

An Act of Contrition

The Calm is a moderately popular cafe in Normal, IL, located in a strip of commercial shops frequented by the local university population. Students could be found there at all hours studying quietly, trading stories, and finding love, all with house coffee and exotic teas expertly made. The location had a knack of never being too busy, but also never being slow, so if you wanted a seat, one would be available and you never had long to wait for your order.

The owner, Sapphire Smith, was a well-loved fixture of The Calm. If she wasn't making drinks, she was always in the office. She was a warm personality known for motherly hugs and an instinctive ability to tell when her customers needed a kind word. Sapphire was instantly recognizable. Tall and lush, with hair dyed to match her name and skin like the earth, she was as popular for her looks as her business. She also wasn't human.

Sapphire was a succubus, an ancient race of inhuman creatures that fed off the life energies of humans via touch that the population at large only read about in stories. Her racial anonymity was important to her survival, as even rumors of a succubus would invariably draw dangerous attention from the ancestral hunters of her kind. Sapphire wasn't particularly old, only about sixty, so because of her success in gaining a large pool of constantly shifting food sources in her patrons, she wasn't interested in testing her luck via clumsiness.

It was a cool spring day that found Sapphire out of sorts. She found herself distractedly sitting in her office doorway watching her baristas work and scanning the floor. Something was wrong, but she couldn't quite place it. She allowed her dark brown eyes to drift from person to person, and face to face without any purpose to guide them. Before long, they settled on the face of a pretty young woman with strawberry blond hair and a purposeful tan. She was a freshman at the local university named Amy, who'd been a frequent patron since enrolling. Today, she wasn't with the usual friends, but instead a man of middling age. He dressed too nice to be a student, wearing a short sleeve button down and well pressed tan slacks. He was fit and admittedly handsome, but something felt off about him. Perhaps it was the relaxed hardness around his eyes that spoke of authority beyond his years or the mild sense of readiness she could see in his posture, but whatever it was, the Succubus knew she didn't like it.

"Hey, Amy," Sapphire said as the young woman came to the counter to order her

drink, smoothly taking over the order in the process. “The usual?”

“Yes, please.” The young woman replied cheerfully.

Sapphire noted her cheery disposition and set about making Amy’s drink, an Americano with light sugar but extra cream. Sapphire had a reputation for knowing every customer's favorite drink, if they had one. A simple task for any Succubus. “I notice you have some new eye candy.”

“I know, right?” Amy replied, her tone hushed yet excited. “He’s a historical lecturer and tours unis. Talking to him is like brain sex.”

“Mmm,” Sapphire purred back, expertly matching Amy’s tone. “Is it serious?”

“No, but it’s fun,” she replied, drawing the last word out almost conspiratorially.

“You’ll have to dish sometime.” Sapphire handed Amy her order and gently brushed her fingers against the freshman’s, taking a sip of her energy in the process. The Succubus’ day was filled with dozens of such interactions. Tiny sips of energy from touches so minor and gentle her prey never even noticed them. Such things took tremendous self control as the hunger that forced her to feed was as powerful as it was relentless. Humans could feel the pull if they weren’t suitably distracted unless the pull was very small, and while distracting humans was very easy in a more private setting, such things were also more likely to get one noticed or allow for mistakes.

Amy’s life force had changed. She normally tasted like a sixteen-year-old’s first day driving without a ride along, but now she tasted like a mosquito-bitten summer’s day at the fair. The change was distinct, and the flavor had familiar overtones that told Sapphire exactly what she needed to know.

Sapphire allowed her desire to be ignored fill her heart. She breathed it out like smoke, letting it linger in the air. She thought of arguing parents at their child’s sporting event and water-bugs in a bachelor’s apartment when he’s finally had a bit of luck at the bar. Concepts and memories copied from the mouths of their owners were tools to a succubus. They formed a complex language that only they could understand and allowed them control over their enigmatic glamors.

