, Lucia thought that her friend was being ridiculous, maybe this man was just born with wonderful genetic markers that made him the enticing specimen he was, nothing more. Still, her mind wandered....he would be the perfect candidate for an otherworldly being if such things existed.

Strange as it seemed, Lucia could have sworn that she had dreamed of him that night and felt him watching over her.

Still, that night Lucia could have sworn she had dreamt of him and had felt him watching over her, with dark wings the color of midnight and eyes shining like jades in the cool autumn night, his hair flowing ethereally under the moonlight, as he knelt in the shadows of her balcony guarding her sleep, and yet hungering for her.

"Why can't I get you out of my mind? Why are you haunting me?" he thought, wary of the fact that if she awakened she would scream at seeing his true form, wary of the fact that he should not be pursuing a mortal whose blood sang to him.....sang...

"It..no It cannot be....surely she is not the one," Vincent said shaking his head. No, this was an obsession and nothing more, a craving for warmth that his soul had craved for in these last centuries, and yet heeding the words of his master Draven, he knew that he could not take things too far, he was already getting too close to her....

Lucia awoke from the best sleep she had had in a while. Her soul felt at peace and even though she knew she still had to deal with work and the feelings Vincent was awakening in her she felt ready to face the day. She was getting ready to have a quick cup of chamomile tea and toast when her phone rang, it was Jonah. 'Strange?' she thought, her friends would not call her during the weekdays unless she had informed them she was off.

"I am heading to work Jonah, I cannot be on the phone for long," Lucia said trying to hold her phone while putting on her heels, which led her to stub her toe and curse. "Look I know ok and I am sorry, but you have to come over, something happened last night and Ashton is in the hospital," he said his voice worried and frantic.

"Oh my! What? Is he ok? I will be right over, I will just have to call in," Lucia said with concern. Jonah was not the one to call over any little thing, and despite the fact that she did not believe in their work she cared about her friends. "Ok see you soon, please don't leave us hanging Lucia," Jonah said as he hung up.

"What could have happened?" Lucia said she hoped their investigations into the paranormal had not gotten them shot or beaten for trespassing on a property. The risks they would take to investigate at times scared her. For now, though she hoped Ashton was not in the ICU. Even with the thoughts of Vincent, her life, and the world in general revolving around her head, she just hoped her friend was ok.

## Chapter 8

She had arrived as fast as she could and became immediately concerned at the looks of horror on her friend's faces. Had her worst fears been confirmed, had they gone too far? Were they going to get into legal trouble, or were they going to have to watch their backs from pagan cults and rebellious teens from now on?

"So what exactly happened to him?" Lucia asked Jonah as she and her friends awaited any word from the doctor. The faces on them were not a good sign. "It was all my fault," Jonah said remorsefully. "I got letters, threats, calls, but I dismissed them as the prank or threat of some local cult or teenagers, after all the site was protected as a historical graveyard, and not even they could be found loitering within," he added nervously biting on his fingers.

"Jonah, what happened? Surely you did not insist on going, prank or no prank, you know people are dangerous, and there are all sorts of gangs, and cults out there," Lucia said with a tone of warning in her voice. "Ashton was against it actually, so was Amie, but I insisted, told them we could not let people scare us off from our passion, our goals, and well," Jonah said taking a seat as he was shaking too much.

"We were attacked, by something, I don't know what it was but, I know I will never be able to forget the stench and smell of them," Amie said speaking up for the first time. "We all tried to find a way out, but when it had been a clear night, all of a sudden a dark mist was surrounding us everywhere, and there were sounds and shadows whose shape I do not believe were of this earth," Samara added.

"Maybe it was that cult, they could have jumped you, and I am assuming Ashton told you all to run and let him take care of it, as usual?", Lucia knew out of all of them Ashton was the most selfless. "It could have all been orchestrated to scatter you and jump whoever did not seem to get phased, did you report it to the police yet?" Lucia said increasingly worried at their silent expressions.

"Listen, Lucia, we know for a fact that you don't believe in the supernatural creatures of this world any longer, but this was a mist we had never encountered before, and those shadows and voices," Jonah said shivering.

"For the first time Ashton did not stay behind we were all running for our lives, trying to find the way to the gate, but then I fell and Ashton ran back to get me, and then..." Amie said holding back a shudder. "He was pulled back by something, and like a coward I ran and ran not knowing if I would see him again, I looked around for a weapon, anything!" Amie said.

"All of our electronic devices were suddenly dead if you are wondering, and we were all disoriented and scattered. I heard Amie scream out for us to go back for Ashton, and then everything suddenly became eerily quiet, we stood there for so long, and then the mist cleared, as quickly as it came," Samara added. "We immediately called the cops and started looking for Ashton and when they found him," Amie shuddered not being able to hold back her tears.

"Lucia, I don't know if he will be able to make it!" Jonah said sobbing loudly. She could only imagine how guilty he would feel if Ashton passed on, how they would all feel. Her heart was hurting "How bad is he?" she asked meekly. "I think there so little of what he looked like left, he is barely alive," Amie added weeping loudly as her friends held her, "He hoped to see you in case he doesn't make it, he is barely conscious," Samara said. "Lucia, his wounds those scars, the way his face was deformed is not normal, no human can do that!" Jonah added fiercely.

