

One

“We’ve got to get out,” I whispered. “Find an exit. Any exit. Then whistle, but softly. I’ll hear you.”

Simon, Rachelle and Chloe took off. We split up to search the factory for an exit, before Dr. Davidoff and his armed gunmen found us.

Why was the director of our group home chasing us with armed gunmen? I had no idea, but I sure as hell wasn’t going to stop to ask.

As the others ran off, I tried not to wince at the amount of noise they made. Davidoff and his guys would find us for sure. All they had to do was stop and listen.

Damn it, this shouldn’t have happened. And it wouldn’t have happened if Chloe had stuck to the plan. Sure, the reason she hadn’t stuck to it was because I’d disappeared when they’d been about to escape, and she’d found me in the middle of my first Change into a werewolf. Then we’d been spotted.

She’d stayed behind to search for me because she knew Simon wouldn’t leave otherwise, and she knew it was more important that he get away because he was the one who could find our dad, and get us out of Lyle House.

So I suppose, if I was being generous, I should say she did the smart thing, letting Simon go. I could say she did the brave thing, staying by me when she hadn't even known I was a werewolf. I could say she'd done the decent thing, insisting I come along after we'd been spotted. But I wasn't feeling generous.

If she hadn't stayed for me, Simon would be safe. And she would be safe. And I wouldn't be flipping out worrying about either of them getting shot. So as I jogged along the hall, I cursed her for a hundred kinds of stupid. It gave me something to do.

When I heard a shriek, I cursed her some more. It didn't matter that it was only a brief cry, quickly muffled.

I wheeled around the corner to see her with Simon, his arms around her, her face buried against his chest. Great. He must have surprised her. That wasn't hard. The girl could watch me changing into a wolf without flinching, but walk up behind her and she jumped like a scared rabbit. Made no sense at all. Well, maybe it did, if the girl was a necromancer, and that "person" sneaking up could be a ghost or a zombie. Again, though, I wasn't in the mood to be generous, especially not now, seeing her cuddled up against Simon. Like we had time for that.

"What happened?" I said. Before I could give her hell, she lifted her head from Simon's chest, and the horror in her eyes stopped the words in my throat.

"A ghost," she said, stepping back from Simon. "I'm sorry."

Not just a ghost. They might spook her, but she looked like she was going to be sick. I stepped forward and I wanted to ask what she'd seen, but instead I said, "I think someone heard. We gotta go."

She nodded and started to turn, then paused to stare through an open doorway. I walked over and tried to see what she was looking at. There was nothing there. Nothing I could see anyway.

“It’s repeating. Like a film loop,” she said. She turned away sharply. “Never mind. We—”

“Have to go,” I said as footsteps echoed down a distant hall.

I nudged her to get going. We started to move. Then an ear-splitting whistle rang out. Rae. Damn it. This is why I hadn’t wanted her along. Simon knew how to be careful—we’d been on the run all our lives. He might screw up now and then, but he could be managed. Chloe . . . well, she couldn’t be managed nearly as well as I’d like, but she had the sense to know when she was in over her head and listen to me. Rae seemed to think we were playing hide-and-seek here.

“Did I say softly?” I muttered.

I picked up my pace and got around the corner just in time to stop the idiot from blindly throwing open an EXIT door. I eased it open, sniffing and listening for signs that anyone was stationed on the other side.

I looked into the yard. We needed to get out of here and take cover. The nearest possibility was a warehouse. When I pointed it out, Rae looked at me like I was nuts.

“It’s a mile away,” she said.

“Quarter mile, tops. Now go. We’re right behind—” The footsteps were louder now, others joining the first pair. At least three people, all headed straight for us. “They’re coming. You guys go. I’ll distract them, then follow.”

“Uh-uh,” Simon said. “I’ve got your back. Chloe, take Rae and run.”

“That’s—” I began.

“You want distractions.” Simon cast a fog spell. “I’m your guy.” He turned to Chloe. “Go. We’ll catch up.”

Chloe hesitated. I did, too. I wanted to tell Simon to go with her, and I’m sure she wanted to say she’d stay and help. There wasn’t time to argue, though, and after a moment, we both realized that.

Chloe nodded and stepped toward the door. Rae was long gone. Surprise, surprise. There was a girl who didn’t care about anyone but herself, which was why, when I’d worried about someone getting shot, her safety hadn’t crossed my mind. I’d feel bad if she got hurt. If I saw a guy pull a gun on her right now, I’d shout a warning, maybe try to distract him. That’s it, though, and I’m not ashamed of that. It’s more than she’d do for me.

I stopped Chloe. “Get in the warehouse and don’t leave. For one hour, don’t even peek out. If we don’t come, find a place to hole up. We’ll be back.”

“Count on it,” Simon said.

“Don’t stay in the warehouse if it’s dangerous, but that’ll be our rendezvous point. Keep checking in. If you can’t stay, find a way to leave a note. We will meet you there. Got it?”

She watched me like she was committing every word to memory, but I wished I had more time. Wished I could have written it down for her. Wished I was sure that the guns and the ghost hadn’t upset her so much that she’d forget what I said the moment she walked away. I was pretty sure she wouldn’t. But I wished I could be absolutely sure.

“They must be back here,” a man yelled. “Search every room!”

I pushed Chloe toward the doorway.

Simon mouthed something to her, flashed a thumb’s up.

“Show time,” he said to me.

And Chloe ran off toward the warehouse.

Two

Simon launched a fog spell as our pursuers came around the corner. No one questioned why the hall suddenly filled with smoke. They dealt with it, muttering and coughing as they made their way through, probably figuring we'd found some chemicals in one of the rooms. Dad says if humans can explain away the supernatural, they will. I used to think that made them stupid. But it's just Occam's razor. Don't go looking for complex explanations when a simple one will do.

As they fought through the fog, it was tempting to race out the back door after the girls. Tempting, but dumb. Even if Davidoff's guys didn't see the flash of the outdoor security lights or hear the click of the door, that's the first place they'd expect us to go.

