

Sunday 9am

The police reportedly broke up a Rave attended by Farmingham High Students last night in the abandoned barn at the old MacDonald farm in Coburn.

Unsubstantiated reports say that one teenaged body was found on the scene. The police have not yet disclosed details as to the victim's identity. <click>

It would have been one of those wonderful days that happen once or twice a winter where everything is just perfect. The wind had died down, there was a nice crunch of snow on the ground, and the sky was clear and sunny. It would have been a perfect run if I hadn't made the mistake of turning on the news this am. Instead, the lead story kept playing through my mind as I ran and knew one thing. I screwed up.

I hated that feeling, the gut clenching up with the certainty that if I'd only done something different, better, something bad would have been averted. Now, because I did nothing, another kid is dead.

It started about a month ago, when I was in the hospital. I heard about these raves that were happening in the Farmingham area. Two kids died...two kids became vamps...and I dusted those two vamps. I told myself I'd tell Jacqueline and the others when I was out of the hospital, but things happened...and then it didn't seem to be happening any longer...so I didn't bother. One news report changed everything. I was wrong. I screwed up.

Running along, I barely noticed where I was going. My thoughts were all turned inward trying to figure out whether sharing the scarce data I did have could have made any difference at all. If it hadn't been for the moving truck blocking the sidewalk, I probably would have run past without noticing the boy watching me. It was a big professional moving van; but the only person in sight was a teenaged boy, maybe my age, who had stopped while carrying a box, and was staring at me. He didn't look familiar to me. It was an odd feeling; I'd never noticed anything as disquieting, kind of hair-raising, but not really scary. Maybe it was because I was already tense. I ran around the moving van, and kept going. It wasn't until I had turned onto another road that I felt that creepy "watched" feeling go away.

I reached home a while later. Because I was upset, I ran longer than usual; must have been about ten miles. I took a long shower and slipped back into my sleep sweats, then put on the music as I contemplated what to tell the others. I knew I was going to have to tell them everything, but I was going to sulk about it for a while before making that call; we all needed a little rest anyway. Besides, I hated admitting that I screwed up.



Raving

By Jill Irving

Sunday 10:30am

<K

nock, Knock> the door to my room opened. “I never figured you for type to sing along with Sarah McLachlan.” T.J. drawled.

I turned to the door a bit embarrassed. “Why not? Nothing wrong with it.” I reached over to my CD player and turned the music down.

“Nope, I just figured you’d prefer a different type of music.”

“I like all kinds of music, different music for different moods.” I explained.

“You have different moods?” She quirked a smile and continued, “what mood is this for?”

“Brooding.”

“Why are you brooding?” She queried plopping down on my bed next to me.

“I screwed up.” I admitted.

“How?” She asked.

“It’s a long story,” I sidestepped, “and I don’t want to go into the details.”

“Okay. Well, how about you change into some real clothes and we get out of here; find something to do?”

“I kind of have some things I need to do.” I hedged for a moment. “Of course, I guess I put it off this long, it can wait a bit longer.” I got up from the bed. “What did you have in mind?”

“Is there someplace we can play pool?” T.J. asked watching me head to the closet. She gasped as I opened it. “What the heck is that?”

“My wardrobe,” I admitted glaring at the lovely array of floral, hippy dresses. “It’s my mother’s idea of fashion.”

“I’m sorry, hon.” I could tell she was trying not to laugh. “I’m not sure if I can be seen with you wearing one of those.”

“Well, there’s not much choice here. The only decent clothes I have are now safely tucked away at a friend’s place for fear ofwell...Mom.”

“Geez, why’d she do this? I mean, admittedly, you weren’t the world’s snappiest dresser, but this is horrifying.” T.J. wandered over and ran her fingers across the fabric of my dresses.

“The worse part is she didn’t get me any shoes that go with them. All I have is sneakers and combat boots. Imagine the comments...” I divulged.

“Why don’t you buy new clothes?” She inquired sneering at some polyester fabric.

“No money. My allowance ended when my dad died. I don’t have enough time to get a regular job, too much going on. I tried posting some signs to do some dog exercising in the mornings, but haven’t gotten any customers yet.”

“Honey, we’ve got to fix this fast. I’m clearly going to have to help you. However, it’s going to cost you.”

“Cost me how?” I asked, a bit leery.

“Well, I’ll send you some new fatigues from the base, but today, we’re going shopping.”

“I don’t have any money.” I stated helplessly.

“Yeah, I get that. I do.”

“You can hardly have enough to be buying me clothes.” I argued.

“I have a job. A good job and in five months I’ll be a Marine. Honey, we’re going shopping and I’m going to buy you clothes you will look good in.”

“I’m not wearing girlie stuff. If I have to do that, these will be just fine.” I gestured towards the hideous dresses.

“I know, I know. No girlie stuff. Just clothes that will look good on you, that will be flattering.”

“I’m not wearing anything revealing either.” I dug my heels in.