"So, what was it that you think attacked him?" asked Lucia, not really ready to visit her friend, but she had to go in there now. Something in their eyes and voices told her they were not lying, and yet could it be true, could they have been attacked by those creatures she denied existed?

Lucia did not want to make them more upset. She had never seen these fearless friends of hers so shaken, and one of them seemed to be at death's door. "I will go see him, but please you must understand it is hard for me to think this was anything supernatural," Lucia said as she headed to the hospital room.

Surely they were just reacting to trauma, and seeing things that were not there, surely Ashton would survive and the perpetrators would be caught and jailed. Maybe this would dissuade them from pursuing such dangerous tasks, all of these thoughts ran across her mind as she walked in to see Ashton and his mother.

Lucia froze and fell to her knees, she was not trying to be rude to Ashton's mom Angela, she was such a kind woman, but to see Ashton, strong, proud, handsome Ashton like this was too much. "What monster does this! I told him to quit this hobby of his! These cultists showed no mercy to my sweet, and naive boy! Oh, Lucia!" Angela had said upon Lucia entering, as she rushed to embrace her. "I don't know," Lucia said truthfully. After sitting with her for some time, Angela asked if Lucia could stay with Ashton for a moment, to which Lucia wholeheartedly agreed. The woman looked so tired, she had probably not even eaten. Being a single mom, dealing with this must have been a nightmare, Lucia thought.

Lucia sat close to him and though she could not see past the bandages she could tell it was as bad as the others had said. His face, legs, and arms were bandaged and she would only be able to see his beautiful blue eyes, though they were now closed, his hair was gone and the only sound was that of the machine connected to his fading heart and the quiet sounds of the hospital outside.

"Do you recall that incident in the paper with the werewolves some time ago?" Ashton said whispering as if he was afraid the so-called Lycans were in their human form disguised as doctors, and possibly following them.

"Listen, Ashton, I know fear and pain can make you see and believe things, but this seems to be the work of some pagan cult to me," Lucia said as calmly as she could. "The shadows I saw before I blacked out were not human Lucia and when you see him you'll know I am not a fool!!" Ashton said angrily.

She leaned over to touch his face, and it was then that....

Everything froze, the world went gray and Lucia felt cold.

The room around her was still the same, yet, the clock and machines stop as if frozen in time. "Was this part of trauma or shock?" she tried to reason, she tried to react and get a sense of what was happening.

More than that, she could not make a sound, complete silence was around her and she could not even hear her own voice. She ran to the door, thinking she should take a breath of fresh air, but it was locked and the steel was frozen over.

She tried to not lose control but her heart was hammering against her chest.

She wanted to wake, scream, and tell herself that it was all a product of her fainting or passing out. Yet all she could see were ribbons of red, gray, and white, fluttering around her, but instead of tangling around her, they were dancing. She tried to wake up again and looked at Ashton, ribbons of red and white were...

She struggled to process it but the ribbons were coming out of him....and she could suddenly see all of his wounds through the bandages. It was a living and vivid nightmare of gory and phantasmal proportions.

What made her want to scream louder though was the shape that loomed above her friend a red hooded figure, with an hourglass in one hand and a scythe in the other, beckoning her. Were these pagan cultists so powerful? Was magic real? Her heart and soul were mutilated in fear.

Then it spoke in a voice that sounded as if had existed eons ago....a voice that at first chilled her to the bone..and yet suddenly calmed her fear like petals over a trembling dove.

"Thiet' elysieth mari'um nee Chrysellise, nauth kaullith umphka zee yisir kint'e mauhm innuit?" the face was a void, the voice was like the sound of a thousand echoes in the forest, but it did not make her cower, and yet she was afraid to approach it even as it beckoned her.

Yet, before she could react, an explosion shook the earth and the world went from gray to red. The ribbons were all red and Ashton's body was unraveling like a spool of thread, Lucia's mind broke and it shattered as the world finally went black.

Somewhere in his manor Vincent awoke with a gasp, his green jade eyes fluttering, though vampires slept little or not at all, Vincent enjoyed meditation, and though he was always alert only a strong spiritual force could make him break his peace.

His blood was reacting to a song, but the song was scattered, scared, and between worlds....was it possible the fated Chrysalis had awakened?

## Chapter 9

Lucia awoke to bright lights and muffled voices. "She's finally awake!" a voice she recognized as Amie said. Gasping she sat up, she was in a hospital bed with tranquilizers and other mind-numbing drugs being used to keep her calm. She tried to recall what had happened? Her mind was somewhat of a blur, she was visiting her ailing friend, and then...

"What exactly happened? Why am I here? Where is Ashton?" Lucia asked feeling very apprehensive and confused. "He is in the ICU, don't you remember you went in to see him and then you said you had to take off, but then some people found you passed out in the parking lot, apparently you are overworked and it has given you anemic symptoms," Jonah added with genuine concern.

"Seems we now have two friends to worry about, I told you, you are burning the candle at both ends, my friend, the impact of what happened to Ashton must have made it worse," Samara added sympathetically holding Lucia's hand gently.

If Lucia had been confused about the last few hours this only added to it. Had she hallucinated the ribbons and what was this draining feeling she had? Was it really anemia....there was something else in her dream....a shadow, but it had all been so real, she did not even recall walking to her car or taking off, this made no sense.

