

Chapter 1

Phoebe Michelle Crane sat in front of her computer and furiously typed. Laying strewn across her desk were the many resource books and loose papers she gathered over the past month. Sitting precariously atop one library book was her fifth cup of coffee. Aside from the frequent trips to the dormitory's bathroom, she was making excellent time.

Research papers were Phoebe's kryptonite. No matter how many weeks in advance she'd been given, she would always wait until the night before. Sure, it would be easier to work on them every now and then, but that didn't sit well with Phoebe's procrastinating nature. She looked at the clock on the computer and sighed. 2:06 a.m. *College sucks*. She slumped in her seat and sipped at the lukewarm coffee, its stale taste sending a shudder across her body. In a fit of bravery, mixed with determination, she chugged the last gulps of the wretched drink, the whole time wishing she had access to some nice cappuccino.

Phoebe's procrastinating mind shifted gears once more, steering back to one ominous fact: she had no major picked out. The majors offered by the college centered around engineering, nursing, accounting, and science. Phoebe was more of a theater person. And that was the second reason she decided to enroll at this crummy college. The first; it had been Phoebe and Kira's

dream since childhood to go to the same college. And the second; the drama professor was said to be the best in the area. However, Professor Wilings gave her the willies. She heard a rumor from last semester in which he had a *relationship* with one of his students. Though nothing beyond rumor was said, rumors had the nasty habit of sticking within people's minds. She was beginning to wonder if college was the best choice. Images of seeing herself as a hippie and hitchhiking across the country gave her a break from the stress. If only.

But her first year in college wasn't that bad. It was already March and the daydreaming of summer swooped in as it had in years past. Two months from now marked the end of her freshmen year, as well as the one year anniversary of that fateful senior trip. The cruise itself remained with the girls, distant as any fading dream. Neither spoke much about those three months, or three days, they were missing. Reporters painstakingly tried to snag any interview or information about their time adrift at sea. But Kira and Phoebe knew better than to give them any morsel. They hoped that the interest in their story would dissolve away. Phoebe's mother, Miranda, on the other hand, attempted to talk her daughter into selling her story. But Phoebe had no desire to "sell their story." Those three days...

Phoebe did have some morbid curiosity about their time at sea. Her internet searching led her to several videos and articles mentioning about the chances of survival under such conditions-conditions Kira and Phoebe overlooked in their story. And as a result, they agreed to never speak of the events. The more questions they may answer, the more questions they would arise. The best course was to remain mum. One video did make Phoebe roll with laughter. A reporter was interviewing some of her fellow students, one of which by the name of Melissa. The girl expressed her concern through forced tears, even adding how much she loved her two best friends and prayed for a miracle. But once Kira and Phoebe returned home, they received little attention from their "best friend." The latest rumor from Queen Melissa was that Kira and Phoebe planned the whole incident to get their

fifteen minutes of fame, and that they were never adrift at sea. From that moment on, Phoebe's curiosity vanished. *Let them think what they want.* And she was certain Kira thought the same way.

In the room across the hall from Phoebe's, Kira tried to sleep. Nights filled with uncomfortable headaches and painful nightmares grew stronger with each passing day. When she would wake, the memories of the dreams faded away, leaving her with the blinding pain. Some of the doctors she saw were baffled by her case, while others made up excuses as to why the headaches were occurring. But Kira knew the truth and *that* frightened her.

Along with her weakening body, her grades began to suffer. For a straight "A" student, this was unthinkable. She tried to focus all of her energy on her studies, but the constant pain forced her otherwise.

Tossing and turning in her bed, Kira's mind and body fought against medication that forced her to sleep. Slowly, she pulled herself out of bed and headed for the desk. She opened the drawer and removed a sharp pair of scissors. With her eyes shut, Kira began to cut into the top of her right arm.

