



resurrected

book #9 of the
Vampire Journals

morgan rice

Morgan Rice

Resurrected

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Аннотация

In RESURRECTED (Book #9 in the Vampire Journals), 16 year old Scarlet Paine finds herself changing in mysterious ways. She is becoming sensitive to light, able to read peoples' thoughts, and is faster and stronger than she's ever been. She doesn't understand what's happening to her, and tries to ignore it. But she can only dismiss it for so long.

Caitlin Paine, her mom, knows too well what's happening to her daughter. She underwent the same transformation to vampire once, centuries ago. But now, in the present day, as a mere human, she has no memory of it. All she has is the journal she found in the attic – her mysterious vampire journal – telling of her exploits in another time and place, and of the vampire race being eradicated. But was there one exception to the rule? Could it be that Scarlet, her daughter, is the last remaining vampire on earth?

As Scarlet tries to fight who she's becoming, she also tries to fight her intense feelings for Blake, a boy in her grade who she has a crush on. She can't tell, though, if he's into her, and with the big Halloween dance just days away, the pressure is on. She would do anything for

Blake to ask her. But Vivian, the meanest of the popular girls, is also on Blake's radar, and she'll do anything to make Blake hers – and to make Scarlet's life a living hell.

Luckily Scarlet has her own clique of friends to back her up, including her best friends Maria and Jasmin. They, too, have guy troubles – but it isn't until Sage appears, the mysterious new boy, that her friends become obsessed. Scarlet finds herself attracted to him, too – and is surprised when it is her, of all the girls in the school, that he pays attention to. But her mind is set on Blake, at least for now, and she continues to hope he'll ask her to the dance.

Just when it seems that Scarlet has what she wants, her body changes. Soon it may be impossible for her to be near her fellow humans. Soon, she may have to choose between her desire to live and her desire for love.

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Morgan Rice

Resurrected

(Book #9 in the

Vampire Journals)

“Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?”
– *William Shakespeare*

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Acclaim for the Vampire Journals

“Rice does a great job of pulling you into the story from the beginning, utilizing a great descriptive quality that transcends the mere painting of the setting... Nicely written and an extremely fast read.”

– *Black Lagoon Reviews (regarding Turned)*

“An ideal story for young readers. Morgan Rice did a good job spinning an interesting twist... Refreshing and unique. The series focuses around one girl... one extraordinary girl!... Easy to read but extremely fast-paced... Rated PG.”

– *The Romance Reviews (regarding Turned)*

“Grabbed my attention from the beginning and did not let go... This story is an amazing adventure that is fast paced and action packed from the very beginning. There is not a dull moment to be found.”

– *Paranormal Romance Guild (regarding Turned)*

“Jam packed with action, romance, adventure, and suspense. Get your hands on this one and fall in love all over

again.”

– *vampirebooksite.com* (regarding *Turned*)

“A great plot, and this especially was the kind of book you will have trouble putting down at night. The ending was a cliffhanger that was so spectacular that you will immediately want to buy the next book, just to see what happens.”

– *The Dallas Examiner* (regarding *Loved*)

“A book to rival TWILIGHT and VAMPIRE DIARIES, and one that will have you wanting to keep reading until the very last page! If you are into adventure, love and vampires this book is the one for you!”

– *Vampirebooksite.com* (regarding *Turned*)

“Morgan Rice proves herself again to be an extremely talented storyteller... This would appeal to a wide range of audiences, including younger fans of the vampire/fantasy genre. It ended with an unexpected cliffhanger that leaves you shocked.”

– *The Romance Reviews* (regarding *Loved*)

About Morgan Rice

Morgan Rice is the #1 bestselling author of THE VAMPIRE JOURNALS, a young adult series comprising eleven books (and counting); the #1 bestselling series THE SURVIVAL TRILOGY, a post-apocalyptic thriller comprising two books

(and counting); and the #1 bestselling epic fantasy series **THE SORCERER'S RING**, comprising thirteen books (and counting).

Morgan's books are available in audio and print editions, and translations of the books are available in German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portugese, Japanese, Chinese, Swedish, Dutch, Turkish, Hungarian, Czech and Slovak (with more languages forthcoming).

TURNED (Book #1 in the Vampire Journals) and **A QUEST OF HEROES** (Book #1 in the Sorcerer's Ring) are each available as a free download!

Morgan loves to hear from you, so please feel free to visit www.morganricebooks.com to join the email list, receive a free book, receive free giveaways, download the free app, get the latest exclusive news, connect on Facebook and Twitter, and stay in touch!

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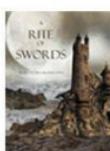
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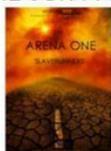
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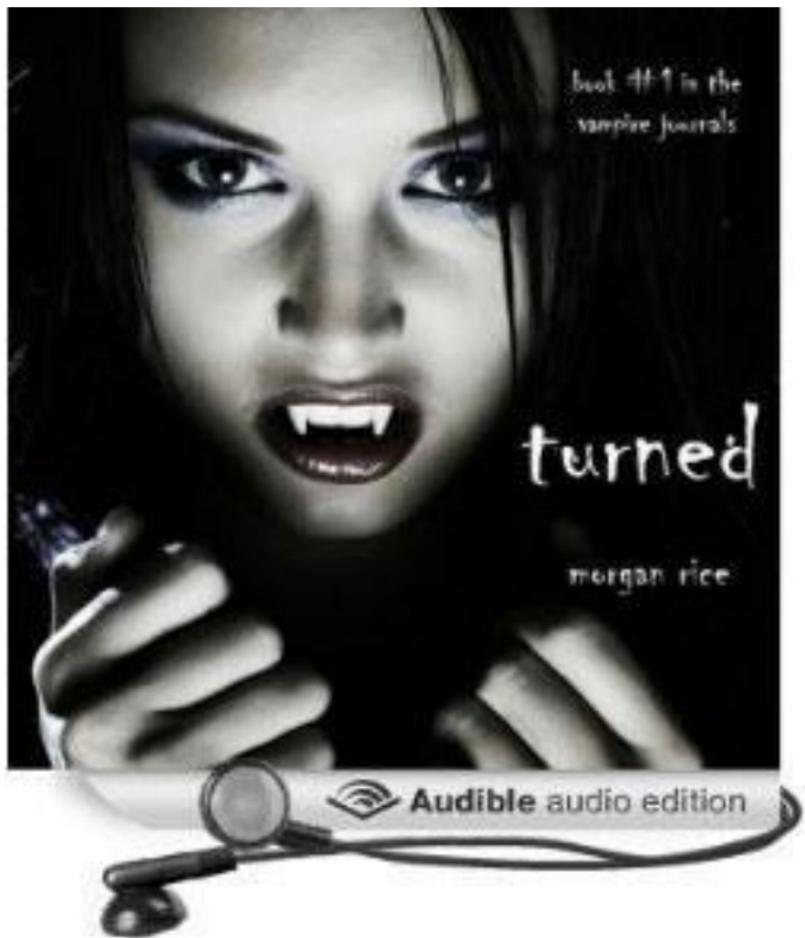