"You should go check on Ashton, I need a moment to myself, maybe I can rest a bit and call my primary doctor to make an appointment," Lucia replied. She had never felt so disoriented in her life. It was a good thing Lucia was told to stay at the hospital for a couple of days, she needed time to make sense of her sudden collapse. It did not help that she was still worried about her friend and his condition. Her friends came in to see how she was doing but she reinforced the idea upon them of putting Ashton before anyone. The doctors had little hope and when midweek they mentioned that they might have to transfer Ashton, the light of hope began to thoroughly dim.

Four days had passed since the incident and Lucia was still bewildered. Though she was given the green light to leave the hospital she felt more confused than ever. It was not a lie that she did feel tired most of the time and had little time to rest, but still, she had no health problems like anemia.

The whole explanation of what had happened still did not make sense to her.

For the first time in her life, Lucia did not want to go back to work, it was as if something within her or around her had been altered, and though she tried to make sense of what had happened it did not make sense. It was the sixth day since the incident and, she felt that she had barely hit the pillow when she heard the phone ring.

It was Jonah, "It's it's a miracle Lucia, the doctors do not know how it happened but most of Ashton's wounds are healed it was as if nothing happened! I guess we were overreacting haha, I mean those scars he has left look like kitten scratches!" Jonah cried ecstatically over the phone "Gone? He has no scars? But how, I mean...I am glad but well..." Lucia asked afraid of how once more Lucia's stable world was being tossed into strange events. "We don't know but, as soon as you are better you have got to go see him! Angela is shocked but relieved of course!" Amie added.

Lucia walked in a daze to meet Ashton when she was finally allowed, and her surprise increased when she saw how different he looked, he was not thoroughly healed and some scars would remain, but he was in a much better condition. She was happy, yet this was all so strange, so very strange. Did she believe in the possibility of miracles? Maybe...maybe not....still this whole event had her confused.

If Lucia had felt confused about the whole situation, it did not compare to how Vincent felt. This week had been hell, and he was quite glad he had not been forced to see Lucia in this state. He was dangerous and feral, and the singing in his head would not stop. "If this is truly the sign of the Chrysalis being awoken then there better be a way to find her or him, I do not know myself," Vincent said as he stood beside Draven who had taken Vincent hunting for deer.

"We do not know much of what the Chrysalis Is meant to do, my son, but if the stories are true, the only way to cease the singing in your head is to locate her or him. With the way you are feeling, however, I would not doubt that you already have come upon them or know them," Draven said. He did not know why? He did not think it possible, after all as attracted as he was to her she was not involved in anything to do with the occult, in fact, she seemed to shun such things, and yet perhaps it was this that made her more of a likely candidate.

"What if it's her father, what if she is the one we have been looking for?" Vincent said his emerald eyes shining, not having to tell Draven who had crossed his mind. "If she is the one, then you must be even more careful my son," Draven said.

"After all your craving for this warmblood could overcome your sense of common caution, remember the Chrysalis is meant to be part of a greater mission for all of us, and we cannot let feelings get in the way. Furthermore, we cannot risk exposure, and I do not want you to get hurt again" Draven added a note of warning and concern in his feral green eyes.

"I won't falter master, If this girl is indeed the fated Chrysalis then, my duty will be to help her find the keys to the Darkworld, and see if this so-called prophecy can lead us all back home," Vincent said half lying, after all his feelings and need for her had grown exponentially over these past few days, it was irrational, it was passionate, it was forbidden.

But he feared that his Angelic Vampire Heart was Infernally Doomed to Fall for Her.

## Chapter 10

After that incident, being back at work did not feel normal for Lucia. No matter how many times she replayed the event at the hospital it felt like something had happened that did not click into her memory. Still, she knew she had to get over it eventually and take control of her life again. On top of it all she dreaded seeing Vincent again, perhaps it was a coincidence, but then again did such things exist?

Ever since he had walked into her life strange things had begun to take place in what she had converted into a life structured into a predictable routine.

"I just have to get a grip and set up firmer boundaries with him is all," Lucia told herself trying to steel her courage and hoping things would go back to normal. Of course, Lucia had no idea what Vincent really was or the fact that she could not hide much from his vampire gaze.

They had agreed to meet at the local museum where Vincent was set on making some donations of some pre-1800 paintings, and some investments into some Elizabethian relics. She arrived as planned trying to get her mind into the routine of work and the fact that strange or not incidents related to amnesia could happen due to overwork, nothing more.

But nothing could hide her distress from Vincent, not only had she lied about being away due to her grandfather being sick, but her demeanor had changed. She looked frail and distraught, and he could not dim the singing in his head. Was this girl truly the reborn chrysalis? If so could she even be up to the task? What's more, the feeling that she had begun to plant within Vincent's living dead heart awoke within him fierce feelings of overprotection he thought were long gone.

"Ms. Clerisse we have some time before the meeting with the shareholders, may we talk?" he whispered hoping she would not hide. "Whatever about, Mr. Lehtinen?" Lucia said. Ever since meeting her incident she had decided to remain stoic and establish firmer boundaries between them. Still, the concern that softened his green eyes was shaking her resolve. He had been uncommonly gentle in his approach and in his mannerisms upon meeting her, almost as if he could sense she had undergone something traumatic.

