**The Third Afterlife**

ANR

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***“You are every reason, every hope, and every dream I’ve ever had… I will always be yours.”***

**Nicholas Sparks**

***To my main inspiration in the writing of the undead, Mamaw. I love you.***

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# Chapter One: An Obsession

## Demi Scarlett VanderWaal

There he was, leaning against that tree again.

I couldn’t see him, nor could anyone else, but we all knew he was there, because if we looked that direction, we got nauseous and our heads ached like we’d slammed them against a brick wall. How I wanted his ability, but he was the only person on the island that had it; the ability to repulse.

He was a vampire, by the name of Akeley Radcliffe, and that’s all anyone knew. We didn’t know what he looked like, what he sounded like, if he was nice or mean. All we could do was think his name and even that gave me a slight headache, saying his name out loud was asking to die.

Each and every perpetual on the island had an ability unlike no other. Some were similar, except his. No one else could repulse the way he could. It was incredible. Maybe it was because he was a vampire; we didn’t have hardly any vampires on the island; people made fun of them. The popular thing for guys was the wolverine, for girls it was the gargoyle.

I was a wolverine, chosen so I could run whenever I’d like.

I came to the hangout spot on the island every day and sat on the bleachers drawing, and every day he was there, against that willow tree. No one liked him, just for the plain reason that he was repulsive. So people made fun of him a lot, but left out his name, in an attempt to stay healthy.

But for me, I wasn’t mad that he blocked me out, or interested even, I was jealous. Oh, how I wished I could disappear from the world the way he could.

My name was Demi, I was nineteen, and I’d been on the Island of Perpetual Territory for twenty-seven years. No one really knew how old Akeley was, or how long he’d been on the island but I wondered oddly about him sometimes. On my lonely nights in bed, when it rains and I can’t sleep, the restless nights when I awake with jolts from nightmares, I thought about him then and wondered if he had nightmares or if the rain made him restless too.

I had dark chocolate-colored skin and milk chocolate-colored hair. It was thick and sort of wavy, but not much, it went just below my shoulders and touched my breast. I had yellow eyes, like all wolverines. Also, my thin nose and large puckered lips, always wet, round, doll-like eyes had shadows under them from my restless, haunting nights. I was lucky enough to have my own house on the island, for the ones in multi perpetual houses that had to share a room with something, well I felt bad for them.

I woke up sometimes screaming, I would feel bad for whoever would end up with me if I ever got put in a multi-perpetual house. I wished we could pick our own houses but we couldn’t. As I watched kids playing soccer I bit my lip, I didn’t remember my human life before I died, but I pondered around the idea of if I was any good at sports.

With my body type though, I’d say I wasn’t. I took another bite of my sandwich and then traded it out for the pencil sitting next to my skinny jeans.

I continued to draw what I imagined Akeley looked like, a dark-headed nerd. But still slightly handsome. I tried looking at him again but almost threw up in the process so I gave up on it. I wondered if he could feel people trying to look, I wondered if maybe he was looking at me. He was such a mystery to me, a mystery I so dearly wanted to solve.

After drawing for a few minutes I started packing up my stuff, scoffing the rest of my turkey, pepperoni, honey mustard sandwich. My brother thought it was disgusting but I thought it was good; it filled me up at least. But only in so many ways, I would have to hunt soon.

My brother’s name was McDaniel, but we all called him Micky. Micky was one of the people on the island that despised Akeley, but I never saw why; it was a waste of energy to hate someone you don’t even know. But also, I guess it was a waste of energy to be obsessed with him the way I was. But I couldn’t help it, it was my nature to want something I couldn’t have, to think about things I wasn’t supposed to, to obsess about the most insane things, Micky called me mentally unstable, but I called it being outside the box. And Akeley Radcliffe was the definition of outside the box.

Standing with my denim shoulder bag I turned to my left, trying to leave the bleachers but ran straight into a tall, broad-shouldered, handsome man and stumbled backward, on to my rear end. His face turned angry and the girl next to him laughed loudly, sending a rush of blood to my cheeks.

“Can’t you watch where you’re going?” The man growled. I scrambled to my feet quickly, ignored the pain on my palms from smacking the metal. I stared at the ground.

“S-Sorry.” They stepped around me and he grumbled a complaint, my lip quivered some and I started running, trying to leave that place as fast as I could. My cheeks were still hot, alongside my ears. It was an overreaction of course, but only because of my ability. I could read people’s minds—all of the only ones I truly wanted to read of course—and what was in his was what sent tears to my eyes. I hated that place, the island, I hated it all. I wanted to die, and then I remembered, I was already dead.

I ran across the soccer field and passed the tree where my little obsession sat, by the time I got to the sidewalk my legs felt stringy and weak, my heart was racing so hard and my lungs burned slightly. I walked slowly back to the house and the sun was setting by the time I got to the yellow door. I unlocked it and stumbled in, a small tear on my dark cheek. My dog, Duchess, leaped up off the couch and came barreling towards me.

She was a pit bull mutt, with short sandy fur and golden eyes. She was small and I loved her, she was always there for me. I brushed my fingers behind her ears and she panted.

I went over and returned my art supplies to my art corner before sliding my eyes over my bookshelf; I sighed and pulled out Heights of the Extreme again. I basically had every line memorized but I loved reading it, I wondered if I had liked hiking like the character in it, or hunting like her boyfriend did, I liked hunting now, but did I when I was human?

Then I started thinking of Akeley again, if he liked hunting, for blood. Most vampires did but I wondered if he was different in that way too. I laid on the couch, flipping open the book, thinking of him still. If he liked reading too, or art, did he paint and draw? Did he like seeking out the fakers on the island and drawing them too? I started reading the book, but he still lingered on the back of my mind. Alongside my hunting plans for that night.

But most of my thoughts were him. Duchess sat on my feet and chewed on her bone. The dog was a gargoyle so it was hard to satisfy her, but she seemed to like elephant bones. She always went hunting with me and somehow every time I found an elephant and we would take it down together. I was okay with that, I could get the meat and she would get the bones. I imagined hunting with Akeley, giving Duchess the bones, letting him have the blood, and I’d take the meat. I found myself smiling like an idiot and blinked, going back to my book.

I read halfway through the book before I started craving the meat, the small little burning in my stomach starting to arise, as it does when wolverines crave. I set the book on the coffee table and stood, patting my leg for Duchess right before the doorbell rang. I went over and opened the door, smiling.

“Hey,” I said to Malachi as he came in. Malachi was my boyfriend, a dark-skinned, green-eyed, handsome ghost. Ghosts could switch from solid figures to see through, to invisible, whenever they liked. He leaned down and pressed his lips into mine.

I liked Malachi, I did, maybe even loved him, and so I wondered why I was so obsessed with Akeley Radcliffe. I kissed Malachi a few times before he giggled and pulled away.

