

THIS IS
THE LAST OF
MY BOOK
DEDICATED TO
MY MOM. I
WILL ALWAYS
LOVE YOU. MAY
YOU FIND REST
IN GOD. 6/6/18

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

"Are you cold?" I asked Raya.

She merely nodded her head in response to me, but remained silent. Her silence toward me was awkward. I attributed this to the various thoughts she had on her mind; I knew she would not be able to sort through them easily. How could I find fault with or for such things when I had the same dilemma?

"I'm going to make a fire as close to us as possible so you won't be cold while we finish talking."

I walked over to the stockpile just near the cave's entrance. Upon reaching it, I begin picking up tree branches and piling them in my arms in a way that would allow me to carry them easily. I stacked them until they were bulky in my arms, but not bothersome to carry. I carried them effortlessly into the cave and dropped them on the ground near Raya. I made sure they were far enough away from Raya that she would not get burned, but close enough to still warm her body.

I begin trying to light the fire, in moments I had a roaring fire. The fire brought light into the black cave. For a few moments, I watched the fire to ensure it would burn well. Once I was sure of this, I turned my full attention back to Raya. I walked back to where Raya was, sitting close enough to her that I was able to easily touch her. I reached my hand out, placing it on the small of her back in an effort to offer her some form of comfort. I tilted my head up so that I could look at her without having to strain my eyes.

"I heard everything you are saying, but do you even understand the depth of what you, yourself are telling me?" I asked.

"Yes, Fallun. I understand perfectly well what I've told you. I would

not have told you otherwise. I honestly, think you disbelieve everything I have told you so far."

At that moment, I felt something which made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. The hunger clawed at me. I felt it moving through my veins. I was, however, more focused on Raya and what she was saying so I did something I had never done before. I pushed the hunger back, it pushed into the deepest, darkest part of me. I hoped with everything in me I could win the fight against such a looming enemy. This was a battle I had yet to win. How would it take before I lost this fight that was just beginning to manifest its presence within me.

"What's wrong with you, Fallun?!!! I can look at you and see the alarm you are trying to hide from me." Raya asked her voiced lined with concern.

"No, Raya. It's nothing..." I lied.

"Fallun, you ask me 'why' earlier, as if you don't already know...because there has never been another like you before, and I know there probably never will be again. With each moment that passes you take my breath away. The way I feel now, I can vaguely remember what my life was like before I met you. Ever since that point, my life has revolved around you and I've thought of little else except for Lerric. I find myself wanting to be around you all the time. When I am asleep, my dreams are filled with images of you. You see yourself in a way that I will never understand, you think so very lowly of yourself. Yet, I don't and can not agree with you. I've never understood love muchless, the concept of it. Even now, as I feel it stronger than anything else I have ever felt before, there are countless questions running rampant in my head. These questions will probably remained unanswered considering everything you have told me. I know you don't have the answers I seek. To

me, none of this matters. There are only two things that matter in my life... Lerric...and now...you. I know I can't live without either one of you. I can not imagine my life without Lerric because she means everything to me. I love her with all of my heart."

"But, you see, my heart doesnot only feel for her. Fallun, it feels for you as well. I feel so much for you; I don't just want you, I feel like it's a need. The need of you is ever present, ever growing within me. This need is growing within me, like my own sickness and you have become like blood I need to make me well again. Do you even know what it was like for me when you and I were separated?"

I heard Raya's voice, but found that my mouth could form no answer to her question. The words coming from her seemed far away and hard for me to make out. I could feel the hunger clawing at me from within, calling to me. As I sat next to Raya, I smelled the blood I knew she held within her body.

"Raya, listen to me. Do you remember what I told you about my having to drink blood from humans to stay alive?"

"Yes, I do. Is this what is bothering you?" Raya asked me, her voice lined with fear.

"Yes, Raya...what happened between us...it has made me exceedingly ravenous. I need to feed. I'm going to go back to the village to hunt..." I tried with enormous effort ot finish my sentence, but Raya quickly cut me off.

"NO!!! Fallun! I can't stand the thought of you taking a human life. Is there no other way...you can still feed without killing them?"

I looked at Raya while trying to focus on the words as she spoke them. I sat quietly, perplexed as I thought about the answer to her questions. My prolonged silence caused her to repeat her question.

"Is there no other way?!! Answer me, Fallun! Now!!!" She screamed at me,

with anger behind her words.

I hated to hear her as she sounded now. However, I hated myself even more for being the reason behind her sadness. I willed myself to answer despite my severe apprehension at doing so.

"Yes...there is. If I were to feed off of you, then this will be enough to satisfy my hunger."

"Then do it...DO IT NOW!!" Raya's voice was louder than it normally was. I thought about this as a question entered my mind. Could I really feed from her and not take her life? I did not know the answer and this bothered me more than I wanted to readily admit. I had no time to consider this possibility because the hunger was quickly overwhelming me.

Raya pulled me to her. I was hesitant at first, but, I knew this hesitation was only temporary. I could feel myself losing the battle. After a few short moments, I gave into it. I placed my hand on the back of Raya's head to hold her still while pulling her toward me. As soon as her skin touched my lips, I sank my teeth in. The blood rushed from her into my mouth swiftly. She gasped for breath, but did not pull away. I drank hungrily as I listened to the beating of her heart. The hunger allowed me to drain her blood quickly and it wasn't long before she lay limp and unmoving.

The slower her heart beat became, the louder it sounded until it was all I could hear. I pushed her from me in one swift motion. As I looked at her, I knew she was close to dying. I knew with everything in me I could never let that happen. How could I fix this now? Then something occurred to me, almost out of nowhere. I could replace what I had taken from her.

But how? She had no wounds that I could see. She was not in any way a vampire. The only that made sense to me was to let her drink in the same way that I did. I did not know what the outcome of this would be, but I could

allow her to die.