"If this was something I would want to discuss in a meeting or in public I would do so, but I would rather we go to a private lounge," Vincent insisted. Lucia felt like telling him that there was no reason to do such a thing or that it was not part of their agreement, but something about the gentle tug on his silk voice was impossible to ignore. "As you wish Mr. Lehtinen but let us make haste, I do not wish for us to be unprepared for the meeting," she answered deciding to remain stoic and not reply to any intrusive questions, on his part.

They walked towards a private lounge reserved for business guests of the museum, walls depicting Michelangelo's works adorned its walls and rustic Savoranola Italian chairs reminiscent of Italian origin beckoned guests to take a seat and dive into the past. "Forgive my untoward manners but, you've not been yourself all morning," Vincent said as he locked the door behind them. "Whatever do you mean Mr. Lehtinen, I've never felt more myself than now," Lucia said trying to sound defensive but failing. Vincent sighed deeply, it seems she was determined to push every wall around her. "Ms. Clerisse I understand and respect your desire for privacy. However, I am not a fool, and I know it was more than a familial incident which has you so shaken," Vincent said hoping she would not run out of the room, accusing him of being impertinent. "Well, even if you were right, I still think it is not my business or part of our contract to discuss my personal issues," Lucia declared firmly. Vincent almost growled at her infernal stubbornness but knew he had to be careful to not push her away, not after his suspicions were cleared, and especially not after he had begun to chase her even in dreams.

Nevertheless, he knew that he could not push her over the edge, so smiling and looking as apologetic as he could he bowed and said, "Forgive me, I was wrong to pry, It was merely a heartfelt concern for you that led me to ask, but it won't happen again," he said. He knew he was lying to himself, the singing in his blood was somewhat dimmed but still humming against his mind as she stood close to her. It would seem he would have to take his time to earn her trust before she could open up. "I am completely fine Mr. Lehtinen, and though the concern is appreciated, it is not needed. I am in control of myself and fully prepared to attend to business," Lucia said, yet somehow she wished she could tell him everything that was disturbing her.

"Very well Ms. Clerisse, however, if there is anything you want to talk about my offer remains," Vincent said trying to not sound aggravating. "I will consider it," Lucia said holding back a groan of frustration. It was harder than she thought after that to conduct business without letting her frustration show. Those green emeralds felt like lasers stuck to her and she could feel him checking on her when her mood faltered. Despite this, she was determined to not let the past few days get in the way of her work. Her life was to continue as normal, with no need for drama, mystery, or even a man to look after her, not even one as divine as her new client.

It was the weekend after that Lucia sat up in bed and feeling her emotions building up, decided that she could no longer ignore this feeling. So for the first time in a long time, she decided to do what she had not done in a long time, even though her fear of being discovered or of what might happen was warning her to not do so. "If I do not do it though, I won't be able to get back to normal, besides, nothing has happened when I've done it recently," Lucia said. It was a well-kept secret, one that she kept even from her closest friends.

After all, she had sworn off anything magical or mystical from her life a long time ago.

Nevertheless, this past week her restlessness was not assuaged, by therapy or even exercise. As such, she waited for the dead of night gathered the tools she had long kept hidden in her closet and the garments she had sworn off, and took off to that secret glade she had found in the park nearby, the one where a fairy circle had once stood and done her meditations and callings.

The moonlight pierced the trees and shone on the grass, making it sparkle like glimmers of jade in the dusk. Lucia made doubly sure no one would follow or see. Why she had decided to do this was beginning to make her second guess, but she thought of her inner turmoil and decided she had to do this lest she goes mad.

It began to make her second guess, why she had decided to do this, but she thought of her inner turmoil and decided she had to do this lest she goes mad.



Wearing nothing but a white dress with silver engravings of the moon and stars and pure wooden sandals she found that spot she had once wandered into when she still believed in magic. Tonight, as she had done other nights she was looking for clarity. In the past, she would have drawn a circle or set upwards but tonight, she was a woman looking for peace and not demons, or other silly unexisting nonsense. Tonight a lavender candle, the light of the moon, and some chamomile incense would do.

She closed her eyes, recalling the fairy circle she had once found here, and the immense sense of peace she had felt, tonight she needed that, her affirmation and positive thoughts to restore her tranquility. If her friends were to see her, they would have called her a hypocrite, yet it's not as if she was casting spells, or any such nonsense, this was just a meditative state of being, a place where she could let go of the day's worries.

Everything seemed to wash away on a blanket filled with comets, stars, and planets until in her mind there was nothing but a blank canvas of constellations where she stood in all immensity to pick out those thoughts that like black holes were threatening to swallow her peace. Vincent, the incident with Ashton, and her own insecurities were disturbing her established sense of self. While Vincent was a rainbow, and enigma of black and white, his constellation was too bedazzling and confusing for her to sort out yet. The incident with Ashton and that whole episode afterward though, stood out like a wormhole, threatening to drown her peace. Could she be overreacting? Making a bigger incident out of what it really was?