She sighed. “Are you ever anything but difficult? I know you aren’t ready to show off that fine figure of yours, although that’s quite a shame. But can we at least pick some colors that look good and maybe some jeans that aren’t baggie?”

“Maybe” I agree reluctantly.

She dragged me out the door, towards her car.

Sunday 1:30pm

Two hours of shopping hell. T.J. made me try on just about every piece of clothing she could put her hands on. But she bought me a few things I could stand wearing and she promised to send me some new fatigues. She seemed to get off on having me try on different things, like some sort of paper doll. It seemed so girlie for her, but I guess we all have our secret hobbies. I’m sure she’d find mine hard to believe.

I was worried about taking them home and having mom go whacko again, so I decided to take my new stuff directly to Raine’s place. When we drove up to MacEnroe Motors, I could see Danny MacEnroe standing outside the garage talking to a couple guys in coveralls. We pulled over on the side of the road, and I got out and headed towards him. Halfway to the garage, I saw Raine and turned towards her; she was in the garage working on a Harley.

“Hey, Raine” I called out to her.

“Delia, what’s up?” She hollered back barely looking up from the bike.

“I was wondering if I could leave some clothes in the barn. My friend T.J. helped me get some replacements for my lost wardrobe, but I don’t want to take a chance of mom taking them too.”

“I haven’t finished cleaning it up; been too busy. They may not smell too good after being out there.” She warned me.

“They’ll smell a lot better there than in the garbage if mom gets them.” I responded as T.J. came up behind me.

“They’re your clothes. Do what you want.” She answered grabbing a wrench.

“You don’t mind if I take over some space?” I asked again just to be sure.

“No problem, as long as you don’t go crazy.”

“Okay. Thanks.” I started to turn around and noticed T.J. “Oh, almost forgot. This is my friend T.J. from boot camp.” I introduced. “T.J., this is Raine.”

Raine finally looked up from her work and nodded at T.J. as T.J. said, “Nice to meet you. I’ve heard so little about you.”

Raine raised her eyebrow at that and looked back at me. “So little, huh?”

“Yeah, Delia’s not real talkative.” T.J. explained.

“Really? Hadn’t noticed!” Raine remarked.

”Hey, cut it out. No talking about me in front of me.” I scolded them before dragging T.J. away. “We need to talk later, Raine.” I called out over my shoulder.

“Oh?” She perked her head up.

“About some weirdness...Farmingham weirdness...” I hinted back. “I’ll call you later.”

“You do that!”

Sunday 4:00pm

After T.J. left to get home before dinner, I called Raine. She was still working, but said she would meet me at Jacqueline’s after dinner. I had a couple more hours to brood.

At least I’d arrive there wearing decent clothes. I had a brand new pair of black jeans and somewhat fitted suede-cloth shirt. I felt human; I hadn’t realized how long it has been since I’d really felt that way. Maybe things were looking up.

I spent a little time working with Grams in the kitchen before Mom showed up for dinner. It was always nice to hang with Grams. Her perspective on things was so different from my mother’s.

When Mom arrived we ate a quiet dinner. I told her I was going over to hang out with Raine for a while. Mom had been pretty cool since she heard about Raine’s dad. She was willing to let me spend time over a Raine’s much later than my curfew had been after

hospitalization. I didn't know how long this softer side was going to last, but I would use it as long as I could.

It's not far to Jacqueline's and Mom needed the jeep, so I ended up running. I got there around 6:00 p.m. Raine pulled up on her bike a few minutes later. We both went in to Jacqueline's and sat down. After a few minutes of the two of them staring me, I started at the hardest part. Dad always said you have to lance the wound quickly to get it to bleed clean.

"I screwed up." I admitted.

Raine looked surprised. Jacqueline waited patiently for more information.

"When I was in the hospital after the headset incident, I found out something...and I never mentioned it to you. Now another kid is dead and maybe I...we...could have stopped it." I rambled on.

Raine raised her eyebrows, as Jacqueline started the prompting. "Perhaps you could give us a little detail of what you found out...?"

"I told you about the vampires in the hospital." I started.

"Yes, it was most unwise of you to go down there in your condition." She scolded.

I interrupted her, "I told you at the time that I tried to get hold of both of you. If I'd waited they might have attacked someone in the hospital. I got there just in time. And I didn't get hurt."

"Amazingly!" Raine commented.

"Whatever. Anyway, when I was in the ER the first one was brought in; the paramedics mentioned something about him coming from a Rave. He flat-lined in the ER. A couple nights later, they brought me a roommate, a girl from our school, I think, or maybe from the Jr. High. She crashed later that night. I heard them working on her. After she died, the doctor and nurse talked a bit. He seemed broken up about losing a kid. Again they mentioned a Rave."

"That's a pretty weak connection." Raine commented.

"Yeah, but they both joined the walking undead on the same night." I added. "Why would they both rise on the same night? There was three nights between these events."