With the feeling of invisibility firmly in mind, she rounded the bar and followed Amy back to her man. He was scrolling absently through his phone, though the subject of his idling meant little to Sapphire. She was already busy with keeping her repellant glamor in place while controlling a deep sense of revulsion that threatened to crack her long perfected veneer. She tapped the man firmly on the shoulder and cleared her throat, taking care not to take any energy from him.

He glanced up at Amy, then to Sapphire. “Can I help you?” He asked as he glanced to Amy again, confused by her sudden deep interest in her own phone.

“Yes, you can.” Sapphire’s voice was barely a whisper. “You can leave my establishment and never come back.”

The man adjusted himself in his seat to allow a better look at Sapphire, his expression filled with amusement. “Why?” He asked.

“Because I don’t allow your kind here under any circumstances.”

The amusement drained from his face, leaving him thin-lipped. “And what kind is

that, exactly?"

Sapphire sneered and casually licked the back of one of her canine teeth. "You know what kind," She said after a moment.

The man looked around, suddenly aware that the room seemed to be incidentally ignoring them. His expression shifted into one of defeat and he allowed a belabored sigh to escape his lips. "Have I done something to offend?"

"You exist," She said simply.

"Of course," the man said, looking away. "I'll gather my pet and leave."

"See that you do." Sapphire turn to walk away, allowing her desire to be ignored to fade.

Jakob flung the door of his loft open with more force than he'd intended and winced as it banged off the brick accent wall behind it. He'd chastised his children about doing such things before, and now he was guilty of the same. His petulance was more justified, however, not that they would dare to challenge him on such things.

The loft, part of a converted warehouse, was far more upscale than its roots suggested. Its distressed brick facade meshed well with the modern aesthetic Jakob had picked when he moved in. Even better, the windows were polarized, eschewing the need for ugly blackout curtains. The Sun wasn't much of a problem for him anymore, which was a testament to his personal strength, but his children weren't there yet, so that detail alone made this place a grand find. He'd looked forward to his new home and the lack of competition the town promised, it being free of both wolves and other vampires. He was gearing up to turn this little college town into his personal kingdom. Then he found a fly in his ointment.

"Something wrong, Boss?" It was Bo, Jakob's firstborn, who greeted him. Bo looked more like a child of the first or second house instead of a child of the sixth. Tall, broad, and handsome with just a hint of threat, Bo was everything Jakob wanted him to be.

"My new pet has poor taste in cafes," Jakob grumbled. "Why are you awake?"

"Restless, I guess? Riggs and Farrah are up too."

"Collect them and meet me in the basement. I'm hungry and wish to wash the flavor of overt disrespect from my mouth."

Bo's bright eyes gleamed with excitement as he left to gather his siblings. The Young were always hungry, and Jakob took rather dangerous steps to avoid doing anything that might stifle that.

The basement of the building had been converted to a communal storage area, sectioned off with chain link fencing. Farrah, who was a curious sort, had discovered a large drainage grate that led to a sizable section of sewers perfect for creating a feeding area and holding pen. Jakob wanted his children to get as strong as possible, as fast as possible, and that required a constant food source.

They only had a single head in the pen at the moment, a runaway Jakob had lured in with the offer of food and shelter, neither of which had been a lie. Well-fed humans were robust humans, and robust humans had plenty of blood to harvest. This one had grown wan, however, so it was a lucky coincidence Jakob needed something to break to make himself feel better.

Inside the pen, the human huddled naked in a corner. Perhaps they sensed what was coming as they shook harder than usual.

"Worry not, human," Jakob cooed as he undid the buttons on his shirt. "After today, there will be no more pain."

“Why does he get to kill them?” Riggs grumbled as the trio walked back up to the loft they shared with their father.

“Because he does,” Bo said with a slight growl in his voice. Riggs’ whining about doing as he was told could grate on the ears.

“When you get stronger and make some kids, you can do what you want too, Riggs,” Farrah said with an exasperated sigh.

