

ROSE Hathaway (17), a well-built fighter with a wild sense of sarcasm and wit, sits at a dining room table. Blood flows from a fresh bite mark on her neck. Her vision moves in and out of focus as her body processes the high from the bite.

A voice startles her from her stupor.

LISSA

You okay?

In front of Rose now stands LISSA Dragomir (also 17), Rose's magical -- and royal -- partner-in-crime. Lissa stares at Rose with concern, a washcloth in her hand.

Rose shakes her head.

ROSE

Yeah. Fine.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

From across a pool deck in the mansion's backyard, a shadowy FIGURE watches the girls in the dining room through the room's blinded windows. Their words and laughter spill out into the darkness. Inside the room, Lissa sits.

LISSA

Sorry. Took me forever to find where these people keep their washcloths.

ROSE

You could have asked them if you hadn't compelled them on a trip to the Bahamas.

LISSA

Look at this place. It's not like they couldn't afford it.

They laugh. The figure stands still and continues to watch them.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Rose puts the washcloth on her bleeding neck and grimaces slightly. Lissa, watching, shifts uncomfortably. Rose sighs.

ROSE

Don't do that.

LISSA

Do what?

ROSE

That pouting thing. Liss, keeping you alive is my job.

LISSA

I don't remember this being part of the job description.

Rose reaches across and sets a reassuring hand on Lissa's.

ROSE

Hey. You come first. Always.

Lissa nods while avoiding Rose's gaze.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Lissa. I promise I'm fine.

Lissa grins up at her.

LISSA

You're still high.

Rose shrugs.

ROSE

Just a little bit.

LISSA

Yeah. Well, while that wears off...

She laughs and stands.

LISSA (CONT'D)

I'm going to bed. You should try the same.

Lissa hugs Rose and walks toward the living room and front of the house.

LISSA (CONT'D)

Don't forget. We have school tomorrow.

Rose groans as Lissa exits.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The figure outside watches Lissa leave the room and then moves from his hiding spot toward the house.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rose stands at the sink, rinsing the washcloth of blood.

Down the hall a door opens silently and the shadowed figure sneaks in, unbeknownst to Rose.

Rose finishes ringing out the rag and sets it to the side, watching the last of the blood run down the drain.

The figure's feet step lightly on the floor of the darkened hallway. The soft footsteps attract Rose's attention. She calls out over her shoulder.

ROSE

I thought you were going to bed?

The footsteps cease.

Rose turns around looking around her. She doesn't notice the stranger lurking behind the wall adjoining the kitchen.

Rose turns her attention forward once more into a mirror-like window. She glances down for only a moment to turn off the faucet. When she looks up, the stranger, still shadowed, stands behind her.

She gasps, but acts quickly. She thrusts an arm backward toward the assailant, who easily catches her wrist. Not to be deterred, she crosses with another punch, but soon finds both of her hands incapacitated.

She looks up in surprise to see her opponent. DIMITRI Belikov (early 20s), perhaps the best guardian of all time, stands before her. Though his words are lightly accented with a Russian grumble, he speaks perfect English.

ROSE (CONT'D)

You're a guardian.

Rose takes a moment to analyze the situation before she realizes what this means and re-launches her attack. Only, before she can move, Dimitri has her hands pinned to the counter behind her and she is immobilized.

DIMITRI

Stop fighting. I don't want to hurt you.

ROSE

Then what do you want?

DIMITRI

I'm here for the princess.

ROSE

I guess I'm the runner's up prize.
Congratulations.

She pushes back against him, but he doesn't budge.

INT. ENTRY WAY / DINING ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Lissa walks down the stairs and makes her way into the dining room, following the sounds of conversation.

DIMITRI (O.S.)

Just tell me where she is.

ROSE (O.S.)

About a thousand miles from
wherever you are if she's smart.

DIMITRI (O.S.)

You are interfering with a royal
decree.

Lissa peeks around the wall separating the kitchen from the dining room and sees Rose with Dimitri. She quickly ducks back behind the wall and conceals herself.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Rose scowls at Dimitri as he continues.

DIMITRI

By order of Queen Tatiana...

ROSE

I could care less what that senile
old bitch wants.

Rose's smirk fades a little as she covertly glances toward the dining room. A small tuft of blonde shows from Lissa's hiding space.

Rose turns her attention back to Dimitri. She allows her arms to go slack.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Let me go. Please.

Dimitri eyes her wearily before releasing her. She pushes him away and backs slowly toward the dining room.

DIMITRI

I only want to keep her safe.