Jacqueline responded. "It is unknown exactly why it takes some people less time to rise than others. Some believe that it is because when a vampire drinks someone almost to death, and then feeds the victim of his own blood, it leaves him in a near death state. This state appears to be clinically dead, but it leaves the victim open for a demon, vampire, to take over the body as a host. Perhaps it also explains why some vampires seem more human; seem to remember their past life better; while others become unbelievable monsters more vicious than anything you could imagine."

"I don't know, I can imagine a lot." Raine commented. "I've seen a lot." She shuddered a little at the inner vision of swimming in a literal blood bath.

"So, you're saying it's not unusual for there to be differences between how long until vampires rise?" I asked.

“Yes. Even in the short time, we’ve been doing this, we’ve seen vamps rise in the morgue and others who don’t rise until a day or two after they’ve been buried.” Jacqueline confirmed.

“Well, still, I didn’t mention the whole Rave thing.” I started again.

“How’s that important?” Raine asked.

“Didn’t you hear the news this morning? There was another Rave last night, another body found.”

“And what have you found out since you heard the news?” Jacqueline asked pulling her glasses down her nose to look over them.

“Last time I checked online they hadn’t released details and the coroner hadn’t examined the body. That was late this morning. I haven’t had a chance to check again.” I admitted.

“Well, then that is the first thing we should do, is it not?” Jacqueline’s brisk, no-nonsense manner set in.

I got up and walked over to her computer wishing that Zoe were around to break into the coroner’s office. She was clearly better at this sort of thing. Every time I’ve had to do anything illegal, like breaking into the coroner’s records, my conscience has bothered me a bit. I’ve always gotten past it by remembering that we’re saving lives. Still I wonder about the long-term effects on my soul, not to mention the long-term consequences if I get caught.

I let my fingers do the walking and found pretty much what I expected. The victim, a male, Bobby Stevens, sixteen years old, died from blood loss due to neck trauma. However, what I didn’t expect was something I hadn’t noticed in the other victims.

“It says here that he died from blood loss from neck wounds, but it appears that one of his kidneys was removed as well. There were also several other puncture wounds at the wrists, ankle and thigh. The coroner speculates that both the neck wound and the removal, which was done with near surgical precision, were simultaneous. There were no traces of any chemicals in his body other than a very small percentage of alcohol. Not enough to cut down on the pain the poor boy must have endured.”

“So this victim is different.” Raine stated.

“Perhaps,” Jacqueline challenged, “but perhaps, no. Delia did not check their bodies carefully, nor did she read the coroner’s reports for either of the other victims. She merely found them in the morgue and slayed them as was necessary.”

“So we should find the other’s coroner reports.” Raine volunteered.

“That would be easier if I had names.” I stated.

“They’re names are not hard to find.” Jacqueline flipped open a roster book from school. “The same night as your visit to the hospital, Ken Lewiston, a freshman, died.”

I turned back to the coroner’s office records and typed in Lewiston, Ken. In a few moments I was looking at his death certificate. “He is listed as having died from

complications of loss of blood and a stolen kidney. Once again, the incision marks from the removal seem to have been nearly surgically clean. There were also very faint signs of alcohol in his blood, no other drugs.”

“Bingo!” Raine sang out. “Sounds like a connection to me. Who was the girl?”

“That we’ll have to refer to other resources as I don’t remember losing any other students that same week.” Jacqueline stated, putting down the log and pulling out a stack of newspapers, then passing over a pile to Raine.

“I think they said she was fourteen, she was probably in the Junior High.” I reminded them.

We skimmed through the papers until Raine found an obituary for a Doris Henry, fourteen, four days after my visit to the hospital. The timing was right. I turned back to the coroner’s records and punched in Henry, Doris.

“We’ve got a match. She was drained of blood through the neck, wrist, thigh and ankle wounds and her kidney surgically removed simultaneously. She lived for a while longer, but couldn’t recover.” I told them after reading her record. I quickly disconnected my connection covering my tracks as well as I could.

“So we have these Raves happening and children being attacked and having their kidneys removed. It is happening one at a time, rather than in groups or as a massacre. What does this tell us?”

“They don’t need a lot of kidneys and/or blood?” I suggested. “But maybe they need a steady supply?”

“We should expand our search for others with similar MOs in the surrounding area.” Raine suggested. “Sounds like more research, maybe we should call in the reinforcements.

“Can we call Zoe?” I asked.

“Sounds good to me.” Raine agreed picking up the phone.

“Many demons require blood, but kidneys are rarer; we’ll need to find out what type we are likely going to find at the end of the trail.” Jacqueline started across to her library and a different type of research.

“Everyone should be here in a bit, except Wylie, she’s busy. She says to call if we need someone to do some ass-kicking.”

Sunday 9:30 p.m.

Several hours later, Zoe had found a couple similar victims in surrounding towns, young teenagers, the eldest sixteen, with their kidneys removed.

