



FROM DUSK

THE VAMPIRE HUNTER PROPHECY

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From Dusk: The Vampire Hunter Prophecy
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To Jen, thank you for giving me the courage to keep going with this story and for loving Lexi and Jack as much as I do. Thank you to everyone who has helped bring this book to life and all my friends and family who supported me along the way.

PROLOGUE

She watched the girl from the shadows, staying out of sight among the alleyways.

The girl was beautiful, as though she had stepped out of the classic fairy tale Snow White and into the modern world, with her long black hair, arresting green eyes and fair skin. It was not her looks that attracted him to her though. It was her scent. She wore a subtle perfume of musk and sandalwood, but underneath that she smelt sweet. He stepped out from the shadows.

‘Can I help you at all?’ he called out to the girl. She turned and looked at him.

‘I just need to find my way back onto High Street,’ she replied shyly.

‘Ah, the Mile, I can show you if you like?’

‘That would be great.’

‘This way,’ he said, trying to lead her down into the shadows.

‘Don’t we need to go up?’ she asked.

‘Out of the two of us, who is the one that is lost?’ he joked, a youthful smile on his face. She eased up a little and started to follow him down the stairs. ‘You’re not from around here, are you?’ he asked.

'No, I'm from Australia. I'm here on holidays,' she answered.

'How long are you staying for?'

'In Edinburgh for just a few days, but I plan on staying in Scotland for the summer.'



They continued down the stairs, deeper into the alley, getting closer to the shadows. Soon he would taste her. Her scent was driving him crazy, but it was a risk to taste her now. It needed to be under the cover of darkness.

'Are you sure this is the right way?' she enquired nervously.

'Trust me,' he replied. The girl stopped in her tracks.

'Thank you for helping me, but I think I'm going to head back up this way.'

'I don't think so,' he snapped, the smile disappearing from his face.

He leapt the couple of stairs that separated them and pushed her hard against the stone wall. He was not going to allow her to get away, not now. She was far too good to let escape. With her body pinned against the wall, he opened his mouth and lowered his fangs, sinking them into her neck.

Her blood was intoxicating as it instantly filled his mouth. It was even more divine than he had imagined. It was sweet and filled him with adrenaline. Not only would she cure his hunger, but she would also give him a high for hours. He detected something unfamiliar in her blood, something he had never tasted before and he liked it.

CHAPTER 1

New Adventures

I woke from my dream, struggling to breathe, feeling like I was being choked. I put my hands to my throat, untangling my long hair from around it. Blinking, I allowed my eyes to focus on the soft light. I looked around the room. My bedroom, though tidy and simply decorated, was cluttered with bookcases which were stuffed with books and sporting trophies.

Then it struck me. Today was the day. Excitement propelled me out of bed. Out in the kitchen, I found that Dad was already up, sitting at the table reading the morning newspaper. He was wearing his running gear, and the slight sheen on his forehead and sweat marks on his T-shirt told me he had just gotten back from a run.

‘Have you had breakfast?’ I asked him. He replied by holding up his cup of coffee, his eyes not shifting from the paper. ‘That does not count as breakfast. I’ll make us some bacon and eggs.’

‘That would be nice,’ he replied.

My banging and clanging of pots and pans as I cooked must have woken Claire. She emerged from her bedroom

in slippers and her dressing gown, still rubbing her eyes, her long red hair disheveled. She was not a morning person.

Claire is my mum's older sister and it surprised me how two siblings could be so different to each other, both in looks and personality. I have long raven hair like my mother's, in total contrast to Claire's, which could only be described as fire red.

'What is all the noise about?' she asked.

'Sorry,' I apologized, 'I'm cooking breakfast. Would you like some?'

'Sure,' she replied as she sat at the table with Dad. 'Morning Marcus.'

'Claire,' he said, still studying the paper.

I dished up our bacon and eggs, then the three of us sat down and ate together. When my father finished his meal, he excused himself from the table to go shower. As soon as he closed the door behind him, I turned to Claire.

'Why don't you and Dad get along?' I asked.

'We get along just fine,' she said, through a mouthful of bacon.

'Really?'