All of these questions loomed around her mind as she sat there not aware of two pairs of shadows lurking nearby. In the sunlight, they would have looked like two regular men tall and muscular, but upon the moon's rising they had become something else, something which now looked at the maiden sitting so unaware nearby that their blood called out for feeding. It was the sound of their growls that awoke her, and it was then that Lucia felt a horror she had not felt in a long time, a horror that felt as if being encased inside a maid of Iron ready to crush her. She stood up, thinking maybe this had all been a bad idea from the start when she saw them creeping towards, her. She could have screamed, but it seemed to be lodged in her throat the horror, for how could such monstrous wolves with such white snowy fur exist here. Was this another strange trip such as she had seen with Ashton? Maybe she did need psychiatric help....

She was about to knock herself out to try and wake up when one of them lunged at her and there they were again the ribbons protruding from the creatures' skin. She felt a need to tug at them to rip this hallucination apart, but she could only cover her face, hoping to wake up soon....

Then she felt another presence and her feet being lifted off the ground. Her mind froze for a moment, and she did not know what to think, for it was Vincent who held her in his arms, his eyes no longer green, but a shade of white, and from his back, two ethereal wings of white though what scared her most was the growl coming from his throat and the two fangs coming forth from his mouth.....she felt like she was flying below the moon's embrace and feeling disoriented she passed out into oblivion.

## Chapter 11

She woke up in darkness and panicked as she struggled to sit up. It turned out the darkness was the blanket that was now wrapped around her like a cocoon. Her surroundings were unfamiliar, and she began to feel a need to scream, but at the same time, the air around was soothing so as to not feel threatening. She tried to recall how she got here but for some reason her memory was hazy, why was everything so confusing for her lately? She thought listlessly.

Lucia looked around the room. By all standards, it should be part of a victorian gothic interior collection. Not only was she sure that the four-poster canopy bed was a piece by Michael Amini Valencia, but the sheets were soft and more comfortable than she had ever felt. Victorian Rococo Wall Sconces decorated the black and silver Damask wallpaper framed the walls and plush Persian rugs greeted her feet upon standing. What almost made her jump though was the figure sitting on a baroque-styled red velvet interior chesterfield sofa.

"Please...before you accuse me of something or panic and try to flee I implore you to stay your heart and listen to me," Vincent said. Something in her memory was hazy as she looked at him, could she have dreamed the angelic wings and his carved angelical face looking slightly demonic? Either way, hallucination or not why was she here? In what she could only assume was a room that was part of his property.

"I think you have a lot more explaining to do than I? Last I recall I was in the woods, on a business of my own and well..." Lucia said slowly recalling some details.

"I can assure you Ms. Clerisse I wish you no harm whatsoever, however, I hoped we could talk here, in private, or perhaps the dining room would be best, though I want to make sure you can walk," Vincent said his eyes hiding a hidden yearning.

"To begin Mr. Lehtinen," Lucia said trying to not panic, if he had wanted to hurt her by now he would have," I want to know how I got here and why were you in the forest, what happened that led to this and what are your intentions," Lucia said as abruptly as she could muster while trying to remain polite.

"You were in the forest, meditating I believe, I happened to be walking that path, it seems we both share a fascination with solitary places in which to wander and think about our daily troubles. However I was surprised to see you there and if I had not Ms. Clerisse, well I am afraid things would have turned quite sour for you," he said a tone of worry and warning in his voice.

"Sour? Whatever do you mean" Lucia said panic rising in her voice. "Before we continue this talk, I was hoping you would accept some dinner and a bath, you went through quite a scare last night," Vincent said. "Not needed, I rather you tell me now and get back home, while I appreciate your hospitality this is not appropriate, between...business partners," Lucia said.

"I would argue the same, and while I can respect your need for solace at this moment I can assure you I mean no harm, and It is important that we talk," Vincent said his voice a low purr, somewhere between a warning for her to not run and an air of protective pride.

"Very well," Lucia said sighing, something in his jade emerald eyes made her feel secure.

"However, as soon as our business is done, I will have to go home, and perhaps our partnership will have to end, after all, I do not want to violate ethics here," Lucia said. "If I had wanted to cross the line with you darling I would have by now made no mistake, and there is nothing that would stop me," Vincent said his eyes gleaming like green fire, emitting a surge of desire in her heart, which she shook off with haste. "However, I once again must reassure you, and tell you that you are not in any danger from me, but from others, nay from yourself," Vincent said his voice a mixture of despair, curiosity, and loneliness.

His words did nothing but confuse her even more, and yet somehow she felt that it was important to talk to him, in this world that had begun to turn around and mess with her stable life, the man that puzzled her the most was the only one whose angelic vampiric aura could bring her a sense of calm...in this infernal twister that was making her lose the roots of peace within the branches of the dead roses in her heart.

## Chapter 12

The bathroom was as grand as the bedroom. A huge silver bathtub sat within the space a cozy but ample space, with a small ornate window and linenfold black panels a small fireplace lit up the room providing a soothing sense of warmth and comfort to Lucia's tired muscles. The tension from the recent incident faded as she stared at the ornate sconces.

This was the first time in years since she had been alone with a man in his house, and even if the reasons had nothing to do with a dalliance or a romantic venture of any sort she could not help but feel self-aware. Moreover, she was thoroughly confused, a couple of months ago all she would have had to worry about was making sure her clients were making wise investments and keeping their finances in shape. She had made sure that magic would no longer have a place in her life and in these past couple of days things had happened that had disturbed that sense of peace around her. Vincent, the memories she was still battling with from the incident at the hospital, and now this

latest event had her wanting to pack up and leave again, to flee from those things that brought up darker memories of things she did not want to face again.

