

What lurks in our underworld.

By Katie

I sat back in my dusty recliner clutching my tea tight, I want to take in as much of the warmth as I can get. The harsh winds are gathering a storm outside and my old, creaking house takes in every ounce of cold that passes by.

"Granny, can you tell me a story? I need inspiration for a writing project at school and I just know you tell the most exciting stories." Tessa asked politely.

Tessa is my only grandchild and if you're wondering who I am, my name is Jessica, Jessica Jenna Jones, but when I was younger I was more known to Jess. I'm 64, currently single as my husband for 20 years was killed, he was found last year lying in a puddle of blood, pale as white, with blood dripping down his neck. My daughter Bella was attacked fatally by what I suspect was actions of an Azton, you will hear about them more later, she had scratch marks around her face and body, was carried 5 miles away and some how dropped out of the sky onto a rock-filled cliff face. I now have possession of Tessa and I fear for what her future holds. Time has not been good to my closest, possibly for reasons caused by my best friend, Sophie.

"Well, I suppose I could tell you about something that happened to me when I was your age, maybe it will give you some information on why our tragic family only consists of you and me..." I took a sip of my flavoursome tea and continued.

"5 girls were sitting in a cold bedroom having a sleepover" Brianna stated trying to tell a spooky story. It's not going to last long with this lot, when they are excited a fairytale spooks them.

"Mum and Dad are out getting pizza so I am in charge! So quiet down you rascals I'm speaking to Elly." Holly barged in with her fluro pink phone at her ear.

"And the Mum and Dad were out getting.....PIZZA!!!!" Brianna smirked as everyone else filled the little air Sophie's bed room had with high pitched screeches.

I put my hand to my head and palmed it, I can not believe this bunch, this must be the kajillionth time tonight that they have screamed!

Once they were all calmed down, (well as calm as a herd bats fleeing for the light can get!) Sophie suggested Murder In The Dark and we all agreed.

As Emma gathered the equipment and passed it around as we all paired up. Cassandra, a tall brunette dancer, paired with Emma, a short blonde karate master. Brianna, a thin blonde gymnast who can always seem to disappear whenever she wants, with me and Sophie by herself as we are the guests and we have odd numbers.

Sophie is a dancer also, she has dark brown hair, brown glowing eyes that always flash a spark when she turns her head in the sun. Sophie was my best friend all through out Primary School.

We switched off all the lights through out the house and clutched our flash lights tight. I flipped the switch and Brianna and I took to our hiding spot and waited for the game to start.

"On your markeys, grab your car keys, GO!!!!" Some one shrieked and we were off. We searched in every crevasse we could think of until I saw a flash in the basement.

"Hey I see someone lets sneak up on them!" I whisper yelled to Brianna as we slowly walked towards the light.

I guess everyone had the same idea because we all ended up in a jumble of PJ's and hair. I tried to pick myself up but was instantly pulled back down. Suddenly we were all floating through the air in a rainbow whizz as sparks flew here and there. The light got brighter and brighter until I was almost blinded. All of a sudden I was dropped on a pile of grey, dead leaves.

I looked around and the atmosphere here was atrocious. The sky was a deep grey, swallowed by dead trees with leaves blowing off with the tiniest breeze, and yet, not one person in sight.

I suddenly heard a booming noise off in the distance and I turned expecting my friends running over to help me. I couldn't be more wrong. I saw bounding creatures made of concrete. They had razor sharp talons poking out through their padded paws. They had sharp, yellow, decaying beaks coming out of their feathered faces, scaled tails of an odd green that camouflaged perfectly with their brown feathery body, there were also two giant wings the size of cars on each creature. There must of been thousands of them charging at once, one of them pointed at me and I picked up my speed. It felt like forever before I decided to take a left turn and lost them.

I knew they were gone but, I kept running. Right until I clashed paths with what looked like a human.

"Thank goodness you're here! There were these winged things and I have never seen anything like them before. You got to tell me where we are!" I panted out exhausted.

"Whoah you mean Aztions. Those things are a menace. We're in the war with them and the Lassons right now. Oh by the way i'm Ella." She explained as I looked at her with wide eyes.

"Lassons?" I questioned curiously.

"Oh you're not from around here. We are in the underworld. The Lassons are an undead army, the Aztions are like griffon things and I'm a Clarapan! There's this whole war thing going on and the Aztions are every where! The Lassons mainly guard their kingdom and we take to the skies in search of victims. Speaking of which..." Ella smiled and showed glistening fangs.

"V.....V.....Vampire!" I shrieked and picked up speed once again.

I finally out ran Ella but was relieved to know what was happening. Until I thought about it. Clarapans = vampires, Aztions = flying monsters, Lassons = Zombies!?

I finally found my way to Sophie and told her everything I had just learned.

