

Chapter 2: The New World Order

[Day Three into the Skip. Call it a thursday]

It was late. Something like nine in the evening. Lessons had been going. Between the tutors for school work, and all the other stuff related to learning their shifting and other abilities... it was a busy time. At that time, Kit was catching some shut eye and the two girls went off to the bar. Raine and Vas were still holed up on the third floor working on their secret project most likely so everyone had something doing.

Raine was busy grumbling and muttering about how blind she was right now with the technology she was trying to slap together, staring intently a diluted blood solution hovering in a test tube in the air by her telekinesis, not entirely sure how to even scan it properly.

The lab had become a bit of a scrambled mess that was like a nest for Raine, since she knew where everything was and was obsessed with trying to get somewhere with this stupid project. All she need was to be able to see this essence and things would definitely start proceeding nicely; she could actually get somewhere instead of flying blind.

Such it was when the phone rang.

With a mixed feeling of a habitual hatred of interruptions and a desire to have a reason to stop running around in circles for at least a moment, Raine snatched the test tube and put it back in the rack before going to collect the phone.

"Raine here," Raine said a little tiredly.

"Dr. Raine... so nice to hear your voice at last. I've heard so much about you," a female said in lieu of greeting.

"Oh this is gonna be good..." Raine remarked with a lifeless sigh, waiting for the inevitable.

"Oh? I doubt you didn't anticipate a situation such as this," the lady commented.

"Really there's only two different types of situations: you're either with Grant, or not with Grant; it's pretty easy to anticipate," Raine said with a dry smirk in her voice.

"And from the rumours, you likely make plans for keeping your people in check. Of course, those depend on said people's adherence to them."

"So... in other words, you're connected to the reason one of my guinea pigs has a few extra holes in them?" Raine guessed airily, not entirely caring either way.

[Kit tossed in his bed from the sheer about of concern in the room above him]

"My, aren't you popular," she said. "But no, all I would like is a simple meet and greet between our groups."

"Somehow I'm given the impression I should be worried, by your use of the word 'simple' in a world like this," Raine said dryly.

"Ah, skepticism. A trait of a good scientist, I'm told."

"I'd dismiss it as idle paranoia if it weren't for the fact the world could quite possibly be out to get me now," Raine said, "What exactly would this meet-and-greet do to help us anyway? I've got more work to do than I want to admit, and going out to parade my little circus seems like a lot of good time going to waste."

"You really should meet your neighbours, in a manner of speaking," the lady said contentedly. "I know for a fact some of mine were quite eager."

"Again with another suspicious word; is hearing their 'eagerness' supposed to be reassuring?" Raine said a little plainly, "I'm really not sure what to make of this either way, I went to a damn lot of effort to get this lot out of Gamma's mitts, and am expecting repercussions from many directions. You have anything that'll actually inspire confidence here? A reason to trust this isn't an elaborate trap or anything?"

"Of course not. And you wouldn't trust them even if I gave you reasons," the woman said simply. "The first stage is always one of universal suspicion. Who is a friend? Who is a foe? Who can and cannot be trusted? What angle are they going for. Still, no answer will come unless you look for them. So, half an hour at the Ambassador Hotel. The Ritz Room."

"Well, I was going to go along with a dozen contingencies either way, but even hollow reassurance might've been a nice change," Raine sighed a little, "See you there, I suppose."

The moment they hung up, Raine hit the hang-up button and dialed Grant, figuring she should update him in case he didn't already somehow know.

The phone rang a few times. "Hello? Raine?"

"How'd you ever guess?" Raine said rhetorically as though in answer before continuing, "Do you know of any other groups like mine? That might be in the area somewhat?"

"It depends on what you mean by groups like your," Grant said, sounding as if he were smothering a yawn. "Though, to your last question, as far as I know... no idea."

"Other groups of therians; who the heck is asking for a meet and greet then...? Who else knows about my group?" Raine queried, a little puzzled.

"At the moment? Likely everyone in the New World, and a few well in the Old," Grant said. "There isn't any need to request permission for passage in our territory, so it's rather hard to keep track of who's representative goes where. I take it someone contacted you?"

"Indeed," Raine answered, sighing a little at the predicament, "Sounded like they were interested in meeting my group and I, as much as I'd relish the opportunity get a glimpse on how others handle theirs, I'd rather not walk into any traps; was wondering if you could arrange some sort of extra contingency within half an hour at the Ambassador Hotel, in the Ritz Room."

"Half an hour? Clever, that would be tricky to arrange even if I were in country," Grant side in a slightly appreciative tone.

"Thought it might be a stretch; I don't think I'll be able to rig up enough contingencies to ensure a safe getaway if things go sour -heck I didn't think I'd have to even leave the house for the next month or so," Raine said with another sigh, rubbing her forehead as her brain churned away, "How much time would you need to get even a few guys with tranqs standing by?"

"A surprising amount, considering they aren't just standing by and ready," Grant said blandly. "At the moment, all outsiders are bound by the Rules of Hospitality in the city. They are not allowed to attack unless threat to them can be reasonably determined. Such as an armed guard. Notice they also picked a fairly public location for this meeting. Still, they likely have a contingency plan of their own. Still, I'll see what I can arrange."

"I sort of expected they'd have their own squad of armed guards hiding somewhere as well -I mainly wanted some back-up to deal with [i]their[i] contingencies," Raine explained airily, "Though by the sounds of that Rule, I suppose I'm not allowed to bring my sidearm?"

"You shepard Therians, widely considered one of the Living Weapon species. A sidearm should be fine. You should probably decide how openly to showcase it though. Your counter will likely have an hidden weapon. The rules state they should be unarmed, but unarmed tends to be defined as one displayed or discovered on a casual check. I should really get you some cole's notes," Grant mused.

"I honestly should have been told about all this essence and Player business months ago," Raine muttered, "I suppose I should get ready for my little outing..."

She figured the best she could hope for here was to layer the deception and keep them guessing long enough for Grant's backup to arrive -if things went sour, of course, but Raine personally wondered when there'd be a day that things would go normally.

At this point she'd keep her gun in its hidden holster under her left armpit inside her coat, only her tazer on display, and with a telekinetic attack available she had her three layers of threats. Now she just had to brief her therians and get them set to go.

[Lets see... Shelly and Alessa are still out at this point... Kit is sleeping... no clue where the others are...]

[Humm... Michael and Vas are the only ones left then; gonna be a very lopsided meet n greet...]

[Then we skip to the Hotel because we can]

//yay. Shelly and Alessa are there in spirit.

Raine parked the vehicle out front of the Ambassador Hotel and stared all the way up a little in trepidation, taking a deep breath and dividing her attention to her passengers.

"So... we're going to this meet'n'greet under the pretense of peace, though because I choose to see it as a potential trap I would like everyone to be ready to make trails on a moment's notice; I'm sure between a few bullets and such we can discourage them long enough to get away -point is keep your guard up," Raine explained idly, still staring at the building as though a revelation were going to fall out of it.