I bit into my wrist as I leaned over her. The blood flowed in a rush into her mouth. She made no move to drink it. As I watched her, my mind became frantic. I willed her to move, I needed her to live with everything in me. Then without warning, I saw her mouth move and she begin to swallow. She had her eyes closed as she drank from me hungrily. As the blood flowed into her mouth, I wondered what would become of her.

I had already pulled my wrist from Raya's mouth. She laid there unmoving. I kneeled beside her, looking at her closely. Her eyes were closed in what seemed like sleep. I knew that she was far from any kind of sleep. Only moments ago, she drank ravenously from me, as if her own life depended on mine. Now I felt as if her own life was wrapped up in my own. Forever intertwined.

I had not lost much blood. I knew it would not take much to revive her. I looked at my wrist, the wound now closed and healed. The only indication of the earlier events was the small amount of dried blood that remained. I knew as Raya laid there lifelessly, she was not dead. It occurred to me as I heard Raya's heart begin to beat stronger that she was still alive. I concentrated on the beating of her heart until it was so loudly beating I became consumed by the sound of it.

Raya still seemed to be lost in a slumber I longed to wake her up from. Her heartbeat continued to beat quicker and with a new found strength Raya did not possess before. I knew the blood I gave Raya was mixing with her own. I looked at Raya and was surprised to see her skin. She was so pale, her skin glowed in the cave, similar to the way my own skin did. I did not know what was happening to her. Too many questions constantly entering my mind, seemed to be moving at a rate I could not keep up with. As soon as a single thought entered my mind, another would follow, in rapid succession.

I knew I had to wake up Raya to see if she continued to under go any further changes. My own curiosity piqued in every way possible, leaving me with many unanswered questions. I did not want to separate Raya from the state she was in, but, was left with no choice.

"Raya. Raya, wake up now. You have to wake up...." My voice spoke loudly enough to where it would be heard loud and clearly, almost bothersome to her. I hoped it was enough to pull her out of this current state. I reached over, shaking her gently. As I touched her, I heard her sharp intake of breath.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

"Fallun..." Raya spoke slowly. "I'm awake. I've been laying here listening, but, I could not seem to make myself answer you."

Her voice was altogether different in the way it sounded in my ears. The way she spoke my name alone was done in a tone that seemed to sound like music from her lips, one she could not have mastered on her own. Raya opened her eyes slowly, finding my eyes on her face. I looked directly into her eyes, noticing they were no longer the same beautiful color they had once been. Her eyes looked to be colored in blood and she seemed to have no pupil. The entirety of her eyes was crimson, a match to my own when I fed.

I did not let Raya know I saw these changes. I must have been looking at Raya with a look she was unused to because she flinched under my close scrutiny.

"Fallun...what's wrong? Why are you looking at me like that? Like you don't even know me anymore?"

I had never heard Raya's voice in the sultry way it came out. I thought about the music of the angels just then thinking how much Raya's voice sounded simliar to this. I felt a pang of longing for these sounds just then, one I had long since forgotten.

"Raya, nothing is wrong with me, but something has happened to you. Something that can not be easily explained with simple words..." I explained to her, letting my voice trail off.

Raya sat up slowly, seemingly with no effort. I stood up as well, moving opposite from her, closest to the wall nearest to the fire. As I turned to to look at Raya, I lost sight of her. When my eyes finally found her, she

stood close to the fire. Her movements were a match to the speed of my own. I knew this was a new development to her, the sickness weighed her down, preventing her from doing much of anything.

"Fallun, what have you done to me?" She asked me while keeping her eyes transfixed on the fire. She seemed to be fascinated by it.

I wondered what it was she saw through her eyes as she looked at her surroundings. Her hair, still unbound, flowed loosely around her. The darkness of it made her skin seem even more pale as I gazed at her.

"Raya, can I ask you something? Do you notice any differences in yourself?"

I asked her while looking at her closely. I was careful to keep from taking my eyes off of her. She seemed to be having trouble controlling her own movements. Even the simplest way she moved was done swiftly and without any form of self-control, however, everything she did with angelic grace. This was unforced, almost natural to Raya as I watched her in awe. I found myself completely absorbed in watching her, thinking how breathtaking she was this way.

"Yes...Fallun. There are numerous changes I take notice of. My hearing seems to be the most noticeable. I hear things with much more clarity, as if some one turned up the volume. Even now, I can hear the crackling of the fire perfectly, almost if I was confined within its flames. I can hear your breathing as if it were my own I was listening to. I can hear your heart beating, the sound so loud in my ears, my eardrums feel as if they might burst."

I heard everything Raya said, but, I gave no indication of this. I had questions and thoughts in my head, ones I desperately wanted to have answered.

"Hold out your hands...Let me see them."

Raya was hesitant about obeying my request, but she did so without my having to ask her again. I looked at her hands in the light of the fire. I

could see they were elegant, closely resembling my own. Her hands had claws protruding from the ends of her fingers where her feminine nails had once been.

"Come here, let me look at you. I need to see something." Raya was quick as she moved, coming to stand directly in front of me.

"Open your mouth." I ordered her. "Why are you asking me this? What's wrong with you?" She asked me as her eyes searched my own. I assumed she thought she would finally find the answers she was seeking in my eyes. To no avail. My face was a blank mask, not betraying the looming thoughts in my mind.

"Open your mouth and then I will tell you what I am thinking. But, first, I need to be completely sure of my own thoughts before I voice them to you."

I could see Raya wanted answers so she readily obeyed me without further questions. She opened her mouth for my inspection, and I could see the obvious change. As if I stared at my own reflection in a mirror, I saw her teeth matching my own, with fangs protruding from Raya's mouth. I sucked in a sharp intake of breath and released her in one swift motion, shocked from the realization of Raya's transformation.

Looking at her, I remained silent. I did not want to tell her what I discovered. But what choice was left to me except this one?