So we took off around the corner. Sure enough, a second later, Davidoff said, "There's an exit here. Mike? Sue? Go out and take a look around. I'll—"

"Move it, guys!" I said, in a whisper loud enough to make Davidoff stop. "In that room. Go!"

We ran to the nearest door as loudly as we could. Simon cast another fog spell as I opened the door, then shut it. Simon tugged off his shoes and motioned for me to do the same. I didn't need to, but I did it anyway, and we took off, running silently down the hall.

The trick didn't buy us a lot of time. We pulled it again, but after the first one, Davidoff only sent Mike—the guy with the gun—inside to check it out, while they continued on. The next time, they barely peeked in the door. The fourth time, they didn't even slow down, which was fine, because that's when we *had* ducked into the room and taken cover.

We waited until their footsteps died down in the distance, then slipped out and doubled-back. When we reached the first corner, Simon wanted to continue on the way we'd come.

"The exit's this way," he said when I balked.

"Yeah, and it's the only one we passed. Meaning they're going to make a beeline for it when they figure out we headed back."

"If we don't stand around arguing, we can make it there before they do."

"Maybe, but we won't make it to the warehouse before they can look out and see us. There's no place else we can go once we're through that door."

Simon only hesitated a second, then waved for me to lead on. I went down a side-hall, looping back toward the main doors, where we'd come in. We got to the next corner, then I heard voices and stopped Simon.

Two people I didn't recognize were speaking . . . down by the main doors. The security guard? I could talk my way past him. Well, Simon could, at least.

I peered around the corner. My night vision is good, but my regular vision isn't any different from most people's, and I had to strain to see down the lit hallway. I could make out two figures. A man and a woman. Neither was the security guard.

Simon glanced out as I pulled back.

"Can we take them?" he said.

"I don't know. Maybe if we can separate them."

The words had just left my mouth when the woman's radio squawked. She answered, and I could make out Davidoff's voice on the other end, telling them to split up—one staying to guard the main exit, the other moving to the rear one.

When I told Simon, he grinned, "Perfect timing."

We pulled back until we were sure the woman was going another way to the back exit.

"I'll take him," I whispered. "You wait here."

"I can—"

"No."

He glared at me, but that was it. So much easier than dealing with Chloe. She'd have insisted on doing something, like causing a distraction while I snuck up on the guy. Sure, that would be a good idea, but then I'd be worried about it backfiring. If someone had to take a risk, it should be me. It just made things easier.

While Simon didn't argue, he didn't retreat either, but stood guard, ready to interfere if things went wrong. I waited until the guy turned his back, then crept along the hall, ready to charge if he turned—

He took a step forward, and as he did, he passed under one of the dimmed security lights. In his hand, I saw a gun. A pistol.

I froze. The guy outside—Mike—had been carrying a gun. He'd shot at me. Even hit me. But it was only a tranquillizer dart, and with my werewolf blood, it had only made me a little drowsy. That had been a rifle, though. This was not a rifle.

Was it still just a tranquillizer? Probably not. Still, there was a chance I could get to him before he used it. Even if he did, his first shot would go wild, and the chances of it being fatal seemed small.

I took a step. Something caught my jacket and I whirled to see Simon there. He pointed and mouthed, “He’s got a gun.” I nodded and waved him back around the corner. For a second, he just stared at me, like I obviously hadn’t heard. When he realized I had, his face hardened and he yanked on my shirt, and from the look in his eye, I knew he wasn’t kidding. Either I followed him or he wasn’t leaving.

I followed him.

“He has a *gun*,” Simon whispered when we were out of hearing range. “What the hell were you thinking? That your odds were decent enough to give it a shot?”

Good guess. I didn’t say that. I saw how it looked from his point of view. Risky and stupid, and exactly the kind of thing I’d give him shit for. It wasn’t like that, but once I was around the corner and my pulse slowed, adrenaline ebbing, I realized it hadn’t been a good idea. If that gun had fired—even if the shot missed me—Simon would have come out of hiding and caught the next bullet.

We retreated and started going through rooms, looking for one with a door or window. If there were, though, we weren’t finding them, and if we kept trying, we’d run into Davidoff and his team.

We’d already had two near misses so far, and the factory wasn’t that big. I was sure we’d already been in every room, probably some twice, and if I’d been thinking clearly, I’d have done it systematically. But I wasn’t thinking straight. I was worrying about Simon and worrying about Chloe. I’d sent her into that warehouse, thinking it was safe because we’d be right behind them. Only we weren’t and now I wasn’t sure how safe it was, or even if they’d already been caught. I should have come up with a better plan. She’d trusted me and I’d be responsible if she’d been captured.

We'd found one door that led up. No idea where it went, but it seemed like our best bet. As it turned out, though, the door didn't lead anywhere. Anywhere useful, at least. It went up into some kind of storage space. Whatever it was supposed to store, though, no one seemed to bother anymore, probably because it was hot as hell and stunk of bat shit.

"That's good, right?" Simon said when I told him what we were smelling.

If he meant it was better than rats, I wasn't telling him I could smell those, too. I just grunted and said, "If you can stand the smell, we should stay up here."

"Um, why?" When I started to say it was the best hideout place we'd found so far, he said, "Guano, bro? Bat shit means bats? Bats mean there's a way out." He thumped me on the back. "You're the science guy, aren't you?"

"Yeah, I'm just—"

"Freaked out and not thinking straight. And, yes, just because a bat can get in, doesn't mean we can get out. Those things can crawl under doors. Still, a lot of bat shit means a lot of bats."

Which meant, presumably, an easy way in, not just a crack in the roof. As I started moving, Simon grabbed my arm.

"You can see, right?"

"Yeah." I paused. "Which means there's some source of light up here."

We moved around, Simon holding my shirt until he could see enough to move, too, which meant we were getting closer to the light.

We moved past a bunch of support beams, and I saw it—a broken vent on the ceiling. The light seeping in wasn't from the moon though. It was the gray light of dawn.

I thought of Chloe hiding in the warehouse. It felt like she'd only left a few minutes ago. Had it been an hour? More? Damn it. I should have been keeping track. I would have, too, if I had my watch on.