“Don’t act like you don’t care, Farrah,” Riggs said, absently scratching at his short beard.

“I don’t,” Farrah said with a shrug.

The three hadn’t known each other long, but it was long enough for them to fall into the common behavior siblings often display. Sniping, teasing, and button pressing seemed as natural for them as if they’d been born to the same human parents. By appearance alone, Riggs and Farah looked like true siblings, slim and bookworms-ish, even though they were not. Whether their similarities were a house preference, an effect of their house, or simply whimsy from their ‘Father’ was blurry.

“And why are you so pissy?” Riggs said, digging a finger into Bo’s shoulder.

“I will pull that thing off your hand and fuck you with it,” Bo said as he shrugged away.

“Oh, you wanna fuckin’ go?” Riggs said as he puffed himself up.

“Guys, chill.” Farah pushed the squabbling pair apart. “Bo, for real, what’s up your ass?”

Bo seemed to swell for a moment before letting the air out of his lungs with an explosive breath. “Shit. Sorry. I’m vibing off the Boss.”

“Oooh,” Riggs said, taking a relaxed step back. “He is pissed off about something, isn’t he?”

“I feel it now too,” Farah said. “Just felt murder-y before, but now I feel him mad too.”

“It’s probably because I caught him when it was fresh,” Bo said as he clapped a hand on Riggs’ shoulder. “Sorry again.”

“Eh, it’s good,” Riggs chuckled. “You know why he’s in a mood?”

“He said something about his pet having bad taste in cafes.”

“He’s gotta be talking about that new girl, Amy,” Farah said. “She’s into that ‘The Calm’ place. It’s mad popular right now.”

“You ever been?”

“I was gonna go once, when it was busy, but I just ended up going someplace else.”

“Riggs?”

“C’mon, Dude. Me? A Cafe?” Riggs scoffed.

“Yeah. Realized that was dumb as it left my mouth.” Bo smirked. “Anyway, something about that place pissed him off, so I’m thinking we should check it out. Find out why.”

“We could just ask that Amy girl.”

“I’m not going anywhere near one of the Boss’s pets after last time,” Farah said,

waving her hands.

“I bet you won’t,” Riggs said with a bark of laughter.

“No. We’ll look into it directly. See if someone needs to learn their place,” Bo said firmly. “And then we’ll help them into it.

“Because we’re helpers,” Farah said with gleeful menace.

“That we are.”

Sapphire was still on edge. She'd banned a vampire earlier and wasn't yet sure that was the end of it. Those curse children were like vermin. The moment you let one into your space, more would start to pop up. The one she'd tossed had seemed reasonable, though, so perhaps she'd be lucky. The Calm was just that; her calm. She'd worked hard to earn the money to start this place. She'd worked hard to stay under the various radars that could make her life more work than she wanted it to be, whether it be avoiding hunters, however thin their numbers had become since Butterfly's war, or the oppressive over-watch of the Choir with their registrations and check-ins. She didn't want that unduly disrupted.

A light tap on her office door sent a disquiet chill running through her. Soft and rapid, like the person doing it was desperate to be only noticed by the room's occupant. Sapphire took a deep breath and opened the door.

"Sorry, Ma'am." It was Shawna, one of her younger employees. Her face was creased with barely hidden fear. "Three people just showed up and started asking us questions about that guy you told us not to serve. Kenny told them he wasn't allowed in anymore because you said so, and the big one started to ask why in a real quiet voice, but not the normal quiet but the scary quiet-" Sapphire put a finger to the child's lips to shush her. The poor creature to shaking.

"Wait in my office, okay?" Sapphire said, gently brushing the girl's face. "It'll be fine."

Shawna nodded, darted into the office and closed the door.