"Raya, listen to me, do you love me?"

"Yes, Fallun, I love you with all of my heart and soul...."

"Raya...what I am about to tell you will severely test your love for me. It will push it to its limits." I told her while staring intensely into her crimson colored eyes.

She was exceptionally beautiful to me, but as I continued to look at her, it seemed as if she grew even more stunning with each passing moment. I wondered if this is what my maker meant when he had said I would be the last thing

they would see. I knew now as I looked at Raya why she was more beautiful than anything else I had ever seen. Her earlier appearance seemed dull compared to how she looked now illuminated in light.

"Raya, when I drained you of blood to satisfy my own hunger, I felt you dying. Your heart was barely beating. I knew if I did not act quickly you would die. So, I did the only thing I felt would save you. I gave you a large amount of my own blood to drink. It has caused this change in you. Now you are like I am..."

My voice trailed off. I knew I should have, but found I was unable to finish speaking. Raya caught on quickly. She remained silent as she took on the full meaning of my words. I waited patiently for any response she would offer, but what she said was not what I expected.

"How are you exactly?"

The realization of what I had done to Raya struck me full force, like a physical blow in that very moment. I felt as long as I remained silent, it would not make what I had to say real. My silence only urged Raya to repeat her question.

"Fallun!!! Answer me! How are you exactly?..." Her voice came out lined with uncertainty.

"...A vampire." I spoke out the word in a rush hoping she would not hear me correctly, but I knew she had.

I heard her heart skip a beat and I knew the reality of my words caught her completely off guard.

"What do you mean 'a vampire'? What exactly are you trying to say? Answer me Fallun!!!"

"Raya, listen to me. Nothing like this has ever happened before. EVER!

I did not even know giving you my blood would affect you in this way. From everything I've seen on a physical level about you, you appear to be a vampire. I won't know for sure unless the hunger begins to affect you as it does me. Don't be upset with me, Raya. I am only going by what I can see with my own eyes because they miss little.

"Your skin is extremely pale, you have fangs, your nails have grown to resemble claws, and your ears are pointed much like my own."

I watched Raya feel her ears. Sure enough, her ears too had undergone a physical change, becoming longer and pointed.

"The only conclusion I can come to is one stemming from these obvious changes, which further proves that you are in fact a vampire."

"So...I'm like you now? What does this mean for me? I can't die???"

"As I mentioned earlier, I can not be sure right now. I do know physically you match me in almost every way possible. All I am asking is for you to just be understanding in all of this. I know all of this is hard for you to wrap your mind around but, there is so much to tell you, so much I have to teach you if you are in fact like I am." I explained.

"Fallun, I don't understand any of this. Please explain it to me so I can better understand. I love you more than anything and as long as I have you everything else is nothing but bliss to me." Raya pleaded.

"Before all of this happened, I was the only one of my kind. Now, it seems you are exactly like me. There is no turning back from this point. What's done is done. Only I should like to think the abhorrent actions I have committed myself to like moving pieces on a chess board, are not things you will destroy your innocence, by staining your own hands with blood for any reason."

"How long do you think it will take the hunger to affect me like it does you?"

"I'm really not sure Raya. This has never happened to me before. The hunger usually affects me whenever I awake from the slumber, just after the setting of the sun. This depends on how tired I am or how much I have fed. Sometimes, when I wake up, the sun is not fully set. Other times it's been dark for hours."

I paused, looking at Raya in the darkness. I still had many unanswered questions, but I knew no one could answer them for me. I had been created to be like this by my maker. Even my own knowledge of these things was a vague, distant memory at best.

"I know you probably have endless questions inside of your head you are eager for answers to. It bothers me that I am unable to answer you because there is so little about the human I understand. I have also told you so much about myself, probably more than I should have. Even now, there is so much I could probably say, so much I haven't said yet for countless reasons."

"Fallun, what is it you have to tell me? Why do you feel the need to hold yourself back from me in any way? You can trust me, you know? You don't have to protect yourself from me I would rather die than to ever hurt you."

"Raya, it's not that I'm holding myself back from you, I just can not put into words what it is I mean to tell you. I've thoughts about these things over and over in my mind and nothing seems right. I don't even understand alot of things at this point. There's very little about this whole situation that I do understand. Your explanation of things has helped, but everything seems complicated still, beyond belief." I paused, trying to gather my thoughts into a way I could make Raya better understand me.

Yes, it was true that I did not refuse Lucifer anything he had asked of me, but could the emotions I felt for him once, ever be described as love?

To my knowledge, such a thing had never happened before. I felt like a small child in my apparent ignorance about such things.

I looked at Raya and could see how striking she was in her array. I found no flaw in her. I knew she was human with imperfection, yet it was these imperfections that made her so perfect in my eyes. Nothing was comparable to her, in that everything about her appealed to me and left me utter fixated with the greatest fascination toward her.

I knew as I looked at her, I loved her. This realization struck me full force as if I had been hit. I was astonished at this fact, yet at the same time, I was eager to make such a thing known to her. My own fear, however, made me apprehensive to tell her, unsure of what her reaction to my words would be.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

It was true, I had already condemned her to my fate. Raya was as damned as I was, how strong would her proclaimed love for me be now? I had never asked her, but I had always wondered if she loved me enough to follow me into the darkness. To embrace what she had no knowledge of. For me, there was no question of my love and the depth of it.

I was silently lost in thought. I knew I had Raya's full attention, but felt unsure of what I would say. It was a very real possibility that my honesty would change things between us, in what ways, I did not know. I did not want to assume things, especially if I did not have enough knowledge of my own to do so.

"Raya, in all these years that I've known you I have always been vexed by so much concerning you. Initially, it was the fact I could not bring myself to kill you. Then, it was because I did not kill you when I had the chance to. I allowed this to pass me by. Doing these things is not in my nature. Instead of killing you, I picked you up and took you with me. Even at the sight of your blood, I did not take your life. This, in turn, allowed me to save your life and Lerric's as well.