Yet, despite her fear, this man did not make her feel uneasy in the sense that he would hurt her. In fact, being here with someone who could possibly tell her about what was going on around her gave her a sense of peace, though she remained suspicious. What if he had orchestrated those things to attack her? What if he was slipping something into her drink during their meetings outside the office leading to these hallucinations? And that image of him looking outwardly supernatural was something that kept replaying in her head.

She knew she should allow him to speak but these events affecting her life lately and so randomly had made her lose balance. Despite her fears, however, a part of her could not leave here without some answers.

'He said things would have gone sour for me? But how and when?' Lucia pondered still afraid of the answers. And how had he gotten her out of there so fast?

Admittedly she had already decided that if this talk resulted in nothing but a series of ridiculous theories she would excuse herself, thank him once more and cut ties with this man just to be on the safe side.

As she stepped out of her bath she was both pleased and flustered at a set of fresh clothes he had provided for her, considering she had been wearing nothing but a tunic she used for meditation. An unknown sense of panic began to swelter within her, urging her to run away from here and from him, was this her intuition, wasn't it always said that one should listen to their 'gut'.

As if to stop her from fleeing so suddenly or calling the authorities to come to take her a maid with red pigtails and even darker red eyes walked in and asked nonverbally for Lucia to follow her.

There would be no running tonight it seemed. Lucia could not help but notice how doll-like this girl looked, and yet there was something fiery in her eyes.

"My name is Rin, Rin Ateos I am Earl Lehtinen's well, I suppose you could call me his special assistant, although my activities I cannot discuss without his permission. However, I will be in charge of watching over you over these next couple of weeks depending on tonight's turn of events." Rin said her voice silky and deep yet emitting little emotion.

As much as she had wanted answers and felt safe with Vincent, this was absolutely out of the question! Had Lucia heard her right? Weeks? And this girl as her bodyguard? She was no child!

"Excuse me weeks? And he expects me to allow someone to follow me?" Lucia said the incredulity still apparent on her face. "It was his command that it be done this way, he will explain his reasons, shall we go meet him?" Rin said not sensing Lucia's change from gratitude to anger.

Did he really think Lucia would stay here? Whatever had happened and no matter how much she needed to find answers she was not going to be coddled and put on a tower to be shielded and left to be sheltered by someone else.

Moreover was surprised to hear him being addressed as Earl, as far as his paperwork she had always known him as Mr. or in some cases Sir.

"I assure you that won't be necessary. While I am grateful to your erm...Earl erm...Sir Lehtinen, I do not need to be coddled" Lucia replied. "We shall see," Rin said as if dismissing Lucia's attempts to even lift a word of rejection against her boss.

"The Earl is awaiting you in his study, we shall go there and dinner will be served sometime later, any questions?" Rin said as if not aware of Lucia's increasingly bad mood. "No, not for now thank you" Lucia replied between gritted teeth as Rin opened the door to what she assumed was Vincent's study.

No matter how upset she was and the absurdity and distress of her current situation, seeing him always left her speechless. His eyes seemed to shine even more brightly as if they had stolen the stars from the very heavens, and the white ruffled shirt he was wearing made him look even paler.

"I am glad to see you are awake, Ms. Clerisse," Vincent said standing in his tall frame and approaching her as he took her small hand into his large one, kissing her palm, leaving her both breathless even as she was confused.

“I was hoping we could have dinner first, but I sense that will not accept if we do not talk first,” he said smiling and melting her somewhat. “Although I can assure you that my plans do not involve letting you go without a thorough discussion or why I have brought you here, or the events that led to these circumstances,” Vincent said with a tone that assumed all was decided and she would argue no further.

“Mr. Lehtinen,” Lucia said trying to calm herself, “Although I am very grateful, that you saved me from a misfortune. I can assure you, I can take care of myself, and moreover, I have a life to get back to. It does not matter what we discuss tonight, I will not be held here, or followed during my daily life,” Lucia said adamantly. “I will have to reprimand someone for not staying quiet I see. However, I suppose it is better to talk to you with clarity and not attempt any subterfuge,” Vincent said inviting Lucia nonverbally to sit in one of his 17th-century broad Damask chairs.

Lucia sat reluctantly her mind both urging her to listen and turn and leave this man and his mysteries alone. “Tell me Ms. Clerisse, when you said that you do not believe in the supernatural realm, in its creatures were you certain? Or was it an effort to push it all away and deny the possibility of something other than the existence of humans,” Vincent said as he served some wine for them in a pair of delicate silver goblets.

“I do not believe in the supernatural and well, I do not see how this is relevant,” Lucia said. “Yet, you were meditating before I found you, you cannot deny that meditation holds magic, and those who practice it in such conditions have some knowledge of the phases of the moons and the seasons,” Vincent pressed. “That you saw me in such a situation is not normal for me, I was just feeling constricted and well,” Lucia said knowing he could look so easily through her and that her actions spoke of how hypocritical she was being in denying her belief in something beyond the mortal realm.