"What's wrong?" Simon asked.

"Nothing."

An hour was nothing, when you came down to it. For all the girls knew, we'd taken off out another door and were hiding, waiting until the coast was clear. Chloe would wait. It was Rae I was worried about, but if she'd stayed an hour, she'd stay longer. No need to rush now, and it was better if we didn't. Take it slow and careful.

Three

The hole was big enough to let Simon through. When I ripped off the rest of the vent, it was big enough for me, too. I stuck my head out and looked out at the nearly flat roof.

I hoisted Simon through. “Don’t—”

“—stand up and call attention to myself. I know.” *I’m not a moron*, his look added. He always took stuff like that the wrong way. Chloe, too. If I give them a friendly suggestion, it’s just because I’m making sure they know what to do, not because I presume they don’t.

Sure, Simon would say if it was a friendly suggestion, I should make it sound a little friendlier. I can never remember that part, though. To me, the instruction is important, not the way it’s worded. Would he want to get shot because he stood up while I was asking him to please be careful and not stand up?

I crawled through. We were near the front of the building. As we crouched there, a truck rolled up to the gates. I grabbed Simon’s arm to tug him back. He gave me another look, one that pointed out that he hadn’t been going anywhere.

I held him still beside me as the truck stopped. A heavysset man got out, unlocked the big gates and pushed them back. Then he got back in his truck and parked it in the employee lot.

“The factory’s opening for the day,” Simon said with a grin. “We did it. If employees are arriving, you can bet Davidoff and his guys are leaving.”

“It’s Sunday,” I said.

“So? Overtime.”

I wasn’t so sure. The man looked like an employee—who else would be opening the gates?—but still . . .

“Let’s go get Chloe and Rae,” Simon said, rising into a crouch.

“Not yet.”

“What?”

“Just hold on.”

“Hold on? We’ve been gone over an hour. We need to—”

“They’ll be fine.”

“Yeah? Are you sure?”

I wasn’t, and that bugged me. I didn’t trust Rae to stay in the warehouse, and I knew Chloe wouldn’t let her leave by herself. I still wasn’t sure she’d heard my instructions. I was pissed off with myself for not making sure. I was pissed off with Simon for agreeing to let Rae come along. I was pissed off with Chloe for not leaving me at Lyle House when I told her to.

“She was supposed to go with you,” I said. “That was the plan. She screwed up the plan.”

“Excuse me? Are you saying Chloe deserves to get caught because she stayed behind to make sure you were okay?”

“Course not. But if she’d followed the plan, none of this—”

“—would have happened? How the hell do you know that? In fact, I’m sure it had nothing to do with you two being spotted by Gill, because those guys were on our tails as soon as Rae and I got here. No way they had time to assemble a team that fast.”

“Okay, but still—”

“But still it’s her fault. Somehow, some way, it’s Chloe’s fault because it’s always Chloe’s fault.”

“I never—”

“What the hell is your problem with her anyway? In the last few days, she’s learned she’s a necromancer. She’s discovered there’s a whole supernatural world out there. And she’s adjusted. I couldn’t have done that. I’d be useless. Freaked out and in total denial.”

“She’s doing good. I said that this morning.”

“To me. Not to her.” He shook his head. “Never mind. Whatever your problem with Chloe—”

“I don’t have a problem with Chloe. You’re right. If we can get to her, we should. As soon as possible.”

Only we couldn’t. When we got to the rear of the roof, we saw Davidoff and Mrs. Talbot—the head nurse from Lyle House—conferring. Right in the path we’d need to take to get to the warehouse. I surveyed the back lot for another route around, but any way we went, we’d cross that path.

“That employee showed up so they cleared out of the building,” Simon said. “Now they’re trying to figure out what to do. Take off? Or tell the factory guys and say we’re runaways, ask them to help look for us.”

“We have to wait it out.”

He looked toward the warehouse, and I knew he was worried about Chloe. After a second, he shook it off.

“You’re right,” he said. “She’s fine. We told her to wait, so she’ll wait, and if that’s not safe, she’ll find a new spot to hide and come back. We have a plan. She’ll stick to it.”

We tried to find a vantage point where we could watch the warehouse, in case Chloe and Rachelle left it. But there was no safe spot with a perfect view.

After a few minutes, we couldn’t even see Davidoff and Talbot. They’d moved toward the exit door. Had they gone back inside? Or were they standing guard under the overhang? I couldn’t see them and they were too far away for me to hear. So we waited.

Would Chloe wait for us? When it came down to it, who were we to her? Just a couple of guys she met a week ago. Guys who’d helped her figure out what she was and promised help with that, but still damned close to strangers.

And who was Chloe to me? Someone I’d taken advantage of. Someone I’d helped because she was the key to getting Simon out of Lyle House. At least, that’s how it started.

Chloe came to Lyle House a week ago. The nurses announced it by saying there was a new girl, so we had to clear out. Or the others had to clear out. I wasn’t allowed to leave. I was too

dangerous. In January, I'd thrown a kid against a wall and broken his back. That started the chain of events that led to our father disappearing, and Simon and me coming to Lyle House.

I could argue that the kid had been going after Simon with a knife. I could argue that I hadn't thrown him very hard. I could argue that I hadn't meant to hurt him, and that everyone misunderstood because they didn't know I had super-strength. But *I* knew I had super-strength, so I should have been more careful.

Enough about that. The new girl came. I was there. If it had been Simon, he'd have gone downstairs to introduce himself, make her feel welcome. I didn't leave my room. Didn't even sneak out for a look at her. Not important. Didn't care.

I only started to care when Simon did. When he met her in the kitchen, he'd flirted with her, then after we left, he said she was cute. I hadn't noticed that. I did notice the glitter in his eyes when he said it, and that's when I started paying attention.

Simon liked girls. Always had. They liked him back. When we came to Lyle House, though, that changed. They still liked him—one in particular, Tori, made an idiot of herself falling over him. But he wasn't interested. He said that's because, if they were at Lyle House, they had problems and he didn't want to take advantage of them, but while I'm sure that was a factor, the truth is that Simon had changed. Withdrawn. He barely ever took out his sketchpad and he was never more than politely friendly to the girls.