THE SURVIVAL TRILOGY



the vampire journals





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Chapter One

Rhinebeck, New York (Hudson Valley)

Present day

Caitlin Paine sat in her living room, eyes raw from crying, exhausted, staring out at the blood-red sunset and hardly listening to the police officers who filled her room. She was in a daze. She slowly glanced about her room, and saw that it was filled with people – too many people.

Police officers, local cops, milled about her room, some sitting, others standing, several holding cups of coffee. They sat there with grim faces, lined up on the couches, in chairs, opposite her, asking endless questions. They had been here for hours. Everyone in this small town knew each other, and these were people who she had grown to know, who she had met at the supermarket, said hello to at local stores. She could hardly believe that they were here. In her house. It was like something out of a nightmare.

It was surreal. It had all happened so quickly, her life had turned upside down so easily, she could barely register it. She tried to grab hold of normal, of anything routine that used to give her comfort – but everything seemed to slip away. Normal didn't exist anymore.

Caitlin felt a reassuring hand squeeze hers and looked over

and saw Caleb sitting beside her, his face pale with worry. On the overstuffed chairs beside them sat Sam and Polly, concern etched on their faces, too. This living room was crowded – way too crowded for Caitlin’s taste. She wanted everyone in it to just disappear, everything to just go back to how it was the day before. Scarlet’s sixteenth birthday, all of them sitting around the table, eating cake, laughing. Feeling as if all was perfect in the world, as if nothing would ever change.

Caitlin thought back to the night before, to her midnight thoughts, to her wishing her world, her life, was more than just mere normal. Now she regretted it. She would give anything to have normal back again.

It had been a whirlwind since she’d arrived home from her dreadful meeting with Aiden. After Scarlet had burst out the house, Caitlin had ran after her, chased her down the side streets. Caleb had recovered from his blow, and had caught up with her, and the two of them had run through their little village, like mad people, trying to catch their daughter.

But it was no use. They were soon out of breath, Scarlet completely disappeared from view. She’d ran so fast, had leapt over an eight foot hedge in a single bound, without even slowing. Caleb had been amazed, although Caitlin had not: she knew what Scarlet was. She knew, even as she ran, that it was a futile effort, that Scarlet could run with lightning speed, leap over anything, and that within moments she would be completely lost, out of sight.

She was. They ran back to the house, jumped into their car, and had sped through the streets, frantically searching. But Caitlin knew, even as Caleb blew stop signs, took each turn hard, that they didn't stand a chance. They wouldn't catch her. Scarlet, she knew, was long gone.

After hours, finally, Caitlin had had enough, had insisted that they return home and call the police.

Now here they were, hours later, at almost midnight. Scarlet hadn't returned, and the police hadn't been able to find her. Luckily, it was a small town, with nothing else going on, and they had sent out cars immediately to search for her, and were still searching. The rest of the force – three officers seated across from them, along with the three officers standing around – remained here, asking question after question.

“Caitlin?”

Caitlin snapped out of it. She turned and saw the face of the officer seated on the couch across from her. Ed Hardy. He was a good man, had a daughter Scarlet's age, in her grade. He looked at her with sympathy and concern. She knew he felt her pain as a parent, and that he would do his best.

“I know this is hard,” he said. “But we just have a few more questions. We really need to know everything if we're going to find Scarlet.”

Caitlin nodded back. She tried to focus.

“I'm sorry,” she said. “What else do you need to know?”

Officer Hardy cleared his throat, looking from Caitlin to

Caleb, then back to her again. He seemed reluctant to proceed with his next question.

“I hate to ask this, but were there any arguments between you and your daughter in recent days?”

Caitlin looked back at him, puzzled.

“Arguments?” she asked.

“Any disagreements? Any fights? Any reason she would want to leave?”

Then Caitlin realized: he was asking her if Scarlet ran away. He still didn’t understand.

She shook her head vehemently.

“There’s no reason she’d want to leave. We never argued. Ever. We love Scarlet and Scarlet loves us. She’s not the arguing type. She’s not a rebel. She wouldn’t run away. Don’t you understand? That’s not what this is about at all. Haven’t you heard anything we’ve been telling you? She’s sick! She needs help!”

Officer Hardy looked at his fellow officers, who looked back skeptically.

“I’m sorry to ask,” he continued. “But you must realize, we get calls like this all the time. Teenage kids run away. That’s what they do. They get mad at their parents. And in 99 % of cases, they come back. Usually a few hours later. Sometimes a day or two. They crash at a friend’s house. They just want to get away from their folks. And it’s usually preceded by an argument.”

“There was no argument,” Caleb chimed in, forcefully. “Scarlet was as happy as can be. We celebrated her sixteenth

birthday last night. Like Caitlin said, she's not that kind of girl."

"I feel like you're still not listening to a word we said," Caitlin added. "We told you, Scarlet was sick. She was sent home early from school. She was having... I don't know what. Convulsions... maybe seizures. She jumped out of bed and ran out the house. This isn't the case of a runaway. It's a child who is sick. Who needs medical attention."

Officer Hardy looked again at his fellow officers, who continued to look skeptical.

"I'm sorry, but what you're telling us just doesn't make any sense. If she was sick, how could she run out the house?"

"You said you chased her," chimed in another officer, edgier. "How could she have outrun you both? Especially if she was sick?"

Caleb shook his head, looking baffled himself.

"I don't know," he said. "But that's what happened."