“Are you going hunting?”

“Yeah.”

“Can I come?” I smiled.

“Yeah,” I replied, nodding. If you’re wondering what ghosts feed on, it's eyelids, I know, weird. I whacked my thigh again and Duchess joined my side.

“Ready girl?” Her tiny tail wagged like crazy and she panted, unable to hold in her excitement. Malachi leaned down, chuckled, and petted her. He was also one of the people who hated Akeley, I had never told anyone about my obsession with him, why I was so interesting. My brother caught on by himself and had threatened to tell Malachi a few times.

But it wasn’t like I was cheating, just because I thought about a different guy didn’t make me a cheater, and I didn’t think about him with lust, just with curiosity. Everyone was curious about him, Micky had once said, but you’re obsessed, you have issues. The words had stung but I brushed them off, not as much as his thoughts though, they were heavier, harder to brush off.

Malachi’s thoughts were very unoriginal, a usual teenage boy. All very boring. Sometimes they were about me, how much he loved me. I liked those kinds of thoughts. Of course, I could only hear what they were thinking as they were thinking about it. So they could mask their thoughts easily, but he never did, he had nothing to hide.

Leaving the house hand in hand with Malachi, Duchess on our heels, I forgot all about what happened on the bleachers, those mean thoughts from the overbearing man. We went into the forest and let Duchess loose, then I transformed into the wolf. I had chocolate fur with small tan spots, Malachi gazed at me, his thoughts just one single word; beautiful.

I felt the heat in my wolf cheeks and then heard Duchess barking, meaning she found our target. Malachi went see-through and flew to the spot as I ran.

It was a good-sized, grey elephant, cornered against a wall of trees. I jumped onto its throat and chomped down as Duchess clawed into one of his back legs. Malachi just waited, there wasn’t much he could do, not till the animal was dead. Once it was he went down and ripped the eyelids clean off. I grimaced, bit into its leg, and looked the other way.

We got done and started heading back towards the house, Duchess chewing around on a good-sized bone the whole time, Malachi’s fingers were cold twisted in mine, but I was naturally really warm so they were probably room temperature to everyone else. He leaned down and kissed my head.

“So, what did you do today?” He pressed.

“Went to Timmy’s for breakfast, then I went to the gallery before I went to the hangout and drew some.”

“What’d you draw?” Akeley Radcliffe. I thought.

“Just some kids playing soccer,” I said, staring at the ground.

I loved Malachi, but deep down inside, I would trade him for Akeley any day of the week, I was selfish like that. Malachi was sweet and innocent, I was too, but I could be selfish sometimes, always getting what I want by using my naivety, until Akeley, all I wanted to be in a conversation with the guy, and I couldn’t. I knew his address and I thought multiple times about sending him an anonymous letter but always came up with slack excused not to.

We went into the house and Duchess immediately went to the couch. Malachi tugged me closer, biting his big bottom lip. I giggled and kissed him, he pulled my hips closer and pushed me against the wall by the stairs.

As I sighed goosebumps shot down my spine and a shiver ran through me as he moved his hands up to my jaw, holding my face firmly. Lust covered his thoughts, I twisted my fingers in his black hair and giggled, lifting myself up and straddling my legs around his waist. His eyes went to the stairs and he smirked, taking me up to the bedroom…

I awoke the next morning, the sun beaming in on my bare skin, Malachi already gone for work, but he left a little note on the kitchen table, telling me he loved me. I smiled, reading his neat and perfect handwriting over and over.

***Demi, I love you more than words, stay beautiful baby!***

I bit my lip, setting it back down and pouring Duchess’s dog food into her silver bowl, it clanked loudly and she came running in, her paws taping against the grey kitchen floor.

I turned on the TV in the living room which I could see from the kitchen and threw a pancake platter on the stove. I ate three and threw the fourth to Duchess.

I was getting dressed when I heard the mailman come up the steps, put my mail in the box, and then leave. So when I came down, I checked it, still buttoning up my black pants. Two were from the island leaders, another was from Mom, and the fourth was the picture request I’d put in with the library.

I opened Mom’s first; it was a very long description of how I needed to visit her side of the island some time, how she missed me, and how Micky did too. I sighed and wrote ‘Write Mom’ on my to-do list stuck to the fridge. Then I opened the first letter from the island leaders.

***Dear Demi VanderWaal,***

***We are sorry to inform you that you are being relocated yet again, your home is needed by two very loving parents with three daughters, your house is perfect for them. We are relocating you and your gargoyle dog Duchess VanderWaal to a multi-perpetual-home holding five other perpetuals, not including the two animals.***

***You will be sharing a room with someone, a man, but we are confident he won’t give you any trouble. There are a few rules you have to follow when being in this house: No smoking outside your room, if your roommate has a problem with it, please do it outside. Clean up after Duchess and yourself. Please be mindful of the others in the home as they are with you. And last but not least, follow all the rules.***

***The other members of this home are Abraham Hatcher, a gargoyle. Felix Oliver, a wolverine. Leana Black, a ghost. Ariana Fletch, ghost. And your roommate will be Akeley Radcliffe, a vampire. Please respect all the other members of the home, if we have problems they will report you and we hope vise versa.***

***Your new home is on the thirteen hundredth block of the fourteenth street, we will be sending a crew to pick you and all your things up on the fifth day of the fourth month, noon of that day, please be ready to leave by then. Good luck on the move and please now, we wouldn’t move you unless we really have to.***

***Thank You for your Cooperation,***

***The Sapphire***

I cursed loudly, throwing down the paper and this caused a chain reaction of Duchess jumping, whimpering, and backing away from me. I took a few deep breaths, trying not to let my anger overflow again.

“I’m sorry girl,” I said. I knelt down but she backed away again. “Come here.” She kept backing away and I sighed, standing straight. I opened the other letter but it was a junk promotion thing from the island leaders, called The Sapphire.

Trying to calm down I opened the picture request from the library, I wanted pictures of me as a human so I hired someone to find them. I wanted to see who I was, what I did, what I was like. I wanted to see if I was that same girl. I was naïve as a wolverine. I wore my heart on my sleeve, I was kind of a hopeless romantic in away. Malachi was perfect in every way because he was charming and romantic and held the door for me. I wondered if I’d been the same way as a human, constantly craving love, always thirsty for more.

I pulled out the pictures and spread them all over the island in the kitchen counter, I was a cheerleader!? Holy crap. And I had a football player boyfriend, his name was Mario. My name was Regina as a human, I looked nothing like a Regina. I looked like Demi. I looked at them some more, I won a science prize for building a mini rocket ship, and I was a mathematical genius. Yeah, I had definitely changed. Not one of these pictures showed me with a book or covered in the paint like I was now, not one showed me daydreaming wildly. I looked kind of… cold.