So when he said he thought Chloe was cute, I knew something had changed. Not that he'd found the girl of his dreams, but that he was finally getting back to himself. Waking up. And when he did, I could convince him to leave and find our dad.

Then came a lucky break I couldn't have imagined. Over lunch, Tori told us why Chloe was at Lyle House. Because she saw ghosts. That got my attention so fast I almost choked on my casserole. I looked up, and when I saw the horror in Chloe's eyes, I knew Tori was right.

I don't know much about schizophrenia, but I'd read a little on it when I did a project on dopamine receptors. Some schizophrenics have auditory and visual hallucinations. They really believe they're hearing and seeing these things. So if you were schizophrenic, wouldn't you admit to "seeing ghosts" and figure everyone else was a moron for missing them?

It wasn't a perfect theory. It bore investigation, though. When Chloe stayed in the basement to fold laundry, I snuck down. I caught her talking to a ghost, and I knew from her reaction that she wasn't schizophrenic. She was a necromancer.

I couldn't have asked for a better stroke of luck. Simon finally liked a girl again, and she was a supernatural. She needed help. Our help. Or, in this case, *his* help. Chloe was tiny and cute and shy, just the kind of girl to bring out Simon's inner knight-in-shining armor. He could help her, and all he had to do was take her out of Lyle House and find our dad.

So I used her. Chloe wasn't dumb, though. She figured it out. She confronted me, and when I admitted it, she still agreed to go along with everything because she knew it was the best choice. That's when I started noticing her as more than just the girl who could help us get out of Lyle House. That's when I started seeing her as a person. And, unfortunately, that's when I started feeling responsible for her.

I'd used Chloe, and I felt bad about that, but she seemed to have gotten over it. I'd helped her contact some ghosts and she'd helped me with my Change. What if now, though, she was thinking back on my scheme and wondering if I really *did* plan to come back for her? Why not just get Simon out of danger and just keep going without a backward glance?

I wouldn't do that, not now, after I started feeling responsible for her. But she had no way of knowing that. No reason not to leave.

It was nearly another hour before we were sure Davidoff and the others had left. By then, more employees had arrived and no one was scouring the yard searching for us, which seemed to mean we were alone. Still, we were careful getting off the roof and we took the long route to the warehouse, cutting behind parked tractor trailers.

Once inside, Simon couldn't resist a loudly whispered, "Chloe? Rae?"

I didn't shush him. I was hoping for an answer as much as he was. When it didn't come, he said, "Probably can't hear us. Let's start looking."

We found the front door easily, and from there, I followed the trail to the spot where they had been hiding. Had been. Past tense. It was empty.

Four

Although Chloe and Rachelle were gone, their scents were strong, meaning they hadn't left long ago. Also meaning they'd been in here when we'd been on the roof and I'd decided it wasn't safe to get to them. Damn it.

"They might have just changed spots," Simon said.

I followed the trail to an open window at the back. I went through it.

"So they found a better spot," Simon said. "No problem. We just keep tracking them."

When we got near the gate, we could see a security guard manning it. I decided we really didn't want to explain why we were *leaving* the factory yard on a Sunday morning. So we went down the fence to a spot I thought was far enough.

Simon had just gotten a hand and foothold when someone shouted, "Hey!" and I looked over to see the guard and another guy running toward us.

Simon glanced down at me. I looked at the men. The guard was heavysset, puffing as he ran. The other guy was younger, but dressed in a suit. Neither seemed to be carrying a gun.

"Go," I said. "I'm right behind you."

We climbed. I swung over the top just as Simon was reaching it. His backpack was weighing him down so I told him to pass it over.

He heaved it off his shoulder. As he did, the guard shouted again. Simon's foot slipped. The bag fell.

"Your insulin," I said.

"Just the back-up."

I didn't care. I'd feel safer with that back-up.

"Go," I said. "I'll get—"

He grabbed my arm as I started over. "No."

I glanced at the men. The guard was fumbling to pull out his gun. I took one last look at the bag, then helped Simon over and we climbed down.

We found a place to hide and watch, but there was no sign of pursuit. Just a couple of factory employees, then. The guard doing his job in front of one of his bosses.

Still we waited until I was sure no one was coming after us. Then I followed Chloe's trail from the factory yard. It led to a street over from Lyle House. I knew where she was heading—the commercial area we'd checked out the night before. Smart. Good. Get something to eat. Now that it was daylight, they wouldn't look out of place.

They hadn't gone into a shop for a candy bar, though. They'd gone to a payphone.

"Shit," Simon said. "Who'd they call? Try— No, there isn't a redial button. Shit!"

The trail left the payphone, went to the corner and stopped.

Simon swore some more. We both knew what this meant. They'd called someone to come and get them. But who?

I went back to the phone and sniffed around. It can be tough sorting out scents, but it seemed that Chloe was the one who'd used it.

When I told Simon this, I said, "She must have called her dad."

He shook his head. "Her aunt. Her dad's never around. He went back overseas as soon as he got her into Lyle House. There's a housekeeper, but she doesn't like Chloe very much. Chloe won't go there."

I hadn't known that. I felt like I should have known it. But we hadn't talked much about personal stuff. That's the kind of thing you do with someone you expect to be your friend or your boyfriend. Someone like Simon. Not someone like me.

"Do you know her aunt's name?"

"Lauren Fellows. She's a doctor. Look up Dr. Fellows." He paused as he caught my expression. "Derek?"

"Nothing. Just . . . The name sounds familiar."

"Probably because you heard them use it at the house. She's the one who came to get Chloe for breakfast that day."

"Right."

Only it sounded *more* familiar. Dr. Fellows. I must have known someone with that name once. Maybe a doctor we'd seen in a town we'd lived in. It wasn't important. What mattered was that Chloe had called someone who might send her right back to Lyle House. We had to find her before that happened.