"It's true. Every word of it is true," Caitlin said softly, remorsefully.

She was getting a sinking feeling that these men wouldn't understand. But she knew why Scarlet was able to outrun them; she knew why she was able to run when sick. She knew the answer – the one that would explain everything. But it was the one answer she could not give, the one that these men would never believe. They were not convulsions; they were hunger pangs. Scarlet was not running; she was hunting. And that was because her daughter was a vampire.

Caitlin flinched inside, burning to tell them, but knowing it was an answer that these men would be unable to hear. So instead, she stared solemnly out the window, hoping, praying, Scarlet would come back. That she might get better. That she hadn't fed. Hoping that these men would go away, leave her alone. She knew they were useless anyway. Calling them had been a mistake.

"I hate to say this," added the third officer, "but what you're describing... your daughter coming home from school, having seizures, having an adrenaline rush, bursting out the door... I hate to say this, but it sounds like drugs. Maybe cocaine. Or Meth. It sounds like she was high on something. Like she had a bad trip. And adrenaline kicked in."

"You don't know what you're talking about," Caleb shot back at him. "Scarlet is not that kind of girl. She's never done drugs in her life."

The three officers looked at each other, skeptical.

"I know it's hard for you to hear," Officer Hardy said softly, "it's hard for most parents to hear. But our kids lead lives we never know about. You don't know what she's doing behind the scenes, with her friends."

"Did she bring around any new friends lately?" another officer asked.

Suddenly, Caleb's face hardened.

"Last night, actually," he said, anger rising in his voice. "She brought around a new boyfriend. Blake. They went to the movies together."

The three cops looked at each other with a knowing look.

“You think that’s it?” Caleb asked. “Do you think this kid is pushing drugs on her?” As Caleb asked it, he started to sound more sure of it himself, more optimistic that he’d found a neat answer to explain everything.

Caitlin sat there silently, just wanting this to end. She was burning to tell them all the real reason. But she knew it wouldn’t do any good.

“What’s his last name?” one of the officers asked.

“I have no idea.” Caleb turned and looked at Caitlin. “Do you?”

Caitlin shook her head, and turned to Sam and Polly. “You guys?”

They shook their heads.

“Maybe I can find out,” Polly said. “If they were friends on Facebook...” Polly began, then took out her cell phone and started typing. “I’m friends with Scarlet on Facebook. I don’t know what her settings are, but maybe I can view her other friends. And if she’s friends with him...”

Polly typed, and her eyes lit up.

“Here! Blake Robertson. Yeah, this is him!”

The cops leaned over and Polly reached out and held up her cell. They took it, handing it one to the other, looking closely at his face, writing down his last name.

“We’ll talk to him,” Officer Hardy said, as they handed Polly back her phone. “Maybe he knows something.”

“What about Scarlet’s other friends?” another officer asked. “Have you contacted them yet?”

Caitlin looked at Caleb blankly, realizing they’d been too dazed.

“I didn’t think of it,” Caitlin said. “It never occurred to me. She wasn’t going to a friend’s house. She was sick. It wasn’t like she had a destination.”

“Do it,” an officer said. “Contact all of them. It’s the best place to start.”

“I have to say, from everything I’m hearing,” Officer Hardy concluded, ready to wrap things up, “this sounds like drugs. I think Bob’s right. Sounds like a bad trip. In the meantime, we’ll keep patrolling the streets. The best thing you two can do is stay put. Wait for her here. She’ll be back.”

The officers looked at each other, then all at once they stood. Caitlin could see they were impatient to leave.

Caleb, Sam and Polly stood, and slowly, Caitlin stood, too, feeling weak in her knees. As she shook their hands, as they all prepared to leave, suddenly, something came over her. She couldn’t remain silent any longer. She could no longer contain the burning desire inside her to tell these people what she knew. To tell them that they weren’t thinking about this the right way.

“What if it’s something else?” Caitlin suddenly called out, as the cops were about to leave.

They all stopped, in the midst of putting on their coats, and slowly, they turned back to her.

“What do you mean?” Officer Hardy asked.

Caitlin, heart pounding in her chest, cleared her throat. She knew she shouldn't tell them; she would just seem crazy. But she couldn't hold it inside any longer.

“What if my daughter is possessed?” she asked.

They all stood there and stared back at her as if she were absolutely crazy.

“Possessed?” one of them asked.

“What if she's not herself anymore?” Caitlin asked. “What if she's changing? Into something else?”

A thick, heavy silence filled the room, and Caitlin felt everyone, including Caleb and Sam and Polly, turning and staring at her. Her cheeks flushed with embarrassment. But she couldn't stop. Not now. She had to plunge forward. And she knew, even as she did it, that this would be the turning point, the moment when the entire town no longer looked at her as a normal person, when her life here would change forever.

“What if my daughter is becoming a vampire?”

Chapter Two

After Caleb had seen the policemen out, he closed the door and marched back into the room, scowling at Caitlin. She had never seen him look at her with such anger before, and her heart sank. She felt as if her whole life were unraveling before her eyes.

“You can’t go speaking like that in public!” he snapped. “You sound like a crazy person! They’re going to think we’re all crazy. They’re not going to take us seriously.”

“I’m NOT crazy!” Caitlin snapped back. “And you should be taking my side, not theirs, and stop pretending like everything is normal. You were in that room with me. You know what you saw. Scarlet threw you across the room. Would a seizure cause that? A sickness?”

“So what are you saying?” Caleb retorted, his voice rising. “That means she’s a monster? A vampire? That’s ridiculous. You sound as if you’re losing touch with reality.”

Caitlin’s voice rose right back at him. “Then how do you explain it?”

“There are a lot of explanations,” he said.

“Like what?”

“Maybe it has something to do with her sickness. Or maybe, like they said, she was on some kind of drug. Maybe that kid Blake – ”

“That’s ridiculous,” Caitlin spat. “Blake is a good kid. He’s

not a drug pusher. And besides, you saw how she outran us. We didn't even stand a chance. That wasn't normal. Don't pretend you didn't see what you did."

"I'm not going to listen to any more of this," Caleb said.

He turned and marched across the room, yanked his army coat off the hook, put it on and quickly zipped it up.

"Where are you going?" Caitlin asked.