If nothing else needed be said, Raine went to lead the way to the Ritz Room as instructed.

"At least I practiced that partial shift thing... some..." Kit sighed. He had tired to get Shelly, but since she lacked a phone... He could only add another message to the one she left.

[i]Gone on a field trip with Dr Raine and the Boys. Wish us luck. Gonna go meet one of her girlfriends at a hotel.[/i]

A page escorted her to the room, though someone at the check in desk gave Raine a slight nod as she passed (Notice: 15). He rapped once on the door and turned the knob, though he left it up to her to open it fully.

[url=<http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4264767/>]Raine Notice: 14[/url] (Hark! It's a Troll! in the form of a Castle!)(Slay the mountain troll before it goes after Hermionie in the bathroom!)(FFFFFF *smashes the goggles while they're on blazinvires face*)(LOL)

Raine's eyes closed halfway as she reached for the door, as though flinching in advance like it was going to explode as she pushed it aside.

The Ritz room was remarkable. It was almost a ballroom really. Rich drapes over windows, intricate tilework on floor and ceiling, well lit, and expensive looking lounge chairs around the open area in the center. Kit reflexibly inhaled, taking in the scents. There were a few people chatting who fell silent when the door opened. There was also a woman in a far from conservative pale blue dress sitting in one chair sipping a drink.

"...Wonderful... I should have figured..." Raine sighed at the glamour of the place, shelving whatever was left of her concern and striding in like she couldn't give two shits about the atmosphere. Considering it had been a woman's voice, Raine was going to bet the one in the blue dress was either her or the 'double' in case Raine opened relations a bit more aggressively. Still, it'd get her from A to B.

"Dr. Raine, we've been expecting you," she said in a sultry tone as she rose gracefully. "Anette Ducharde. Enchanté."

"Charming..." Raine responded a little tartly, not entirely impressed with the sheer contrast between herself and this 'Anette', "I suppose I'm grateful to be so graciously invited to such an upperclass party."

"Nonsense, Raine. Our expectations are different. You are a guardian and a researcher, I am a guardian and a mentor."

"Mentor is an... interesting choice for a title..." Raine stated a little pointedly, "You'd easily guess why I'm here, but what's a mentor's interest in another's flock?"

"Come now Raine, you must now of the... novel nature they possess," She aimed such a look at them that Kit distinctly felt uncomfortable. "Purebloods are such rare creatures in these times."

She wasn't the only one around who wanted to talk. The others in her room, presumedly her group, approached the kids. "Hello," one said tentatively.

//male

Vasily had been looking around all the time. The amount of stuff... Woah. He couldn't help but to let his body show his curiosity, mainly through the movement of his tail and twitching of his ear.

"Uh... Hello? We haven't met before, no?" Vasily replied.

"No, we haven't," the fellow said, not being too obvious in response to the obvious question.

"Uh-huh. And you are?" Kit said.

"Alphonse Tailor," he said, extending a hand.

Vasily did a handshake "Vasily Kotov. The lady here, Annete is your... Overseer? Should have used a better word..."

"Mentor," Alphonse supplied.

"Thanks," Vasily replied. The topics... Seemed to quickly die. Meh.

"So... um... what are you?" Alphonse asked.

Kit raised an eyebrow. "Pardon?"

Michael looks at Alphonse with a neutral expression, "I'm... guessing you're asking about our essence, or something?"

Vasily glanced at people, waiting for more specific answer.

"I mean... It's hard to ask without sounding rude... what sort of therian are you?"

"Cat, cat, raccon," Kit said, pointing to the persons in question. "And right back at you. The 'what' are you part."

One of the other guys took over. "She," he motioned subtly at Annette, "named it a phage. Psycephage. We're hot european incubuses."

"Wow." Vasily remarked. Lots of commentaries he considered to say but decided against it

"Ignore him. Just because we can tap people's emotions doesn't make you an incubus," Alphonse said.

"It doesn't not make you one either," Kit observed shrewdly. "Therians gave people the ideas for werewolves, you gonna tell me that your... type I guess, didn't give them them the idea for cubi?"

"Ugh... we could have gone through this without them getting that idea in their head," Alphonse complained. "Fine, I did here that some of the phages might have inspired it, but that's only some. Not everyone has that taste, or need. I get by with anything, Philpe there prefers confusion..."

"As if we aren't confused enough already" Vasily said, "Phages?"

"Yes, phages. Like you being Therian, we being phages. Easier to say than psycephages."

"I'd need an encyclopedea on all of the types soon..." Vasily said

"How many have you seen so far?" Alphonse asked, cutting off the other guy before he could talk again.

"Huh..." Kit said thoughtfully. "Just Grant and Raine, isn't it?" He asked, directing it at his buddies.

Michael has been kinda staring into space ever since another type of Essence was given out and his brain insisted on figuring out this 'puzzle' with just those pieces. Thankfully it finally stopped when Kit looked at him and he had enough of an idea of what was going on with 'just Grant and Raine', "Umm... Yeah, I think so."

Vasily wanted to mention the group of people with restraints he saw in the complex of the corporation that kidnapped them but decided to keep his mouth shut about this one.

"I heard that vampires weren't all that common in this part of the world," the other guy, Bernard, said.

"If I'm not mistaken," Raine began, following Anette's gaze for a moment with a suspicious air, "It is environmental factors that govern an individual's behaviour; their status as Purebloods would be more a reason to desire a blood sample -which would require a proper researcher, hence my curiosity about your motives here."

"It's always the science with you, isn't it?" Anette observed. "Yet you over look the sociopolitical implications."

"I look as far as I need to, and considering science is one of my strengths it's no surprise I focus on it," Raine said a little tiredly, "Though I do love how you dodged my question -or was I being too blunt? You'll have to forgive my scientist-efficiency mentality."

"Even if your strength is in the sciences, you should work on your political senses if you plan to progress," Anette said as she took another sip. "Oh, where are my manners. Would you care for a drink?"

"You ask the paranoid scientist if she wants a drink?" Raine laughed in disbelief, going to take a seat, "My dear, Grant didn't hire me to do the political dance -that's his little niche and he seems to enjoy well enough. I realize there's a little bit of song and dance involved in everything, but I have an astronomically large amount of work I need to catch up on and but a month of relatively free time to use. My patience is a little bit shorter than usual."

"A month likely filled with others continually heckling you, most likely," Anette said, sashaying over to a small bar in a corner. "Annoying really. They'll spend so much efforts picking at chinks in your armour before they finally decide were they stand. I prefer skipping the foreplay."

"Ah," Raine issued, a moment of enlightenment striking her, "Gauging the competition are we? Competitions are so tiresome though -especially when I have so many other things I'm trying to do."