"Don't you know the night I delivered her, I fed off your beautiful energy and it became imprinted on every part of me permanently, this, as well as your scent. Granted, this happens with every life I take in some way or another, but you were different. I did not kill you, instead, I left you alive. Then, I was left alone to long for you in ways I had never known before. I knew I had changed when I began to look for in everything I did."

Raya watched me closely. I noticed she was listening intently so I continued.

Apart of me wanted to hold my word back because I knew the outcome of them, the unknown, was bothersome. I had never allowed fear to dictate my actions or control me in any way, even since the very beginning of my fall.

"The realization of everything struck me with such force, I could only cower against it. I looked for any words to describe how I felt, yet I could find none adequate enough. The fact was that I craved you, I needed you. I wanted you. My very life was wrapped up in yours. In a sense, I had a reason or purpose for wanting to help you.

To be honest, it was not selfish in any way. I had pure intentions in my wanting to help you in some way. Yet, no solution was apparent to me. Nothing I thought of seemed to be an easy option. I was simply at a loss as to how to help you because I had never faced a problem like this before. Don't you know the greatest problem I faced was when I rebelled against my maker and became what you see before you. Yet, that was nothing compared to the threat your sickness posed to me. I remembered how I was unable to take your life when I had the chance to do so. How could I live with myself if I let something else do what I could not?" I asked while looking at her face closely, looking in earnest for the answers she might have in the lines of her face.

"Fallun," Raya spoke softly while looking directly into my eyes. I knew she could clearly see into my eyes despite the surrounding darkness. "Don't you understand, the sickness which affected me was entirely no fault of your own. How could it be? I was born this way. Yes, it is true you could have taken my life at any moment, but the fact remains, you did not. Why this is? I do not know. Only you can truly answer that. Trust me, when I tell you I am grateful to you for everything. Even now I feel no affects of the former sickness. I have you to thank for these things. If I am destined to be what you are, then I still don't fault you for this. How could I do such a thing,

when it's you who has saved my life over and over?" Raya asked me with pleading eyes.

"Raya, something occurred to me and I have said it numerous times inside of my head, but never out loud to you. Honestly, I am afraid of what it could mean once I tell you."

"What is it Fallun? You know you can tell me anything and nothing will ever change between us. My love for you is endless. Nothing, not even your words can ever affect this."

Raya paused and waited for me to speak. I could see she was slightly anxious to hear what I had to say, but was trying to be patient with me. She had not learn how to mask her emotions in her new form. I had centuries to learn this but for her, I knew what I had to teach her would come with time.

"Raya, I love you. I've loved you from the first moment I saw you. Yes, it is true I did not know how to tell you. I am a monster and still feel as though this is all I will ever be because of the things I have done. I am a monster of the worst kind and I know there's no changing this fact. To me, I was incapable of such emotions as love, but when I even so much as think of you I feel it inside my heart beyond measure.

"I have never felt anything comparable to this feeling, not even the hunger. The thing about the hunger, is it can be satisfied, but the longing I feel for you simply can not. What's more is that I have grown to love Lerric as well. This is odd to me because she is human and I am able to smell the blood flowing in her veins. However, I would no sooner harm either of you than I would my own self."

I became silent because I knew my words held weight to them and I was unsure exactly how they affected Raya. I looked at her very carefully, trying

to detect the hidden expressions of Raya's face.

Raya broke the silence with an odd question. "Faullun, what is it you truly want from me?"

I allowed her question to sink into my mind, thoughtful about it. I was afraid to speak put my answer, but I had no hesitation as I spoke.

"Raya, my love, if you are indeed a vampire like myself, this means you can not die or be taken from me in some unforeseen way. What I want is for you to walk with me for all eternity. To remain here by my side. I was without you once before and the slumber itself was the only way I was able to endure the separation. Now that I have you, I no longer wish to be without you. I want you with me until my love for you dies."

"Fallun, is this really and truly what you want from me?"

"Raya, don't you know by now I don't say things lightly. I mean every word I say. I'm sure there are many options left open to you, but what would you honestly do even in the slightest state you are in now? I just don't want you to leave me. Not only because I want you with me always, but also because there is much to teach you."

"What do you mean there is much to teach me? What could I possibly have to learn?" Raya asked, showing her obvious discomfort held in the thoughts she held just below the surface of her eyes.

She did little to mask her emotions so they were easy for me to read. I did not know if she showed them to me intentionally or she was too uncomfortable to hide them from me. I so desperately wanted her to understand what I was saying to her. I wanted the chance to prove to her the very truth of my words. I decided I would bring something to her attention she might have overlooked.

"Raya, look at my face. What do you see when you look at me?"

She was thoughtful as she scrutinized my face. I knew no matter how hard she looked at my face, she would not see what I wanted and so desperately needed her to see in my eyes. I knew this to be truth, but I had to test it regardless.

"Your face is hard to read. I don't know. Maybe because you've had a longer time learning how to mask your emotions than I have." Raya explained, clearly bothered.

I hated the fact she was so bothered by this. I did my best to give her as much reassurance as possibly.

"Raya, I believe that you are in fact a vampire. It's not that my face is so much harder for you to read, or that you can't see as well as I can. Yes, I have clearly learned how to mask my emotions. Do you know how long it took me to master something like that? There were many ways I had help with this. For one, I watched the humns. I have been in this cave so long I have lost track of the time, but I have always managed to watch the humans with such clarity. Do you still find yourself so bothered?"

"Fallun, what do you expect...nothing like this has ever happened to me before. There's no way for me to really understand any of it. What proof can I go by?"