"Vampires, Zombies, Monsters?" Sophie screamed shaking me, "I guess that's who took the others."

"What?" I asked worried.

"The girls were dragged away into a castle. I think we should organise a rescue mission!" Sophie suggested pointing in the distance. I could vaguely see the outline of an old brick castle. Just like every thing else here, it was grey. A cloud of fog had gathered around the middle and sent off a dangerous vibe but, I still agreed to enter. My gut told me to sprint for the hills, but I couldn't do that. Not only the fact that there are no hills but I can't leave my friends here.

We slowly stumbled up to the tower placing one dusty shoe at a time. We could see the Lassons guarding and did not want to make the slightest of sound as we knew neither of us were fit to run right now. As we got closer we slid down the sides of the cold, dusty bricks. I placed my dry, cracked hands on the cold grooves of the grey bricks. Eventually I realised we reached a door because my hands slipped onto something wooden.

We turned to see a giant door equipped with spying holes around the door to peak through weapons, an eye slit for intruders and a keypad for placing in a passcode.

"What are we going to do we don't know the..... wooooooow!" I stood there amazed as Sophie had already kicked the door and it flung open. "I didn't know you could do that!"

"Well, I haven't told you every thing about me!" Sophie replied eagerly.

We stayed close to the walls and peaked through doors, we travelled down long, dark passages and crawled under holes, we went up giant staircases of marble and long corridors of shiny bricks. The outside of the castle gave off a very different vibe to the inside. The castle was actually pieced together quite nicely and wouldn't be a bad place to live, if it wasn't surrounded by man eating zombies that is.

I jolted my head back as I heard a slightly disturbing drool from behind me. I was expecting the warm, driven face of my best friend. With her shiny hair, glowing white teeth, bright brown eyes and her fun, bubbling expression but, for the billionth time today, I could not be more wrong.

When I turned my head I saw Sophie, but not glistening bubbly Sophie, a dull demented Sophie. She had flesh hanging down her cheek, her skin was a shimmering grey, the kind that makes you scowl when you see it, she was letting off a ghastly smell that made my face screw up, and worst of all, I noticed she was a zombie.

Her eyes were wonky, her cheeks were deteriorating and I couldn't believe it. My best friend was a,

ZOMBIE!

"You're a zombie! Sophie did they get you?" I questioned hoping she still understood me.

She smiled with those ghastly teeth. They were decaying, yellow, rotting, uggh!

"You are so ignorant Jess! I have been a zombie all along. I am the ruler of the Lasson Kingdom. I was only in your world to look for sacrifices for the war. The war I started, to take over the whole underworld." She replied stepping one step closer to me.

I backed off with a blank expression on my face, then I smiled. "Oh Sophie, you really shouldn't tell people your plan until they're out of the picture for good!" I kicked her in the knee and bolted.

I could hear Sophie yelling at guards behind me but, I kept running right until I slipped on the cold marble floor.

I picked myself up being very vigilant of my surroundings and leaned against a door. It instantly swung open and I clumsily stumbled in. I heard a muffle and almost had a heart attack. Luckily when I turned I was once again wrong about who was in there. I thought I was about to be captured by a Lasson, when I turned I saw the glistening sight of Brianna, Emma and Cassandra.

They were tightly wrapped in a thick, dense rope complete with tape over their mouths. 'A bit cliche action movie' I imagined to myself. I spotted a row of medieval weapons along the back wall. I grabbed a sword and cut them free.