"Rather than the typical poke the nest approach, Shall we just form an alliance? At worse, it can be dissolved at a later date."

"I certainly wouldn't be opposed to having less potential enemies, but beyond a simple agreement to peace between us there may quickly become issues," Raine stated, "At this current point I'm not sure what I need beyond mere time and some resources for my research, I already have access to most of the necessary things to proceed nicely. And it's quite evident Purebloods are rare thus it's going make any negotiations a little difficult to come away with a fair deal."

"Oh it more a shaking of hands and a mutual cease fire for the moment," Anette said, pouring herself another drink. "And a chance for you to learn a bit of some of the other Essence touched in the world. No need to limit yourself to only Therian exposure. Not that I'll be letting you have your way with my boys."

"And I was so looking forward to it," Raine said dryly, "I suppose knowledge is useful in all its forms, however limited some may be; it saves me picking Grant's brains for all the answers I guess? But what exactly are you expecting from me beyond what you already have? I've far too much work to even think about stirring trouble and butting heads."

"All about material gain with you, isn't it? Are you sure you are new at this?" Annette smiled over the glass.

"Dear Anette," Raine began almost solemnly, "I'm not at a point where I can afford losses; speak to me in a couple of months time and you'll meet someone vastly more entertaining. You're already settled, clearly, you have the luxury to call up such meetings and play games. I've barely had a week."

"Touche. Still, the boys and I are on a tour. I'm showing them the world. It's only polite to give greetings to the locals. And there's a certain pleasure in being someone's first," a faintly lustful glint flashed in her eyes. [DC 15 notice] [[url=http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4268529/](http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4268529/)]Raine Notice: 18[url] She sees the lustful predatory glint.

Something felt like it just clicked or something, and Raine let out a silent sigh, closing her eyes and rubbing the bridge of her nose with a finger and thumb.

"Let me guess: Sanguinus, was it?" Raine queried, a touch of curiosity in the depths of her mind but ultimately she wasn't much of a lover of surprises.

Annette laughed. "No, my dear. Though, some would still call our kind vampires. The more commonly accepted term is a phage though."

"I see. And how much of those myths were true? Whatever the name, the Essence clearly gives you a double-edged sword," Raine said.

"There's a change every myth can be traced to some Essence touched or another. Sanguinus covers a range of blood drinkers, many succubus and haunting myths can be connected to phages, emotion feeders, Therians, as you've likely figured, are a majority of the werecreatures. It's a large world."

"I have to admit the concept of 'phages' does have a few subjects of fascination," Raine said with a bit of helplessness to her tone, stretching her neck and glancing off to the side, "Whether the strange dietary requirement is due to a curious flaw in the Essence-modification, or in fact akin to 'fuel' to provide for what the Essence has granted."

"Not much for conversation, are you?" Annette commented.

"Just more goal-orientated than you it seems," Raine returned, "It would be wise not to forget that I am a scientist; unless the endeavor may bear fruit, putting energy towards it isn't high on my list of priorities. If you spent less time criticizing the other party, you might get more work done yourself, but then again, you probably don't really care -I imagine phages are particularly long-lived similar to Immortalis, thus you don't feel much urgency in any case."

"All Essence Touched are long lived," Annette commented.

"But of course the Sanguinus have a certain advantage over the others excluding Immortalis; feeding off others would be like feasting on their Essence," Raine said, eyes narrowing a little, "You could live for as long as you like. It just wouldn't be as convenient."

"Oh, we don't live forever. We still did from old age. Phages just tend not to age visibly throughout their life. Therian's are another than are long lived and slow agers."

"So, no particular benefits over Therians in that case? Though I imagine your offensive capabilities don't require several minutes to prepare and are far more subtle," Raine said curiously.

"Phage feed on and feed emotions, combat isn't where we are commonly expected," Annette said. "It's bad enough feeling your own pain and terror without dealing with those of three other people."

"So phages are the guile and Therians are the force... we really are but chess pieces in this messed up game..." Raine said mostly to herself, sighing a little, afterward throwing a glance at Anette, "...I'm going to assume that Purebloods are something of a 'rare delicacy'..."

"Rare more as in celebrities. I'd heard Nick went to visit you. To many riddles in his talk as usual I guess?"

"He had the same fondness for dodging questions and criticizing me," Raine replied, thinly veiled.

"When you deal often with people who can compel and take hold of your will because of a slip of the tongue, it becomes second nature," she said. "They are only ten or so purebloods in this generation. Of course they are going to be popular."

"Ten..." Raine echoed skeptically, "You're telling me, that Grant gathered this many without causing a royal mess and getting everyone worth their salt after him?"

"Oh, he's gotten lots of people upset. Particularly The Governor. From what I hear, Grant started moving under his authority then undermined him. They are calling Grant the Upstart at the moment."

Raine dropped her head into her hands, leaning heavily on the table.

"God [*i*]dammit[*i*] Grant... I swear if that man had of managed to put me in an even worse situation than this I think I'd be tempted to just bail out on the bastard..." Raine grumbled, "I really need to get back to work... I'm not going to be able to catch up in a month -not with this kind of handicap..."

"Should be enough to be competent in a month," Annette offered. "Heaven's know no one fully catches up without a few years."

"You really think I'm going to be able to catch up while fighting off all of these attempts from players? I know there's probably a lot of people who are content to sit and watch, but there's enough people on this planet for more than a couple to feel opportunistic," Raine said cynically, shaking her head and throwing herself back into her seat, slumping a little.

"...I don't suppose this 'Governor' is the type to sit back and watch? I'm sure there's an equal chance he'd be pissed as much as amused. How many people earn the name 'Upstart'?" Raine queried.

"I think he has another name he goes by... Director, I believe is what he uses within he reach," Annette said thoughtfully.

"[i]The[/i] Director...? Oh for..." Raine said, really having quite enough of just how much was going to be on her plate, "Was your initiation into this new world so ridiculous and jarring? Though I suppose it's possible you might've had the advantage of being born into it."

"Family legends and stories helped," Annette said.

"I suppose it would be easier to believe dragons and such exist when you're not a scientist and in the right environment," Raine sighed, a little wistful, "...I could've done so much if I had of been initiated earlier..."

"Social sciences are equally as viable as the applied sciences," Annette said. "For instance, I can deduce was some accuracy that my two missing wards likely meet up with at least one of yours. And that someone is likely toying with loopholes to attack, informally, at least another of yours."

"Of course they are..." Raine sighed a little hopelessly, going distant in thought for a moment, "It seems awfully tempting to just disappear and live in seclusion now... do you really enjoy this political dance, Annette? Skirting around the feet of giants as they walk, ensuring you live another day by doing what's necessary to avoid being stepped on..."

"One thing you realize, the 'giants' as you call them, often don't see the little ones anymore. It's those that have their favor that you need to look out for."

"And do you have their favor?" Raine asked airily.

"Only of the local one," Annette said.