'At the end of the day Lexi, your father and I are just two very different people. If it wasn't for your mother, we probably would never have crossed paths. Ultimately, we have a very good reason for being in each other's lives and we respect that.'

'You mean me,' I stated.

'Of course. You are the most important thing in both your father's life and mine. He struggled after losing your mum and letting me raise you was the hardest thing I think he has ever had to do.'

'Do you think he will ever remarry?' I stared at the

bathroom door thinking of the sacrifice my father had made in allowing Aunt Claire to raise me.

'Your father? No, he's married to the Army and far too committed to you.'

'He deserves to be happy though.'

'And in his way I think he is.' Claire finished her breakfast and made to leave, but turned back to me. 'Your father would be devastated if anything happened to you.'

'I'm only going to Scotland,' I replied.

'That's not what I meant.'

'I know... Claire, do you think I'm doing the right thing, going overseas?' I asked anxiously.

Claire sat back down at the table and placed her hand on mine. 'Your father only has the best of intentions for you, you know that don't you?'

'Yeah, I know.'

'At the end of the day though, honey, you need to do what is best for you and if that's this trip to Scotland, then so be it. You are an intelligent young woman and you graduated high school not even six months ago. It is only natural that you want to explore the world, so go and explore. It will be good for you.'

'Thank you.' I leant across and kissed her on the cheek.



The time had arrived. Dad packed my luggage into the back of his four-wheel-drive as I said my goodbye to Claire. She was the closest thing I had to a mum and I loved her as such. I would miss her quirky, positive outlook on everything, but most of all her warmth, love and support. Saying goodbye was harder than I thought it would be, especially when she hugged me tight. I wrapped my arms around her neck and didn't want to let go.

'You look after yourself,' she said, 'and ring me when you arrive in London.'

'I promise.'

'Come on Lex,' Dad interjected. 'We better get a move on.'

'Oh wait, I've forgotten something,' Claire turned and went back into the house, reappearing moments later.

She handed me a new book by my favourite author, one that she knew I had been wanting for a while. I opened the front cover to find a note on the first page in Claire's beautiful handwriting;

*This above all, to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell, my blessing season this is thee!*

A quote from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. I knew instantly what Claire was telling me; to have the courage to be myself and to take this trip. Claire always had the ability to read me so well and tell me exactly what I needed to hear, whether I wanted to hear it or not. The ability to read people is her gift. I often wished it was a skill that I possessed.

'Thank you,' I said, closing the cover.

'I'll see you in a few months, kiddo.'

I gave her one last hug and then climbed into the passenger seat of the four-wheel-drive, waving goodbye as we reversed out of the driveway. I fought back the tears as we drove up the street. My excitement was slowly turning to nerves. A knot formed in my stomach at the realisation that I was about to travel to the other side of the world all on my own. What was I thinking?

We arrived at the airport and Dad pulled the vehicle into

a carpark. He turned off the ignition, before removing a white envelope from his jacket pocket and handing it to me.

'I have something for you,' he said. I took the envelope and looked inside. It was full of English pounds.

'I can't,' I said.

Dad cut me off with a gesture of his hand. 'You can and you will. I have also transferred some money into your account to help you out.'

'Dad!' I protested.

'Please, just take it.' I knew that this was his way of looking after me, so I reluctantly took the money and placed it in my backpack along with my book from Claire.

'Thank you,' I replied, grateful for his contribution.

'I'm proud of you, Lex and I know your Mum would be too.'

'Thanks, Dad.'

'You know your stubborn streak comes from the Irish side of the family?'

'Yep.' I smiled.

'I'm going to miss you, Lex.'

'I know. But it will be no different to normal, only I will be the one that is going away this time.'

'And that gives me reason to worry,' he said. 'At least while you are here with your Aunt, I know you are safe.'

'Dad, I'm going to be fine. I can't stay locked up in my bedroom for the rest of my life.'

'No, maybe not for the rest of your life, but at least until you're thirty.'

'And you don't think I worry about you when you get deployed?' I asked.

'I'm the parent, so it's my job to worry.'

'Well, just because you're the parent doesn't make me

worry any less about you. Look, you and Claire have both raised me to be a strong and independent woman. Let me prove it.'