I scooped up all the pictures but then stopped, I had a little sister, Celest. I wondered what she was like, my mom and brother on the island weren’t my human mom and brother, I’d been assigned to them, but I loved them, they were family. I memorized my human sister’s face and reminded myself to look for her in the next coming years, see if I can spot her.

I put them all in a box and took a deep breath, I had obviously changed. Now I was naïve, sensitive, a daydreamer, immature, childish, exposed in a way. Naked to the world. I bit my lip and looked back to Duchess, kneeling down again, she came to me this time and I scratched behind her ears, she panted.

“It’ll be okay, we just have to move again, but it’ll be okay,” I assured her.

After I cleaned the kitchen I swept the living room with a straw broom and spoke with Mickey on the phone for a while. He asked how Malachi was, and if “weirdo vamp” had come out of his shell yet. I tried not to sound too desperate or disappointed as I denied it. But he saw through it anyway and demanded I just email him or send him a letter already.

Then after I was done cleaning and throwing in a load of laundry I got ready and left the house, library bound since I was running out of books to read. I went down my favorite aisle and pulled out When the Lights Go Out and Deep down Inside is Where My Monster Hides before finding a few movies and taking them to the checkout.

The large, tall woman smiled at me with all her yellow teeth and asked, “Getting more Demi?” I nodded.

“Just these,” I replied, sliding them over the counter alongside my card.

“Where’s that boyfriend of yours? Haven’t seen him in a while.” I rolled my eyes.

“Busy at work, gotta find a way to break the news to him that I’m moving to a multi perpetual home. He isn’t gonna like that.” She smiled and handed me my stuff.

“See ya, Debbi.” I waved. She waved too and I was out the door, back into the cold of winter. I tucked the books and movies into my denim back and started heading towards my favorite store as I counted how much cash I had left.

I had a part-time job, only for the weekends, I was a model for some of the new clotheslines. Most humans always wonder what comes after death, not one of them had ever guessed you just got another life, a life where you never die. For us though, we didn’t remember being human, this was the only life we knew, and I hated it.

I went into the thrift store where Malachi worked and found him behind the counter, he smiled and looked at me but flickered his eyes back to the customer, holding up his index finger for me. After he was done helping the man he came over and kissed me intensely for a second.

I giggled, pushing him away. He brushed his fingers through his hair and gazed at me with awe before saying, “Hey.” I giggled again.

“Hey. Got anything in today?” He grinned devilishly and tilted his chin towards the counter. I beamed, following him. He went behind it and dug around some before bringing up a wooden rectangular box, it looked ancient.

“I thought you might like this.” He murmured. I spun it around, examining it. It said faith on the top. I opened the jewelry box and smiled, there was a small mirror, cracked in the corner, and places for rings and necklaces. I glimpsed Malachi and found him grinning at my dazzled reaction.

I smiled big and nodded.

“I’ll take it.” I started digging for my wallet but he shook his head.

“I already bought it for ya.” My beam grew as he came around the counter and leaned against it, next to me. I threw my arms around him and he chuckled, ruffling my hair. I embraced him for a long time.

I actually didn’t like physical contact with people, I hated it truthfully, but Malachi was a really good hugger and in his arms, I was in heaven instead of on the island.

“I love you,” I whispered. He shrieked.

“I love you too.” A customer came asking for help on finding something and he sighed. I poked him, pushing him towards her.

“Go.” He leaned down and let his lips nudge mine one last time before winking and walking off.

I giggled, putting the wooden box in my bag, it was a tight fit. I left the warmth of the thrift store and into the crisp air, I strolled down the sidewalk, holding my jacket in close. Now to everyone else, it was probably a nice day out, warm even, but wolverines are always hot, so if it’s not blistering hot out, it felt cold. I glanced at my watch about the time my stomach started growling and started thinking of places to eat.

I was a good cook, I was, but it was a very boring thing to do, so I ate out a lot. I sauntered a few streets over and into a diner, I went too often. I didn’t have a car, it was my preference to walk. I was trying to keep my weight reasonable, I liked my body, but I hated exercise, walking everywhere was something my legs got used to, so I did that instead of exercise.

The man at the counter of the diner smiled at me, “Hey Demi. You’re usual?”

“Yep.” I pulled out my wallet and handed him the five dollars. He counted it out and handed me back the seventy-two cents alongside my cup. I went to the machine and got the sweet tea before sitting and waiting at my usual seat in the diner, the corner one made for two, by the window. You could see the hangout from there, I couldn’t look at the tree, which in its own way was seeing that Akeley was there, though I couldn’t see him.

I was thinking of a way to tell Malachi about the move when Axel set down my food and smiled charmingly, “What’re you thinking’ so hard about?”

“How did you tell your girlfriend about you moving into a multi-house.” He grinned a little bigger and I motioned to the other seat, he turned it around and sat, with his arms folded over the back.

“I bought her roses, took her to dinner, waited till’ she’d had a good amount of wine, and then told her.” I cackled, rolling my eyes.

“So get em’ good and drunk first.” He nodded.

“Exactly, whose house are they moving you into?”

“Leana Black’s.” He grinned.

“She’s nice, you’d like her, a little shy, but nice. I went out with her once.” I rolled my eyes. Axel had dated everyone one time or another. He seemed lost in his own thoughts for a second.

“Once upon a better time.” I laughed loudly.

“You better not tell your new girlfriend that!”

“She’s gon’ dump soon anyway.” He mumbled rolling his green eyes and shrugging, then he beamed. “And then I’ll find another.” I brushed the brown hair out of his eyes and grinned.

“You’re such a player.” His boss started yelling at him from the back, Axel groaned and stood, he looked back at me one last time over his shoulder, smirking and winked. I rolled my eyes and took a sip of my soup.

He flirted with me constantly and I thought it was hilarious, Malachi even thought it was kind of funny after he examined it for a while and saw that I never bit the bait.

But almost every girl on the island had woken up one very good Saturday morning and found themselves in Axel Hoffmann’s bed one time or another. Some girls got lucky and it happened twice. I had never done it once, I lied and said that I wasn’t even tempted, but Axel had a gorgeous face, and he had a rocking body with clothes on, so it made me wonder…

I finished my soup and tea, I was about to get up to throw my trash away when Axel came back over with a big grin.

“You are aware who else is in that house right?” He asked. I knew exactly who he was talking about before he finished himself. “That freaky vamp weirdo, what’s his name?”

“I’m not sure.” I lied, not meeting his eyes. “Something that starts with an A I think.”

“Akeley?”

“Yeah, that sounds right. Akeley Radcliffe, I think.” I threw my things in the garbage can and Axel tapped my chin, making me look at him. My lip trembled a little, he was onto me, to my obsession. I felt the heat in my cheeks growing heavier as he stepped closer to me and smirked.