Jacqueline had found a reference to a demon known as an Augury. Auguries are said to have the power to see the future after consumption of a human kidney. Generally, the images are random, but the book suggests they can be controlled to some extent via a

blood ritual and consuming a very young kidney. The last known Augury to be seen was over a hundred years ago. They were thought to be an extinct species.

What we know is why this Augury was being used to see the future or why vampires are involved in it, turning the victims. So we needed to find another Rave, and we needed to do it before someone else died. Our reputations as outcasts in school would probably preclude our being invited, so we had to hope that Duncan or Wylie would get the invite. However, we all were going to have to try to find out.

Raine left to take care of Bobby Stevens. We needed to make sure we didn't find ourselves with any more wrinkle-faces than necessary when we had to deal with the big bad. Since it was getting late, I asked her to drop me off at my house.

"You never mentioned your friend T.J. before." She prompted when we got outside.

"Met her in boot camp two years ago and we kept up with each other a bit. I exchange email with a couple others from that camp session too."

"And she bought you clothes?" She raised her eyebrow as she climbed on to her ride.

"She felt bad for me. She saw my pathetic wardrobe." I explained.

"And she bought clothes for you?" She grinned.

"What are you suggesting?" I asked though clenched teeth.

"Nothing" she replied innocently, tossing me a helmet, and then revving the engine.

Monday 5:30 a.m.

We decided it would be a good idea to hang where other students were to elicit an invitation to a Rave. We were all headed to the Vault tonight to mix and mingle, but trying to mix it up at school was part of the plan as well. I put on some more of my new clothes to try to mix in better than usual. This time black slacks and a gold-toned shirt in this cool shiny fabric. I changed at Raine's place after my run and rode to school with her when she was ready.

We were doing the usual sitting in the cafeteria thing, trying not to watch Trim eat, when it happened again. I was leaning over my notebook writing notes on everything we'd learned the night before in the hopes that inspiration would strike. I felt that curious, hair-raising sensation. I hadn't decided whether to look or not when Wylie spoke up.

"Who's that?" She asked with a note of awe in her tone.

Kate looked over to where Wylie was looking and added. "I don't know but I'd like to."

Slowly everyone looked over to look so I finally broke down and glanced over. It was the boy from the moving van. His hair was brown, worn a tad long, and wavy. His eyes were dark, with slashing dark brows arched over them. He had a long, lean line to him, the kind you see in many actors; and he knew he was attractive to women.

"New kid" I offered looking back at my notebook

"How do you know?" Trim asked.

“1. I’ve never seen him in school before, and though I don’t know everyone, 2. None of you seems to know who he is as well. 3. I saw him carrying boxes to or from a moving truck on Sunday morning. Since he’s here today, I say it was from the truck.” I answered never looking up.

“He’s gorgeous!” Wylie announced continuing to look up from time to time before she left our table and wandered over to the popular table. “I think I need to meet him.”

I got up from the table and headed to gym class to try to get in a couple of extra laps. I felt his eyes on my back again as I walked out of the room. I was thankful to get out of there again.

Monday Lunchtime

Wylie was telling us “His name is....”
“Darius MacAllister” a strange voice continued. We all looked up to find him introducing himself. “People call me Dare.” His eyes were smiling, and damned if it didn’t seem like he was looking at me.

“Pleasure to meet you.” Wylie smiled back and held out her hand. “I’ve been hoping I’d get the opportunity.”

“You are most kind.” He shook her hand and glanced around the table. “Perhaps you can start the introductions?” He prompted her.

I had gone back to working on my chem. homework. If I was going to be at the Vault tonight, I had to get all the homework done before I got home.

“I’m Wylie Hansford.” She smiled her most winsome smile, the type that made boys drop to their knees.

“My pleasure.” I guess he had one of those smiles too...I think I could hear the heart rates of the girls at the table kick up a notch. “And your friends...?” He glanced back at us like accessories.

“Well...um...friend could be a strong word...” She hedged, as usual trying to disassociate herself from us freaks. “This is Raine MacEnroe.” She finally started around the table, waiting long enough for him to shake hands. “Trim Falussi”

“Trim?” He questioned.

“A nickname that stuck.” Trim explained. “Some call me the magnificent Falussi instead.”

“Uh huh...so, Trim, you are a lucky man sitting with all these lovely ladies.” He grinned back a Trim who had sat up taller; probably hurt himself from sitting so straight.

“Well, they are crazy about me...” Raine hit him...it looked kind of hard...and Trim glared but went back to eating.

Wylie picked up the thread of introductions. “This is Kate Parson, Zoe Zinni, and Delia Hunter.” She pointed to each of us in turn, long enough for him to shake hands or

acknowledge our existence in some way. I glanced up at my name and nodded then went back to work. I could still feel him looking at me.

“We’ve met before.” He announced still looking at my bent head. I could feel everyone else turn to look at me.

“I’d hardly call seeing you while I was running by ‘meeting’.” I argued.