There was only one problem. We couldn't get a home address for Lauren Fellows. The number for her in the phone book was her professional one, ringing through to her office in a medical clinic. I should have known that. Dad used to say we didn't need to worry about

anyone thinking it was suspicious that they couldn't find us in a phonebook. As a lawyer, he was unlikely to have his home number in there anyway—he wouldn't risk getting a surprise visit from someone who didn't like the case Dad mounted against him. With doctors, you'd probably get patients calling you at all hours or showing up on your doorstep with a strange rash.

We tried getting a phone number from her clinic. Simon figured if he did that, he might be able to convince the phone company to part with an address. Normally, he's really good at getting people to do stuff like that. Not this time. Dr. Fellows' after-hours staff knew better than to give out anything, no matter how charming Simon was.

"Okay," Simon said when we finally gave up. "If she went to her aunt, they'd take her to Lyle House, right? So that's where we go."

Returning to the place we'd just escaped? Was he crazy? Luckily, I thought about it before I said that.

Returning to the place we'd just escaped *was* crazy, which meant no one would expect it. If they were staking out places for us to go, they'd be at bus terminals and train stations. They wouldn't be at Lyle House.

In fact, no one was at Lyle House. We crept through the yard behind it, until we could see that all the windows were dark. The morning sun beat down on the cold ground, leaving a layer of thin fog. Simon used that cover and added his own fog, so he could get closer to the house.

"Empty," he said when he came back. "That must mean they only had Tori left, so they moved her to another home. They didn't catch Chloe and Rae."

"Or they did, which is why they moved them *all* to another home."

"I liked my explanation better."

“I know. You could be right. If Tori was the only one left, I bet they didn’t move her, though. They let her go home. Reward for turning us in.”

“What?” He hunkered down beside me as we crouched behind the neighbor’s shed.

“You said those guys came after you right away. There wasn’t time for Gill to notify them after she saw us. And what the hell *was* Gill doing at the house anyway? She must have been called in *because* we took off. So how did they know we took off?”

Simon nodded. “Because Tori overheard us making plans and warned them. Bitch. What difference would it make to her if we got away? Hell, you think she’d be happy to have the whole house to herself.”

“Better to negotiate her own release with the information.”

“Bitch.” He glanced at me. “So what’s the plan?”

“First step is getting you some food.” I cut off his protest. “You need your shot and if you have your shot, you need food. We need to try finding Dad and try finding Chloe. That’s going to keep us busy. We’ll start with breakfast.”

Five

We had two ways to find our father: natural and supernatural. Natural meant hunting for him the way anyone else would. By computer. Supernatural meant using a spell dad taught Simon.

The question, then, was that if Simon had this magical spell, why hadn't he used it when our dad first went missing, before we got locked up in Lyle House. He'd tried. It hadn't worked. At the time, that hadn't surprised me. Even Dad had trouble with the spell.

After a few months in Lyle House, that excuse had faded, overtaken by another one—that for it to work, both people needed to be in relatively close proximity. It hadn't worked while we were at home and in Albany because Dad hadn't been there. Here, though, we had a shot.

Why would Dad be in Buffalo? First, if he'd been kidnapped by the same people we'd been running from, then they were based in Buffalo, so they'd bring him here. Second, if Dad had been taken by someone else and gotten free, he might have realized we'd be brought back to Buffalo, since that's where we'd disappeared from ten years ago. So he'd be looking for us here.

Was either of these a perfect explanation? Hell, no. They weren't even all that plausible. But when you've spent months locked up, having no idea what happened to your father and what

will happen to you, you start grasping at straws. You just don't realize it until you're outside those walls and faced with the cold reality that you really don't have a clue what you're doing.

My plan was to travel from library to library. While Simon wandered outside, casting his spell, I'd search on the computer for anything about our dad. Changing locations helped Simon. It helped me, too. There's a limit on how long you can take up a library computer. With some people they don't notice if you've been there a while. With me, they do. And they're usually quick to tell me to move along, probably shutting down the computer afterward to check for leftover links to porn sites and bomb recipes.

So we moved around. Spent all day moving around, casting and searching. It wasn't just my dad I was hunting for. I'd told Simon I was looking for Chloe, and I was. It just wasn't as easy as it was with my dad, where I could search on his aliases, looking for any recent hits. With Chloe, I was hunting for either her dad's or her aunt's.

I couldn't get one for Dr. Fellows, but with some detective work, I figured out a way to track down Chloe's.

I knew her mother was dead. Simon said it had been a hit-and-run when Chloe was five or six. Combine that with knowing her maiden name—Fellows—and it was easy to pull up the news of her death.

I read the article. I didn't need to—I only needed her dad's name, and that was right there, along with his company. I even felt like I shouldn't be reading it. If Chloe wanted me to know how her mom died, she'd have told me. But I figured she hadn't volunteered the information to Simon either. Her mother's death must have come up in conversation and he'd asked about it. She obviously didn't mind telling him, so she'd tell me too, if I asked. That justified reading the article. Kind of.

There wasn't much to read. It was your typical senseless tragedy, probably caused by someone downing a few too many before getting behind the wheel. Chloe's parents were heading home after a date night. Their car was hit by someone running a red. The other vehicle collided with the passenger side, killing Chloe's mother. Her father escaped with minor injuries.

Chloe hadn't been in the car. That was good. I didn't like to think of her being there, witnessing it. I wouldn't like to think of anyone witnessing the death of a parent, but, well . . . I was glad she hadn't been there.

I figured the driver hadn't been caught. I couldn't help checking, though. When I ran a search, I didn't find any news of an arrest. But I found something else. An article from her mom's home town, mentioning the death and mentioning another tragedy in the family—her mother's twin brother, Ben. He'd died at the age of nineteen. He'd fallen from a building, and friends reported mood changes in the last few years, but there must not have been enough evidence to support a finding of suicide, because the paper called it an accident.

I only needed to flip to the original article to know what happened to Ben Fellows. In it, his friends had reported that he'd been withdrawn for a few years, changed plans for college, often seemed anxious, jumpy and just “out of it.”