'Just promise me that you'll be careful and that you'll ring your aunt every day.'

'I promise,' I said, reaching over and squeezing his hand.

'Good. I'll ring you as often as I can.' We both climbed out of the vehicle and Dad retrieved my luggage out of the back. He pulled me close and held me tight with his strong arms. Even as tall as I am, I felt dwarfed, yet protected by my father. 'I love you, Lex,' he whispered.

'I love you too, Dad.'



The plane started to make its descent. I could just make out the country side of England below, then the city of London itself. As the wheels of the plane struck the tarmac, a smile spread across my face. I had finally arrived. From Heathrow Airport I travelled by train into London, feeling a sense of relief when I made it to the hotel and entered my room. I was exhausted.

I settled in before deciding to ring Aunt Claire. It was late evening at home, but I knew she would still be up. I retrieved my phone from the backpack and dialed. After only a few rings, I heard Claire's voice on the other end of the line.

'Hey Claire, it's me.'

'Lex! Are you in London?' I could hear relief in her voice.

'I am. I made it safe and sound and have just checked into the hotel.'

'How was your flight?' she asked.

'Long and cramped,' I replied.

'You must be exhausted.'

'I am, I haven't slept yet.'

'Well, I will let you go and get some much needed sleep then.'

'Okay. Claire?'

'Yes, honey?'

'I wanted to say thank you for giving me the courage to go on this trip.'

'Honey, that is all you. Now go, rest and enjoy London. Ring me again tomorrow night and tell me all about it.'

'I will. I love you.'

'Bye, honey, I love you too.'

After ending the call, I luxuriated in a long, hot and necessary bath. I dressed in some casual clothes and then ordered room service. My legs still ached from being cramped on a plane for so long, so I stretched them out on the bed while I waited for my food. Dinner arrived and I ate before spending the rest of the evening watching television. I had not had a proper sleep in over twenty-four hours and the flickering from the screen was draining on my eyes, to the point where I could no longer keep them open.

I woke to screaming. Disorientated and horrified, I sat bolt upright. The screaming continued. I leapt out of bed in search of a weapon. As the grogginess of sleep started to fall away, the realization of what was happening started to sink in. The screaming was coming from the television, which I had left on when I fell asleep. I grabbed the remote and turned off the old werewolf movie, before climbing back into bed, feeling a little silly at my overreaction to the situation. I lay back down and let sleep consume me once more. However, my sleep was not peaceful; wolves and vampires invaded my dreams.

The next morning the dawn light was teasing at the

window, filling the room and straining my eyes. I placed my head under the pillow in search of darkness. My dreams had caused a restless sleep and I wanted to stay in bed, but with a big day ahead of me I reluctantly climbed out and dressed in my jeans, shirt and jacket. Today I planned to go and see Westminster Abbey in the morning and a Jack the Ripper Tour in the afternoon.

After a satisfying breakfast I collected my backpack and stepped out onto the streets of London, feeling excited. I walked to the nearest bus stop and waited for a tourist bus to arrive. After a few minutes, the double decker bus pulled up. Taking the internal stairs two at a time, I had my choice of seats on the open top deck, the city air cool upon my face. This was certainly the way to see London!

The bus started to move in a slow, cumbersome manner. It maneuvered through the hectic London traffic and around me. I could hear the rambunctious noise of the city — beeping horns, car engines, talking and the sound of shoes on the sidewalks as people shuffled about. We passed many of the magnificent sights of London before we reached Westminster Abbey, where I jumped off the bus.

As I approached the Abbey, its distinctive towers started to appear before the rest of the building came into view. Walking around to the north entrance, I was a little lost for words. I had never seen anything so grand in my life. The large stain glass window took centre stage like an eye overlooking everything, both inside and out.

I entered the Abbey, amazed by the fact that the building was a thousand years old. With my information leaflet in hand, I started my journey, reading up on the history of the building as I went. Walking through the Abbey, I absorbed every detail. The stone pillars stood tall and dominating,

reminding me of medieval guards in their armoured uniforms, standing guard over their territory. I couldn't help but think about all the history that had occurred in this building since it had been built. The Abbey had seen the despair of death, the joy of marriage, the celebration of coronations and the devastation of war. It felt as though the Abbey has a soul, with the centuries of prayer seeming to permeate the ether.