“Only because you didn’t stop and introduce yourself.” He criticized.

“So I should talk to every strange man I meet on the street? That’s a great way to wind up on a milk container.” I got up and stalked away.

“Is she always this friendly?” He asked the group as his eyes followed me, I could still feel them. What was it about him that made me so aware of him?

“That was friendly, Delia-style,” I heard Raine comment as I neared the exit, “sometimes she’s downright anti-social.”

Monday 3 p.m.

“I heard some of them talking about something that could definitely be a Rave, but they stopped as I got close to them. Either my reputation is slipping...” Wylie stopped as she looked around at us “or it is too well known that I don’t drink or do drugs. Maybe they don’t invite me because I don’t.” She suggested.

“My attempts at finding out anything led to even less than that.” I admitted. “Did you know there are a large number of students that don’t know me as anything but ‘G.I. Jane’? How insulting? As if I’d ever be a G.I.! That’s Army!”

“Don’t take it personally Delia. I’m sure no one realizes there’s a difference between Army and Marines.” Kate soothed.

“Did anyone have any luck?” Raine asked.

“Maybe all of us have too ‘clean’ an image, like Wylie.” Zoe suggested.

“It could be,” Kate reasoned, “We aren’t all known well, but what is known tends toward ‘upright’. None of us have the kind of reputation that suggests we’d party at a Rave.”

“Then how to we find out where it is?” Trim griped while digging through his backpack for a candy bar.

“What I did hear suggested that no one knows where it will be at this point,” Wylie offered. “It seems like someone mysteriously drops off directions to the location the day of the event.”

“I guess that makes it less likely to be raided.” Kate added. “I wonder if anyone even knows who is organizing it.”

“Maybe Roland can get us an in.” Raine proposed hopping on her bike and riding off, probably in the direction of Roland.

I felt I was being watched again, and looked up to see Darius gazing at us. A couple cheerleaders were talking to him, but his eyes were definitely focused in our direction. After a couple minutes, the cheerleaders hopped around and said their perky goodbyes and Darius started strolling in our direction. I did the only thing a good marine could do under the circumstances. I made a strategic retreat.

I could hear his voice join with Wylie's and the others as I strode towards home. They were talking about going to the Vault.

Tuesday 8 a.m.

I had bailed on going to the Vault. I called Raine and told her I couldn't get out of the house, which was true to a point. Since I had told my mother my homework wasn't done, there was no way I was getting out. I just seemed to have a really hard time getting it done last night. True, normally I could have done it in half an hour or so, but I had other stuff in my head. Besides, no one would have invited me to the Rave.

I was just turning a corner the next morning, heading to gym class, when I nearly bumped in Darius. Only my fast reaction stopped him from being plowed over.

"Delia. You were missed at the Vault last night." He smiled. "Everything okay?"

"Fine, I just had too much homework to hang out on a school night." I hated the defensive tone I was using, but couldn't seem to stop it.

"I was hoping I'd see you today. We didn't get off on the right foot. I was hoping to correct that." He stood in front of me expectantly.

"Whatever, I'm not holding any grudges." I finally replied with my usual style and panache.

"I was wondering if you were going to the Rave tomorrow night."

I stopped dead and stared at him for a second. "I haven't heard exactly where it is." I replied trying for nonchalance.

"Neither have I. But as soon as I hear, I'll let you know." He did that melty smile thing again, but I was immune to that! "You will be there, won't you?"

"I'll be there," I promised. As he started to walk away, I had a thought. "Hey Darius..."

"It's Dare," he reminded.

"Maybe you should take a pass on it." I offered.

"The Rave?" he asked quirked his eyebrow.

"Yeah." I saw his eyebrow lift even higher and thought quickly. "You are new. You don't want people to think you are some sort of stoner or something, do you?"

"I'll take my chances." He laughed, and continued "everyone whose anyone is supposed to be there. Seems like that is exactly the place I need to be."

"Do you know whose running this thing?" I asked.

“No,” he confessed. “I got the impression that it was someone who organizes stuff like this and just invites the kids to come.”

“Then how do you know it’s safe. Who is providing everything? You don’t know; it could be some freak or pedophile or something.”

“You sound like a mother. If you don’t want to go, then don’t. I need to meet people and it’s an excellent opportunity.” He started to walk away, then stopped and said over his shoulder. “But if you’re worried, I don’t plan to drink or take anything.”

“I wish that gave me some comfort.” I whispered as I headed into the gym. I had a lot of laps to run.

Wednesday 12 p.m.

I was sitting at the table waiting for the others to come through the lunch line; I had given up on the school lunch program after the first week I’d been there. I figured it was better to be safe with a sandwich or salad from home, than sorry with what passed for lunch in the cafe.

Darius slipped into the seat across from me. “Hi Delia” He turned up the wattage of his smile.

“Hey Darius” I replied looking up from my book.

“It’s Dare!” He reminded me again, a little frustration sliding through the usual suave tenor of his voice. “What’s your problem with calling me by the name I prefer?”