Necromancy runs in families. Reading this, I knew it came from Chloe's mother's side, and that her twin brother had inherited the genes.

Had he given up trying to deal with ghosts and killed himself? Gone up there to escape one and fallen? Been lured to the roof and over the edge?

"Find anything?" Simon whispered.

I alt-tabbed fast to hide the screen. "Got her dad's name and his business. I should be able to get a home address from that."

"Good. The librarian is checking her watch. I'll distract her until you're done."

I didn't ask if he'd gotten any feedback from his spell. If he'd had, he'd have said so.

When he was gone, I skimmed the article again. I wasn't telling him about it. No point. If—*when*—we found Chloe, I wasn't telling her either. Again, what was the point? To scare her? She had enough to worry about.

I searched on Steven Saunders and his business name. It took a while to dig up a current address, but I finally found one. That would be our next stop.

Six

It was evening now. We'd spent all day touring libraries only to end up here, at the foot of an apartment building.

"It's the penthouse suite," Simon said, looking up. "That's at the top, right?"

"Usually."

"Then forget peeking in windows. Penthouse means it's the only apartment on the floor, too, doesn't it?"

"Usually."

"Damn."

"For once, you're going to need to take the slow, steady route—"

"Never." He walked into the lobby and randomly hit buttons until someone buzzed us in.

Then he looked back at me. "Coming?"

I shook my head and followed.

We went up the stairs. It was a long walk.

"No wonder Chloe stays so skinny," Simon said as we hit the eighteenth floor. "Taking the stairs every day? Even just going down? Hell of a workout."

"How do you know she takes the stairs down?"

He shrugged. "She mentioned it."

When? I wanted to say. *How come I've spent more time alone with her, yet you know all this stuff that I don't. What kind of conversations were you two having that she just happens to mention her dead mother and taking the stairs every morning.*

Personal conversations. Real conversations. When I was with Chloe, we only seemed to discuss whatever was going on at the moment. Talking to dead people. Fighting zombies. Reburying their corpses. Sure, when you're in the middle of changing into a wolf or fleeing from guys with guns, it doesn't leave a lot of time to talk about your favorite snack food, but still . . .

"You like Chloe, don't you?" Simon said as I followed him up the stairs.

I stumbled over a step. "What? No. Course not."

"I thought you did. You guys get along. Most of the time anyway. Even when you don't, you seem to like her well enough."

"Oh, you mean—? Sure, I like her well enough. Better than the other girls you've gone out with."

"Which is my point. You didn't want anything to do with them. It's different with Chloe. She's different. *It's different, you know?*"

"You really like her."

"I do. I mean sure, I've liked a lot of girls and you probably think this is just the same thing. But it's not. I like being with her. Hanging out with her. Talking to her. Getting to know her. Not that I didn't want to get to know the other girls, but I really want to this time. I'm not just asking questions to make conversation. She's different and she's interesting, and she doesn't know she is and that's . . ." He glanced back at me. "I'm glad you two seem to get along." He grinned. "A nice change."

I nodded and waved for less talking and more climbing.

When we reached the top, we found a door that seemed to automatically lock from the outside. You could get *into* the stairwell from the hall outside Chloe's apartment, but couldn't get into that hall from the stairwell. Made sense, security-wise. Would have made more sense if the lock couldn't be snapped by one good wrench of super-strength.

There were three doors in the hall: the stairs, the elevator and the penthouse. I walked to the last and crouched, hoping to pick up Chloe's scent. It was there, all right. Everywhere. None of it seemed recent, but I couldn't tell for sure.

While I hid inside the stairwell—the door slightly ajar so I could peek out—Simon rapped on the penthouse door.

A middle-aged woman with bright red hair answered the door. She looked Simon up and down.

"How did—?"

Simon cut her short by holding out his hand. "I'm Tad. I go to school with Chloe. You must be Annette."

"How did you get up here?"

"I buzzed, but no one answered, so I came up the stairs. Yep, it's a long climb."

She glanced toward the stairwell. "You aren't supposed to be—"

"Is Chloe here? I haven't seen her at school for over a week. No one seems to know where she is. I texted her, but she didn't get back to me. I wanted to ask her to the dance next week, and I, uh, well, I hope that's not why she's avoiding me . . ." He gave a small laugh.

"Chloe's not here. She's in the hospital."

"Really? Geez, I didn't know. Which one is it? I'll go visit her."

"I don't think—"

"You can ask her first, make sure it's okay. I'm not trying to bug her. I just— Can you tell her Tad Simon came by, he's worried about her and he'd really like to see her?"

The housekeeper said she'd let Chloe know, then retreated into the penthouse.

Simon joined me in the stairwell. "I don't think she's there. If she was, she'd have heard me. If the housekeeper knows where she is, hopefully she'll give Chloe the message and she'll understand it."

"She'll understand it."

Simon exhaled. "I know. And— Shit! The rendezvous point. We need to check—"

"I was waiting for sundown. We'll go now and leave a note telling them when we'll be back."

"Good idea."

Like the stairs, you could access the elevator from the penthouse—you just couldn't ride up to the elevator to the penthouse without a key or a code. So we went down the elevator. As we got off, we brushed past a man waiting to get on, cell phone to his ear, suitcase rolling behind him.

I caught a whiff of a vaguely familiar scent. I turned, but the man was already walking onto the elevator, still talking.

“—me, Lauren. Again. Don’t play this game. I came back early to see my daughter. I planned to surprise her at Lyle House, but she’s not there. No one’s there.”

I turned sharply and caught a glimpse of Chloe’s father just as the elevator doors started to shut.

“If they had to move the kids, someone should have notified me,” he continued. “I’m her father, as much as you—”

The elevator doors closed. Simon spun as he picked up the last bit of the message.

“Shit. Was that—?”

“Her dad. He just got back to find Lyle House empty. He’s trying to contact her aunt.”

“Then we have to—”

I pulled him back as he strode toward the stairs. “We can’t. Whatever you’re thinking, we can’t do it. He’s going to raise hell about her being gone. If her aunt sent her back, she’ll tell him, but she’s obviously not returning his calls. Which seems weird.”