Around 9 a.m., an exhausted Phoebe headed back to her room after the quick dash to turn in her research paper. She almost had a heart attack when she began printing the paper--the printer's ink was running dangerously low. It was her fault, however, not stocking up when she had the chance. But she made it. The paper was turned in and all was right in the world. A seven-hundred pound dead moose could fall on her from no where and she wouldn't mind.

Phoebe clumsily fumbled through her keys as she tried to find the one to her room, nearly dropping them as she felt someone tap on her shoulder. Turning around, she saw a very pale Kira.

The clothes she wore weren't typical for her friend; a baggy sweatshirt and sweatpants, and a pair of fuzzy blue house slippers. Her hair was kept back in a low ponytail with several

strands falling loose around her face. She looked like the classic college student on the morning after a weekend party.

"Phoebe," Kira said, her voice weak, "I need to talk to you."

Phoebe's eyes narrowed as she realized the obvious. "Why aren't you in class?"

"Class can wait. Do you have time to talk with me for a sec?" She stood there, fidgeting and avoiding eye contact.

"Uh, sure." Phoebe unlocked her door and they entered. Before continuing the conversation, Phoebe closed the door and sat her keys on the dresser. Kira remained in the middle of the room with her arms crossed.

"So," began Phoebe, "What's up? It's not like you to miss any classes."

Bypassing the small talk, Kira looked straight at her friend. "Have you talked to Vincent recently?"

This was an odd question coming from Kira. When did she really care about the last time they talked?

"Several days ago, why?"

Kira hung her head, attempting once again to avoid eye contact. "I need to ask him something."

Phoebe replied, her composure softening, "You want to talk to him now? I can let you, if you want."

"No. Not right now. How about tonight?" There was hidden sense of panic beneath her words.

"Oh, okay. Tonight then."

Kira smiled. "Thank you." She left the room quietly.

Confused by her friend's actions, Phoebe wondered what had Kira's panties all in a bunch. She shook her head. Something had been bugging Kira ever since they returned. The doctor visits were hardly discussed between them. Phoebe wanted to explain the change in Kira as simple college fatigue, or some kind of adjustment to living away from home. But Kira wanted to speak with Vincent. Something serious must be going on if she wanted to see him. Phoebe, however, wasn't one to sit and wait until the night came. She wanted to speak with Vincent first.

Hidden in the back of her bottom dresser drawer, underneath several shirts and pants, sat a soft black pouch. Inside, it contained five, semi-transparent, dark red stones and a large black pearl the size of a golf ball. The five red stones were once clear, but when the blood was added, the stones became permanently colored. It was a little spell that Vincent shown her on his first and only visit to the strange world called Earth. He wouldn't have been able to cross into their world if it were not for the wristwatch Phoebe gave him.

The day Vincent arrived on Earth was a day filled with grueling assignments for Phoebe. She had just returned to her room from her evening shower and was in the process of dressing when rush of warm air whipped around her room. The wind knocked her to the floor and scattered everything in her room, evening ripping her posters from the walls. The wind ceased as the vortex then collapsed within itself, forming a large, black sphere. Phoebe stared at the sphere and saw Vincent step through. Her bewilderment turned to embarrassment as she realized she sat before him wearing only her underwear.

His visit lasted for a week. Phoebe gleamed as she was eager to show her world to him, even buying him clothes to wear during his stay. Vincent took everything in stride. The one thing that impressed him the most was how scientific and precise her world was. Phoebe could empathize, reversing the experience and visualizing that Earth was like an in-depth science fiction novel to him. But on further inspection, Vincent also commented on how one dimensional everything felt. Humans and *only* humans ruled over this world. Though a few tinges of something else could be sensed by him, they were too faint to even warrant questioning. Earth was a strange place. Of course he would sense strange things.

Before he returned home, Vincent shown her the trick with the enchanted stones. Not quite a spell in the traditional sense, it was more of a manipulation of the stones, a technique taught to Vincent in his early years under the guidance of Ambrose. Phoebe's five stones held Vincent's blood, while the five in his posses-

sion held hers. The black pearl was used to complete the connection. It also depended on who was “calling” whom. If Vincent tried to contact Phoebe, then all she would need was the pearl. But this time, Phoebe was going to contact Vincent.