“I’m sorry, but when calling someone Dare, I think they ought to be someone who is up to the tough challenges. I haven’t seen that in you. It may be there...but I haven’t seen it. Until I do, I’m not comfortable calling you Dare.”

“And what does it take to prove myself to you?” He asked with a slight touch of innuendo in his tone.

“Time” I answered irrevocably.

“Gotcha” He sighed. “Well I just swung by to let you know that the Rave is going to be held at the old Fontaine warehouse in North Barnstead. I guess its out near the tracks.”

“Great, thanks.” I responded. “Look, I really appreciate you letting me know about it.”

“No problem. You will be there, right?”

“I will, with friends. I don’t suppose you gave any consideration to not going?” I had to try one last time.

“We’ve been over that. Besides, why is it okay for you to go?” Darius asked.

“My reputation is in the trash already.”

“I somehow doubt that matters to you anyway.” He smiled.

I had to smile back at that one. “Touché. As I said, I’ll be there with friends. In fact, Wylie will be coming with us.” I hinted wiggling my eyebrows.

“Well, that’s great. Maybe I’ll see you all there.” He got up and walked off before the rest of the gang arrived at the table.

Wednesday night, The Rave

“Wow, psychedelic, man!” Trim gushed as we walked into the site and sound-filled warehouse.

“Okay, everyone remember, don’t drink or eat anything. That means you, Trim.” Raine reminded everyone, while she glared at Trim.

“And stay with your ‘buddy’, no one goes off alone.” I advised, “We don’t know how many or how big they are. Let’s not be stupid.”

“Pot...kettle...black” Kate muttered at my side.

Wylie and Duncan headed off into the crowd. There were swirling lights, almost enough to make a person nauseous. Everything glowed with neon colors. The music was loud, too loud, with a driving beat that made my head ache instantly. Students were packed into the warehouse, such that they were almost exploding from the seams. The people trying to be heard over the music were adding to the din. Hazy smoke hovered over everything, smelling partly of vanilla like an artificial fog maker, but also of the cloying scent of cigarette and pot.

Raine didn’t want a partner. She said that anyone else could slow her down, keep her from being her most effective. Jacqueline argued that if we were all going to be there, we should split up, but stay in pairs; fast and safe. Raine didn’t like it, but Jacqueline won. Jacqueline always wins. Raine was paired with Trim. Kate was with me, and Zoe was waiting at command, the car, with Jacqueline. Each team had a radio, although I was pretty sure we wouldn’t hear a thing over this racket.

My sensitive ears were practically bleeding from the noise, I wanted nothing more than to put in some earplugs, but I was afraid I’d miss a call for help. I briefly saw Darius as I walked in, but had quickly lost him in the throng. After that, I kept one eye peeled for him, and the other for anything strange. Problem was everything was strange to me. I’d never been at something like this. Why would I? The very concept of debasing my body by putting chemical stimulants or depressants into it was alien to me.

Kate made nice-nice with everyone as we maneuvered, and pushed, through the multitude. Being tall, I could see over many people’s heads. I caught a quick glance of brown wavy hair, which looked suspiciously like Darius’s, before it disappeared inside a doorway. I just saw the top of a very blonde head follow and close the door behind her. Something didn’t feel right to me at that moment.

“I’ve got a bad feeling.” I related to Kate, glancing up at the catwalk above us. Raine was looking down towards the door the blonde had just closed. Our eyes met above the crowd for a second. “Do you suppose Slayers have some sort of Spidy-Sense for the supernatural?” I asked Kate as Raine waved Trim back to the steps and then leaped over the railing, yelling for people below to clear the way. She landed on a stack of crates, jumped to the floor, and pushed her way to the door.

She stopped at the steps and waited for the rest of us. I was pushing my way through with Kate in my wake. Wylie seemed to have noticed the disturbance and was moving our way with Duncan. I was two steps away when Raine kicked open the door.

“It was locked.” She announced before stepping in.

I saw a short hallway, which appeared to lead to some stairs. There was one door that stood open. There were no sounds coming from the immediate area inside, but then my ears were still ringing from the music. Oh well, maybe the music covered the crashing noise.

Wylie and I fell in behind Raine while the others followed us. Raine glanced through the open door, but barely spent more than a second before moving down the stairs. Meanwhile, Trim got out the radio and gave a status report to Jacqueline.

At the foot of the steps, there was an arched door. I just barely heard the sound of a female voice behind the door...it sounded kind of like chanting.

I whispered to the others. “Sound of a woman...sounds like chanting.”

Raine checked the door; it was locked. She held up three fingers, two, one, and kicked the door in. It opened with a loud thud and Raine was through instantly.