“They don’t get along.”

“Huh?”

“Her dad and her aunt don’t get along. She wanted to take custody of Chloe after her mom died. Her father wouldn’t give her up. Her aunt thinks she’s being neglected, with her dad gone all the time. Chloe doesn’t seem neglected, though.”

Just because you had nice clothes and enough to eat and no one beat you every night didn’t mean you weren’t neglected. I knew that from my life in the lab, before I went to live with Simon and our dad. Still, it was obvious Chloe’s father loved her, even if he wasn’t very good at being there for her. I just hoped that he didn’t get so worried that he did something stupid. Something that could piss off the people chasing us . . . and make things even worse.

Seven

After dark, we went back to the factory warehouse. Simon had bought a pad of paper, pencils and a marker, so we could leave a note. A scrap of paper and a cheap pen would have been enough, but Simon had lost his sketch pad with his backpack, and I felt bad about that. I was worried about him, too. He was acting fine—good spirits, chatting away, full of energy. With Simon, though, that can be a sign he's stressed, the extra liveliness coming from nervous energy. Art would calm him down.

What I had in mind, though, was some quiet drawing after we'd found a place to spend the night. Not while we were in the warehouse, me guarding the door as he prepared a message.

"Are you almost done?" I said, walking back to where I'd left him.

He was crouched in front of a crate. On it, he was sketching one of his comic book characters.

Without turning, he said, "No, I did not think this was a good time to engage in a little creative graffiti. There are too many places in here to stick a note, especially if we don't want the bad guys finding it. I figured I'd mark this box and put the note underneath."

I pointed at the drawing. "Will Chloe know you did that?"

"I hope so. She's seen my sketches. We talked about it."

Exactly how much time had Simon and Chloe spent chatting at Lyle House? It hadn't seemed like much. It *couldn't* have been much. But apparently they'd said a lot in it.

He continued drawing. “You might want to go back on guard. I’m almost done this, but I still need to do the note.”

How long would it take to write a couple lines? I decided not to ask. He was happy and calming down, even if this wasn’t quite what I had in mind.

When he did call me back, I found more sketches, these on the message paper. A picture of a ghost, then the Terminator, then a lightning bolt with fog.

“Okay,” I said. “You decorated it. Nice. Now add the message.”

“This is the message.” He pointed to the three pictures in sequence. “Chloe. I’ll be back. Simon. That way, anyone accidentally finding the note won’t understand it. But Chloe will. She’ll get the Terminator reference because—”

“She loves movies.” That much I knew about her. Of course, so did everyone else at Lyle House. “It’s a good idea but . . .” I took the pencil and added in big block letters 10AM.

“Hey!” Simon said, snatching the paper back.

“She needs to know *when* to meet us,” I said.

“You just ruined—”

“It’s fine. I’m sure she’ll still cherish it forever.”

I took the paper, folded it in half, set it on a crate, then put the illustrated one on top, and led him out again.

I found us an alley to sleep in. I wanted better, but I’d let it go too long and night had already fallen. Simon was fine with the alley. I vowed I’d find a better place tomorrow.

I doubted I'd sleep. I didn't plan to. But I did. Slept in even, jumping up at nine-thirty, cursing, then shaking Simon awake.

It wasn't quite ten when we made it to the factory yard. There was no sign of Chloe. No scent of her either, or any indication she'd been here since we'd left. The note was exactly where I'd put it. We waited until eleven. I wanted to stay longer, but Simon had to eat.

I should have had the foresight to grab breakfast before we settled in for the night. I'd bought juice in case Simon woke up with low blood sugar, but having breakfast for him would have been smart, so he didn't get off his schedule. And my stomach would have appreciated it.

We hit the first convenience store. I waited outside because I'd forgotten to buy something else yesterday. Deodorant. If you're trying not to leave an impression on strangers, smelling like you spent the last week sleeping in an alley is not the way to do it.

We'd eaten dinner at a fast food place last night, and washed up there, like I had that morning, too. For Simon, that worked fine. As for me, let's just say everyone giving me wide berth wasn't just being polite.

While Simon shopped, I mentally made a list of other things we needed to buy. Backpacks. Clothes. More food.

As I compiled my mental list, I glanced in the store window for Simon and my gaze snagged on the display of newspapers. At first, I wasn't sure what caught my attention, but when I looked again, I saw a photo on the front of the local paper. Chloe's photo. Under the headline "Local Teen Missing. \$500,000 Reward."

Simon was approaching the counter, his arms loaded with food. I opened the door and waved for him to get a paper. He frowned. Then he saw the headline. He grabbed one.

There was a park a few doors down. Well, not really a park, but a spot where a building had been torn down and someone had planted grass and flowers to help cover the scars. There were a lot of scars in Buffalo. Too many torn-down buildings. Too many buildings that should be torn down. Which meant I shouldn't have trouble finding a place to spend the night if I started early enough.

Tonight was a long way off, though. Right now, the big concern lay on my lap. A front page article on Chloe's disappearance. Her dad was offering a half-million dollar reward for her return. Exactly the kind of stupid thing I'd been afraid he'd do.

"It's not stupid," Simon said as he tested his blood sugar. "He's really worried about her and he's doing everything he can to find her."

"Which is only going to freak out the people looking for her. They'll step up their efforts to find her, then make sure her dad never does."

"He doesn't know that."

"But he should know that this is only going to hamper an investigation. The cops won't have time to look for Chloe. They'll be too busy processing leads from everyone who spots a blond or red-haired girl on the street. I bet his lawyer advised him against this. I bet the cops did, too."

"He's worried. He's not thinking straight. He wants to use whatever he has to get Chloe back and what he has is money. It's a poor choice, but it's not stupid."

That was splitting hairs. I didn't argue, though. The point was that the whole city knew we'd disappeared.

When I said that, Simon shook his head and pointed farther down in the article, past where I'd read so far.

"They only know Chloe has," he said. "There's nothing in here about any of—"

He stopped. I kept reading.