"I'm going to find her. I can't just sit here. It's driving me crazy. I have to look."

"The cops said the best place to be is here. What if she comes home while you're out there?" Caitlin asked.

"Then you can stay here and call me," Caleb snapped. "I'm going out."

With that, he crossed the room, opened the door, and slammed it behind him. Caitlin listened to the sound of his boots quickly descending the porch steps, crunching across the gravel, then heard him get into their car and take off.

Caitlin felt like crying. She didn't want to fight with Caleb – especially now. But she couldn't let him convince her she was losing touch with reality. She knew what she saw. And she knew that she was right. She wasn't going to let others convince her she was losing her mind.

Caitlin turned to Sam and Polly, who stood there, very still, eyes opened wide in surprise. They had never seen Caitlin and Caleb fight before. Caitlin herself had never seen them fight before – up until this moment, their relationship had never been

anything but harmonious. Sam and Polly both looked stunned, afraid to interfere. They also looked at her as if she were a bit crazy, not in her right mind. She wondered if maybe they sided with Caleb.

“I feel like maybe I should be out there searching, too,” Sam said tentatively. “Two cars searching the streets is better than one. And I’m pretty useless in here. Is that okay?” he asked Caitlin.

Caitlin nodded back, afraid to open her mouth for fear she would cry. Sam was right; he wouldn’t be much use here in the house. And she had Polly. Sam came over and gave her a quick hug, then turned and left.

“I’ll be on my cell,” he said, as he left. “Call me if you hear anything.”

Sam closed the door behind him and Polly came over to Caitlin and gave her a long hug. Caitlin hugged her back. It felt so good to have her best friend here, by her side. She didn’t know what she would do without her.

The two of them sat side-by-side on the couch, as Caitlin wiped away a tear forming at the corner of her eyes. Her eyes were already red and raw from all the hours of crying. Now, she just felt hollowed out.

“I’m so so so sorry,” Polly said. “This is a nightmare. Just awful. There are no words. I don’t understand what happened. None of it makes any sense. I know that Scarlet didn’t do drugs. She wouldn’t. And you’re right: Blake seems like a good kid.”

Caitlin sat there, looking out the window at the falling night,

and nodded blankly. She wanted to talk, but she felt so shaky, she was afraid she would burst into tears again if she did.

“What do you think about what the police said?” Polly asked. “About contacting her friends? Do you think that’s a good idea?”

As Polly said it, Caitlin suddenly remembered it, and realized it was the perfect thing to do. She racked her brain, wondering how to get in touch with her friends.

Then it hit her: Scarlet’s phone. She’d burst out of here without even pausing to grab it. Her phone must be somewhere in the house. Maybe in her bag. Probably in her bedroom.

Caitlin jumped up from the couch.

“You’re right,” she said. “Her phone. It must be in her bedroom.”

Caitlin ran across the room and up the steps, Polly and Ruth on her heels.

She hurried into Scarlet’s bedroom, saw the upturned sheets and pillows, saw the dent in the sheetrock where Caleb had been thrown, where her own head had hit, and remembered. It brought it all back, and made her feel queasy as she relived it again. It looked like the scene of a disaster.

Caitlin felt a surge of determination as she scoured the room. She rifled through the mess on her desk, on her dresser – then spotted her bag, hanging on a chair. She rummaged through it, feeling a bit guilty, and felt for her phone. She pulled it out, victorious.

“You found it!” Polly yelled, hurrying over.

Caitlin saw there was still some battery life. She opened it, feeling bad for spying, but knowing that she needed to. She didn't know Scarlet's friends numbers, and had no other way of getting in touch with them.

She tapped on Scarlet's contacts, then went to her Favorites. She scrolled through, and saw dozens of names. Some names she recognized, and others she didn't.

"We should call them all," Polly said. "One by one. Maybe one of them knows something."

Caitlin stood there, in a daze, suddenly feeling overwhelmed. As she went to dial the first contact, she noticed how badly her hands were shaking.

Polly noticed, too; she reached out and placed a reassuring hand on Caitlin's wrist, and Caitlin looked up.

"Caitlin, sweetie, you're still in shock. Let me call all these people for you. Please. It would give me something to do. Just go and sit down and rest. You've been through hell, and you've already done all that you can."

As Polly said it, Caitlin knew she was right. She wasn't really in her right mind. She looked at the phone, and for a moment, almost forgot what she was doing. She reached out and handed the phone to Polly.

Caitlin turned and walked out the room, and within moments, she heard Polly's voice ringing through the air, already having someone on the line.

"Is this Heather?" Polly called out. "This is Polly Paine. I'm

Scarlet Paine's aunt. I'm sorry to trouble you, but we're looking for Scarlet. Have you seen her?"

Polly's voice slowly faded as Caitlin walked back down the steps. She held the banister as she went, feeling dizzy, feeling as if the world might slip out from under her.

She finally entered the living room, walked over to a large, overstuffed chair, and sank into it. She sat there, staring out the window, her mind racing. Despite her best efforts, images flashed through her mind: Scarlet in bed, screaming; her snarl; her throwing Caleb; her bursting out of the house... Was it all real?

As she dwelled on it, she couldn't help thinking of her meeting with Aiden. Of his words, of her journal. Had her journal caused all this? Why had she had to go to that stupid attic? Why did she have to go visit him? If she hadn't, if she'd left everything alone, would all of this had happened?

She thought of Aiden's warning, that Scarlet would unleash vampirism back onto the world.

You must stop her.

Caitlin sat there, wondering. What was Scarlet out there doing right now? Was she feeding on people? Was she turning them into vampires? Was she spreading it, even now? Would the world never be the same? Was Caitlin responsible?

Caitlin felt like grabbing her phone and calling Aiden. Grilling him. Demanding he tell her everything, every last detail.

But she couldn't bring herself to. She reached out and held

her phone, and something inside her stopped. She remembered Aiden's final words, and they brought a fresh wave of nausea. She loved Scarlet more than life, and could never entertain harming her.

As Caitlin sat there, clutching the phone, staring out the window, hearing Polly's muted voice from upstairs, her mind raced. Her eyelids grow heavy. Before she knew it, she was fast asleep.