"And you're bothering to make a peace treaty with us... why?" Raine asked a little cynically.

"Because friends are importal, or course," Annette said. "And it makes travel so much easier when you are on good terms with the locals. I should tell you why I can't go back to Milan some day."

"Well obviously you don't have much to fear from my liltle group, which means it must be Grant you're concerned about; yet you contacted me..." Raine said, a little puzzled.

"It's a matter of territory. Grant's claim spans a good portion of this region. You and yours are his forces. Besides, people tend to grow in power quickly once essence touches them."

"Hmm..." Raine issued with half a smile in thought, "I think I'm starting to understand the value of your 'social sciences'... we're something of an investment, aren't we? I think you know or have something that's giving you a particular advantage here over your competitors and you've made a few judgement calls with it."

"See, you're learning already," Annette said with a smile. "One of the major reasons was to let my boys get a taste of purebloods. So they would be able to pick them out of a crowd later, if the need be. Another is just to give you a heads up. The Master of Milan seems to be curious as well. Oh, and do watch for people whose toes get dipped in the essence as it were."

"'Dipped'..." Raine echoed suspiciously, "Is that a cute way to refer to the 'Essence-Touched' or a hint at something a little more complicated?"

"A shard of glass, a sharpened fragment of metal, a knife and a well crafted sword are all edged weapons. All dangerous even if a shard of glass is pitiful compared to the latter." Annette smiled slightly, as if pleased with herself. "Essence does odd things."

"So... the latter," Raine said, not sharing Annette's opinion on her little statement, sighing afterwards as the list of enemies just seemed to pile up, partly wondering if she should actually go for a drink if only because it felt appropriate right now.

"I don't suppose you're interested in investing a little bit more?" Raine began a little seriously, "I could only imagine where a sample of phage blood could lead me; as 'pure' as my therian samples are, it's still but one variation of Essence modification, but if my research stagnates too fast due to lack of material I may be at a disadvantage in regards to trying to catch up faster than they can step on me."

"You must be a joy at parties... And how do you plan to collect blood? if you pull out a blood bag, I would be very concerned about you," Annette said.

Raine burst out laughing, feeling a bit relaxed for once as she threw a knowing glance at Annette.

"Oh come now, are you trying to tell me you don't actually know where to send presents to? You have my phone number after all," Raine said with half a smile, "Tis just a proposition, as it's likely not impossible for me to acquire phage blood at some point, but I do have this dangerous habit of paying back my debts."

"That's more like it," Annette said, approving. "I'll even put a bow on it."

Raine's smile lingered at the mention of the bow, idly contemplating the novel nature of a quirky method of identification in this situation.

"Are you curious about what I've got in mind for it?" Raine asked a little slyly, "Or is me owing you a favor all you need?"

"The favour is a good start," Annette smiled back. "And I'm almost certain I would get lost if you started explaining your plans to me."

"True enough..." Raine said in acknowledgement, "So I suppose I should ring Grant and get this all set in motion?"

"When all we need is a contract between us? I trust Grant hasn't imposed an iron fist of 'his will alone' on you?"

"That sounds... suspicious... but no; how do you expect a contract with me to stop Grant from moving against you unless I bring him in on this?" Raine queried, "Because I find it hard to believe you'd be afraid of me in any sense of the word."

"Because you represent him. He could still act against me, but only after formally annulling the contracting with his authority, which would cost him in the face of the Others, since it would mean his own were making actions outside his schemes, hinting he didn't have proper control," Annette explained.

"I represent him do I? Somehow I feel like I missed orientation on the first day of school here..." Raine said, her mood dropping a little, "In other words, if I don't contact him to make sure he's okay with it, he could end up in an awkward situation further down the line. Not that I can even pretend to understand how a contract with me specifically binds Grant without proper fine-print."

"You are His. He's been promoted, in a word, and these minor things fall to you and your little ones."

Raine's expression darkened a little, more suspicious and wary. One too many revelations happened in a short time, and the intricacies of this game were eroding her patience and tolerance from many directions.

"I don't like how you phrased that..." Raine commented, going distant as her mind worked while she spoke, "Fine. Let's have this deal done, and then I should go and try and catch up on my sleep..."

"Yes, because that's the important thing right here," Annette nodded solemnly.

"You have a better way of keeping the brain running at full power? Because sleep deprivation never worked for me," Raine said tartly, "How's this going to work anyway? We shake hands and get on with our lives or is there paperwork involved?"

"It depends really. Essence, traditionally, is binding. In the older days, according to the stories in any case, breaking ones Word, capital W, had consequences in your own power. They have been holding to the tradition, though the consequence part has been sporadic at best. They did publish paper work for it, though."

"Huh..." Raine issued looking off into space, genuinely intrigued all of a sudden at the implications of such a notion, "Subconscious psychological atrophy or Essence possessing

enough sentience to know the meaning of 'honour'... Essence is such a dangerously fascinating subject..."

"Whatever makes you happy I suppose, I understand the power of a reputation so I have a habit of keeping my word as much fulfilling promises and paying debts -with or without paperwork enforcing such things," Raine said with a careless shrug, returning her gaze to Annette.

"Raine, darling, I'm brokering with you. You determine the contract."

"Fine..." Raine sighed, "No conflict between us for now then, no psychological or physical harm to be inflicted by either side -whether our own hands or those we control."

"And the occasional sharing of pertinent news, should we stumble across it?" Annette asked, not quite phrasing it as anything more than a suggestion.

"If we're feeling generous enough, sure, why not?" Raine said mostly rhetorically.

Annette smiled and extended her hand. "On my Word and Essence, I agree to non-conflict between our sides, psychological and physical."

"On my Word and Essence as well then," Raine said, going to grasp Annette's hand.

There was a slight, ever so slight tingle. Of course, that could have just been her imagination, the subconscious playing off Annette's tale and suppling ghost sensations. [Wis DC... 12 to notice and class as real?]

[If I ain't allowed to Take Ten: [url=<http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4304402/>]Raine Notice: 20[url] O.o... nevermind...]

Whatever surprise and intrigue Raine felt at the mystery of the handshake, she masked perfectly, but somehow felt a little more reassured by its presence more than anything. She wasn't going to throw caution to the wind just because of a strange sensation in the handshake of a contract, but it did give many of her idle anxieties a rest.

She figured the only thing she had to worry about from Annette for now was crazy loopholes and weak interruptions to her work, other than that it seemed all upsides for the time being.

"I look forward to some wonderful exchanges between us," Annette said cheerfully. "I can at least enlighten you to some of the tricks more common to those outside the therian blood. No offense to your brood, but therians tend to think in rather... direct methods. With good reason, mind you, but still."

"And I shall look forward to those exchanges also; for now, I have a grace period to take advantage of and probably centuries of research I need to find shortcuts through," Raine said with a respectful nod of her head, preparing to leave.