At the bar were three people who looked to be in their mid-twenties. Two looked like they were brother and sister, similar in build and feature, but the third was tall and muscular. They were all dressed like the vampire and she knew they weren't just acquainted, but most assuredly related. The tall one had a causal finger hooked into the strap of Kenny's apron and had the young man pulled low over the counter as he spoke softly into his ear. Other patrons were already looking and talking in hushed tones about it. It would be impossible to redirect their attention from something so obvious.

"Is there a problem?" Sapphire said, trying to fill her tone more with authority than anger.

"You the owner?" The Tall Man asked.

"I am, so let that boy go. If there is an issue, I'm happy to entertain you."

The Woman chuckled. "You look like you would be."

"Did you toss a man out today for no reason? Dressed like us?" The Tall man asked. His voice was calm, but it still brimmed with threat. She felt something push on her. It was vampiric glamor. The voice of authority. If she'd had any doubts before, they were now long gone.

"I did," Sapphire said as she calmly freed her employee from the Tall Man's finger. He'd tensed his finger, but the idea of touching him disgusted her, so she simply slid the fabric free, allowing Kenny to quickly step out of range.

"Maybe you don't realize who you fucked with."

"No. I'm well aware of who I fucked with. You don't seem to be so fortunate."

Sapphire said, her tone one of cool fury. She walked around the counter, dragging her hand as she went. “You’ve upset me greatly. I suspect your father is simply a poor teacher for the same reason you all are the way you are, so I’m going to be nice.” Her tone softened as she came as close as she could without touching him. “Leave. You have scared my employees and my customers. You have disrupted my place of business. You have disrupted my peace. You have disrupted a Mother’s peace. Leave without another word or act to piss me off and maybe, just maybe, I’ll forget this.”

The Tall Man seemed unprepared for Sapphire’s boldness. His friends did the same, their unease at being so directly challenged showing clearly on their faces. The Tall Man recovered quickly, however, and began to look the Succubus up and down. He leaned in, a lascivious grin splitting his face. He reached around her and deliberately grabbed hold of her rear, digging his fingers in roughly. He stared right into her eyes, without blinking.

Everything about his touch was infuriating. She could rip the life out of him for his audacity, but it would be hard to hide. She could strike him, but he was ready for it. If anything, he wanted her to hit him and if she missed or he blocked, the ensuing fight would be an even greater issue. She couldn’t even harden her form to stop his grip from hurting. She could do nothing more than stare him down and hope it didn’t escalate any further.

“Bo,” The woman with him said, putting her hand on his arm.

The Tall man named Bo finally relented. He leaned in and gave her a peck on the cheek. “You see me again, you’d best count your toes, or I might just make you,” He said.

The three walked out, the air filled now with nothing more than the jingle of the doorbells and the ambient radio.

“Are you okay, Ma’am?” Kenny asked as he stepped around the counter.

“I’m fine, Dear,” Sapphire said stiffly. “Did that girl call that boy, Bo?”

“I think so.”

Sapphire nodded and shook herself, running her fingers through her hair. “I’ll be in my office. Let me know if you need anything,” She said as she briskly made her way to the back.

“You got it,” Kenny said. “I’m sor-”

“Don’t apologize for things you didn’t do, Ken,” She said cutting him off.

Sapphire gently shooed the still shaken Shawna out of her office and shut the door softly before leaning heavily against it. She knew this would happen. Vampires are problems. They are predisposed to be problems. They were the worst things about humanity evolved. She’d make him pay for this insult. That whole wretched pack would pay.

She walked over to her desk and picked up her phone, dialing a number she hasn’t needed to use in quite some time.

“Hello,” A cheery voice on the other end greeted her.

“This is Sapphire Smith.”

“Hm, you one of Diamond’s?”

“No. Joy’s.”

“Ahh. Okay. You’re out in Illinois, yeah? You sound upset.”

“I need a Child of Contrition sent.”

“I see.” The woman on the phone’s voice grew hard. “Consider it done. Are you okay?”

“I will be.”

“That you will, Sister.”