"Rachelle Rodgers?" I said. "The police interviewed Rae?"

"Could they fake that?" Simon asked. "Maybe Dr. Davidoff let them interview Tori and had her say she was Chloe's roommate, Rae?"

"Too risky. They could just have Tori talk to the cops as herself, claim she was friends with Chloe. Dr. Davidoff has Rae, and he's made her say that Chloe ran away from Lyle House. Let's just hope that doesn't mean he has Chloe, too."

Eight

The rest of the day passed. It didn't pass slowly. It didn't pass quickly. It just went. Twelve hours of wasted time during which we discovered absolutely nothing. I searched for Dad on more computers, as if being in a different library would make new information magically appear. Simon cast his spell, as if his complete lack of success meant he just needed to keep trying. We took a trip back to Chloe's apartment, as if she'd just casually show up at home when the whole city was searching for her.

I should have written 10 AM and PM on that note. Stopped by twice a day. I'd change it when we went back in the morning.

One thing we didn't discuss was how long we'd keep going back. Until the news said she'd been found, I guess. Not exactly a smart plan, but I was too frustrated to come up with another one. Tomorrow. Maybe.

I found us a better place for the night. A small abandoned building with only rats in residence. The rats would clear out when they smelled me. I couldn't say as much for the dead guy I faintly smelled in another room. I'd just need to make sure Simon didn't go wandering.

We got up at seven the next morning, before Simon's watch alarm went off. We headed to a nearby donut place for breakfast. Not what Simon should be eating, and I made him have a yogurt along with half a donut and a carton of milk. It was good to sit inside, though, after

another cold night. Good to have a bathroom to clean up in, too. We ate and washed, then headed out.

We got to the factory yard early. I didn't want to go in too soon, so I found us a place by some other industrial buildings just outside the factory fence. We were waiting there when a scent passed on the breeze and made me jerk up from my thoughts.

"Smell someone?" Simon said.

"I think that guard's walking around," I lied. "Hold on."

I tried to walk casually to the end of the building. I couldn't. I practically jogged there, inhaling as I went, searching for that scent.

Not a guard's. Hers. Chloe's.

I leaned around the end of the building and took a deep breath. Took two or three. But it was no use. Whatever I'd smelled wasn't in the air. It had just flitted past on a breeze and I couldn't catch it again.

Had I smelled it at all? I wasn't sure. After all, I had been thinking about her. Not *her*, not like *that*. Just the general situation that involved her. So I might have imagined her scent. Which was why I wasn't telling Simon and getting his hopes up. But I wasn't ignoring it, either. If there was a chance—however slight—that Chloe was out here, I needed to find her.

I told Simon that the guard seemed to be patrolling near the warehouse, and I thought I might have seen a cop, too, so I needed a better look, and to find an alternative way in.

I found Chloe's scent just outside the fence around front. A fresh scent. She was here.

Then I caught another girl's scent. Tori? Shit. What was she doing here?

A vehicle turned from a side street, heading this way. A dark blue SUV, just like the one that Chloe and I escaped the other night.

I looked around. I couldn't make it through the factory gates before it reached the corner. I shouldn't even head for the factory if it could be the same vehicle.

I ran across the road, and hunkered behind a bush. Then I caught a scent in the breeze. A strong scent. Her scent. She was here.

I leaped over a chain link fence into a backyard and, with my ears tuned to the slowly approaching SUV, I followed Chloe's scent over the rear fence and then . . .

Then she was there. Ten feet away. Behind a shed, leaning out to look at the street. Through the bushes, I could see the SUV coming. She'd spotted it, and that was good, she was doing the right thing, but I still felt this overwhelming urge to give her shit. Tell her off for not paying complete attention to her surroundings and letting me get this close without her even noticing I was there.

I'd finally found her, and she was safe, and she was trying to stay safe, and all I could think about was giving her shit? I don't know why. I just know that, standing there, looking at her, I was feeling relieved and I was feeling happy, and I was feeling other things, and the best way to deal with all that seemed to be to tell her off.

As I watched through the bushes, the SUV made a right at the next corner, and headed along the side of the factory yard. Chloe waited until it had disappeared, then started stepping out. When I moved forward, my shadow crossed the shed and she finally noticed me. She started to spin and lifted her fists. Good instinct, but a little late. I already had her around the waist and was pulling her behind the shed, with my other hand over her mouth.

I bent to whisper, "It's me," and let her go.

She spun and there was this grin on her face, and I knew it was just relief at finding us, but whatever I'd been going to say died in my throat and I stood there, staring, as she grinned up at me, looking like she was going to hug me or something. A scowl checked that impulse.

"I am so glad to see you," she said.

I snorted and looked away as I waved her behind the shed. She followed, then grinned up at me again, bouncing on the balls of her feet.

"I am so glad—"

"Got that," I said. "Stop bouncing, Chloe, and stand still before they see you."

"They're gone. That's why—" As she looked behind me, she stopped smiling. "Where's Simon? H-He's okay isn't he? I tried to hurry." She tugged his insulin pouch from her pocket. "I know he needs this."

Simon. That's why she was grinning and bouncing. She thought Simon was here. As soon as she realized he wasn't . . . No more grinning. No more bouncing. No more "I'm so glad to see you."

"That's his backup," I said. "He had another one in his pocket. He's fine."

"Oh. Right. Um, good. So where—?"

"Around back. I smelled Tori so I thought it was a trap and—"

"Tori! Her mom— The car— We have to warn her."

"What?"

"She— No time."

Chloe took off through the yard. I stood there, trying to decipher what she'd just said. Something about warning Tori? No, she must have said "warn him." Warn Simon. That's what she was thinking about. Simon.

That's what I'd wanted, wasn't it? Someone for Simon, first to get him out of Lyle House and now to keep his spirits up. Keep him from stressing out and getting sick while we hunted for Dad. Someone to make him happy.

Make her happy, too.

She'd make him happy, and he'd make her happy, and that was good. That was what I wanted.

I took off after Chloe.

THE END