"Do have a good night Raine. And don't forget my comment about people that toy with thoughts."

Raine nodded her head respectfully and stood up to go collect her Therians and leave. She'd have to give Grant a call sometime soon too, though perhaps when her mood was a little better first...

Raine gave the guys a good excuse to get out of the awkward conversation with the NPCs they could have mined for information if their life was a complex game that they didn't know all the rules for. Oh.. wait... ANYWAY... like a mother hen she began gathering them under her wings.
//They are all geeks that have no common topics!
//that are all members of a global history spanning conspiracy...

"Well... that's our cue," Kit said. "It's been... interesting."

Vasily nodded and added "And a bit awkward, huh."

Michael was just silent, almost as if whatever mental shields he was using were starting to crack. Sleep might help... or a drink.

[Since no one seems to be posting. Home skip time. Down below]

-----Meanwhile, elsewhere-----

Behold, three guy's terrible attempt at doing a bar scene.

Alessa moped around in her room for a short while after Vasily left. After that she put on a skirt and stockings and left the room. She makes her way downstairs faltering near the middle and crashing near the foot of the stairs. She staggered up and collapsed on the couch weeping.

Shelly meanwhile had put her pocket PC quickly into the space between her breasts. She was starting to use that for convenience really. Her average bust had become slightly larger ever since she and the others had come back while any body fat had seemed to pack up its bags and move south or north. Pocket PC hidden, she perked up and looked for who was causing the noise. "Alessa?" She asked. "What happened?"

"Vasily broke up with me...I should have seen it coming.", Alessa said to Shelly.

Shelly blinked. "Wait, what? When did this even...? Why'd he..?"

"Just a few minutes ago. He said the relationship was just about sex...that we had nothing in common...why I'm not just some piece of meat...he...can't....", Alessa slammed her face into the couch cushion repeatedly.

Shelly hugged Alessa, and stroked her back. "Comfort food. I'll get a tub of ice cream." She said and went to the kitchen. Coming back soon after with an ice cream scoop and the tub in question and put it on the table.

Alessa slowly sat up and took a bowl of ice cream. "Thank you...I just...I don't think I should talk about it.", she said to Shelly.

"Do you wanna have me by to try and help?" Shelly offered.

"How so...it's exactly what it looks like.", Alessa said, "He dumped me...I want to shank him...that's all."

"Well if he's so stupid that he can't see a good thing right in front of him, then he doesn't deserve you." Shelly said, looking for a blanket as well.

"I want you to prevent me from shanking him.", Alessa said seriously.

"I'll do what I can," Shelly replied, worried that it might genuinely come to that.

"I say this now because I know I will try...", Alessa said.

"I hope not..." Shelly replied. "The last thing we need is infighting with all the bullshit that's happened to us lately."

"And am I to just take it like that...you know he'd deserve it too.", Alessa said.

"No one really deserves to just be stabbed. Unless they're truly like these 'players'." She spat the last word out like a curse. "But you don't want to hear another of my rage rants on this..." She closed her eyes and sighed. "Point is, if it happened to me, I'd get back at Kit in another way. Try to find other guys and parade them in front of Kit or something. Make him jealous and let him know he'd never get this." She gestured to her form.

"That just sounds silly...making him jealous...hah,...nah...stabbing would be much quicker...also less effort...and now I have natural claws so I could do it too.", Alessa said to Shelly, making a fist.

Shelly looked down a little, saddened. "I really hope you don't though. Again, there's only... what, five of us? We already lost one, and with Nate's impulsiveness, he'll likely get himself in trouble... again."

"I don't know how I could stand living around him knowing what we did together...and who'd we lose?", Alessa said.

"Shaen." Shelly said, seeming to be the only one that remembered him. "Was a wolf guy? Just went *poof* shortly after we went furry?" Then again, if what her dreams were saying were correct, no one else would remember him as her brain just wanted to forget everything it couldn't adequately process. Like how Shaen poofed.

"I just don't know...we all live in the same house, it's not like I can pretend the time with Vasily never happened.", Alessa said eating some ice cream.

"I know... I wouldn't be able to do that if it happened with Kit, but I wouldn't want to stab him. Maybe just ignore him or something. But then again, I'm pretty cowardly by nature and I'd never do that." Shelly added, turning on the TV to partially drown out their conversation.

"I suppose I shouldn't...but just seeing him again would make me so angry.", Alessa said.

"It would make anyone angry." Shelly countered. "Furious even, but people do move on from things like this. I know that sounds terrible, but it's what happens... Well... Most of the time." She added as an afterthought.

"I guess, I guess....I just need to take my mind off it...You doing anything later?", Alessa asked.

"Not really. Aside from maybe playing Minecraft. That volcano fort isn't going to make itself." Shelly smiled.

"Was wondering if we could go do something...I guess you're right, I just need to get over it.", Alessa said to Shelly.

Shelly smiled. "That's better at least. Violence isn't the answer. It'll just cause more problems. My advice? Girl's night out. Single's bar." She said. "Well... I'll just tag along with." She offered.

"That could work...", Alessa said, "Tonight sound good? Or what about right the hell now?"

Shelly smiled. "Got your ID and stuff?" She said. "And some good party clothes?"

"Maybe I could go in my morphsuit?", Alessa said to Shelly, she was still very upset by the breakup, but a night on the town could help.

"Ummm... Well I dunno. I mean these are..." She paused. "Normal people after all." She said, somewhat saddened by the fact that she had to use those words now. "If it helps, I'll move your stuff out of his room and to another's."

"I never actually moved my stuff to his room...and doesn't the morphsuit work for partying? It's like something out of sailor moon."

Shelly chuckled. "and when's the last time you've seen that kinda outfit in public? UNTHEMED public." She stressed.

"Fine, I'll put a dress over it Seashells.", Alessa said to Shelly, she also put the ice cream away.

Shelly nodded. "All righty. I'll let Kit know. Or Nate. Whoever's in control." She got up and headed to her room, wondering where he was. If he wasn't there, she'd just stick a note to the TV and go. She made sure her clothes weren't the 'come get me' kind and instead the wallflower type. She had no interest in picking up any dates there.

Kit, who'd been napping, drowsily looked up, but she was gone by the time most of the fog cleared his head, and he wrote it off as just being part of his imagination and rolled over in the blankets.

Alessa thought about clothing choice, and figured she needed to branch out more. Hence why she picked out among the finest thing she had. She was a little upset she'd have to not use the morphsuit. She picked out a deep blue strapless gown with a low cut that could show off her cleavage.

Finally done with telling everyone where she was going, when she expected to be back, what she was doing, and all the usual things like that, Shelly left, wallet in her pocket and smiled, lurking by Alessa's door.

Alessa left the room to see Shelly standing there. "I figured now that I'm single, I might as well go all out.", Alessa said. She had her morphsuit on under the dress, and then slid some emergency money into her cleavage. "I think I look like a whore...", Alessa sighed, "Maybe this was a bad idea."