It took Lumina roughly three days to make it to the town of Normal from the last Op location. The last year had been exhausting, though the return of Lord Evandrus from wherever he'd been hiding had made work more organized than it had been. If only the wolf population hadn't dropped so much in North America. The children of the six houses flew into a frenzy of growth once the news of the massive change got out. So much so that Lord Evandrus had not only pulled additional children in to assist, but he requested the First Father to make more.

The mission had come as a request from the Mothers, or Succubi as they called themselves. Their requests always took precedence by order of the First Father. There were reasons for this that looked for all the world like guilt, but no one dared to say it out loud.

Finding The Calm was simple enough. Lumina parked her rental car and put on her mask. It was a badge of office that told anyone who recognized it she was on official business and not to be interfered with. Humans thought she was just some crazy person and let her be, which was fine with her. The mask was a formed plate that looked like a facsimile of a crying face with no mouth and a rising sun on the forehead. Some of her fellows wore a hooded frock, but Lumina preferred to wear a plain, long-sleeved black dress shirt and slacks. She also eschewed the armored bracers and velvet gloves many wore in favor of simple black driver's gloves. They were relics, and Lumina felt they didn't offer enough protection for the trouble they caused when observed.

As she entered the Cafe, she could feel the subtle push of a Mother's glamor. The Cafe was fairly busy and Lumina surmised she didn't feel more customers were needed at the moment. The staff worked cheerfully, though a few balked when their eyes fell on Lumina's mask.

"Welcome to The Calm," The young Barista said, clearly nervous. "Can I take your order?"

"Not at this time," Lumina said, her voice gentle. "I'm here to speak with the owner, Miss Sapphire Smith. She should be expecting me."

"I'll get her," Another Barista said as she scurried off into the back.

A few moments later, Lumina was directed to the back and into Sapphire's office. It wasn't a big space, but it had the distinct cozy air Mother's tend to surround themselves with. Sapphire was behind her desk, standing with a hand extended. "Thank you for coming. I'm Sapphire."

"Lumina." She took Sapphire's hand and bowed her head respectfully. "How may I assist, Mother Sapphire?"

"I have been harassed by a Vampire named Bo and his siblings," Sapphire said as she returned to her seat. "They came to my business to do so after I asked another Vampire I am confident was their father to leave."

"Had the father done anything to be ejected?"

"No. I simply do not allow Vampires in my business under any circumstances."

"Of course. Do you believe he sent his children to harass you?"

"I don't think so," Sapphire said as she began to tap her finger on her desk. "I think

he hasn't taught them any manners, however. They didn't react as though they understood that they were doing something they shouldn't have been doing. The one named Bo even groped me in front of my customers and staff."

"Allow me to apologize for their impudence. I will see them properly educated for this transgression against your peace, Mother Sapphire," Lumina said, bowing her head again.

"Don't apologize for them," Sapphire said, almost spitting the words. "Punish them and make it clear that I am never to see them again."

"Of course, Mother Sapphire. Have you any idea where I might find the ones who offended you?"

Sapphire nodded and stood up. "Follow me." Lumina followed her out to the cafe floor where she pointed out a young woman talking to some friends. "That human is his pet. She should know."

Lumina look at the woman for a moment before reaching out her mind to touch her. She could feel the effect of the Voice of Authority on her mind. She could feel the owner, Jakob. That was enough. She could track him now.

"I have what I need, Mother Sapphire," Lumina said softly. "I will go a mete out an appropriate punishment. I assure you that you will not be bothered by these children again."

"See that you return when you finish so I can reward you," Sapphire said.

"That is not needed, but I will do as you ask." Lumina bowed her head again and left the Cafe.

Lumina left on foot, content to leave her rental car at the Cafe as she'd been directed to return. A walk was nice. Three days in a car was hard on the body and even with everything that made her special, she was still human. She felt the tug of Jakob's being leading to a nice part of town that looked to be a renovated industrial area. The pull drew her to a distressed brick warehouse with a secured door. It was too exposed to try to pick, and the metal frame would protest too much at being forced. She stepped back and studied the building for a moment. She could feel Jakob on the top floor. The door buzzer showed a few different buttons so she rang them one at a time, looking for a response.