Honestly, it looked like he was going to kiss me and he was thinking about it too, I’d be fine with that compared to the alternative of him revealing my little secret addiction to Akeley. He leaned down close to my face.

“You’re not really fooling anyone but yourself Demi.” He murmured. I bit my lip, folding my hands behind me and staring at the ground. “Except maybe Malachi.”

My head snapped up and I met Axel’s green eyes. His smirk became more profound to my reaction.

“I don’t know what you're talking about Axel, obviously you have a screw or two loose.” I started to walk around him and he chuckled, going back to himself.

“You wanna screw me back in?” He asked, imagining me in bed. It wasn’t actually too bad looking of an image, me and him. I read through his thoughts for a minute more and found myself considering going back, but I couldn’t do that to Malachi.

“In your wildest dreams,” I called back, leaving. The last sound I heard was his laugh radiating throughout the diner…

# Chapter Two: An Addiction

## Akeley Dane Radcliffe

There I was again, against the tree.

I was actually hiding in this spot, waiting until the movers were done at my house, I hated that they had to move some girl into my room but there wasn't much I could do about it. So I was hiding, in my own little spot, with a book in hand. Heights of the Extreme was my favorite book, I'd read it over a hundred times but it never got old, alongside When You See Me.

But I glanced over the top of the first book and to the bleachers, frowning when I didn't see her. Where is she? I thought. She's always there, every day, like clockwork. I didn't know her name, or what she was, I just knew that she was beautiful and she liked art, and she read a lot. I could tell from a mile away that she was sweet and self-conscious, but I wanted her. Most girls on the island I didn't pay attention to, a few caught my eye, but nothing like her. She was so average in every way, but... I was obsessed, she was my addiction.

I had never shown anyone outside the Sapphire myself and had never spoken to anyone, but with her, it had never been more tempting. Even if I did show myself to people, I'd be too nervous to talk to her. She was too perfect. And I was basically sure, she had a boyfriend. Which wasn't surprising with how gorgeous she was, but I dealt with the jealousy a lot.

I wondered if she noticed me, hiding over there by that tree, I wondered if she hated me like everyone else. I wondered if she was one of the fans on my website, the photography one. They wouldn't be fans if they knew who ran it, but I never told them. I just went around, taking pictures, and posted them. People loved it. I wondered if she'd be bothered, I took one of her, just once, but never posted it. I kept it to myself, hidden in the back of my favorite book. She had paint on her in the picture, she was a mess, but she was a beautiful mess. I wanted so dearly for her to be my beautiful mess.

I had my vintage camera out that day, the day she wasn't there and I sat, picturing the soccer players, they liked it when I posted pictures of them to my website. I felt a few people attempting to look at me and turned my repulse to high. They quickly stopped. I loved my ability, I pondered aimlessly on what the girl was like. I so dearly wanted to know her name but never talking to anyone cuts you back some.

She kind of looked like a... Sabrina, or Allison. She had dark skin, chocolate hair, yellow eyes, she was lean and sort of thin, but her thighs had some curves to them. She was beautiful, with a long neck and puckered lips, I'd wanted those lips so bad. On the nights when I couldn't sleep, when the rain kept me up, I'd turn to my side and start daydreaming, daydreaming that she was there, next to me, that I was holding her in my arms. Then I'd blink and the image would be gone, I'd remember she had a boyfriend and that she probably never noticed me. But it was a heck of a good daydream.

My name was Akeley, I was a vampire. I was seventeen and had been on the island for eighty years. I was tall, muscular, very muscular, with back boy blonde hair and deep red eyes. With a sharp jaw and big nose; I thought I looked average, excusing the extra muscle I carried. I liked reading books and listening to music, and I liked photography. I made a good amount of money off it.

I'd seen my little Jane Doe in magazine ads before, but they never gave her name. She was a model, and that wasn't shocking at all. Except, in public, she seemed shy, a little awkward, naïve. Which only made me want her more.

I was about to head home and see if the movers were done yet when I glanced up, feeling someone trying to see me. My eyes immediately landed on her, walking to her normal spot in the top left corner of the metal bleachers. She was so beautiful, in a floral dress to her knees that had no sleeves. I saw the paint on her fingertips and grinned. Her hair was pulled back into a tail and bounced lightly as she walked. She was in little vans and I could hear the noise of her strolling from the tree, vampire senses, and all.

I bit my lip and held up the camera, I took a few pictures and decided these I would put on the website. Maybe that way I could figure out if she's a fan, I'd ask if anyone knew her name also. There was a guy with her, but it wasn't Malachi, her boyfriend. This guy was white with green eyes and brown hair, skinny, lanky, tall. She laughed a little bit at whatever he said and I quickly got a picture of her smiling. She was so beautiful, with those pearly teeth beaming bright.

She started drawing and I found I couldn't go back to my book, not with her so beautifully over there. The guy who I thought's name was Axel left soon and it was just her there, drawing. She drew for a long while and then got up and left just as quietly as she came when the sun started to set.

Walking home I took lots of pictures of the sunset and then decided I'd go over a few extra blocks and get pictures of the riverbank with setting sun's glow. They turned out pretty good but I hated walking home in the dark so I hurried to get back to the brick house. The wood porch creaked as I came to it, I could already hear Felix blasting his hip hop music in the den. I rolled my eyes and entered, then stopped dead in my tracks, sitting right in my living room, talking to Ariana, was the girl. The girl from the hangout.

She was... She was my new roommate. I got a little dizzy and thought I might faint as my hands shook alongside my lower lip. I'd never been so scared of a girl until I discovered her, I hadn't started coming to the hangout until I discovered she did. Ariana tried to glimpse my way but my repulse was too high.

"So uh, AK—AK—" She gave up on attempting my name. "You, this is your new roommate; Demi VanderWaal." She stared to the left of me, smiling, and I felt my repulse go down some, she looked little closer to me, but still couldn't look at me. I couldn't breathe. Demi, the name fit her, she looked like a Demi, why hadn't I thought of that name. I gulped, blinking and tried to take deep breaths.

"You have mail on the kitchen counter vamp," Abraham muttered coming in, not looking at me. Demi and Ariana backed up as I dizzily stepped around them, passed the couch and wood floors and bookshelves, I avoided coming too close to the fireplace as I entered the dark kitchen. Our house reminded me of the snow white and the seven dwarves. I picked up my mail.

One was a check, from my website collection money, I had two websites; one on photography, the other was all about Earth. People seemed to love them both. The other mail was from my Dad, who I didn't trust. So not even he knew what I looked like. I pulled it open and read through it, he described his day and how he fell a week ago, right off the stairs; he thanked me for the dog I got him for his birthday since she helped him get back up. And then he reminded me that I had two little sisters I was supposed to say hey to, every once and awhile.