* * *

Caitlin woke to find herself sitting alone in her large, empty house. The world was still. She sat there, wondering where everyone had gone, and stood and crossed the room. Oddly, all the blinds and drapes had been drawn tight. She walked to one of the windows, and pulled them back. As she looked out, she saw a blood-red sun – but this time it looked different. It didn't seem like sunset, but rather sunrise. She was confused. Had she slept the whole night? Had Scarlet come home? And where had everyone gone?

Caitlin headed towards the front door. For some reason she sensed that maybe Scarlet was there, waiting for her.

She slowly pulled open the heavy door, looking out. But the world was absolutely still. There wasn't a single person on the streets, or even a single car in sight. All she could hear was the sound of a lone morning bird chirping. She looked up and saw

it was a raven.

Caitlin heard a sudden noise, and turned and walked back through the house. She walked into the kitchen, looking for signs of anyone. She heard another clanging, and made her way to the window against the back wall. The drapes were drawn tightly here, too, which was odd, because Caitlin always kept them open. She reached for the drapes, and pulled the cord.

As she did, she jumped back in fright. Standing outside, its face to the window, was the pale, white face of a vampire, completely bald, fangs extended and right up against the glass. It snarled and hissed as it reached up with its hands and placed its palms against the glass. Caitlin could see its long, yellow fingernails.

There was another sudden noise, and Caitlin turned and saw the face of another vampire at the side window.

There was the sound of breaking glass, and she turned and in the other direction saw yet another face. This one smashed his head right to the glass, sneering at her.

Suddenly, her house was filled with the sound of breaking glass. Caitlin ran through the house, and everywhere she looked, the walls were different than she remembered. Now they were all made of glass windows, and everywhere she looked, drapes were being pulled back and windows shattered, as vampire after vampire stuck its head through.

Caitlin ran from room to room, to the front door, trying to get away, as more and more windows shattered.

She reached the front door and yanked it open – and stopped in her tracks.

Standing there, facing her, a deadly look in her eyes, was Scarlet. She glared back at Caitlin, looking more dead than alive, stark white, and with a fierce look that wanted to kill. Even more shocking, behind her stood an army of vampires – thousands of them. All waiting to follow her, to rush into Caitlin’s house.

“Scarlet?” she asked, hearing the fear in her own voice.

But before she could react, Scarlet grimaced, leaned back, and pounced on Caitlin, her fangs aiming right for her throat.

Caitlin woke screaming, sitting up in her chair. She reached for her throat, rubbing it with one hand, while with her other hand, she tried to push Scarlet off.

“Caitlin? You OK?”

After several seconds, Caitlin calmed down and looked up and realized it wasn’t Scarlet. It was Sam. At first, she was confused. Then she realized, with tremendous relief, that she had been sleeping. It was just a nightmare.

Caitlin sat there, breathing hard. Standing over her were Sam, one hand on her shoulder, looking concerned, and Polly. The lamps were on, and she saw it was dark out. She glanced at the grandfather clock and saw it was after midnight. She must have fallen asleep in the chair.

“You okay?” Sam asked again.

Now Caitlin was embarrassed. She sat up, wiping her forehead.

“Sorry to wake you, but it seemed like you were having a bad dream,” Polly added.

Caitlin slowly stood, pacing, trying to shake off the awful vision of the dream. It had felt so real, she could almost still feel the pain in her throat where she had been bitten by her own daughter.

But it was just a dream. She had to keep telling herself that. Just a dream.

“Where’s Caleb?” she asked, remembering. “Have you heard anything? How did the calls go?”

The expressions on Sam’s and Polly’s faces told her all she needed to know.

“Caleb’s still out there looking,” Sam said. “I called it quits about an hour ago. It’s pretty late. But we wanted to keep you company until he got home.”

“I called all her friends,” Polly chimed in. “Every single one. I got through to most of them. No one has seen or heard anything. They were all as surprised as we were. I even got through to Blake. But he said he hasn’t heard a word from her. I’m so sorry.”

Caitlin rubbed her face, trying to shake off the cobwebs. She had hoped to wake to find that none of this was real. That Scarlet was back, home, safe. That life had gone back to normal. But seeing Sam and Polly standing there, in her house, after midnight, looking so concerned, brought it all back. It was all real. Too real. Scarlet was missing. And might not ever come back.

The realization struck Caitlin like a knife. She could barely

breathe at the thought of it. Scarlet, her only daughter. The person she loved most in life. She couldn't possibly imagine life without her. She wanted to run out there, down every street, to scream and yell at the unfairness of it all. But she knew it would be useless. She just had to sit here, and wait.

Suddenly, there was a noise at the door. The three of them jumped up and looked, hoping. Caitlin ran to it, praying to see the familiar face of her teenage daughter.

But her heart fell to see it was just Caleb. Returning home – and with a grim expression on his face. The sight of it made her heart drop further. He had clearly been unsuccessful.

She knew it was useless, but she asked anyway: “Anything?”

Caleb looked to the floor as he shook his head. He looked like a broken man.

Sam and Polly exchanged a look, then came over to Caitlin and each gave her a hug.

“I’ll be back first thing in the morning,” Caitlin said. “Call me if you hear anything. Even if it’s the middle of the night. Promise?”

Caitlin nodded back, too overwhelmed to speak. She felt Polly hug her, and hugged her back, then hugged her little brother.

“I love you, sis,” he said over her shoulder. “Hang in there. She’ll be okay.”

Caitlin wiped away tears and watched Sam and Polly walk out the door.

Now, it was just her and Caleb. Usually, she’d be thrilled to

be alone with him – but after their fight, she felt nervous. Caleb, she could see, was lost in his own world of misery and regret; she also sensed he was still mad at her for voicing her theories to the police.

It was all too much for Caitlin to bear. She realized she'd been holding out hope for Caleb's return, a shred of optimism that he would waltz in and announce something, some good news. But to see him returning like this, with nothing, nothing at all, just brought it all home for her. Scarlet had been gone all day. Nobody knew where she was. It was after midnight and she hadn't come home. She knew what a bad sign that was. She didn't even want to entertain the possibilities, but she knew it was very, very bad.

"I'm going to bed," Caleb announced, as he turned and strutted up the steps.

Caleb always said "good night," always asked her to come to bed with him. In fact, Caitlin could not remember a night they had not gone to bed together.