"Hello?" The voice speaker came to life.

"Yeah, hey. I'm your neighbor on the top floor. My outside door key keeps sticking and I don't wanna break it. Could you buzz me in?" Lumina said, relaxing her voice.

"Bob give you a bad key?" The voice came back.

"I didn't get it from the building guy. My Dad had it made for me and must have forgot to test it."

"Ah, I've had that happen. Sure, I got you."

The door buzzed and unlocked with an audible clack.

"Thank you," Lumina said as she pulled the door open.

The inside of the building had a played up distressed aesthetic, but it was clearly done

on purpose and not as the result of lazy design. Even the freight style elevator retained the same old warehouse look, but all the parts and paint were new. Lumina rode the elevator to the top floor, allowing Jakob's pull to lead her to his home. She rang the bell and stood clearly in view of the peephole.

After a few moments, the door opened to reveal a bearded young man wearing a plain white button down and tan slacks. He looked at her with confusion, making it clear he didn't know what he was looking at. "Can I help you?"

"I am looking for Jakob. He is here." Lumina said.

"Yeah, but who are you?"

"He will explain. Take me to your Father at once."

"Ok," The young vampire said, allowing Lumina inside. His confusion a testament to his ignorance.

He led her to the next room where a group of vampires lounged. Two were watching TV, but an elder one was reading. That was Jakob. Lumina could feel the trail lead to him.

"Who was it, Riggs?" Jakob asked without looking up.

"You will stand before me for judgment, Father Jakob," Lumina demanded, cutting off Riggs before he could speak.

Jakob's head snapped up, and he visibly blanched. He moved from his seat to standing before Lumina before his book could hit the floor. "Apologies. I did not realize."

Riggs looked at his maker in confusion and unconsciously stepped away from the woman at his side. The two watching TV had risen to their feet at this point, their expressions as worried as they were confused.

"Which of your Children is named Bo, Father Jakob?" Lumina asked.

"The Tall boy by the TV." Jakob said, looking directly ahead.

"Stand beside your Father, boy," Lumina said, pointing to a spot beside Jakob.

Bo stood still for a moment, looking to his Father for guidance.

"Is he deaf?" Lumina asked, turning her face towards Jakob.

"No. He is simply stupid," Jakob said, turning to glower at Bo.

"Sorry, Sir," Bo said as he hurried to his father's side.

"As a matter of fact, I would like you all to line up before me." Lumina pointed to the floor beside Jakob and Bo. Riggs and the girl hurried into position. "Bo. You and your siblings seem to be ignorant of what I am. Is this correct?"

"I planed to educate them when I felt it pertinent," Jakob interjected.

"Father Jakob, I am fairly certain at this point that your name is not Bo." Lumina turned to look at Jakob again, her tone flat.

"Apologies," Jakob muttered.

Lumina looked back to Bo and cocked her head expectantly.

"I don't know what you are," Bo said after a moment. Seeing his father's reactions had caused fear to spread through the room, making the TV seem much louder than it was.

Lumina tapped her mask. “This is the mask of the Children of Contrition. We are the seventh house of our Lord, The First Father. We serve the Seventh Scion as the tempering hand that guides the family. If you even see this mask, understand that you will obey any command given, no matter how small, lest you cross the will of the First Father. Is that clear?”

“Yes,” Bo said.

“I have come because you, Bo, violated a Law. One must never disturb the peace of a Mother. Sapphire Smith, the Owner of The Calm Cafe, tells me you broke this Law. You came to her place of peace and cause a disturbance. This alone is unacceptable, but she tells me that you in particular groped her before her staff and customers, I assume as an act of dominance.”

“You did what?” Jakob said, his eyes bulging with rage.

“I didn-” Bo’s voice was cut off as Lumina grabbed his throat and pulled him down to face her.