Shelly tilted her head. "I don't see it." Shelly said. "You look great."

"Really? I even stuffed money in my cleavage...I still haven't figure out how you fit a whole pocket PC in your bust.", Alessa said to Shelly. If nothing else this talk helped her cheer up.

Shelly chuckled. "Oh right, yeah. Better put this thing away." She said, zipping off to her room. Putting it in the drawer she kept it in, bottem left of the computer desk, she headed out. "It's not that hard. I mean the thing is hardly bigger then a cell phone." She said, letting her gaze look over Kit's sleeping form. [i]down, girl...[/i] She thought, then grinned. [i]later[/i]

"I suppose...so shall we get going? Err...is Kit tagging along?", Alessa asked.

"Nah. Girls night only. Well... more like your night," she smiled.

"Thanks Seashells...shall we get going?", Alessa said putting on her slippers.

"Sure," Shelly said, slipping on her sneakers and headed to a nearby club she had heard about.

Alessa let Shelly lead the way till they got to a club. "You know I was never big on the clubbing...", Alessa said nervously as they waited in line.

"Neither was I," Shelly smiled. "I just know of places."

"Well, that's nice...I'm not sure if a night of overpriced drinks is really the best way to unwind.", Alessa said to Shells.

"Well to play devil's advocate, I'd say it's also about meeting new people, and enjoying music." Shelly countered.

"I guess...but for that we could just go to the bar or something.", Alessa said to Shells.

"I wouldn't know," Shelly admitted sheepishly. "Still though. we can have a good time."

"Yeah...just curious, did you ever think me and Vasily had a chance?", Alessa asked.

Shelly shrugged. "I dunno. It was too early to tell I think. and I'm not really that good a judge. Me and Kit met online, and we dated for years. It was only when we got here that we met in person."

"But still I only met Vasily before we were kidnapped...perhaps that's why...the bulk of our relationship was in that creepy facility...Perhaps it really was just like he said.", Alessa sighed.

Shelly gave Alessa a hug from the side. "It'll be all right, I'm sure. There's lots of people out there. I'm sure someone will enjoy you for being you."

"I'm still wondering why I ended up liking getting tied up in ropes.", Alessa said softly. "And we can only hope.", Alessa said.

Shelly shrugged. "Wouldn't know. anyways, let's think about some other things. Preferably nothing to do with anything that we got going on currently."

"Such as?", Alessa asked.

"Having fun, of course," Shelly smiled.

"Sounds great...", Alessa said to Shells, "But what we have going on currently may cause problems in public..."

"Which is exactly why we keep it on the down-low." Shelly said as the line continuously moved.

"Fair enough Seashells.", Alessa quipped, "Geez, these clubs take a while."

Shelly shrugged. "No idea..." She said. "This is my first time to a club, ya know." She said, fishing her ID out of her wallet. "Please tell me you brought yours. And that you're old enough to get in."

"19, old enough? And it's my first time too.", Alessa said.

"Uhhh..." Shelly tried to remember as they approached to the front of the line. "Never came up with Kit suprisingly... Hey there!" She said, showing the bouncer her ID.

"You're not on the list," the bouncer said.

"Oh, there's a list...?" Shelly asked. "We can't slip in?"

"No. Next!"

"We better get going Shells.", Alessa said, she didn't want any trouble...well any more than she already had.

"Crap..." Shelly muttered as she left the line. "Might just need to go to a bar?" She offered, at a loss for what to do. How could she be expected to know which nightclubs needed reservations and which didn't?

"A bar would be nice...", Alessa said to Shells, as they backed away from the club.

"That'll work." Shelly shrugged and wondered where the nearest one was, eventually getting some directions from a passer by as they wandered.

"The closest one is Smoking Ban. Decent staff. Good home brew. And like their name, they don't allow smoking."

"Sounds good, thanks!" Shelly said, and began to head in the direction they were told to go.

"Don't mention it," he smiled before walking off.

"Why would they name the place Smoking Ban?", Alessa asked following behind Shelly.

"Because smoking sucks and they want to have a smoke free crowd?" Shelly shrugged.

"Then enforce the ban, but why call the place that...", Alessa wondered as they walked.

"So the customers know what they're going in for?" Shelly asked. "I dunno... Don't think it really matters. Does it?"

"No not really that much...", Alessa said.

Eventually finding the bar, Shelly opened the door for Alessa. "After you," She smiled.

Alessa sauntered in, catching the eye of a few of the boys in there. She simply stood at the entrance taking in the atmosphere, it almost made her forget about earlier that day...almost. She needed a drink.

Shelly poked Alessa's back. "Come on," she whispered. "Enjoy yourself. I'll be in the corner if ya need me."

"Any tips on drinks to get?", Alessa asked Shelly.

"How should I know?" Shelly said. "I don't drink." She neglected to mention that she had rarely drank alcohol, but only one glass something like a month if that. Nowhere near enough alcohol to even get her tipsy, let alone drunk. She'd just do her usual and stick to non alcoholic drinks, not in a mood to get drunk. She took a seat in the corner and kept an eye out at Alessa, just to make sure she didn't get into trouble.

Alessa walked up to the bartender. "What's good?", she asked.

"We are having a theme night. I make a pretty good Freeze Ray."

"Freeze ray? What's that and how much would it cost me?", Alessa asked innocently.

"[insert money here], Doll."

"And what's all in it?", Alessa asked.

"Some vodka, some menthe with a base of sprite."

"So do I pay up front or??", Alessa asked.

The man sighed and started mixing a drink.

Meanwhile, as he mixed... Shelly nursed a pepsi and kept to herself, periodically looking up at Alessa before going back to her drink, ineffectually stirring.

Alessa waited as the bartender worked. She wondered if she should just pay up front or something.

"You want to start a tab? Or will you pay for this one?" He asked.

Alessa fetched a wad of cash from her cleavage counted out the amount for one drink and set it on the table. "I'll just pay up front...", Alessa said.

After a few minutes, he set a glass of colourless liquid in front of her. "Enjoy."

Alessa thanked him and sat at the bar. She took a slow sip of her drink, she would savor this slowly.

As the night went on, they were hit on by two charming guys.

"Um..hey there...what's up.", Alessa said to the guy that approached her.

Shelly looked up from her drink. "Hey there," She said pleasantly. She was a little surprised someone wanted to talk to her though considering she was just alone in a corner and didn't think she was doing anything to say 'come get me'.

[insert one smoother than honey woo them for the money line here, and one crash and burn wingman who should have done a barrel roll.]

[url=<http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4256638/>]1d20+1=7, 1d20+3=22[/url]

Shelly smiled pleasantly again, wondering how to politely tell him that she already had a boyfriend. She didn't want to hurt his feelings... "This is a nice bar isn't it?" She asked, hoping to start the conversation. "I'm Shelly. Shelly Mauroy."