ROSE

You want to take her back to the Academy. They're two different things, comrade.

Rose comes to a stop between the dining area and Dimitri.

ROSE (CONT'D)

She's not going anywhere with you.

DIMITRI

Whatever it is you are afraid of, I can protect her from it.

Rose drops into a fighting stance.

ROSE

No. I'm her guardian. I'm the only protection she needs.

She lunges at him. Dimitri reacts quickly and merely sidesteps her attack. Rose falls, hitting her head hard against the sink. Dimitri moves quickly to catch her as she loses consciousness.

LISSA

Rose!

Lissa runs in from her hiding spot and places a hand on Rose.

2

INT. WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

2

Rose lies on a bench, unconscious. Dimitri stands nearby, alone in an otherwise empty room. Rose stirs in her sleep before jolting awake. Dimitri glances up at her.

ROSE

Lissa!

Rose sits up too quickly and grimaces, holding her head in pain. She looks up accusingly at Dimitri.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Where is she?

DIMITRI

Easy. You hit your head.

ROSE

Thanks for the diagnosis, comrade. Now tell me where Lissa is.

DIMITRI

She's talking to the Headmistress.

Rose looks around, analyzing her surroundings.

ROSE

You brought us back?

DIMITRI

Would you really have had me leave the Princess out there only you as protection?

Rose turns her furious glare back to him.

ROSE

Yes. I've kept her safe for over a year without your help.

DIMITRI

From what I saw, you're both lucky to be alive.

ROSE

I always did what I had to do to protect Lissa. I'm her guardian.

DIMITRI

Technically, I'm her guardian.

ROSE

Technically, you're outsourced help. If you really wanted to protect Lissa, you wouldn't have brought her back to this place.

DIMITRI

And why is that?

Rose shakes her head and glances away, shrugging.

ROSE

Forget it. Doesn't matter anymore.

DIMITRI

It matters to me.

Dimitri sits beside Rose.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

You know, I've seen your records. By all accounts, your running away makes little sense.

Rose plasters a vindictive half smile onto her face.

ROSE
Maybe I'm just crazy.

DIMITRI
Or maybe there's something you aren't telling me. A real reason you have to fear the academy.

ROSE
I'm not afraid of anything.

DIMITRI
Except, of course, losing Vasilisa.

ROSE
Which will never happen. I'd die before I let anyone touch her.

DIMITRI
But when you die, who's left to protect her?

Rose scrambles for a witty comeback or legitimate answer. Ultimately, she gives up and scowls at Dimitri.

ROSE
Screw you.

DIMITRI
Your intentions are noble. Brave. For everyone except a dhampir.

Rose's confusion turns to irritation and defensiveness.

ROSE
I've been hearing that they come first since elementary school. Are you saying I shouldn't be willing to die for her?

DIMITRI
I'm saying that taking a bullet is easy. Getting ahead of the situation and grabbing the gun before a shot can be fired is the real test of a guardian's abilities.

Dimitri stands as Rose mulls over his words.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

You'll do anything to protect her.
I understand that. But you're
impulsive. And that's why you're
not ready to be a guardian. Yet.

He crosses to the office door and knocks on it. A moment later, the door opens and Ellen KIROVA, St. Vladimir's uptight pain-in-the-ass of a headmistress, exits.

Lissa follows closely behind the headmistress and Rose stands immediately at the sight of her. Rose meets Lissa's gaze and a long glance full of unspoken communication passes between them. A question plays across Lissa's features.

Rose responds with a quick nod and Lissa walks away. Dimitri watches this interaction with curious eyes. Kirova turns her glare to Rose.

KIROVA

Miss Hathaway. How nice of you to
grace us with your presence.

Rose faces Kirova with an arrogant smirk.

ROSE

Nice to see you, too, Ellen.

Rose brushes past her and steps into the office, not a worry in the world to be seen on her face.

3

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

3

Rose reclines in a chair in a large conference room instead of an office. Multiple televisions hang on the wall of the room. Kirova sits calmly across the conference table from her, papers and files spread across the table.

ROSE

You're abnormally quiet.

KIROVA

I'm waiting.

ROSE

For what?

KIROVA

For you to spin some ridiculous and convoluted story to explain why you left the Academy. With the last of the Dragomir family line, no less.

Rose glances around the room.

ROSE

Why aren't we in your office?

KIROVA

I've been in meetings all day. Particularly with members of the royal court. Even the queen herself.

ROSE

And how is that possible? Big screens, conference rooms? The school used to look like a defunct castle and I barely got wifi.