I hated the sound of her frantic voice just now because she had the new found ability to reach tones and pitches in her range of sound that made my ears hurt to hear her speak. I knew she wa bother. I hated for her to feel anything else but complete happiness. I knew this transition was hard for her. The only way I knew how to help her was to let her see for herself what I could not show her. I had to show her outside the confines of the cave.

"Raya," I said as I paused to look at her closely, watching for any changes in her facial expression. There were subtle changes, but I saw them clearly.

"I hate for you to feel as you do. Don't be bothered. There is a way to prove that it is not your eyesight lacking and prove once and for all that you are as I believe you to be."

Raya listened intently to me. She seemed to be hanging on my every word. I was grateful because it showed me she would easily learn and there would not be obstacles in teaching her things. This meant a lot to me considering I had never been in a situation where I had to teach anyone else.

"Come with me Raya and pay close attention to me." I ordered her.

I being walking toward the cave's opening, moving at a slower pace than I was used to. I knew Raya would be able to follow my movements in the darkness of the cave. However, I was ready to test Raya's keen eyesight in a way she would have no further cause to doubt. I walked until I reached the cliff's edge and waited momentarily for her to come and stand beside me.

"Raya, listen to me." I spoke without looking at her. I knew she paid attention to my every word, so I did not pause to look at her at all. "I'm going to show you how fast I can move. No, the full pace at which I can move, but enough so you can see for yourself what I want to show you. I want to see if you are able to keep up with my movements. As I move through the trees, I will be easy enough to locate because of my pale skin but with your eyesight you should be able to see me despite this fact."

I did not wait for Raya to respond, I leaped from the cliff's edge landing on the tree closest to its edge. I continued to jump from tree to tree until I was far enough from Raya that she looked like a black speck to me. I stood erect on the limb of the tree and waited. I turned so that I could look at

her.

I looked at her small form, but even from where I stood I could still see her face with clarity. The look of astonishment upon her face was unlike anything else I had ever seen before. I stood there leaning against the tree's main trunk. There were so many branches I found it hard to count them all. As I stood there I wondered what Raya thought now. I wondered about our future and how long it would be until we could enjoy a moment of undisturbed peace.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

I was unsure how I appeared to Raya. I didn't know if she was able to track my movements as easy as I tracked hers. I knew she kept up with me, but I wondered if I came easy to her. I was eager to return to her presence. Being away from her, taxed me emotionally no matter how brief it was. I wanted to know if my test for her had been successful. If she had been able to follow me without strain, then I knew she was in fact like me. If she wasn't however, I wondered how this would affect us.

I did not linger on these thoughts long. As I started to return back to Raya, I did not look to see if she was watching me. I jumped from tree limb to tree limb effortlessly reaching her. I landed on the cliff's edge and stood in front of her. I was not out of breath nor was I tired in the least. Immediately, I looked at her face to see if I could read her expression. I could see the open discomfort Raya had upon her beautiful face.

"Raya, I don't have to ask if you were able to follow my movements because I saw as much when you were watching me just now. Don't let yourself be bothered by this. This is one of the abilities I possess as well. Nothing will be as it used to be for you. You try to hide this from me, but I know the sounds of everything around you are screaming at you pulling your attention toward each one. Stop trying to hide such things from me, because you will find you are unable to. Am I wrong in the things I tell you." I hoped she would be truthful with me when she spoke. As I thought about these things, I wondered what good would it be for her to hide anything at all from me.

"Fallun, it's not that I am trying to hide anything from you. There is a more pressing matter that I need to speak to you about. I feel a need, a

craving I can't explain to you."

"You don't have to explain, Its the hunger you can't hide or run from. It's time I teach you to hunt. I looked at the sky and knew that the sun is going to rise soon. We both need to hunt before it rises and we have to return to the cave." Pausing, I wanted my words to sink in. The smell from some unknown prey came to me quickly and easily. I wasted no time as I turned to Raya and softly spoke to her.

"Follow me." This was all I said before leaping out of the cave. I let myself fall to the ground gracefully. Immediately, I picked up my speed, running in the direction of the scent. The moments seemed to drag on before I reached my prey, but when I found it, I smiled as I saw my reward. I didn't look to see if Raya was behind me, I could hear her just a few steps away. "Watch me now and wait here until I signal for you to come to me."

I saw a male covered in blood, I knew he would become my prey. His features were hard to make out. I did not question where the blood came from, I knew very shortly the answered would come to me. I wasted no time leaping upon him. I bit into him and drank from him hungrily, feeling his blood rush into me feeding me his memories at the same time. I paced myself as I drank from him. Once he was weakened and unmoving, I pulled him from my lips and held him with disgust in my arms.

"Come here and drink from him Raya."

Raya must have been controlled by the blood entirely as I once was in the beginning because she lost no time in aggressively feeding from the male. She drank hungrily from him. I heard her swallowing forcefully trying to pull the blood from his body even faster. I knew beyond all doubt Raya was indeed a vampire. She would never die.

I stood there with the male in my arms allowing Raya to drain the remainder of his blood. I listened for his heartbeat to grow faint and slow down. I could not make the mistake of allowing her to drain every last drop of his blood. She would grow cold with the guilt and blood staining his own soul.

Once I heard his heart beat grow faint, I pulled him from her grasp. "Raya," I said to her. "You must not drain all of his blood or you will be sickened by his guilt as it taints you in ways you can't possibly understand. I know this because in the beginning I made the mistake of doing this and this guilt transformed me into the mindless monster I was at first, driven only by my own ravenous hunger. Are you not satisfied? Why do you still thirst?"

I did not know how to wrap my brain around the things I knew Raya was obviously affected by.

"Yes, Fallun. The feeling that I spoke of earlier, this craving is not so harsh to me now. Now I am able to endure the feeling of it. Does your own hunger affect you like this as well?"

I wanted to lie to Raya just then, but the reality of this I knew would only hinder her in the future. I did not want to give her any reason at all to distrust me. I would not be responsible for this.