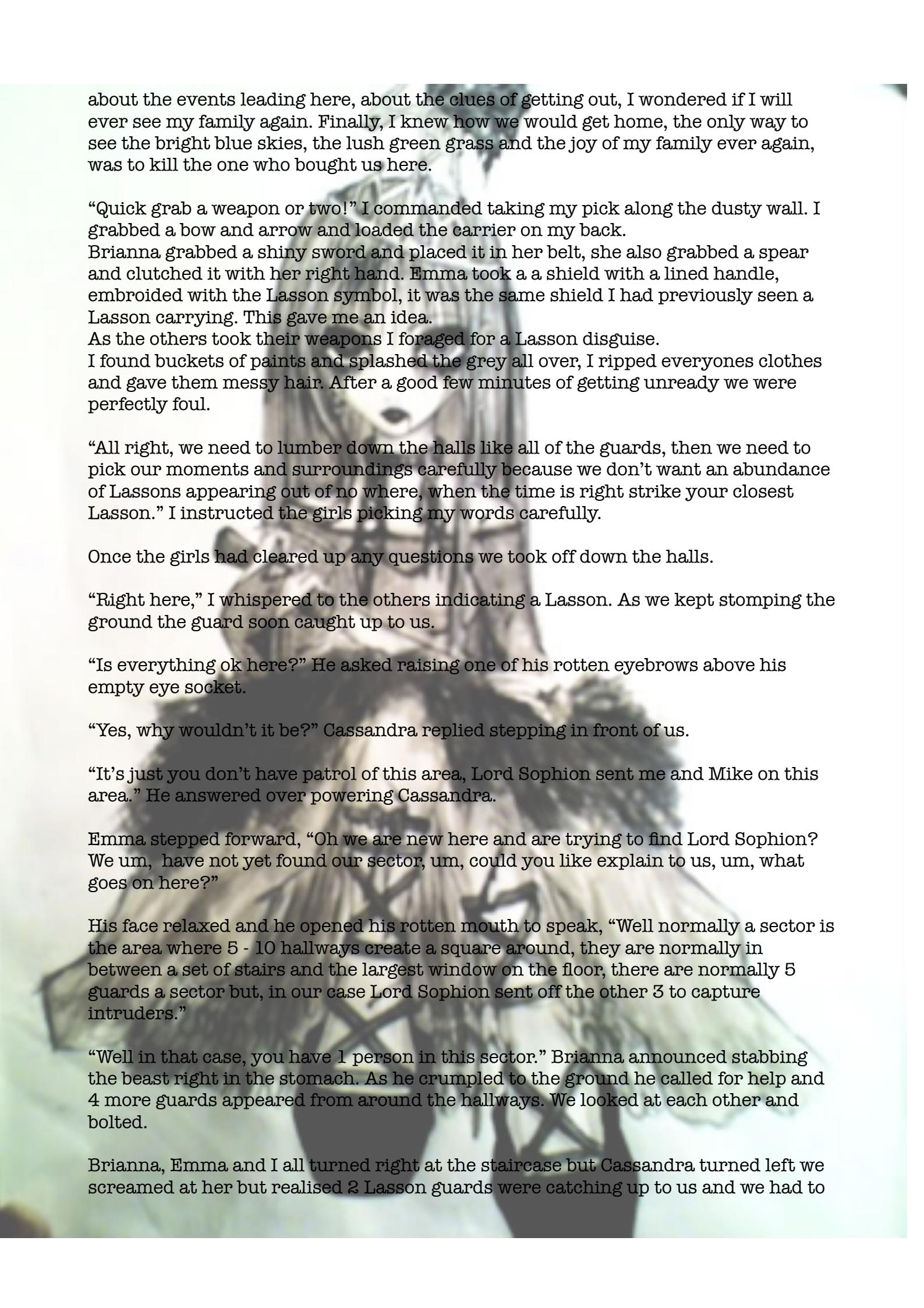
"What happened?" I questioned curiously.

"We were dragged away by zombies!" They replied, each with a scared look on their face.

"Sophie is a zombie! She is the ruler, we are in the underworld, there are vampires called Clarapans, griffons called Aztions, the zombies are Lassons and there is a big war going on. She was trying to kill us and give us as sacrifices!" I explained in a massive rush as they all gasped with shock.

"We found someone who explained to us where to go and Sophie did take us down some of the wrong paths. I just thought she was forgetful. When I tried to tell her she managed to convince us all that this was the right way." Brianna told me in a state of concentration. It was almost like Sophie had hypnotised them to not remember any of the previous events.

To the right of me I heard a booming noise. We peaked our heads through the door, spying a male Lasson lumbering down the halls. We cocked our heads back in the surprisingly warm room. I walked up to the window cill and stared in the distance. The wretched world we were confined to was still as grey as stone covered mountains, the air was thick and you could see the sway of winds struggling to lift the heavy air, the trees were all dead, the ground was a moist clump of death, now it was raining, the rain did not smell as fresh as it would where I come from, it was letting off an appalling stench. I kept thinking for a good 10 minutes. I thought



about the events leading here, about the clues of getting out, I wondered if I will ever see my family again. Finally, I knew how we would get home, the only way to see the bright blue skies, the lush green grass and the joy of my family ever again, was to kill the one who bought us here.

“Quick grab a weapon or two!” I commanded taking my pick along the dusty wall. I grabbed a bow and arrow and loaded the carrier on my back.

Brianna grabbed a shiny sword and placed it in her belt, she also grabbed a spear and clutched it with her right hand. Emma took a shield with a lined handle, embroidered with the Lasson symbol, it was the same shield I had previously seen a Lasson carrying. This gave me an idea.

As the others took their weapons I foraged for a Lasson disguise.

I found buckets of paints and splashed the grey all over, I ripped everyones clothes and gave them messy hair. After a good few minutes of getting unready we were perfectly foul.

“All right, we need to lumber down the halls like all of the guards, then we need to pick our moments and surroundings carefully because we don’t want an abundance of Lassons appearing out of no where, when the time is right strike your closest Lasson.” I instructed the girls picking my words carefully.