There were other tourists buzzing around me, just as engrossed as I was. I could hear the click of cameras, the sound of shoes squeaking on the floor and voices that spoke in soft whispers. The noises blended together and became a blur. At that moment, I had the strangest feeling of *déjà vu*. An overwhelming sensation that I had been here before.

I watched as two priests walked down the aisle, deep in conversation. I could not explain why, but they looked out of place, as though they didn't belong. The pair reached a young boy who appeared to be waiting for them. One of the priests placed his hand on the boy's shoulder. Like the priest, the boy looked out of place. His clothes seemed old and worn, his shirt, shorts and braces appearing dated. I closed my eyes, not sure of what I was seeing. When I opened them, the three figures were gone. I must have been daydreaming. I exhaled after realising I had been holding my breath.

I could feel the first signs of a pressure headache forming. I made my way back to the bus stop, breathing in the crisp, fresh air as I walked. I had to be at Tower Hill that afternoon for the Jack the Ripper tour, so I jumped on the next bus and found a seat as it started to roll forward, lurching as the driver changed gears. I noted famous landmarks I had only read about as we drove past, like Buckingham Palace. I was intrigued how the history of London blended seamlessly

with the modern city. Two worlds combined into one. We passed St Paul's Cathedral, the white dome dominating the surrounding buildings. The bus reached the stop at Tower Hill, where I disembarked and seemed to step back in time.

I was early for the tour, so I found myself a comfortable spot to sit and wait, hoping that my headache would pass. I sat with my elbows on my knees and my fingers at my temples, gently circling, trying to relieve the pressure in my head.

'Excuse me. Are you here for the Jack the Ripper tour?.' I looked up and saw an older gentleman. He had a soft kind face, grey hair and a large friendly smile.

'Yes, I am,' I replied.

'Lovely. My name is Jim.' He held his right hand out to me, shaking mine gently. 'I'm your guide today. Your name is?' he asked, studying the clipboard in his possession.

'Lexi,' I replied. 'Lexi O'Connor.'

'Lexi,' he whispered to himself as he perused the sheet of paper attached to his clipboard. 'Ah, there you are, Alexandra O'Connor.' He placed a tick beside my name.

'Just Lexi,' I said.

'Well, Lexi,' he said, emphasising my name, 'it looks like we should have a relatively small group today. We are a bit early but hopefully everyone else won't be too much longer and we can start.'

Just as Jim finished his sentence, a young couple arrived to join us on the tour. From their accents I guessed that they were German. Jim ticked their names off his list and within minutes the whole group of eight was present, and we were ready to start. I had an interest in the history of Jack the Ripper and had read many books about the murders of Whitechapel, but actually being on the streets where those atrocities had occurred felt very surreal.

Jim led us on a very comprehensive tour, walking along the cobblestone streets past the old stone buildings. It was easy to imagine that we were back in 1888 and actually following in the footsteps of the man himself. We went to the areas where each of his victims were discovered, with Jim informing us of the wounds and experiments that had been inflicted upon each of the poor women.

My imagination started running wild with Jim's stories. Suddenly, although I was still standing on the same street in Whitechapel, day was now night and there was a metallic smell in the air. In front of me was a woman in a long flowing dress pinned against the stone wall, scattered flowers and a basket at her feet. Her body was limp and her eyes lifeless. A man dressed in black was holding her in place as he nuzzled into her neck. When he turned and stared at me, I saw blood on his face. He hissed, bearing his prominent fangs. I jumped.

'Are you okay?' Jim asked, his hand on my shoulder waking me from my daydream.

'Yeah, I'm fine,' I replied, catching my breath.

'You just zoned out on us.' I noticed that the rest of the group had moved on.

'I'm just jet-lagged.'

'Well, make sure you drink plenty of water and get some rest,' he advised. 'Come on, the group is waiting for us.'

Jim moved forward, leading the group on with the rest of the tour. I hung to the back. My head was now pounding and my hands were shaking. I felt far from fine, despite what I had told Jim. What was happening to me?