KIROVA

Prince Dashkov made a rather large donation seeking to update the school to modern times.

Rose's attitude dampens as she recognizes the name.

ROSE

How is Victor?

KIROVA

To start, he was worried to death about Vasilisa.

Rose remains silent.

KIROVA (CONT'D)

Do you have any idea how serious this is? The risks you were taking? What were you thinking?

ROSE

Thinking? When have I ever been accused of that? Look, Lissa's back now. Can't we just leave it at that?

KIROVA

We most certainly can not.

Kirova drags a file around in front of her.

KIROVA (CONT'D)

The meetings today were not only to discuss Vasilisa's return. They were to discuss what should happen with you now that she has.

Rose's remaining attitude fades, replaced with anger.

ROSE
You're sending me away.

KIROVA
The royal court has insisted on
your expulsion from this
institution.

Rose scoffs and leans forward.

ROSE
If you think you can keep me away
from Lissa, you are seriously
mistaken.

KIROVA
Rose --

Rose ignores her, pissed off and not in a mood to be interrupted.

ROSE
Tell me, who are you going to send
me to? My mom's out of cell range
in Tibet. And good luck finding my
father.

Kirova interrupts, more forcefully this time.

KIROVA
Enough, Miss Hathaway.

Rose sits back in her chair, still fuming.

KIROVA (CONT'D)
We are not, unfortunately, sending
you away.

Rose shakes her head.

ROSE
Sorry. I think I missed that. Run
that by me again?

KIROVA
It appears you've made a friend in
the faculty. Someone who has made
an adamant case for you to stay.

Rose pauses and considers this, choosing her next words carefully.

ROSE

That's impossible. Everyone here hates me. I'm not a likeable person.

KIROVA

Precisely what I thought when Guardian Belikov suggested you stay.

This surprises Rose.

ROSE

Who the hell is Belikov?

KIROVA

I thought you'd already met Vasilisa's new, official guardian.

Rose glances back toward the door, a surprised grin alighting her face.

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EXT. WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

4

Rose steps out of the conference room and the door closes behind her. She takes a deep breath and exhales quickly. She smiles to herself, victorious.

DIMITRI (O.S.)

Well.

Rose jumps at the voice and turns to see Dimitri leaning against the wall down the hall.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

You're still here. That's good.

ROSE

I'm told that's thanks to you. Why the hell would you save my ass from getting kicked out?

Dimitri shrugs.

DIMITRI

You may be wild and erratic. Impulsive, a bit insane --

ROSE

Do you have a point?

DIMITRI

My point is that none of that matters. Not if you're dedicated. Which I think you are.

Rose beams at the compliment.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

Not to mention the fact that wasting a psychic bond would be a mistake, no matter how egotistical one half of the equation is.

Rose stops.

ROSE

Wait? What bond?

DIMITRI

It's not hard to spot. Though you might try to make it a little less obvious.

Rose stutters a response.

ROSE

Look, I don't know --

Dimitri raises an eyebrow at her. There is no lying to him.

ROSE (CONT'D)

What do you know?

DIMITRI

Just that it's rare. And dangerous. For both the moroi and the dhampir.

ROSE

But they come first.

(beat)

She'll always come first for me. I want to keep her safe.

DIMITRI

We will. You just need to keep training.

Rose shakes her head.

ROSE

The teachers here just teach you how to run. Sometimes how to fight.

DIMITRI

And you want to know more?

Rose nods.

ROSE

I want to know how to win. How to keep the guy from firing the gun, like you said. I don't want to train as a novice. I want to become a guardian.

Dimitri nods, understanding.

DIMITRI

I think I can help you with that.

INT. DORM LOBBY - MORNING

Lissa trudges through the front door of her dorm building. From a chair near the entrance, MIA Rinadli (16), a classic high school mean girl, calls out to Lissa.

MIA

I heard the cat dragged you back campus tonight. I just had to see it for myself.

Mia stands and approaches Lissa, her vile grin not quite matching her tiny, almost doll-like features.

LISSA

Do I know you?

Mia laughs.

MIA

You will. The school isn't the only thing that's gotten an upgrade since you left, your highness. You may be a princess now, but you don't rule anything anymore.

LISSA

What's your problem? Who are you?

MIA

I'm Mia. We'll have a lot more time to catch up later. For now, you should rest your pretty little head. It's going to be a long year.

Mia sidesteps Lissa and walks upstairs, Lissa's eyes trailing her as she leaves.

END OF EPISODE