"Oh hello, I'm Alessa, and your name is?", Alessa said to the guy.

"I'm Edward," Mr. Smoother than Honey said. "My somewhat awkward friend is Jacob."

"Hey Edward...what brings you here?", Alessa asked.

"G'day Jacob," Shelly said. "You come here often?"

"If if we did, it's not every day we find such beautiful flowers," Edward Smoother-than-Honey said.

Ordering another coke, Shelly smiled. "Haven't been on the town much myself. First time. And in a bar too."

"Why thank you, you're not so bad on the eyes yourself.", Alessa said giddy. She never felt she would enjoy that cornball flattery, but the drink and her emotions were overpowering. "Please go on...", Alessa said.

"If I did, I'd only run out of words," Edward StH said.

"Don't encourage him," Jacob warned. "He's a lit. buff. He can keep going all night."

Shelly chuckled. "I know the type. By the by, where are you two from? Just curious. I'm from Sydney!"

"That's alright, it was sweet of you.", Alessa said to Edward.

[Flirting happens. They get invited out to a movie]

Shelly shook her head. "Sorry. I'd better get back home. My boyfriend gets mad if I don't come back at the right time." She said, having overheard a few girls do it in the lunchroom or library both back home and in Canada.

"Tell them I'll be back later...", Alessa called to Shelly.

"By when?" Shelly asked. "And will we be able to call you?"

"Of course, I have my phone.", Alessa said, "And I don't know...I'll call when the movie's over."

"All right... I'll call at 1 and then before i go to bed at 2." Shelly said, concerned. She didn't want anything bad happening to Alessa either. Having it happen to Kit was bad enough. She wouldn't forgive herself if it happened again...

"Sounds good.", Alessa said.

Edward and Alessa (Wingman Jacob said he wouldn't be the third wheel) headed off to the theatre

Showing: Frankenweenie, The First Time, Wake In Fright, Special Forces, Atlas Shrugged II, The Perks of Being a Wall Flower, 17 Girls

Edward lingered by the posters. "Which one sounds good to you?"

"You're the host...but I think you decide, by the way who's paying for tonight?", Alessa asked.

"I was paying, but wanted you to pick."

"I haven't seen any of these.", Alessa said to him, "But let's go with Frankenweenie."

[Stupid dating...]

After the tickets were acquired, Edward stopped by the concession stand and got them some snacks, a small popcorn and a drink for each of them, as well as a pack of chocolate to go with them. He didn't get one for them to share, figuring that was a bit too familiar.

Alessa figured it was mean of her to force him to pay for everything. But if he wanted to, she didn't stop him. "Um...do I need to pay you back or anything?", she asked.

"I'll cover it, don't worry about it," Edward said, given her his killer smile again. "It's the least I could do."

"Alright then.", Alessa said. If nothing else the guy was smooth. She followed him into the theater, carrying her snacks.

When Shelly got home, she quietly eased the door open and shut it, not wanting to disturb anyone upstairs. Creeping along, she headed upstairs, causing some creeks in the staircase, but didn;t say anything. Easing the door to her and Kit's room open, she smiled knowing that he was likely still fast asleep.

Stealth: <http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4257243/> 11

Shedding her club clothes, if such wear could be called that. it didn't seem very 'clubby' to her, she changed to her PJs then looked at the note just below hers. She felt worried as she looked at it and bit the inside of her lip. Well... He wasn't going alone, but he was still wounded. And she was alone. Her heartrate picked up as she remembered the trauma from the kidnapping. She

rubbed her arms, feeling slightly cold suddenly and went to the living room and looked at the TV. Alone still... Shelly shivered and just decided to make it seem that she wasn't home. Besides, as a therian, she could see decently well in the dark now. Shutting off all the lights and locking the doors, she hovered in the kitchen, back to the wall so no one could sneak up on her.

Michael was likely one of the first to exit whatever car they used to get back here. He was walking fast and was somewhat ahead of the group, so he went ahead to unlock and open the door.

Shelly gasped softly as she heard the door open. She had debated over and over getting a frying pan to bash someone open, but she didn't want to take the chance that she'd be taken from behind. Now it was too late. Instead, she completely froze up.

Will save (vs combat fear/PTSD stuff) **Yellow13** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 5

Raine did little more than follow Michael's wake, brushing aside her coat to reveal the tazer in its holster at her hip and resting a hand upon it absently as she thought about what to eat before going to bed.

Shelly yelped as the lights in the dining room were turned on by Raine. Her night vision ruined. "No!" She yelped and partially curled into a ball as though as she was expecting another kidnapping.

Michael felt quite content with the idea of getting something to eat, drinking some coke and spending the rest of his night in his room in hopes of repairing the mental barrier he's been using since day one to avoid going mad, but alas there was Shelly hiding in the dining room like she was beaten while they were gone despite the fact that everything in the house looked normal and neat, ".....Did we miss something?" Granted, learning the reality of what they were in for in the future was better in the long run than whatever the girls did, but why the heck is Shelly freaking out?

//Lo Fen.

//Also, no clue if you would be interested or not, considering the games you are currently in.

<http://titanpad.com/TheGoodLife>

Kit had been the last to get out of the van, so was understandably the last one to get into the house as well. So he just caught the tail end of Shelly's shriek. So he rushed in, stumbling into Michael in the process. "What happened?"

Raine's grip on her tazer had tightened only long enough to discover where the noise had come from, and promptly discarded the situation without a second thought, figuring some food and a good night's sleep was the most important thing for her right now.

She did, after all, have half a city to fight off in a month's time.

Shelly's eyes slowly adjusted to the light and when she saw Raine, then Kit she relaxed. "Oh... It's you." She said, relieved. "I thought you were... Nevermind. Sorry. I'm fine now." It was a lie of course. Her heart was pounding in her chest and she looked pale. She slowly got to her feet, her breath coming in short pants.

Kit didn't call her out on it. Instead, he just went to the sink and filled a glass with water and gave it to her, "Drink, seashell."

Shelly took the water, and smiled. "Thanks, hun." She drank it down, a little slowly though. "How was your trip?"

Vasily meanwhile fell down in a sofa in the living room, hoping to get a catnap. He wanted a sleep quite a bit, for some reason.

"Still... I guess it went well." Shelly started again, hoping to make conversation. "Is anyone hungry?" She offered, already heading to the pantry to sate her own hunger.

//didn't she recently eat?

//not so far as i know... just a few pops at the bar. Also she doesn't know if they ate or not.

"It was weird..." Kit said after a moment of thought. "We met 'hot European Incubuses'. Their words, not mine. No one really talked much though."

Shelly blinked. "Ummm... Right. That's... new." She said, confused. "Sorry I missed it. Then again, with my apperent reputation, I dunno if it'd be good. Maybe I should just stay behind when someone calls?" Shelly's accent made the last word seem like a question when it was in reality a statement.