"I have existed for such a long time and for me the hunger was worse. At least for you, you seem to have some control over yourself. I'm grateful of this because I don't want you to know the guilt for such things I have known all this time. I don't want you to ever see yourself as a monster the way I see myself even now. At least with you, I know you will only kill one who deserves this fate to simply satisfy the needs of your hunger."

"Fallun, I know I am like you, a vampire, but my thinking is still the same in the aspect of killing needlessly. I don't want to do that and abhor the very idea of having to just because I am affected in much the same ways

as you are. Do you know what images flooded my mind as I drank from him?"

"Raya, these are the memories of his life. Don't you know this? Couldn't you tell by the things you saw in his blood." I asked her.

"Fallun, I know if you saw even half of what I saw, you know how truly gruesome he was. He was a monster in the worst way. The blood that covered and stained his soul was from the innocent he tortured and murdered without cause, yet, no one stopped it. Even as his memories flooded my mind, I saw that he has murdered many other innocents. I also know he took great pleasure in doing these things. I know all this is not surprising to you in the least bit because you have had the memories of the humans to contend with a lot longer than I have."

"Raya," I started as I looked at her face. She seemed tormented by the realization of what she had come to know. "I know you don't like these aspects or that I have to kill the humans in this way, but do you really believe it is better to let such monsters in their own right live. I do kill them, but I only kill those who are just as much of a monster if not more so that I have been in my whole existence. They have no regard for anything or anyone but themselves. That male we drank from has killed countless victims, small children who could not protect themselves. What would do if it was Lerric who he caused harm to in some way...?"

Raya stopped me midsentence, knowing she did not want to hear what I had to say. She needed to hear my words, whether she wanted to or not. There was no room for such soft emotions toward the monsters; they deserved no pity. All they deserved was hatred and an introduction to death itself. I was grateful to these monsters, without them I would not have such an abundance of food.

"Fallun, must you say such things to me? I don't want to think of such things regarding Lerric. I guard her with my very life, you of all people

know this better than anyone. I know beyond everything you would also protect Lerric with your very life. I will never let any harm come to her as long as I live." Raya told me with conviction.

I heard her voice full of emotions. I wanted her to learn to hide her emotions better, I was grateful that she choose not to at this moment in time.

"Raya, don't you know that next to the hunger, the love I have for you utterly dictates everything I do now. I know that Lerric is a part of you. I have sworn my life to protect the both of you because I know you come as one. My life is yours. I would tear apart the entire earth just to search for you were you to ever become lost or harmed in any way at all. For you the hunger is the only thing I can see that would ever pose a problem. For Lerric, I don't know if she will be able to understand and accept everything we are about to tell her."

"WE??? What do you mean 'we'?" Raya asked me in surprise.

"Raya has it not dawned on you I have made you this way, into the creature you are now. I condemned you to this fate which is now yours. The truth is, I'm not ever going to leave your side, for nothing and no one. I know there is still so much I have to teach you. I want to help you with everything so it will not be hard on you. I love you, and to be honest I can't bear to be away from you for any period of time. No matter how great or small the time may be.

"So that leads me to tell you that I really want you to come live with me permanently. Before you even ask, yes, this includes Lerric as well. I don't want to leave Lerric alone because I know this would kill something very beautiful in your heart. However, there are things that will have to be done for her. She is still human and has to eat food to live. We will gather firewood and make sure she has adequate provisions.

"Does this strike you as something you can help me do? I would never ask of you something that you weren't capable of. You don't have much of a choice since you can not be in the sunlight." I asked, pausing to let Raya contemplate my words.

I noticed how thoughtful she was about my words, taking everything into serious consideration.

"Everything you tell me seems like the best option. How much time do we have before the sun rises?"

"Not long, the sun is soon to rise."

"Let's go then. I don't want to waste anymore time. I know the sun rise limits what we are able to do in the light of the day. I remember what happened to you. The images in my mind will not so easily be forgotten." Raya told me as she begin to run.

I wasted no time in following her. I knew there was much we had to accomplish before the night's end. Raya's new found strength made her exceptionally fast. I was much older than her which gave me the advantage over her of my abilities. I was first to reach Raya's dwelling, waiting a few moments before Raya arrived.

She looked at me and I could see her smiling slightly. I smiled back at her grateful for this even though it was a real possibility things were about to get more complicated than they already were.

"Let's do this..." Raya said as her face took on a more serious expression.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

Raya wore a calm expression on her face now. I wondered how long this would last, but did not allow my own thoughts to linger from the task at hand. Raya walked forward ahead of me, opening the door as she crossed the threshold. I followed her noticing how quiet the house was. I was aware of Lerric's presence before I saw her, I could smell her Lerric. I watched Raya move toward Lerric. Lerric slept on the settee. She looked like a cheribum utterly lost in the paradise of sleep. Raya reached out gently touching Lerric.

"Don't touch her! Speak to her to wake her. Your body's temperature is much colder than she is used to. It might harm her." I told Raya, causing to stop abruptly.

"Lerric. Lerric, wake up." Raya's voice was soft as she spoke. Lerric appeared to be lost in a deep sleep but, it did not take much prodding for Raya to wake her.

"Mother, you're here!?" Lerric said in a slumber filled voice. Her eyes opened becoming more alert as she realized she was no longer sleeping.

I knew Raya wanted to embrace Lerric after her long absence from Lerric, but she elected not to because of my earlier warning.

"Lerric, listen to me. We don't have much time. I need you to grab some things that you will need and bring them here. We are leaving with Fallun and going back to the cave. Do you understand? Don't ask any questions right now just hurry, please."

Lerric did as she was asked without any form of delay. In mere moments, Lerric was back, standing in front of Raya with a small back packed to the brim.

"I'll carry Lerric since you're not used to running yet. We need to go NOW. We will come back for the rest of your stuff little by little." I explained as I looked at the both of them. "Come here Lerric." I said softly. I knew it was now going to be a race against the sun.