Of course, the Sapphire assigned me a family, but that didn't mean I had to like them. The one sister was kinda cool, musical, she sang pretty well, but the other was not. She was gothic and depressing. I took the mail and right when I almost forgot about the model in our living room started heading upstairs, planning on what to write back, also what I'd say to Abigail and Eve. I entered my room which had another twin bed in it, on the back right corner, mine was on the left. As I entered I turned to my bookshelves which lines the whole first left wall before they cut off by the closet. They had moved my desk to sit in between our beds and had gotten rid of the nightstands. There was also a new dresser sitting on one end of my bed.

I went to the desk and sat, writing to Abigail that I wanted another one of her CDs to listen too and that I'd give the others back for trade. I asked what she wanted for her birthday coming up and then I started on the letter to Eve, which wasn't as happy and nice. I told her to stop sending me letters with her black makeup smeared on them and then told her a little color never killed anyone.

I heard Demi enter the room and if I had a heartbeat, it would have sped. She went through some books, then said in the most beautiful voice I'd ever heard, "I like Heights of the Extreme..." I badly wanted to turn around and tell her it was my favorite but just because I wanted her, didn't mean I trusted her, I didn't know her.

"It's my favorite." She added. Which made it all the harder. I sat on my bed and she sat on hers. It was pretty silent and I pulled the deck of cards out of my pocket, spreading them to play with myself.

I saw her trying to watch the cards and again my shield tried to collapse, it dropped just a tad and I picked it back up. I'd never had such a hard time holding it up for someone. I'd been tempted with Ariana, but it wasn't hard to say no, the way it was with Demi.

"There's two of hearts." She muttered pointing. I glimpsed down and grinned, moving it. She bit her lip and went back to reading. Then she pulled out a notebook and started writing for a little bit.

Every once and a while her bloody smell would grow, almost like she was blushing and it reminded me of how I needed the hunt. The bloodlust was becoming too strong. Hours ticked by and she eventually lay down, I turned out the lights, laying too but gazed over at her. She was beautiful, so perfect.

A few hours passed and once the clock hit two I got out of bed, quickly going down the stairs. I slid into shoes and went out hunting. I hated hunting, I hated the blood, not that it didn't taste good, but I hated killing things, or violence in general, but this was the best way. I fed, I'll spare you the details, and then returned to the house, the sun was starting to rise at that point. Demi was still asleep, looking gorgeous as ever but in a different position.

A paper on my desk caught my eye and I read over the note she'd left me, I grinned. A list of questions for me. I slowly started writing the answers, I'd never really communicated with anyone like this, but she had to earn my trust somehow right?

***Dear Akeley,***

***I have some questions, I've always been a little curious about you, but I don't hate you like others.***

***Do you like art? How old are you? How long have you been in Perpetual Territory? Can you turn off the repulse, or not? Do you like hunting? What's your favorite book? Do you like movies? Or dogs? Do you like dogs?***

***From,***

***Demi***

I giggled, writing back.

***Dear Demi,***

***I love art. I'm seventeen, I've been on the island for eighty-seven years. Yes I can turn off the repulse; it has settings, so to say. No, I don't like hunting, I hate violence. We have the same favorite book. I prefer reading to movies, but they aren't bad. I also prefer cats, but dogs aren't bad either.***

***Now can I ask questions?***

***Why don't you hate me? Are you a fan of Perpetualstrangers.com? What's your ability? Do you like music? I'm musical. And, is Malachi your boyfriend?***

***From,***

***Akeley***

I put the note over her so she'd find it and then started reading, occasionally my eyes would wander over and gaze at her, then I'd catch myself and go back to reading, I never slept on the nights when I hunted, it was a lost hope. Hours ticked by and I went downstairs, throwing eggs to the skillet.

I made enough for everyone and set out the plates to the island in the light kitchen, as the others awoke, they came in, grabbed their plate, and scattered. I ate at the island. Demi was the last to wake up, at probably eleven and she had a smile, I hoped that meant she'd read my note. But seeing her, brought down my wall again, I had a hard time picking it back up. I slid over her plate and she ate at the island too, not looking at me.

"Thank you." I heard her mutter. "For replying." I smiled but said nothing, continuing to post the pictures from the day before on the photography website from my silver laptop. People liked Demi's, they were used to seeing pictures of her in magazines, so they thought it was cool seeing her in public, just being normal.

She was reading a book, it was one of mine, I recognized the cover of it. I grinned a little, but staring at her raised my breathing and made me want her so bad. So I went upstairs quickly, grasping the reply paper she'd left to my questions.

***Dear Akeley,***

***I am a fan of the website, and I know you run it, all the angles are from your tree. I don't hate you because I envy you, your ability. Mine is mind-reading, but I can't read yours, the repulse keeps me out. Malachi is my boyfriend, yes. I do like music.***

***Why don't you show people yourself? Have you ever? Can you at least tell me what you look like? I imagen a dark-headed nerd, am I right? Please tell me, please, please, please.***

***From,***

***Demi***

I grinned and started writing back.

***Dear Demi,***

***My tree? No one's ever seen me before, other than the Sapphire, I don't show people because why would I ignore an ability like this? The only way to see me is to show me I can trust you. No, that's not anything that I look like. Keep trying.***

***From,***

***Akeley***

I set the paper on her bed and smiled, going over and turning on my CD player, I heard her come in, she read the note, and growled at me. I giggled and got dressed, then I picked up my camera, sketchbook, and a few books. On my way out of the house I put stamps on my letters and stuck them in the mailbox, then I was off to the hangout.

I drew a few passing kids, and then a butterfly that had landed on my foot. The cool thing about my ability was, I could repulse people, but animals were attracted to me, which sometimes sucked since Ariana's cat always found a way into my room, alongside Abe's rabbit. I hadn't met Demi's dog but heard she had a pit bull mutt.

When the butterfly flew away I let my gaze follow it, but then my eyes landed on her. Demi sat in her normal spot, a small thing of paint beside her crossed legs, her colorful skirt falling to her ankles. She had a paint book with her, atop her knees and was looking off at the hills in the distance.

I smiled and started drawing her as she painted. Every once in awhile she'd try to look at me and lurch forward. Her boyfriend showed up and seeing him kiss her just made me angry, so I got up and left. She must have noticed because it wasn't long and she was following me.

A few days pass uneventful, a sort of routine forming, Demi and I passing more notes, our questions going more in-depth. She tried a few more times to guess what I looked like but never came close. She never once guessed that I was blond. She had come up with a nickname for me since she couldn't say my name out loud, but I couldn't figure it out, why 'Spike'? But I never questioned it, just looked in her direction when she called it.

Her boyfriend came over once, but she got mad and kicked him out when he kept muttering about me. The fourth night of her being there she moved around a lot in bed and talked, then cried, and screamed sitting up quickly. I jumped and looked at her quickly.