CHAPTER 2

Nightmares Are Not Real

I reached for my phone on the bedside table and turned off the alarm. Even after taking a couple of Panadol before bed last night, my headache still lingered. I got out of bed, showered and dressed. After breakfast, I collected my backpack and walked the short distance to the bus stop. I boarded the bus and climbed the stairs to the top deck, braving the cold. There was a distinct chill in the air as the overcast skies clouded the sun. The wind was cool on my face as the bus travelled up Park Lane and around onto Gloucester Place, where it then turned onto the famous Baker Street, where I disembarked, heading over to Madame Tussauds Wax Museum.

I was immediately overwhelmed at the sight of the lifelike wax statues. There was British actor Daniel Craig with his square jaw and masculine shoulders, suited up in the famous role of James Bond and Australia's pint size pop princess Kylie Minogue, looking always effervescent.

There were statues of prominent British citizens including members of the Royal Family and former Prime Minister Winston Churchill. I studied the statue of Churchill closely.

I could have sworn he was looking directly at me. His eyes were intense and a stern frown was etched upon his face.

The surroundings around me changed and I was in an enclosed room with the Prime Minister and various high ranking military officers in uniform, maps of Europe covering the walls with multi-coloured pins protruding from them. Standing next to me was a priest and a small boy. It wasn't possible, but it was the same pair that I saw at Westminster Abbey the previous day. The priest was having an intense argument with the Prime Minister.

'Sir, you need to listen to me!' he pleaded. 'We have more than one war going on in London. The streets are not safe for the citizens that live here and I am not just talking about the Germans.'

'You expect me to believe this, Father?' Churchill asked.

'Yes sir, I do. I assure you that all of this is very real.'

'And you, along with this girl and boy are the solution to this problem?' Churchill glanced at the boy, before turning his eyes back to the priest.

'We alone cannot solve the problem, but we are doing our best to control it, but we need assistance.' The priest was getting visibly more upset as he spoke

'What kind of assistance is it exactly, that you require?'

'Man power, soldiers, anything,' the priest replied.

'Do you think I have the man power to spare?'

'I know that I am asking a lot, sir, but this is important. Innocent people are dying.'

'Of course they are! If you haven't noticed, we are in the middle of a war with the Germans,' Churchill yelled. 'I'm not entertaining this ridiculous notion of vampires. Now, get out!'

'Excuse me, sweetie, are you okay?' I heard a soft gentle

voice ask, bringing me out of my reverie. I turned my head to see an elderly lady standing beside me with a concerned look on her face. I blinked my eyes, trying to focus. I was no longer in the room with Churchill and the priest, but back in the museum.

‘No,’ I softly answered her.

‘You look white as a ghost.’

‘I think I’ve just seen one.’

‘Here, come and sit down.’ She directed me to a seat and helped me down. ‘Doug,’ she called out and an elderly man walked over to us. ‘Pass me my bottle of water.’ As instructed Doug passed her a bottle which she then passed to me. ‘Here, sweetie, have a drink.’

‘Thank you,’ I replied. I took the bottle from her and drank from it.

‘You keep it,’ she told me when I went to hand it back. I sat for a couple of minutes, gaining my strength. I could soon feel the colour returning to my cheeks. ‘Are you okay?’ she asked, as I made to stand up.

‘Yes, thank you, I’m feeling much better. I think it’s just jet-lag.’

‘Well, you just take it easy sweetie,’ she said as she reached out and held my hand. ‘Would you like us to stay with you for a while?’

‘No, that’s not necessary. I’ll be fine.’

‘Okay then, we’ll leave you to it.’

‘Thank you again,’ I said as the elderly couple walked away arm in arm. I waited for a couple more minutes before continuing my journey through the museum.

I reached a darkened room and entered it, at once seeing a statue of Count Dracula, leaning over his damsel in distress, mouth open and fangs bared. He was dressed in

the traditional black cape and his yellow eyes were piercing as they watched and followed me as I moved around the room. Shivers ran down my spine and the hairs on the back of my neck stood on end. I subconsciously rubbed my neck, as though I was worried that the statue was about to come to life and jump out at me.