If we were worried for even a second that things weren't what we thought, well we might have been able to relax...except for the fact that it meant there were four vampires in the room, a seven-foot, brown-spotted, orange-skinned demon with three lumps sticking on top of his skull, and a woman in black robes with a knife held close to a tied up boy. Not just any boy, Darius MacAllister was stripped down to his Scooby-Doo boxers, bound and gagged against a wall. The room was cavernous, with cold cement walls, ceiling and floors. Another archway led out the far left corner.

Raine didn't waste a second; she headed in towards the largest vampire who was bearing down on us from the left. Wylie also dived into the fray and was intercepted by another vampire “guard” coming from the right.

”Kate, the knife” I yelled as I lunged in toward another guard coming at us through the center of the room. He wasn't my target; he was just in the way. Lump-head had yet to join the fight, but I was unsure how long that would last. Raine was closest to him. I had to believe she could handle it given that I needed to get to the woman.

The third vampire was coming at me quickly. I tucked into a football stance and hit him gut high with my shoulder. He absorbed the impact, but wasn't expecting my follow-up movement to toss him over my shoulder. From the sound of it, he went down hard, but I wasn't worrying about him right now.

It was bad tactics, I knew. Never leave an enemy behind you I could hear my father's voice say. But I needed to stop the woman. Kate had disarmed her; I could see the knife floating in the air near the ceiling. Apparently, the blonde wasn't done though, she had wicked nails and looked like she could use them.

I caught movement to my left and saw the demon move towards Raine. I heard Trim yell out something magical sounding behind me as I tackled the woman. She went down under my weight, but almost before I could catch my own breath, she had reversed our

positions. She was inhumanly strong. She smashed my head once against the floor, which had me seeing stars, before swiping out with her nails. Fortunately, she didn't have technique on her side. I rolled her off me into the wall. That gave me long enough for a quick one two combination to her face. Her head shot back against wall again with a thud. Her eyes rolled back.

I rolled away and sprang to my feet. It was only about three steps to the wall where Darius was held. The leather bindings were thick, but they sliced like butter under my knife's blade. Darius's eyes were wide and he looked pale, but he wasn't panicking.

I looked around to check the status of the fight. I could hear shouts from the other's in the background; someone had yelled "Duncan!" Trim and Kate were ganging up on the vampire that I'd thrown over my shoulder. Duncan was on the floor just inside the door; he was sitting up, nursing his arm, the woman's knife in his hand. Wylie dusted her opponent as I glanced her way and Raine was hard-pressed by the demon.

I couldn't see Darius's clothes anywhere, so I pulled off my long-sleeved shirt, baring a black tank, and gave it to him.

"Stay down and keep your eyes on her". I ordered pointing to the shaman. "Let me know if she wakes."

In the moments it took for that to happen, Wylie had come up behind the last vamp and leaping in a beautiful arc kicked in him the head. She went down a little hard, over balanced from the kick, but managed to gain her feet a second prior to the vamp. She then threw a feint with the left and dusted him with the right.

Meanwhile, Trim threw out his hands and yelled "Ignis Incende", causing the vampire's clothing to go up in flames. In a shocking response, the vamp threw himself towards Trim as the others scrambled to help the boy. Kate stepped back and focused, lifting the vamp a foot into the air above Trim. Duncan rolled Trim in the classic fire extinguishing way.

Raine gave the demon a powerful slam that knocked it back a few feet, but it still looked healthy. I threw my knife and buried it in its head. It pulled the knife out and tossed it at Raine as she flung herself in the air to kick him full force. The knife sliced her arm as she went by but didn't interrupt her momentum.

Wylie ran into the skirmish fists flying, and gave him a couple hard blows to his torso as Raine smashed his head bloody. I moved in carefully behind him and ducked down low. Raine caught on quickly and went for a full force push. The thrust sent him tumbling backwards over me. His heavy legs pressed me down flat on my belly on the ground. He rolled out of the impact. I expected him to come back at us, but he ran, fast, out the back way. Wylie and Raine ran after him, as I heard Dare yell about the woman waking.

I signaled to the others and we went to check her out. Looking over, the rest of the gang was gathering themselves together. Trim's clothes looked a bit toasty, but he seemed mostly okay. Duncan had a bit of a cut across his forearm, but it didn't look too deep. Kate was wrapping the wound in a bandana as they crossed the room.

Jacqueline and Zoe came in as we were tying up the woman. Wylie and Raine ran back into the room carrying some clothes and stopped in front of Darius.

“Hi there, handsome, are you okay?” Wylie asked Dare as she looked him over. “I think these might be yours.”

“Yes, thanks.” He took the clothes and focused on slipping on his jeans.

“This tunnel leads out into the sewer; he plummeted into them and continued. I’d say he’s hurting bad.” Raine updated the rest of us.

“He’ll need a victim soon, or he won’t survive.” Jacqueline surmised. “You must go after him and finish him.”

“We’ll go grab some weapons and hunt him down.” Raine responded looking at Wylie.

“The sewers? You want me to play around in the sewers?” Wylie whined. “Can’t you take Delia? She likes that kind of thing.” She turned back towards Dare. “I think I should stay here and make sure that Dare is okay.”