Lerric walked over to me quickly. I gathered her up into my arms and immediately picked her up. Without any further delays, I picked up my speed. I heard the door shut behind me and knew Raya was just behind me. We ran through the darkness. I felt the surrounding branches brush against my skin as I ran. I did my best to shield Lerric from them. I heard Raya's footsteps behind me knowing she was keeping up with me easily. Time seemed to stand still. The sun was rising quickly and I could already see the edge of the cliff a few paces in front of me. I ran even faster allowing my own sense of urgency propel me faster to my goal. I jumped up landing on the edge of the cliff.

I saw the sun rise before I felt the burning pain on my body. I paid it little attention because my primary focus was Lerric. The sun had risen enough for me to see it completely on the horizon. However, I felt the heat of it before I saw this. I walked forward with Lerric still in my arms into the deepest recesses of the cave, well away from from the light of the sun. The pain my whole body was engulfed in sent me reeling. I continued to give Lerric my complete attention.

"Are you okay?" I asked her as I set her down on her feet. Any movement I engaged in hurt me emmensely, but I hid this from her child-like eyes.

"Yes. I am okay, but where is my mother?"

It took me a moment to fully register her question above the pain occupying my mind. When I did register Lerric's questions, time stopped.

Where was Raya? I knew it had already taken her too long to arrive. In my own haste I assumed she was still right behind me. I stood there for only

a moment before I realized the horror of Raya's absence. Once it did, I wasted no time. I knew I had to go and look for Raya at all costs.

"Lerric, stay here...wait until I come back for you. DO NOT leave the confines of this cave until I return. I will not be long."

I did not wait for Lerric's response. I ran full speed toward the edge of the cliff. The sun's were scorching on my skin. The sun had not yet reached its peak in the sky, but it was already hot enough to burn me. I had to get back to my dwelling as quickly as possible or I would die by the sun's rays. The reality of this struck me with such force I trembled from it. This thought coupled with the excruciating pain caused me to stagger as I ran, but I did not stop.

Did I truly love Raya enough to save her from this know I could die in the process? I had yet to come in such close contact for such an extended period of time to anything that could take my life except for the light of the sun itself. The cause for such insanity was for the woman I loved even more than my own life. Her life was in my hands.

At this thought, I leaped from the cliff and tried to locate Raya by her scent I hoped would somehow be in the air. I knew the only way I would be able to track her would be by the blood I hoped would not be shed. I hoped, as I ran, that she was not feeling the same pain I struggled against. I could feel my skin burning, cracking and peeling from my bones in pieces as I ran. Each step caused me to scream, with no one to hear me by the empty air around me.

The pain mixed with my thoughts propelled me faster toward Raya. I did not know exactly where I would find her or if I would find her at all. I knew above everything I could not give up my search. I retraced my steps, going back the way I had come only moments ago. Hoping with each step I would see

her. The I felt was growing to an almost unbearable level. How much more would I have to endure before I found Raya? Was it even a possibility I could endure such torture in order to do so? These thoughts entered my mind and I became even more hurried, frantic as I ran.

I had only found Raya, recently realizing that I loved her as I found myself doing. I wasn't able to finish my thoughts because I saw a corpse lying on the ground, unmoving. There sight was utterly morbid, one that stole the breath from my lungs. I slowed my pace as I reached it. I almost walked right past it when I heard the unmistakeable sound of Raya's voice.

"Fallun...please...I need you..."

It was Raya. I would not have know simply by looking at her, but her voice as always was like music to my ears. Walking forward I wasted no time. I reached down, picking Raya up. Everything I did made me scream out in agony, but I did not care. I pulled Raya to my chest and titled my head to shield her from the rays of the sun that continued to grow in heat.

I wasted no time in picking up my speed, knowing I had to get Raya out of the sun as quickly possible. As I looked down at her momentarily, I wanted to somehow reassure her so she would know I was right there with her. I did not know how much longer she would last in the sun, but, I would still get her to my dwelling at all costs. Or I would surely die trying. I knew this beyond everything else and felt it within my heart and soul. I wondered if I really did love her this much? I knew it had to be this and more because as I continued to burn in this living hell, all that mattered was Raya's life.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

I ran as fast as my damaged body would allow me to, knowing every single moment that passed counted. I reached the cliff, but felt my own energy draining almost as soon as I did. This seemed to be instant. I doubted my own ability to jump so high. I didn't want to harm Raya so I was cautious, jumping to the lowest branch I could easily reach. I used the other branches in the tree to help me reach the top of the cliff's edge.

Upon reaching it, I hurriedly ran into the innermost part of the cave, surrounded completely by darkness. Sluggish, I lay Raya down.

"What's wrong with her???" Lerric asked me immediately. I saw the look of pain etched on Lerric's face as she stared at her mother in horror.

"I can't answer you right now, Lerric. Go over to the other side of the cave wall so I can attend to your mother. She really needs my help right now, but if you stay there, it will be hard for me to help her." I explained, my own voice frantic but calm.

Lerric obeyed me without questions, but leaned up against the wall where she would still be able to see us both. I knew her eyesight was not as keen as my own. I was grateful for this because of what I planned to do. I did not want to show Lerric the horrors of my world.

"Raya...listen to me, please. I need you to wake up now. You've been badly burned by the sun. I'm going to try to give you some of my blood in hopes that it will heal you as it once did. Just hold on. Stay with me and focus on the sound of my voice. I love you."

I did not wait for her to respond because I knew she was much too weak to say anything. Since finding her, she had suffered further burns on our

return. To my eyes, she was almost unrecognizable. I was not sure if I would even be able to heal her like I did last time but I was going to at try. I wanted to focus on her external injuries first. I bit a gash in my wrist and let the blood drip into her mouth and over her body. Her clothes were in rags from the sun.