“The truth is Ms. Clerisse that no matter how much you try to deny it, magic and the unseen creatures and wonders of this world do exist, and though some are gentle and enchanting there is darkness too, and danger,” Vincent said his eyes seeming to take on a red hue that quickly vanished. “Even if I were to believe in such things,” Lucia said still trying to pretend that nothing like that was possible and pushing dark memories away. “I do not yet see the relevance of what happened to me, and what caused you to be there at the exact moment and bring me here so swiftly,” Lucia said. “The relevance can only claim its true if you are willing to open your eyes and accept that there is more to this universe than what meets the eye and that you are connected to it, despite your refusal to accept it,” Vincent said leaning forward and studying her reaction with the concentration of a surgeon in a heart operation.

“If you are telling me that some supernatural creature is the culprit for my recent woes and that I am a character in a ridiculous story where I will be chased because it was written in a tablet millions of years ago, you are mistaken and foolish Mr. Lehtinen,” Lucia said, this was turning out to be a waste of time as she had feared. Still, it did not answer any of her questions and she was not a very patient person.

“Well then, if your sense of disbelief is that ingrained and for some reason, you have chosen to ignore it I will have to show you what I mean, but you must promise to trust me,” Vincent said standing up to approach her. “As grateful as I am for your aid and as ridiculous as this theory is starting to sound I think I will pass,” Lucia said heading towards the door, her heart was pounding with fear now, something within her was unwinding something primal and dark and she was afraid of what she would do if cornered.

“Ah yes, there it is,” Vincent said his voice so low it almost sounded feral and cat-like, like a predator ready to pounce on his prey. “Stay away, I am warning you,” Lucia said. And then it began to happen again, ribbons of colors around her this time silver and golden ribbons all coming from Vincent. Around him a swirling aura of black and from his back two skeletal wings and then she saw his eyes again, the red eyes of a creature not of this world. She wanted to scream, to run, to pull those ribbons apart and make it all dissolve, but when he rushed to her and his arms held her a golden ribbon wrapped around her and connected the places where their hearts should be.

A sense of peace washed over her erasing the panic as his red eyes turned silver and green, "Please, I know you are scared darling, but if you do not listen to me you will be in further peril and I could not take it," Vincent said his red eyes once more green and soulful, his wings gone as they returned to reality. "What the hell is going on...what am I," Lucia said whimpering in panic as he held her close hoping he could explain to her and keep her safe, for his worse fears and hopes were confirmed this girl was the chrysalis, her song was humming in his vampire's veins and it could not be calmed.

## Chapter 13

Her instincts kept telling her to run, to not believe, but her heart was urging her to listen to him. Still, caution kept her wondering if he had not just injected her with some hallucinogen or tranquilizer and that he had less than noble intentions by bringing her here. Yet, if this was not a hazy lucid dream, then he had saved her from an unknown but very real peril. Yet she could not believe the words that this man was telling her.

"I understand that what I am telling you may seem too fantastical and strange, but it is the truth. This world we live in is not the only one in existence, there is another world that belongs to those creatures who suffer the penalty of hiding their true essence here. The arrogance and crimes of our ancestors cost us all our freedom and we were exiled to this world of mortals, he said.

"Yet there is a chance for us to prove ourselves and regain entrance to the Darkworld, that light of hope is called the Chrysalis, and only he or she can help us find the keys that will allow us to return to where we belong," Vincent explained, his eyes were displaying more urgency than ever. As if he was afraid she would run out, after all, he could not keep her here against her will.

"And you believe that I am this Chrysalis?" Lucia said still feeling that this was all a prank or a sick joke her friends had concocted. "Yes, for it is said that if one of my kind were to find her our blood would sing, and none but her presence would quell it," Vincent added. "Because you are a vampire, and according to this tale, if one of your kind should find this Chrysalis or whatever, your blood would do that?" Lucia said seething, this was all extremely foolish.

"Yes," Vincent said with a finality that made her explode in anger. "Please forgive me if I cannot and will not allow myself to believe you! This is all just a lie! Did my friends pay you to prank me! Did you put something in my drink? Were you in cahoots with those men in the forest to try to scare me!" Lucia said hysterically as she tried to head towards the door only to have Vincent race to it so fast that it shocked her. His pale skin shone even brighter in the candlelight and his dark green eyes were sad and yearning for her to not go.

"I understand this is all too much to believe and it is also something we expected, for the Chrysalis was said to have had her magic knowledge and memories sealed away until the time comes for our redemption," Vincent said emphasizing the word with some bitterness.

"I am sorry to disappoint you Mr. Lehtinen but this whole story is nothing but lies to me and whatever sick joke this is I warn you that I will call the authorities if you do not let me go now!" Lucia said her heart racing. "I wish you would believe me, believe your own mind, have you not seen things you would have not in the past! The ribbons, my eyes, my shape," Vincent said appearing once more before her with skeletal wings and red eyes.

"Whatever drug you put on me please, stop! If it is access to the vault in the bank you want then I will let you in but please!" Lucia said truly frightened now, though she knew someone as wealthy as he was had no use for petty theft.

"Perhaps it would be better to show you, I am afraid I will have to," Vincent said approaching her and before she could scream he had enveloped her in a cloud of dark smoke, and though she could not see anything but darkness for some time, her jaw almost fell wide open as he opened her mind to a world she had never seen before Lucia stood a mirage of Darkworld an illusion created by Vincent to try and convince her before she ran and it was too late.