“You need to go with Raine now.” Jacqueline told her sternly.

“Let’s go!” Raine grabbed Wylie’s arm before running out the main exit towards the stairs.

“We need to get her out of here quietly.” Jacqueline announced, grabbing my arm to keep me from following. “She hasn’t yet come to and I think it would be best if that happened away from here.”

“Who are you people?” Fully dressed, Darius asked, finally giving voice to the questions in his eyes. “Aren’t you a teacher?” He turned to Jacqueline.

“You’d best go home.” She ordered him, “When I get to my car, I will be calling the police to break up this party.” She started lifting the unconscious form.

“We’ll treat her like she’s had a bit too much to drink and walk her right out of here.” I suggested, going to the woman’s other side.

“Delia, talk to me!” Darius stepped in front of me. “I can see what is going on. Those are vampires, aren’t they?”

“Look” I told him solidifying my hold on the woman. “Go home. Forget what you saw here. Tomorrow it will be just a bad dream and you can count yourself lucky.”

“You think I’m going to forget that they were going to cut me up?” He argued, clearly frustrated.

“Most people do.” Kate explained calmly. “We see what we want to see and remember only what we have to. You will be better off if you can.”

“What about all of you?” He asked.

“It’s not an option for us.” I answered as I helped Jacqueline carry the woman away.

Thursday Morning

The police reportedly broke up a Rave held by Farmingham High Students last night in the abandoned barn at an old warehouse near the train tracks after an

anonymous tip was phoned in. Several students were taken into custody after being caught with illicit substances. No injuries have been reported at this time.

The gang met in the library that morning, it was a lot quieter there, fewer people to overhear our conversation. Jacqueline told us what she'd found out. The woman was some sort of half-demon shaman who served as a mediator between the Augury Demon and the organization for which she worked. She arranged the Raves with her employers' money, and used them as an opportunity to find the youngest students who were not drinking or taking drugs. Apparently, alcohol and drugs lessened the affect of the visions. She then performed a blood ritual for Augury, which served to give a kidney to her pet demon and blood to her vampire henchmen. The shaman died before giving her employer's name; apparently, she started to say the name, choked and died.

Raine and Wylie spent a good part of the night looking for him, but found it difficult to track him through the sewers. Neither of them seemed to be even slightly hurt the next day; all that lovely slayer healing power. I could use some of that.

Duncan and Trim were okay, though both were bearing their injuries as badges of honor. The police raided shortly after we left, and no bodies were found. Darius was apparently their chosen victim for the night.

Earlier, the same morning

Darius had been outside waiting for me when I ran past his house in the morning. He silently handed me my shirt, cleaned and pressed. His eyes spoke volumes. He had not forgotten and would not. That could mean trouble later.

"You tried to warn me away." He stated it simply as if he'd worked it out overnight.

"Yeah, kind of." I admitted.

"You knew that would happen?" His voice was half-accusation, half-surprise.

"Not really. I knew bad stuff had happened at a few other Raves. It seemed likely something bad would happen at this one." I tried to explain.

"So you warned me. Just me?"

"You helped me. I wanted to try to help you." I shrugged it off. "I don't know why I bothered. We went there to help everyone."

"I guess I should have said this by now, but thank you." He looked down at his hands.

I had to ask him, "What made you go off with the blonde? Wylie is easily ten times as attractive as the blonde."

His smile hovered around his mouth, but didn't reach his eyes. "I had a headache. She said she had packets of Advil in her purse. Once we were out of sight of the crowd, she overpowered me...easily."

"I'm sorry." I reached out and patted his arm, and started to turn away.

"How long...?" He let his question drift off.

I turned back. “How long have I known that the things that go bump in the night really do go bump in the night?” I tried to interpret his question, giving him a guilty half-smile. “A couple months.”

It looked like he digested that before asking. “How long have you guys fought them?”

“I moved here a couple months ago, it started shortly after that for me. They’d been doing it slightly longer.”

He opened his mouth to ask something else. I stopped him by putting my hand on his arm. “Look I really can’t tell you anything else. I probably shouldn’t have said anything at all.” I shook my head.

“Don’t you think I’m better off knowing what’s out there so I can protect myself?” Darius questioned.

“I think that knowing about it won’t really protect you. It will just keep you from really living your life.” I responded sadly.

“You don’t think I can take care of myself?” Scorn filled his voice.

I looked hard at him for a moment, and lifted my eyebrow. “Didn’t see too much of it last night.” I held up my hand. “What are you going to do? Blind them with your brilliant smile and charm them to death?”

He sucked in a breath and let it out slowly. “Is that all you think I can do?”

I tilted my head and took a good look at him. Patting his cheek, I replied. “I really don’t know you.” I gave him another half-smile, turned and jogged off.

I think I heard him breathe out “No you don’t. Not yet.” I felt his eyes following me until I turned the corner.