It seemed like a thousand small eternities passed since I had kneeled down next to her with my wrist pressed to her mouth. At first, there was no change when the blood made contact with her, but now she was swallowing it with greater force and urgency. This pained me already, due to the already weakened state I was in, but I did not pull back from her. I let her drink from me until I could hear her heart beating rapidly in the silence. Once I heard this sound, I pulled back from her. I was almost tempted to let her drink until she was completely healed.

I knew if I did, I would die, because of my weakened state. As I heard her heartbeat pick up in strength, I knew this was all that mattered to me. Stumbling backward, I hit the wall opposite from her with a force that knocked the air from my lungs. Looking at Raya in the darkness, I saw her with clarity. At first, I was vexed because I saw no outward signs of healing. This was short-lived because right before my eyes, her skin began to heal gradually until it was back to normal. I watched her closely to see if she would heal further. I only wanted to be sure she would be okay.

"Fallun, are you there?"

I heard Raya ask me so softly, I barely heard it. I was almost certain Lerric could not hear it, but I remembered Lerric was also not human, so I knew this was probably Raya. I glanced at Lerric who sat there motionless looking at us both. I stood up and walked over to Raya. Raya's eyes were now

can sense this new life growing inside of me already. How it is possible, I don't know because we only just a few hours ago, knew each other intimately."

I looked at Raya and thought about everything she was saying to me. What did this all mean? There had never been a vampire child before? What would this child become, I wondered. So many thoughts flooded my mind so rapidly, that I could not keep up with them.

"Fallun, what is it? Please talk to me and tell me what it is you're thinking. I need to know. I'm scared because I know I am a vampire now, but I was human when I got pregnant, so I wonder what will this baby be?"

We both spoke unusually low to keep Lerric from hearing too much of our conversation.

"Raya, I'm not sure, but I will still not leave your side." I reassured her in a calm manner.

Raya sighed heavily and then asked "Do you promise, Fallun??? I know this changes things because we did not expect this to happen. When I found out I was happy, despite my weakened state. I knew I was extremely happy, but I was apprehensive about telling you, unsure of how it would affect you."

"Raya, I know that there is so much you are going through. These changes are a lot to endure and now you are pregnant. I will be honest, I don't know the first thing about what this means for you to be pregnant. I have been alone for a very long time. I don't know the first thing about being a father. I promise you, I will do all I can to help you care for the child. I know that I am a monster and I don't want my morbid nature to affect Lerric or this child. What will they do once they learn of my true nature?"

"Fallun, don't you know how much I love you with everything in me? Do you know how much I have wanted to be the mother of your child? Nothing makes me happier. Now that it is going to happen, nothing means more to me than

open. Her skin looked much better. I knew she was still healing. I was grateful for this.

"Raya, are you okay?"

"Yes, I am. What happened to me?"

As I stood there looking at her, I know I was unusually weak, but I paid little attention to this. Raya was my only focus just now.

"Raya, as I told you, you can not die, but you were not fast enough to reach the cave before the rising of the sun. It burned you severely. I had to use my blood to heal again. How do you feel??"

"To be honest, I feel the hunger raging inside of me, only not as strong. Also, I have something else to tell you. I don't know how you are going to take it. Or what it will mean once I do..."

"Raya, just like you told me nothing will change how I feel for you. Please just tell me what you need to say. All I can do is listen. I promise, I won't leave your side."

Raya sighed heavily, appearing to be in deep thought. "Fallun, I'm pregnant."

"How do you know, Raya???"

"I know because when you gave me your blood, I could feel another life inside of me drawing the blood to it. I don't know how this happened, but this is the only thing I can think of. I don't really know what to say, except that you are going to be a father."

The gravity of Raya's words overwhelmed me, more than anything I had ever known. Somehow I didn't register her words fully. I questioned her in an attempt to ensure I had heard her correctly. "You said you're pregnant, and that I am going to be a father???"

"Yes, Fallun. I know this is hard for you to believe but, its true. I

our family. It's hard for me to even picture being pregnant, because I did not count on it. I didn't even think I would live that long.

"Do you know how many times you have saved my life? Look at you, my love. I know it took everything in you to go out into the sun willing, risking your life simply to look for me, just to save me. A true monster would never have done something like this without a second thought. Monsters can never know what it is to truly love someone. Such a word can no longer be used to describe what you have become now. You are more than that. Even without knowing I carried this child, you saved its life as well.

"Don't you remember the men you saved me from? They were truly monsters, but not you, my lover."

"I hear you, Raya. The fact remains that I do kill just so I can live. Even further than this, I have condemned you to a fate worst than death. Also the child as well. Don't you understand I see your heart and the good you possess."

"Fallun, do not hold what you can not control against yourself. You have changed drastically since the very beginning. According to you, the hunger no longer dictates your actions."

I understand she was trying to get me to see her point of view. I did see it but I hated to look at things like that. I condemned her to such a life as the one I now lived. She may have come to terms with it, but I could never forgive myself for any of these things."

"Fallun, can I ask you something?"

Raya sat up slowly, turning so that we were facing each other. Her injuries were completely healed. There was no indication of her previous trauma earlier.

"Do you love me?" Raya asked me while staring into my eyes.

"Yes, I do with everything I have in me, with all my body, heart, mind and soul. I have never felt this way not even about Lucifer himself."

"I know, Fallun. You are so differen than anyone I have ever know. Much more different than you were when I met you. I know beyond all else that you do love and nothing you could ever say or do will change any thing about my feelings for you. I never ever want to be without you. No matter what happens, from here until we no longer live." Raya told me with conviction.

"Raya, let me tell you something in hopes you can understand me and what I say to you. All you need to understand is that I love you and I do want to be with you. No matter what happens I will not leave your side. I don't know what the future holds for us, but I know we are in this together. If you show me where forever dies, I'll show you where my love ends."