"Mind if I ask why you smell like beer? And smoke? What I think are peanuts and what I swear is a inncubus."

Shelly blinked at that last part. "How do...? Right those pals you met... I dunno. I was taking Alessa to a bar to help her get over that other cat." Shelly explained, not naming name, but making it clear that she didn't have a high value on Vasily right now. "I was just over in the corner for the most part. Alessa was having the drinks and got a date with one of the guys that came up on us." She paused. "Dunno where you got smoke from, cause the bar we were at didn't allow it."

"If incubus is a cute term to refer to a phage," Raine began through half a mouthful of tuna sandwich, swallowing before continuing, "Then I guess Annette really did know what was going on -she said one of her little herd was probably investigating one of mine, as neither of us had a full house at that meeting. We have a ceasefire agreement with her people by the way, the exact terms were no physical or psychological harm, so if they get desperate expect them to get creative in finding loopholes."

Kit's eye twitched as he leveled a half-glare at Raine. "Seriously? You knew something like this was going to happen?" He demanded of Raine.

"Considering you got shot, I think it's for the best." Shelly said. "The less people that get shot for no real reason, the better. Though how can we be sure that she wasn't the one to do the shooting in the first place?"

"The 'rules' of this game give us a month's grace period, so it's pretty obvious people are going to be looking for loopholes, and considering the sheer magnitude of the politics going on here, I'm surprised we've only been approached twice," Raine said with a careless shrug, "And as I've recently discovered, our little group here is a far bigger bounty than I predicted -I'm not even sure if I'll be able to keep up with the amount of attempts on us that are most likely going to occur when this grace period ends."

"And again, I bring up that someone SHOT KIT during this supposed grace period." Shelly countered. "Has anyone even told Grant about that yet? besides, I really doubt that these rules are actually worth a damn to these people."

"Nate provoked them," Kit said. "It's like that 'I'm not touching you' thing. Or a game of chicken. He sucks at those games. Big time."

Shelly gave Kit a stern look. "That's not the point here. You got shot! If ya haven't, I'll tell Grant next I see him."

"No point," Raine reiterated Kit's statement, "That woman can effectively claim self defense, because in this world, a Therian is seen as one of the strongest 'weapons', it'd be too easy for her to worm out of any consequences."

"Oh of course it would be." Shelly sighed. "What was I thinking?" She said sarcastically. She knew she'd just get more and more angry the longer she tried this pointless argument. Grabbing some veggies; a carrot, two apples and a clementine, she went upstairs to eat and sleep.

Michael decides to blow that out of the water by opening a can of coke, "Strongest weapon my ass, we're just a bunch of furies on steroids... Now what Raine did, THAT is a weapon." He was of course referencing the time Raine used some kind of force/wind/whatever magic.

"Granted, we haven't seen what an experienced therian can do," Kit said. "We did kinda mess up the guards... and that was just us on some steroids... makes me wonder what people like Caleb and Old Coyote can do."

Shelly meanwhile finished off her midnight snack and went into bed, slipping back into her dreams soon enough.

For more information see: <http://titanpad.com/ShellysDream> line 190 and down.

"At any rate, it's safe to say that if the guys who've been running this planet for god knows how long, say that Therians are practically the strongest weapons, then they probably are," Raine said a little plainly, "...In the physical department at least..."

[Time Skip to when Alessa gets home some some people went to bed and won't share/be shared with]

//how much time we talkin? Raine's quite likely gone to bed if it's too long

Alessa returned home from the date. it was fairly nice, but she had no plans to seek further involvement. Though she did get Edward's number, so there was that. She entered the house. It was already close to midnight when she arrived. She was fairly tired from the date, but still didn't feel like going to bed. She crashed on the living room couch.

Kit had been rummaging around in the kitchen, not really hungry, but just rummaging around. He didn't have the light on, making the best (and getting used to) his bitchin' night vision. The fact that he wasn't hungry didn't stop him from munching on some chicken strips (because chicken strips was all he reason he needed). Anyway, he was downstairs when Alessa came home and stuck his head out the kitchen door. "Had a good date?"

"It was alright, we drank at the bar, then watched a movie. I haven't decided on a second date yet.", she said still lying on the couch.

"Well don't you just bounce back fast," Kit said blandly.

"Not really a bounce back...more like a passing readiness to move on...but sometimes I just can't get the good times with Vasily out of my mind.", she said to him.

"So you go hookup with the first incubus you find," Kit said, not too far from unkingindly.

"Incubus? What do you mean incubus?", Alessa asked.

"A male succubus," Kit said, helpful yet unhelpful.

"But Edward an incubus...what do you mean?", Alessa asked.

"His name was Edward? Seriously?" Kit said in disbelief. "You when out with a random guy named [i]Edward[/i]?"

"He seemed nice.", Alessa said to him, "I don't see what the problem is."

"He seemed nice..?" Kit echoed, not able, or willing, to accept the words at face value. "Only you could walk out into the city and not only cross pathc with, but go on a date with the only unaccounted for inncubus in the provice," Kit said, shaking his head with disbeleif. "And one with a name like Edward..."

//weren't there two?

//Yes. Your point?

//He said "the only unaccouted for incubus." Shouldn't that be "one of the only?" He might be able to pick out that this incubus scent is different then the one on his mate.

"Wait? You're not joking, you really believe there are incubi in the city...hah...that is hilarious...do the others share this delusion?", Alessa chuckled.

"Werecat," Kit said, pointing at himself. "Werewhatever," he said, pointing at her. "Whatever Raine is. You really think it's time to start questioning things? We already met with the other... seven in town."

"Other seven incubi, other therians?", Alessa asked.

"Cubi. European emotion feeders," Kit said, sustaining the same bland tone.

"So you guys met 7 incubi?", Alessa asked.

"You know... I'm going to bed," Kit said, shaking his head and heading for the stairs.

Shelly meanwhile was in bed still, having sprawled out and taken over both beds as she did so. She had told Kit about her strange dreams the previous day and she seemed to be doing so again.

Kit hissed irritated nothings on the way up the stairs. Maybe he was over reacting to the whole thing, but really; she makes a big stink about Vas breaking up with her, then she decides to go out clubbing and strikes out on a date with the first guy she meets, who turned out to be the missing incubus kid... They really didn't need another curve ball. They'd had even in the past few days.

He rolled off his shirt as he closed the door to their room behind him, Shelly already gone to sleep from an hour or so before. And she didn't get 'gifted' with the heightened hearing that made the sleep of the living dead imitation a bit harder than it was in the good ole days.

[i]Damn... I sound like an old man...[/i]

Kit thought to himself. He sighed and tossed the shirt into a corner so it would be out of the way before climbing into bed and getting some sleep himself. Tomorrow would be another day.

Alessa crawled her way to her room. The date was alright, and all this talk of incubi as if they were actually real was getting to her.