Now, he didn't even ask.

Caitlin went back to her chair in the living room, and sat there, listening to his boots climb the steps, hearing their bedroom door close behind him. It was the loneliest sound she'd ever heard.

She burst into tears, and she cried for she didn't know how long. Eventually she curled up into a ball, crying into the pillow. She vaguely remembered Ruth coming up to her, trying to lick her face; but it was all just a blur, because soon, her body racked with sobs, she fell into a deep and fitful sleep.

Chapter Three

Caitlin felt something cold and wet on her face, and slowly opened her eyes. Disoriented, she was looking at her living room, sideways; she realized she had fallen asleep on the chair. The room was dim, and from the muted light coming through the drapes, she realized day was just beginning to break. The sound of pouring rain slammed against the glass.

Caitlin heard whining, and felt something wet on her face again and looked over and saw Ruth, standing over her, licking her, whining hysterically. She was prodding her with her cold, wet snout, and she wouldn't quit.

Finally Caitlin sat up, realizing something was wrong. Ruth wouldn't stop whining, louder and louder, then finally barking at her – she'd never known her to act this way.

“What is it, Ruth?” Caitlin asked.

Ruth barked again, then turned and ran from the room, towards the front door. Caitlin looked down and in the dim light made out a trail of muddy pawprints all over the carpet. Ruth must have been outside, Caitlin realized. The front door must be open.

Caitlin hurried to her feet, realizing that Ruth was trying to tell her something, to lead her somewhere.

Scarlet, she thought.

Ruth barked again, and Caitlin felt that was it. Ruth was trying

to lead her to Scarlet.

Caitlin ran out the room, her heart pounding. She didn't want to waste a second by running upstairs to get Caleb. She tore through the living room, through the parlor, and out the front door. *Where could Ruth have possibly found Scarlet?* she wondered. *Was she safe? Was she alive?*

Caitlin flooded with panic as she burst out the front door, already ajar from Ruth, who had somehow managed to get it open, and out onto the front porch. The world was filled with the sound of pouring rain. There was a soft, rumbling thunder, and a flash of lightning in the breaking dawn, and in the soft gray light, the torrential rain slammed down to earth.

Caitlin stopped at the top of the steps, as she saw where Ruth had went. She flooded with panic. Lightning filled the sky, and there, before her, was an image that traumatized her – one that lodged in her brain, one that she would never forget as long as she lived.

There, lying on the front lawn, curled up in a ball, unconscious, naked, was her daughter. Scarlet. Exposed to the rain.

Pacing over her, barking like crazy, Ruth looked back and forth between Caitlin and Scarlet.

Caitlin burst into action: she ran down the steps, tripping over them as she went, screaming out in terror as she ran for her daughter. Her mind raced with a million scenarios of what might have happened to her, where she might have went, how she might have returned. Whether she was healthy. Alive.

The worst possible scenarios all flashed through her mind at once, as Caitlin ran in the muddy grass, slipping and sliding.

“SCARLET!” Caitlin shrieked, and another clap of thunder met her cry.

It was the wail of a mother beside herself with grief, the wail of a mother who could not stop whaling as she ran to Scarlet, knelt beside her, scooped her up in her arms, and prayed to God with everything she had that her daughter was still alive.

Chapter Four

Caitlin sat beside Caleb in the stark-white hospital room, watching Scarlet sleep. The two of them sat in separate chairs, a few feet away from one another, each lost in their own world. They were both so emotionally drained, so panic-stricken, they hadn't any energy left to even speak to each other. In all the other tough times in their marriage, they'd always found solace in each other; but this time was different. The incidents of the last day had been too dramatic, too terrifying. Caitlin was still in shock; so, she knew, was Caleb. They each needed to process it their own way.

They sat there in silence, watching Scarlet sleep, the only sound in the room the beeping of the various machines. Caitlin was afraid to take her eyes off her daughter, afraid that if she looked away, she might lose her again. The clock over Scarlet's head read 8 AM, and Caitlin realized she'd been sitting there for the last three hours, ever since they'd admitted her, watching. Scarlet had not awakened since they'd brought her in.

The nurses had reassured them several times that all of Scarlet's vitals were normal, that she was just in a deep sleep, and that there was nothing to worry about. On the one hand, Caitlin was greatly relieved; but on the other, she wouldn't really believe it until she saw for herself, saw Scarlet awake, her eyes open, saw the same old Scarlet she had always known – happy and healthy.

Caitlin ran through in her mind, again and again, the events of the past 24 hours. But no matter how she dissected them, none of it made any sense – unless she returned to the same conclusion: that Aiden was right. Her journal was real. That her daughter was a vampire. That she, Caitlin, once had been one, too. That she had traveled back in time, had found the antidote, and had chosen to return here, to this time and place, to live out a normal life. The Scarlet was the last remaining vampire on earth.

The thought terrified Caitlin. She was so protective of Scarlet and determined that nothing bad should happen to her; yet, at the same time, she also felt a responsibility to humanity, felt that if all this were true, she could not allow Scarlet to spread it, to re-create the vampire race once again. She hardly knew what to do, and she didn't know what to think, or to believe. Her own husband didn't believe her, and she could hardly blame him. She hardly believed herself.

“Mom?”

Caitlin sat upright as she saw Scarlet's eyes flutter open. She jumped up from her chair, and ran over to her bedside, as did Caleb. The two hovered over Scarlet as she slowly opened her big, beautiful eyes, lit up by the morning sun coming through the window.

“Scarlet? Honey?” Caitlin asked. “Are you okay?”

Scarlet yawned and rubbed her eyes with the back of her hands, then slowly rolled over onto her back, blinking, disoriented.

“Where am I?” she asked.

Caitlin was flooded with relief at the sound of her voice; she sounded, and looked, like the same old Scarlet. There was strength in her voice, strength in her movements, in her facial expressions. In fact, to Caitlin’s utter surprise, Scarlet looked completely normal, as if she’d just casually awakened from a long sleep.

“Scarlet, do you remember anything that happened?” Caitlin asked.

Scarlet turned and looked at her, then slowly propped herself up on one elbow, sitting up partially.

“Am I in a hospital?” she asked, surprised. She surveyed the room, realizing she was. “OMG. What am I doing here? Did I get really sick?”