“You will not speak lies in my presence,” Lumina said, her voice hard. She could feel the lie even as it formed in his mouth. “I did not ask for a confession. I am telling you what you did wrong. If you attempt to lie again, you will suffer for it.”

“Ok,” Bo croaked out. Lumina released him to a small shove.

“The crime of disturbing a Mother’s peace is severe, as you will come to understand.”

“I’m sorry, but what is a Mother?” The female vampire asked. “I mean besides the obvious.”

“Outrageous.” Lumina said, the words coming unbidden as she looked back to Jakob. “What else have you failed to teach your children?”

Jakob was silent, his head drooping in defeat.

Lumina stepped to the young woman. “What is your name?”

“Farrah,” She replied.

Lumina placed her hands on either side of Farrah’s face and ran through her mind. She searched for the rules and laws. She looked for general knowledge and there was nothing of value. She released Farrah’s face and found herself genuinely angry. “You have taught this girl nothing, Father Jakob.” She practically spat the words. “She doesn’t know anything about the First Father beside his name and that he is to be respected. Your abject failure is not a violation of the law, but such disregard for the lives of your children is simply unacceptable.”

“It was my intent-” Jakob started.

“At what point did you believe I would care about your intent? Does intent undo the fact that I was summoned by Mothers to punish ignorant children for breaking the law? Do you believe your intent will stay my hand?” Lumina almost shouted.

Jakob’s head dropped again. “No,” He said softly.

Lumina adjusted her shirt sleeves. “In light of your ignorance, Bo. I will offer you a mercy as well as an education. One I expect your Father will complete in time. On your knees.”

Bo did as commanded and sat on his heels.

“Based on your sister’s ignorance, I assume you do not know the true nature of your curse. It is an insidious and subtle thing. Most allow their children to discover the truth on their own. I will give you this knowledge early, however.” Lumina reached into him with her mind, effortlessly finding the thing she was looking for. The trigger for the curse. She could feel the pain he had inflicted on his victims as a stream, small and weak, but more than enough for her needs. She loosed it on his psyche and released him. The effects were instantaneous. He froze, his face a rictus of pain. “He will enjoy what he has given the world for the next week. You however, Father Jakob, will drink until the cup is dry. When you awake I expect that not only will you educate these children, but that you will vacate this town. I’m sure another will enjoy it more reasonably.”

Jakob began to shake and wring his hands. “May I at least kneel first?” He asked. “You may.”

Jakob settled on to his knees and Lumina released the river of pain his soul held at bay. He froze, much like his son, though his face was more one of terror and simply pain.

“I do not know for sure how long your Father will sleep, but when he wakes, remind him of my commands.” Lumina turned to leave, her work finished.

She felt, rather than saw, Riggs’ outstretched hand and the words of protest forming on his lips. He would not have time to recognize his mistake. Lumina spun and with a flick of her arm she shattered his. She loosed the stream of pain in his mind and watched as he hit the floor face first. “Let that be a lesson to you, Farrah,” She said without looking at the last vampire standing. “Care for your siblings until they wake. Care for your father until he wakes and understand this,” She said as she stepped towards her, over the body of the fallen Riggs, “The Children of Contrition do not offer mercy twice. When they wake, you leave. If I return and you have not left, I will bring hunters with me and I will feed you to them. Understood?”

“Yes,” Farrah said, through hands clasped over her mouth.

Lumina returned to the Cafe, checking her phone as she went. There had been no new orders yet, so she could finally take a break. She considered renting a room to sleep as it had been a few days. At the Cafe, she found Sapphire serving customers. She waved Lumina to the counter with a warm smile.

“Did you deal with it?” The Mother asked.

“I did. They will not bother you again,” Lumina said simply.

“Good,” Sapphire said, as she handed her a small sandwich. “What can I get you?”

Lumina removed her mask and tucked it under her arm. “What is good?” She smiled.