## Chapter 14

Words failed to formulate. The mirage of what she was seeing was not possible. Not probable. Because it was both beautiful and haunting. A world where three moons reigned over the skies and a small orb of multicolored rainbow lights floated next to each one.

"This is my world, the world from which we, my people, the creatures of fairytales come. This is the Darkworld," Vincent said surprising her as he stood beside her. They appeared to be floating above it all as if watching from an airplane view. "This, whatever you gave me this is not funny!" Lucia said panicking. Vincent turned to look at her and his eyes took her breath for they looked even more majestically green and sad. "I feared you would not believe it to be real and so I will try to let you experience some of it, though we cannot truly access it, I need you to trust me and believe, can you do that?" Vincent said knowing this was hard and that he was asking for a lot but that the only hope lay in that she would believe in him. She took a deep breath and though she still thought she was dreaming in a lucid plane, the sadness coming from Vincent tugged at her.

While the Venusian-like angel of twilight called Vincent was embarking on a mission to connect to whom he knew without a doubt was the Chrysalis, his mentor Draven was in a rage. It had not taken too long to feel and realize the risks his son was taking by exposing this girl who could or could not be the Chrysalis to the place that was their home. Anyone could be watching, over the years Draven had learned to survive based on a mix of courage and caution. Amelia his beloved worried that this did not allow him to be free of his past demons but even now he knew it was only by watching his back and watching over the decisions of those around him that his coven had survived.

"You are awake, and restless again, do I have to go drag him back home," Amelia said her dark eyes filled with worry over the gentle giant she called her heart. "I am at an impasse 'Mond meines Lebens' " he sighed. "My son believes he has found the Chrysalis and he is acting rashly, and yet if he is right, I thought....I thought we would be ready to act," Draven said.

"If she is the one your clan keeps raving about, then yes Vincent would have done well to be more cautious and bring her here, but you know your son, he does not think before he acts all the time," Amelia grumbled. "However until he comes back from his mirrored travel we cannot do anything," Draven added, hoping his son's brashness did not result in something they could not control.

"This world, our world reflects the fears and fantasies of all humans, and lets them take shape into what you call vampires, fairies, werewolves, and other creatures, you so to speak, and without the struggles, you face we would not be," Vincent said. Lucia stared in awe as they stood beside a field of moonflowers, and fluttering white and red butterflies. "However, this does not mean that it is only those feelings that feed us, for births, peace, and acts of mercy allow for the fauna, flora, ocean, and land to grow, and for us to survive," Vincent said staring wistfully at the moons. "Our desire is to return here, for we do not belong in your world, and the only one that can help us is you," Vincent said. "Me! But even if this is true...even if I'm not drugged out of my mind right now.....how can I do anything!" Lucia said.

She was just a powerless girl, who worked a normal job, tried to keep her distance from the supernatural, and had vowed to ever since....her memory has always remained shut when she tried to recall why she detested fantasy so much. "Perhaps by accepting this...we can unlock that which makes your heart ache so," Vincent said wiping a tear from Lucia's cheek, making her shiver and back off his touch had been unexpected and had produced all sorts of feelings she could not deal with, not right now, not ever if he was telling her the truth about her life, about who she was.

"Even so! I can refuse can't I?" Lucia said, even if she felt it was hopeless. Still, she thought surely there was someone more capable. Better yet, maybe Vincent would get sick of this little prank and let her go. She would even promise to not call the cops...call the cops she smirked....how could she be thinking of the real world and its surroundings as she stood here. After all, she had seen, and heard, would anything make sense ever again.

"I cannot force you to, but know there will be consequences...if we do not return to our world soon, the balance of both worlds will collide and we creatures will cease to exist," Vincent said sadly.

Lucia felt bad for him and these so-called creatures, but what about her life, her fears, why couldn't someone else do it, or better yet couldn't they just stay here.... She thought.

“I did not want to tell you this,” Vincent said picking a moonflower and placing its ghostly mirage in her hair, “But if you do not cooperate, well...the moment we vanish...remember how I said we are born of your emotions....if those emotions have nowhere to be born, whether they be anger or hate, sadness, or loneliness, you humans will be stripped of them, and made to serve those amongst us that dream of enslaving you...” Vincent said.

“Stripped of what!” Lucia said her emotions running high as she slapped his hand away. “Your feelings and emotions will be taken away, and you will turn into a mindless slave to creatures whose demonic nature will have no control here in the human world,” Vincent said keeping a safe distance he did not want to hurt her but could she really be so closed-minded, and stubborn.

And thus for a few moments there was silence they stared into a dark horizon as Lucia stood upon the precipice of an event that was now turning her world upside down, would she take the plunge....and could she trust Vincent....to be truthful and loyal...after all he was a vampire...angelic but deadly....

\*\*\*\*\* PDF Book Excerpt for reading\*\*\*\*\*

'Infernal Lover- The Dark World' is the second book of Violentt Sonatta a wonderful fantasy story. All characters are fictional. Copyright 2022 by Violentt Sonatta (Story) and Angelus design- Suncica Rodermund (book cover image). Recommended minimum age: 16 years! The book will be available soon, stay tuned...