Once the girls had cleared up any questions we took off down the halls.

“Right here,” I whispered to the others indicating a Lasson. As we kept stomping the ground the guard soon caught up to us.

“Is everything ok here?” He asked raising one of his rotten eyebrows above his empty eye socket.

“Yes, why wouldn’t it be?” Cassandra replied stepping in front of us.

“It’s just you don’t have patrol of this area, Lord Sophion sent me and Mike on this area.” He answered over powering Cassandra.

Emma stepped forward, “Oh we are new here and are trying to find Lord Sophion? We um, have not yet found our sector, um, could you like explain to us, um, what goes on here?”

His face relaxed and he opened his rotten mouth to speak, “Well normally a sector is the area where 5 - 10 hallways create a square around, they are normally in between a set of stairs and the largest window on the floor, there are normally 5 guards a sector but, in our case Lord Sophion sent off the other 3 to capture intruders.”

“Well in that case, you have 1 person in this sector.” Brianna announced stabbing the beast right in the stomach. As he crumpled to the ground he called for help and 4 more guards appeared from around the hallways. We looked at each other and bolted.

Brianna, Emma and I all turned right at the staircase but Cassandra turned left we screamed at her but realised 2 Lasson guards were catching up to us and we had to

gain speed. We kept running until the guards were completely out of view. We started to slow until we were lumbering zombies once again.

"We have to find Cassandra! She'll never survive on her own." pleaded Emma as we stumbled up the stairs.

As we turned the corner I could see Lassons everywhere, lying down on the ground, some with brutal gashes, others with fatal punctures scattered through out their ugly bodies.

"Cassandra! But how? What? Who? Why? When?" Emma gasped. Cassandra just giggled and we ran up to her.

"Sophie should be on the next level! Guess what. Lassons can only see movement! If you stay completely still it's like you're invisible!" Cassandra blurted out jumping up and down.

"Wow that's so helpful! There must only be 5 guards on the next floor and Sophie!" Brianna butted in.

We whispered a plan in each others ears and soon we were on the top floor. Every time we saw a Lasson we stood completely still. We decided to try not to kill them as they walked past. This was because the slightest movement can draw all the attention in the underworld, glaring straight at you.

"Hey, look I can see Sophie." Emma whispered pointing at a Lasson.

She was wearing a, grey dress with her brown hair knotting and tangling around her lifeless face.

I scowled at the traitor she is and tip toed along the wall.

"What was that?" Sophie jumped turning around.

We all pushed our backs against the wall and held our breaths.

"Go check the other guards down on the next floor. Go! All of you!" Sophie instructed all the guards in the room.

This was just perfect. It was all Sophie now, no unfair battles.

I loaded my bow and arrow and shot, it hit Sophie perfectly in the head. She stood up and cracked the arrow and the bristles of the wood splintered every where. As she turned around I drew my sword and took a swing. She drew hers and our swords clashed, she managed to slice my thigh but I did not care, in fact my rage blurred my grip on reality and I lashed out, I stabbed the sword through Sophie's stomach and she crumpled on the cold, sweat covered floor.

Sophie cackled evilly, "Good one Jess, The war was a distraction to keep my monsters out of your world, with out the person who started the war, how do you expect the war to continue? You can expect a lot more tragedy in your life now."

I removed my sword from her blood covered stomach and used it to take off her head.

The sparks flew for the second and hopefully last time. We spun around in a wild whizz of metallic colours that sparkled in the dusty, underworld sun. I couldn't wait to get of of here.

I was the first back and landed with a loud thud. I raised my sweaty palm to feel the wounds from the events we had just endeavored. Everyone else began stumbling through the gaping hole. I thought about the rest of Sophie's family.

Are they Lassons to? Will they know about me killing Sophie? Will they one day find a way to avenge her and take revenge on me?

The thoughts sent chills down my body and Emma, Cassandra, Brianna and I clung together for the whole night.

"And that Tessa is only one of my most exciting adventures." I told Tessa as I gripped back into reality.

"Wow that was very interesting! But, are you sure that story is true?" Tessa asked me screwing her delicate little face.

I sighed and looked at her precious little hazel eyes. They glistened as the pouring rain out side reflected over her face. I fear for her future, she is the only family left that I have. I would have preferred that evil, traitor Sophie curse me to death. But my family is a way more effective punishment.

"Well, my grip on reality is not to great these days. After everything that happened to my loved ones I guess my mind has started to lose it." I told Tessa. I knew everything that happened in that story was true, I just don't want to scare Tessa. When she is older I will teach her to survive with these wretched creatures.

I looked out the dripping window and smiled at a pedestrian walking past, she smiled back and I saw glistening white fangs.