Caitlin felt an even greater sense of relief at her words – and her motions. She was sitting up. She was alert. Her voice was completely normal. Her eyes were bright. It was hard to believe that anything abnormal had ever happened.

Caitlin thought about how to respond, how much to tell her. She didn’t want to scare her.

“Yes honey,” Caleb interjected. “You were sick. The nurse sent you home from school, and we took you to the hospital this morning. Do you remember any of it?”

“I remember being sent home from school... being in bed, in my room... then...” She furrowed her brow, as if trying to remember. “... that’s about it. What was it? A fever? Whatever.

I feel fine now.”

Caleb and Caitlin both exchanged a confused look. Clearly, Scarlet seemed normal, and didn't remember anything.

Should we tell her? Caitlin wondered.

She didn't want to terrify her. But at the same time, she felt that she needed to know, needed to know some part of what happened to her. She could sense Caleb was thinking the same thing.

“Scarlet, honey,” Caitlin began softly, trying to think how to best phrase her words, “when you were sick, you jumped out of bed and ran out the house. Do you remember that?”

Scarlet looked at her, eyes widening in surprise.

“Really?” she asked. “Ran out the house? What do you mean? Like, sleepwalking? How far did I go?”

Caitlin and Caleb exchanged a look.

“You actually ran pretty far,” Caitlin said. “We couldn't find you for a while. We called the police, and we called some of your friends – ”

“Seriously?” Scarlet asked, sitting upright, reddening. “You called my friends? Why? That's so embarrassing. How did you get their numbers?” Then she realized. “Did you raid my phone? How could you do that?”

She leaned back in bed, sighing, staring at the ceiling, exasperated.

“This is so mortifying. I'll never live this down. How am I going to face everyone? Now they'll think I'm some kind of freak

or something.”

“Honey, I’m sorry, but you were sick, and we couldn’t find you – ”

Suddenly the door to the room opened, and in walked a man who was clearly her doctor, strutting in with authority, flanked by two residents, each holding clipboards. They walked right to the clipboard at the base of Scarlet’s bed and read the chart.

Caitlin was glad for the interruption, defusing their argument.

A nurse trailed them, and walked up to Scarlet and raised her hospital bed to a sitting position. She wrapped her bicep and read her blood pressure, then inserted a digital thermostat in her ear and read it to the doctor.

“Normal,” she announced to the doctor, as he read the clipboard, nodding. “The same as when she came in here. We found nothing wrong with her at all.”

“I feel fine,” Scarlet chimed in. “I know I was sick yesterday, I guess I had a fever or whatever. But I’m fine now. Actually, I’d really like to go to school. I have a lot of tests today. And some damage control to do,” she added, looking angrily at her parents. “And I’m hungry. Can I go now?”

Caitlin was worried by Scarlet’s reaction, her insistence on trying to just brush all this under the rug and jump back into normal life. She looked at Caleb, hoping he felt the same, but she sensed in him, too, a desire to forget all this and to rush back to normalcy. He seemed relieved.

“Scarlet,” the doctor began. “Is it okay if I examine you and

ask you a few questions?”

“Sure.”

He handed his clipboard to one of his residents, removed his stethoscope, placed it on her chest, and listened. He then placed his fingers on various spots on her stomach, then reached out and took her wrists, and bent her arms in various directions. He felt her lymph nodes, felt her throat, and felt the pressure points behind her elbows and knees.

“I’m told you were sent home from school yesterday with a fever,” he said. “How do you feel now?”

“I feel great,” she responded, chipper.

“Can you describe to me how you were feeling yesterday?” he pressed.

Scarlet furrowed her brow.

“It’s kind of hazy, to be honest,” she said. “I was in class and I, like, started to feel really sick. My head hurt, and the light hurt my eyes, and I felt really achy... I remember feeling really cold when I got home... But other than that it’s kind of a blur.”

“Do you have any memory of yesterday, of anything that happened after you got sick?” he asked.

“I was just telling my parents, I don’t. I’m sorry. They said I was like sleepwalking or something. But I don’t remember. Anyway, I’d really like to get back to class.”

The doctor smiled.

“You’re a strong and brave young girl, Scarlet. I admire your work ethic. I wish that all teenagers were like you,” he said with

a wink. “If you don’t mind, I’d like to talk to your parents for a few minutes. And yes, I see no reason why you can’t return to school. I’ll talk to the nurses and we’ll begin the paperwork to discharge you.”

“Yes!” Scarlet said, clenching her fist in excitement as she sat up, her eyes gleaming.

The doctor turned to Caitlin and Caleb.

“May I talk to the two of you in private?”

Chapter Five

Caitlin and Caleb follow the doctor down the hall and into his large, brightly-lit office, the morning sun streaming in through the windows.

“Please, take a seat,” he said in his reassuring, authoritative voice, gesturing towards the two chairs opposite his desk, as he closed the door behind them.

Caitlin and Caleb sat and the doctor walked around his desk, holding his file, and took a seat behind his desk. He adjusted his glasses on the bridge of his nose, glancing down at some notes, then removed his glasses, closed the folder, and pushed it to the side of his desk. He folded his hands and rested them on his stomach, leaning back slightly in his chair as he studied them both. Caitlin felt reassured in his presence, and sensed he was good at what he did. She also liked how kind he had been to Scarlet.

“Your daughter is fine,” he began. “She’s absolutely normal. Her vitals are normal, and have been normal since she arrived, and she shows no sign of having had any convulsions or seizures or any epileptic disorders. She also shows no signs of neurological problems. Given the fact that you found her unclothed, we also checked for any signs of sexual activity – and there were none whatsoever. We also ran a slew of blood tests on her, all of which have come back negative. You can set your mind at ease: there

is absolutely nothing wrong with your daughter.”

Caleb sighed in relief.

“Thank you, doctor,” he said. “You don’t know what that means to us to hear that.”

But inside, Caitlin was still shaking. She didn’t feel a sense of peace yet. If the doctor had told her that, in fact, Scarlet was positive for a medical condition, she would have, paradoxically, felt much better, more of a sense of ease: at least then she would know exactly what was wrong with her, and could discount any thoughts of vampirism.

But hearing this, that there was nothing medically wrong with her, only deepened Caitlin’s sense of dread.