Her cheeks filled with color. "Sorry." She muttered. "Nightmare." I changed the settings on my repulse, so she could hear me, I was taking baby steps here.

"I have nightmares too," I revealed. "You don't have to be self-conscious." Her eyes went wide and she tried to look by direction but failed. So she tried something else. She muttered my name and her eyes went wide again when she was successful. I laughed.

"Settings." I excused. She seemed to be listening intently to my voice. I bit my lip, it probably wasn't what she expected.

"Why do you block everyone out? Instead of just the people you hate." I gulped. I didn't want to block her out, but I didn't know her well enough, I was still learning to trust.

"I only show myself to the people I trust, translation: no one. You are the first person besides the Sapphire to ever hear my voice." Her eyes went wide. "Because you are the first person I've ever tried to trust..."

"Why?" Because I'm in love with you. I thought.

"Because you haven't stabbed me in the back or made fun of me in any way... I like you..." I muttered. If I wasn't a vampire, I would have blushed so deep, but looking at her, the blush in her dark cheek, made me wonder how much she really loved that boyfriend of hers.

"Will you let me read your mind, please just once." She begged.

"No." I heard her growl and smiled, it was a nice sound from such a tiny girl. I laid down. "Goodnight Demi."

"Night Akeley."

## The Next Morning

I rolled over in bed and then grinned, Demi was sprawled over the floor, in front of her dead laptop, snoring, drooling on her arm, surrounded in study books. I giggled and felt my shield shut down a notch again, almost falling completely.

I got up and put on a shirt, then sighed and bent down, picking her up. Her skin was so warm, beyond warm. Werewolves man. Their skin, so hot. She groaned a little in her sleep and moved her hand on my chest; the touch sent a shiver down my spine. I swallowed hard and set her in her bed. But as I walked away I felt a snag, she grabbed my hand and I turned, my shield falling and crumbling at her touch.

"Akeley..." It sounded like a moan but I knew she was still asleep. "I'm falling... in love... you..." And then she dropped my hand and started snoring again. My eyes went wide and I couldn't breathe, the room suddenly growing very small. She's falling in love with me?

And it was then, that I felt my walls really crumble...

# Chapter Three: A Need

## Demi Scarlett VanderWaal

I waited, but he wasn’t at the tree.

“You’re acting weird, you sure you’re okay?” I looked back over to Malachi quickly, trying to act like everything was completely normal. I smiled at him, he really was handsome. Brushing his hair back he let me move my fingertips over his face.

“Yeah, I’m fine.” Malachi was the perfect guy, I told myself that over and over again. That he was perfect and romantic and he loved me. I even reminded myself of the note he’d left me. The little poem. There wasn’t a guy better.

“I’m sorry about the other day, when you kicked me out.” I cringed at the memory.

“It's fine, it was an overreaction.”

“The guy’s just a creep.” I nodded, trying not to get mad.

“Yeah, a super creep.”

“I mean, he has to be up to something big and bad to hide like that, right? Can you read his mind?” I wished. I wished so much. I’d trade anything. If I had to give up my power forever to just hear his mind once, I’d do it. I shook my head, trying not to look too disappointed.

“No, but I don’t wanna talk about him, I wanna talk about you… and the promotion.” I recalled, beaming big. “Look at you, a manager and stuff.” He laughed, flipping his hair out of his eyes.

“Of a thrift store.” He reminded me. “It’s nothing, don’t get excited.”

“Well it's good, I think so at least, and I get gifts, how could I not like it.” He smiled widely. “I put that box you got me to good use.”

“Oh?” He raised a brow.

“I kept my paint brushes in it, since I don’t wear a lot of jewelry.” He nodded and I leaned across the table, taking his hand. “What’s wrong handsome?” He smirked, whatever it was he was trying his very hardest not to think about it.

“You’re just acting weird.” I gulped.

“How so?” I saw a flash in his mind, of me, biting on my lip and looking over to the park, to Akeley’s tree. I rolled my eyes. “I looked at the park, come on, that’s not weird.” He shrugged and I saw more images, of me avoiding his eyes and gulping, picking at my nails, biting my lip, bouncing my knee, and then one where I couldn’t have looked guiltier. I gulped again. He was onto me.

“And you keep looking at that tree, what’s so special about that tree?” I tried to look back over there, but couldn’t and excitement washed through me. Akeley was there. Then I heard it click in Malachi’s head. The words stung.

“I am not cheating on you.” I spit, standing up, tears coming to my eyes. “How could you think of me like that, after everything we’ve been through together Mal?” He stood too, looking nervous and stuttered.

“I’m just trying to figure out what’s going on Demi, you’re acting weird and you’re getting mad easier, you never do this.” Then he froze. “You aren’t pregnant are you?”

“No!” I cried. “I’m just… The move, it's messing with me, that’s all. You’re the one flipping! Not me!” I yelled. His mind floated over me, as I yelled, something I never did. Then he was back to the cheating analogy, or that maybe I fell in-love with someone else.

“I’m glad you think so lowly of me.” I snarled, grabbing my bag. I started stomping out of the diner and Axel watched as he washed the register. Malachi started to chase after me but I started running. Eventually I lost him, but it didn’t take long and I could hear Akeley walking behind me. We always walked home together, it was just… what we did.

But when he heard me sniffle I heard him come closer. I gasped as I felt a cold hand take my arm gentle, rotating me around. Then my eyes went wide. There, holding onto my arm was a tall, broad shouldered, amazingly muscular blonde. His eyes deep red, his skin icy and pale, like stone. It took a second to connect a name to that gorgeous, irresistibly flawless face.

Akeley Radcliffe.

His shield down, all the way, his mind full of worry for why I was crying, his brows furrowing, causing a chain reaction of wrinkles in his forehead. “Demi what’s wrong?” I stared at him, wide eyed; still a tear flowing down my cheek, my lips open some. I blinked and shook my head, that wasn’t at all what I imagined him as. I felt almost stupid for living my hand up and touching his cheek, making sure I wasn’t hallucinating. I’d thought it was crazy that he’d carried me to bed, though I didn’t remember it, I knew he had, there wasn’t another explanation.

I didn’t even realize it until I was murmuring the words, “You’re beautiful…” Then I froze, heat flashing to my cheeks faster than ever. I dropped my hand, staring at the ground. He touched my chin and brought my face back up.

“As are you.” Was all he said, staring into my eyes deeply. The words stabbed at me, staring at him I realized Malachi was right, I was falling in love with someone else. First I was just curious, and then I was obsessive, then I was in denial, and now I’m in-love.

“Demi, what’s wrong?” He repeated. “Why are you crying?” I cleared my throat.

“I got into a fight with Malachi…” Then I felt myself shaking, my whole body got hot. I rapidly looked to the sky and then at my watch, the full moon was unmistakable in the sky. I cursed.