I started to feel dizzy. My vision was blurry, like it was coming in and out of focus. My breathing became shallow and I found it difficult to take a breath. I broke out in a sweat even though I felt cold, goose bumps breaking out all over my body. I felt claustrophobic and on the verge of a panic attack. I urgently needed to leave what was suddenly becoming an enclosed space.

I staggered outside onto the street, taking a deep breath as I reached the fresh air. I stumbled across the road to the bus stop. Reaching it, I stopped and sucked air into my desperate lungs. My breathing started to regulate and my head was no longer spinning. There was a wait before the next bus was due to arrive and I appreciated the time to compose myself.

When the bus pulled up, a few people disembarked before I climbed on board. I found a seat on the lower level, placed my backpack on my lap, and hugged it tight. The bus moved on and in a haze. I looked out the window, but barely noticed the city as we passed it by.

I was so lost in my thoughts I nearly missed my stop. We passed the Tower of London and I suddenly realised that I needed to get off. The bus came to a lumbering halt. Placing my bag on my back, I climbed off the bus and walked the short distance back to the Tower.

I found the entrance and once inside, moved over to a group that stood nearby as they waited for a guided tour to start. I mingled with them and waited until our tour guide

joined us. Dressed in the traditional uniform of the Yeomen Warders, a dark navy blue Tudor outfit with red trim, plus 'beefeater' hat, our guide headed towards us.

'Welcome to the Tower of London,' he greeted us, in a thick British accent. He was a jovial-looking man of average height, with a dense, neatly trimmed beard and crow's feet at the corner of his eyes. He looked smart in his crisp uniform. 'I'm your tour guide for today. I will be escorting you through the grounds and sharing my knowledge on the history of The Tower. So, let's get started. Please follow me and feel free to ask questions along the way.'

The tour was fascinating and I enjoyed the rest of the afternoon at the Tower, with the earlier events of the day at Madame Tussauds quickly becoming a fading memory. Soon the day was approaching its end and we were being advised that it was time for closing. Disappointed, I followed the crowd out and went back to the bus stop. It was late in the afternoon and a dim light was reflected over the city as the sun struggled to shine through the clouds.



Back at the hotel room, I placed my backpack on the bench and headed straight to the bathroom. I stripped off my clothes and stepped into the shower, turning on the hot tap. The warm water washed over me. I felt exhausted — today's events had taken their toll.

Dressed in my comfortable pyjamas after my shower, I took my time deliberating over the room service menu, before deciding and ordering. While I waited for my meal to arrive, I repacked my bag as tomorrow I was checking out and catching the train to Edinburgh. I felt excitement surge

through my body at the thought. I was so close to being in Scotland I could almost touch it.

Soon my dinner arrived and I made myself comfortable on the bed. On the tray, was a huge chicken burger, bowl of chips and a delicious looking sticky date pudding for dessert. A small scoop of real cream sat to the side of the pudding. I felt sure the cleaners were going to find crumbs all through the sheets tomorrow. I devoured and enjoyed every mouthful that I consumed, with the pudding providing just the perfect end to my day. I lay on the bed, full and satisfied, and found myself drifting off to sleep, my head feeling heavy. I allowed the large bed to swallow me whole and I drifted off to a deep sleep.



The place was dark and unfamiliar. I allowed my eyes to adjust to the minimal light and realised that I was back in the grounds of the Tower of London, yet I could not recall how I got here. The lights of the city and the full moon offered just enough light, allowing me to see.

‘Hello,’ I called out. Only my echo answered me in return.

I walked around the grounds, clinging to the walls, the sharp edges of the stone scratching the tips of my fingers. I felt as though I was lost in a maze and looking for a way out. I called out again, hoping that someone would hear me and be able to help.

‘Are you lost?’ I heard a deep voice ask from behind me.

Startled, I turned on my heels. ‘Yes, I am,’ I replied. I was expecting to see a security guard but instead nobody was there, only darkness. ‘Hello?’ I called out again.

Out of the shadows stepped a tall man with dark slicked back hair. He resembled the statue of Dracula that I had