“So then how do you explain what happened?” Caitlin asked the doctor, her voice trembling.

He turned and looked at her.

“Please tell me: what exactly *did* happen?” he asked. “I only know what the file says: that she had a fever yesterday afternoon, was sent home from school, that she ran out of the house, and that you found her on your lawn this morning. Is that accurate?”

“There’s more to it than that,” Caitlin snapped, determined to be heard. “She didn’t just run of the house. She...” Caitlin paused, trying to figure out how to phrase it. “She... transformed. Her level of strength – it’s hard to explain. My husband tried to stop her, and she threw him across the room. She threw me across the room, too. And her speed: we chased after her, and couldn’t catch her. It was no normal ‘running out

of the house.’ Something happened to her. Something physical.”
The doctor sighed.

“I realize this must have been very scary for you,” he said, “as it would be for any parent. But I can assure you again that there is nothing wrong with her. We encounter episodes like this from time to time, especially amongst teenagers. In fact, there is an age-old diagnosis for it: Conversion Syndrome. Formerly known as ‘hysteria.’ Fits like this can overwhelm the patient, and they can experience a surge of strength, and do things out of character. The state can last for several hours, after which they often return to normal. It is especially prevalent amongst teenage girls. No one knows its exact cause, although generally, it is brought on by a stressor. Did Scarlet experience any stress in the days leading up to the event? Anything different? Anything at all?”

Caitlin slowly shook her head, still not buying it.

“Everything was perfect in her life. The night before was her sixteenth birthday. She introduced us to her new boyfriend. She was as happy as can be. She had no stress whatsoever.”

The doctor smiled back.

“That is, she had no stress that you could see – or that she chose to reveal to you. But I think you’ve answered your own question: you said that she introduced you to her new boyfriend. Don’t you think that could be stressful in the eyes of a teenage girl? Parental approval? That certainly could have surfaced any latent stressors. Not to mention, her turning 16. High school, peer pressure, exams, SATs on the horizon... There are an endless

number of potential stressors there. Sometimes we don't always know what sets it off. Scarlet may not even know herself. But the important thing is, there is nothing to worry about here."

"Doctor," Caitlin continued, more firmly, "this wasn't merely a fit of hysteria, or whatever it is you're calling it. I'm telling you, something happened in that room. Something... supernatural."

The doctor looked long and hard at her, his eyes widening.

Caleb interjected, leaning forward.

"I'm sorry, doctor – my wife has been under a lot of stress lately, as you can understand."

"I'm *not* under stress," Caitlin snapped back, sounding way too stressed and contradicting her own words. "I know what I saw. Doctor, I need you to help her daughter. She is not normal. Something happened to her. She is changing. Please. There must be something you can do. Somewhere we can bring her."

The doctor stared at Caitlin, looking stunned, for at least ten seconds. A thick silence hung in the air.

"Mrs. Paine," he began slowly, "with all due respect, I work in the medical profession. And medically, there is absolutely nothing wrong with your daughter. In fact, I heartily recommend that she go back to school today, and put this whole incident behind her as soon as she can. And as far as your... ideas... I don't mean to be patronizing, but may I ask: are you currently seeing anyone?"

Caitlin looked back at him blankly, trying to understand what he meant.

“Are you currently in therapy, Mrs. Paine?”

Caitlin blushed, finally realizing what he was saying. He thought she was crazy.

“No,” she answered flatly.

He slowly nodded.

“Well, I realize today is about your daughter, not about you. But when things settle down, if I may, I do suggest that you talk to someone. It can help.”

He reached out, grabbed a pad, and started scribbling.

“I’m giving you the name of a top-notch psychiatrist. Dr. Halsted, a colleague of mine. Please, use it. We all go through stressful times in life. He can help.”

With that, the doctor suddenly stood, holding out the paper to Caitlin. She and Caleb stood, too, but as she stood there, looking out at the paper, she couldn’t get herself to take it. She wasn’t crazy. She knew what she saw.

And she wasn’t going to accept the paper.

The doctor held the paper out there, awkwardly, his hand trembling, for way too long, until finally, Caleb reached out and took it from him.

“Thank you, doctor. And thank you for helping her daughter.”

Chapter Six

Caitlin and Caleb walked down the hospital corridor together, to the waiting area. Scarlet needed a few minutes to gather her things and get dressed, and they wanted to give her privacy. Caitlin could not believe how fast she was checking out: they would be out of their before 9 AM. Caitlin really wanted her to stay home and rest, but Scarlet insisted on going to school for the day.

It all felt surreal. Just hours ago Caitlin had been awakened by Ruth, wondering if her daughter was dead or alive. Now, by 9 AM, she was seemingly fine, and heading off to school. Caitlin knew she should be thrilled for the return to normalcy. But nothing felt normal to her anymore. Inside, she was trembling, sensing that far worse things could be coming down the road.

As they walked into the hospital atrium, a large, glass waiting room with soaring ceilings, huge shoots of bamboo, sunlight pouring through the glass and a large bubbling fountain in its center, Caleb seemed as happy as can be. She could sense he was determined to put all this behind them, to insist on things going back to normal. And that bothered her. It was like he was pretending that nothing unusual had happened.

“So is that it then?” she finally asked, as they crossed the huge, empty room, their footsteps echoing on the marble floor. “We just drop Scarlet off at school and pretend nothing ever

happened?”

Caitlin didn't want to start a fight, but she couldn't help it. She couldn't just let this go.

“What else are we supposed to do?” he asked. “She said she's fine. The doctor said she's fine. The nurses say she's fine. All the tests show that she's fine. She doesn't want to go back home. And I don't blame her. Why should she sit alone in her room all day, lying in bed, when she wants to go to school?”

“And frankly,” he added, “I think it's a good idea. I think she should get on with her life. I think we *all* should,” he added, looking at Caitlin strangely, as if giving her a message. “It was a terrible day and night, not knowing where she was, or what really even happened. But she's back to us. That's all that matters. That's all I care about. I want to put this behind us, and move forward. I don't want to dwell on it. I don't think it's helpful for Scarlet to, either. I don't want her to get some kind complex, to start worrying about herself, if she's normal. I'm just so grateful that she's back to us, and that she's safe and healthy. That's all that matters, isn't it?”

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