“I gotta go.” I murmured, starting to run.

“Wait!” He called. But I was already in the woods, running, feeling the tremors coming. I dropped my bag and fell to the ground on my hands and knees, the yellow washing over my vision blinded me and my clothes started spreading and then I let out a howl, and it wasn’t the only howl I heard. Lots more. But then I realized, I wasn’t alone in the woods, I looked over as Akeley started, wide eyed.

Whatever setting he was in wouldn't let me read his mind, though I wanted so bad, to see what he thought. Only one other person had seen me in wolf, Malachi. Did Akeley like what he saw? Or was he repulsed? Then he gulped and stepped closer, his breathing a little uneven.

“Demi?” I nodded and he smiled. Nothing had ever melted me like that silent smile did, he let me in his mind and it was filled with how beautiful I was. I’d never been so flattered, my cheeks were hot and when he touched my fur I didn’t want to admit to the shiver that ran through me. Then the moon wasn’t fully overhead, and had no control over me. I started slowly morphing back and he looked away, I hated how my clothes shredded.

I pulled my clothes out of my bag and dressed quickly as he looked the other way and leaned against a tree, “You can turn around.” I was allowed once I was getting into shoes. He did and smiled widely, it sort of dazzled me for a minute.

“I’ve never seen a wolf before, that was amazing.” I blushed deep, picking up my bag and throwing it over my shoulder. “You’re beautiful.” I blushed deeper and he grinned, brushing his icy fingers over it.

“C’mon, let me walk you home.” I looped my arm through his and stared at him as he walked, oblivious of how incredibly gorgeous he was. “So, what was the fight with Malachi about?” He pressed casually.

“Well like I said he accused me of cheating, and… with the most impossible person ever.”

“Who?”

“I was hoping you wouldn’t ask that question.” I revealed. He wasn’t letting me in his head as we came back to the sidewalk but at least I’d gotten a glimpse, that was all I’d ever asked for. His voice wasn’t what I expected, but I loved it. I never wanted him to stop talking, but he was so quiet.

“Is it me?” He guessed.

“Yeah.” I admitted blushing. It might have been a slip, it might not have, but I was in his head for a second, a very small second and could only hear two words. I wish. And that only made my blush deeper than ever. He took a deep breath.

“So did he apologize?”

“I ran out before he could, I think I dumped him…”

“Well do you want it to be over?”

“Yes… I mean, I love him, and he’s a great guy… But what do you do when…” I bit my lip. I couldn’t admit how obsessed I was with him, it was pathetic, but how I wanted him. He stopped walking and turned to me.

“You can tell me whatever it is.” We were in front of the house now, and I knew everyone was asleep, it was pretty late and all the lights were out. “You can tell me anything.” My breathing grew heavy and my gaze fixed on his lips. Then it clicked on his face and he moved his hand to the small of my back. I grabbed the collar of his shirt and came to my toes quickly.

When his cold lips touched mine, my whole world stopped spinning, my bones got hot and my stomach started knotting. Then his lips parted and my world was spinning, everything was spinning, it was so fast, I was so dizzy. I melted into him as he kissed me again, then pulled me closer and strained his neck, deepening the kiss. I grabbed his hair and pulled his icy cold body into mine.

I sighed loudly and I felt him shiver as I lifted myself closer to him, whining a little. He grabbed my thigh hard, it almost hurt but I was too distracted to care as he picked me up and wrapped his arms around me. I surrounded his waist with my legs. He stumbled up the stairs and unlocked the door with super speed, kissing me harder than I’d ever been kissed.

I’d made out with Malachi hundreds of times, we’d made love more times than I could remember, but he never made me feel the way Akeley did in that moment as he carried me inside. My hip ached as he slammed me against the wall. We broke the kiss and watched the crack in the wall he’d caused stretched all the way up to the siblings.

“Oops.” I giggled out, but when I met his eyes they were worried.

“Did I hurt you?” He asked quickly. “Are you okay.” I squeezed his hair, actually my hip really hurt.

“I’m fine… Kiss me again.” He obeyed and I sighed, it was actually more of a moan really. I was shocked at how unguilty I felt for basically cheating on Malachi, if we were still a thing. I felt him going up the stairs and he started kissing my throat. I really moaned then. And the next thing I knew we were in his bed and his tongue was on my throat.

I squeezed him tighter and heard him sigh his name as his lips came back to mine. The sound sent a jolt of excitement through my veins, and the same jolt came when he moaned in between kisses. I started pulling off his sweater and it hit the floor. Malachi had pretty muscles, but there was no justice.

The guns were incredible, and his chiseled out muscles, the way his six packs stood out bold on his pale skin. I dragged my fingers down them and shivered, his lips glided to my throat and he buried his face in as he kissed me. Nothing had ever felt the way it did when his icy lips touched me. Nothing had ever felt better.

I’d thought making love with Malachi was the best thing my body could ever go through, god I was wrong, I was so, so wrong. But when my hands moved to the edge of his khakis, my destination set on his belt he pulled away and shook his head. “We can’t Demi.”

“Because of Malachi? It's over… Please Akeley…” I’d never felt so weak, so pathetic, how I fell to his feet, crumbling to my knees. “Please… I need you.” His thoughts were nothing but lust, so I knew he wanted me just as much as I needed him.

“It’s not Malachi… I could really hurt you Demi, the cracked wall that Abe’s gonna be mad about tomorrow is a good example of how accidents happen.”

“You won’t.” His brows knotted and he reached over to the desk, breaking a chunk off the wood and holding it up, it pinched it with his finger and it turned to wood chippings. I sighed. “Please, you’ve got self-control, I can tell… Please, I need you.” I kissed his throat and he moaned. I rolled over him and rammed my body against his, my breast flattening against his chest, I kissed him again.

“Demi…” He moaned. “Oh Demi…” I moved to his ear and traced his earlobe with my tongue, he moaned loudly and rolled overtop of me, kissing my lips intensely.

“Akeley…” I sighed. “I want you.”

“I want you more.” Was all he said, kissing my collar bone, I backed up and looked him dead in the eye.

“Then come and get me.” I challenged grinning.

“Demi, it's dangerous.” He sighed, breathing heavy.

“Maybe I like danger.” He rolled his eyes and I sighed. “Fine, just hold me.” I begged. He smiled wide and laid next to me, wrapping me in his icy touch. I curled into his side. I didn’t want him to go all silent again, I needed his voice like I needed him. I loved it.

“Please talk.” I whispered.

“About what?” I shrugged.

“Anything, just say something.”

“I want you to say something instead, you have a beautiful voice.” I smiled, melting the same.

“That’s why I wanted you to say something.”

“Well I love your voice…” He whispered. “Can I tell you something cheesy?” I nodded, helpless to his whispery tone. “I think I need to get my eyes checked… I just can’t take them off you.” I giggled and looked up at him, his little grin, his dimples.

“That was cheesy.” His grin grew. Then my phone started ringing in my bag. He reached over and picked it up for me, then frowned.

“It's Malachi.” I grabbed it, and hit ignore, then put the phone on the desk. I watched his beam spread wide. He kept brushing his fingers through his hair and then giggling when I’d shiver. I couldn’t help it though, and then his fingertips would touch my throat the way he kept doing, my eyes would roll back in my head. I’d never felt weaker in my entire life.

“Why me?” I whispered. “Why do you show yourself to me?” I heard him gulp, he started blocking me out of his thoughts again.

“Because I trust you… And… I’ve liked you for a long time, before you moved into the house.” I glanced up at him, trying to read his face since I couldn’t hear his thoughts.

“Really?” He nodded, but I could tell there was more to the explanation. He read my suspicion easily and sighed.

“I… I l…” He kept cutting himself off, almost like he was choking on the words. I knew what they were though as soon as he started on the L. I leaned up and kissed him.

“I love you too.” I whispered, and then like that, he was back on me, kissing me intensely, moaning. I grabbed his hair, loving the sudden passion those little words brought on. He rammed his body up against mine and held me tight, I knew my arms were going to have bruises in the morning but didn’t care.

He glided down my throat again and I whined, pulling him closer. I tried his belt again but, yet again, he pulled away and shook his head. “Please Akeley… We’ll be careful, please…” His lip was trembling and he seemed to be on a wire, not knowing exactly what to do, so I pushed it by kissing his chest again. That seemed to do it, he shoved his hands up my shirt and I quickly pulled it off, letting my fingertips lingered down past his abs and onto his belt once more.

This time, he didn’t stop me.

This time, I let him have me. I let him take me in the passion, the hunger so strong. And it was perfect, nothing like Malachi had ever given me, it was sensual and careful, sure I was going to be covered in bruises, but I didn’t care. Only one thing mattered, he was that one thing. And he was everything I needed.

I was aware of the sun rising outside as I laid in his arms for hours, the sun coming up brighter and moving across the sky, my eyes heavy, my breathing slow, listening to his thoughts, which were still on the hours before. He leaned down and kissed my ear, his fingers tracing down my arm as my back pressed against his chest.

“I love you.” He murmured in my ear. I shivered.

“I love you too.” I twisted around to see his face and he frowned slightly, brushing his thumb over my bottom lip. “What is it?” I pressed, I really wished he’d quit randomly blocking me out of his head.

“Your lips’ swollen.” I giggled, snuggling further into his chest. “Is the rest of you okay?” I just nodded, a little scared to take a peek under the blanket, I knew there’d be bruises, everyone. My dark skin wouldn’t help at all. He must have seen it on my face, his hand slipped under the blanket and onto my skin. I shivered and he pulled the blanket off my body.

His thoughts were nothing but sorrow, his brows furrowing, he frowned and tears filled his eyes. I looked down, I was covered in bruises. My ribs and chest, thighs and hips, my collar bone too. They were everything. Black and purple against my chocolate skin. Akeley started lightly putting his hands on them, showing that some were obviously handprints. He shook his head.

“I… am so sorry Demi… I…” His voice cracked. I cupped his cheek and rolled on him some.

“Don’t.” I kissed him and he sighed, his lip trembling. He seemed reluctant to kiss me back and when he did, it was weak. “Kiss me.” I begged. “Please…” I rolled over him and kissed his neck. He sighed heavily and grabbed me by the thighs, sitting up and shoving his lips into mine. I giggled and grabbed his hair.

He laughed, kissing me lightly. I fell backwards in the bed and he came with me, I giggled and he pecked my neck, my collar bone, moving his hands up to my chest. I snickered and then there was a knock at the door.

“Can they see you?” I whispered. “Or hear you?”

“No, only you. It’s the setting.” He replied. I laughed. This was awesome. I answered to whoever was knocking at the door and Abe alerted us that breakfast was ready, which was good, I was starving. Akeley kissed me a few more times and then watched as I dressed quickly.

“What are you lookin’ at?” I teased. He smirked and came closer, tying the edge of his sweatpants. I skimmed my hands up his bare chest and smiled, kissing him. He snickered and pushed my bra strap off, kissing my shoulder, then down on my ribs, I sighed and his hands lingered on the edge of my underwear. I giggled and moved back from him.

“We have breakfast to eat…”

“Hmm… But…” He whined, kissing my jaw. I laughed and he picked me up. He carefully pushed me against the wall and traced one of the scratch marks down my arm. He frowned again. “I’m sorry about that.”

“Don’t apologize, I’m not sorry, not… one… bit…” I whispered, kissing the side of his neck. “Now, can I get dressed?” He smiled again; his sudden mood swings were killing me.

“Why? I like it this way.” I rolled my eyes, and he kissed my bottom lip softly, in ways that made me dizzy, and hungry, wanting him more than ever…

# Chapter Four: Preoccupied

## Akeley Dane Radcliffe

Gorgeous. She was so, so gorgeous.

Nothing compared to her, before I’d seen her naked, I’d have thought that her in my favorite flowery dress of hers was the prettiest she got. I kept finding myself accidentally getting lost in thought, thoughts about her of course; how her soft lips felt moving against my skin, her fingertips on me, her body beneath mine. There I was again, getting lost. But she was so amazing, I’d never felt anything like that.

It was enough for me to love it, enough for me to never want it to stop, for her to hold me harder, but it was also enough to terrify me beyond belief. And the way she had a whole blanket of bruises over her, it hurt me, I couldn't bear it. But she was so good at making me forget they were there.

Going down the stairs her fingers lingered on mine, I grinned at her and she winked, skipping ahead of me and to the kitchen. I giggled and shook my head. I had never had my walls all the way down, my shield though, it just crumbled at her feet.

Breakfast was good, Abe kept asking when the crack in the wall and ceiling appeared, but no one had a valid answer, he pressed Demi more than the others, but that might have been because she giggled and blushed. I really hadn’t meant to put it there, I never meant to hurt her, and I knew I had, it was all over her face; how it twisted in pain for a moment and then scrambled back to normal.

I didn’t like the way she tried to hide that from me. So, she could read my thoughts, but I couldn’t read hers? That didn’t seem very fair. But I couldn’t be mad at her, I don’t think anyone could be mad at someone that beautiful.

I went into the kitchen, she was at the island, already eating on pancakes. I sat next to her and started to do the same. She peered at me from the corner of her eye and grinned, moving hand to my thigh. I smiled.

I could feel a big chance coming in life, whether good or bad, I didn’t know. But it was coming. Nonetheless, all I could think was that I wanted to spend the rest of my life, with Demi VanderWaal.

THE END