After locking the door, she took a seat in the middle of her room and began placing the five stones around her in a counterclockwise circle. With last stone in place, she held the black pearl in her hands and closed her eyes. A tranquil feeling came over Phoebe, completely perfect and serene. She opened her eyes and was met with by a familiar scene. A flat, treeless field rested all around her, along with a bright blue sky and a slight warm breeze that stirred the simple, loose white dress she wore. Off in the distance, Phoebe could see a solitary object standing, the only blemish on the perfect straight horizon. It wasn't a human figure, but a small, white table. She headed for it, her mind continuing to marvel at the perfection of this place.

Upon reaching the table, she took a seat on one of the two chairs. The table and chairs weren't of a normal fashion. They were made from white marble and flawlessly shaped glass, its form organic in construction.

The breeze calmed for a moment before resuming its current pace, as if announcing the arrival of a new soul into this world. A single butterfly fluttered around Phoebe and landed on the table's surface. The creature's wings were transparent, capturing light through the crystalline particles that made up each wing, and then sending out a collage of glittering colors. Another butterfly appeared, this one similar to the first, except darker in color. Phoebe watched the two creatures circle each other, growing closer with every pass until they touched. Their tiny forms melted together, creating one large butterfly that took to the air with a sparkling trail dusting its path.

Her eyes went away from the carefree spirit and fell onto a familiar face.

Vincent walked up to the table where Phoebe sat. He wore a flowing white cloak and his long, black hair loosely tied back. In this place, he always looked different to her. The two scars over

his right eye were gone, as was the pale shade of green of the eye's iris.

He took a seat in the chair opposite of Phoebe and worriedly asked, "Is anything wrong?"

"I'm not sure," she replied. "It's Kira. She wants to talk to you about something."

Vincent appeared interested in this. "What do you think it is?"

"I don't know. She's been acting strange lately. She missed her classes today, and I think she's missed more this week."

"Anything else?" he wondered.

Phoebe thought of a moment. "Well, I have noticed she hasn't been eating much. She's been extremely tired, cranky, and almost completely out of it. There's also the headaches."

"Headaches?" Vincent's posture changed.

"Yeah, she started getting them shortly after we came back. She saw some doctors about them. They ran all these tests and came up with nothing. But they did give her some medicine to take the edge off the pain. What do you think it could be?"

Vincent lowered his eyes. He tried to come up with possible answers to Kira's ailments, but continually found himself landing on the same conclusion. With the death of Sephryn, he recalled something strange. His body vanished, but his realm--his created world--remained, unlike the death of Ambrose when Narr died along with him. Vincent knew something was amiss, but he wasn't completely sure.

"I'd like to see her for myself," he said, a serious tone weighing heavy in his words.

"Kira said that she wanted to talk with you tonight."

Vincent shook his head. "No. No talking here. I'm coming over to see her in person."

Phoebe seemed happy at hearing this, but her happiness waned. "Don't you remember what happened last time? The trip here drained most of your energy. You can't keep traveling back and forth. It's hard to tell what kind of physical damage it's doing to you."

"There's no need for concern," he assured her with a smile. "My energy replenishes quickly. Kira is more important right now. I don't think these headaches are the result from the stress of her studies."

With a weak, unsure smile, Phoebe gave her support. "Just be careful, okay?"

He returned the smile. "I shall."

Ten minutes after 9 p.m., Kira heard a telltale knock at her door. She looked through the peephole to see Phoebe standing outside. She opened the door, cracking it enough to see her friend.

"Can we come in?" Phoebe asked.

Kira looked at her confused. "We?"

She opened the door further and saw Vincent standing off to the side. His hair was short and his clothes similar to what the guys wore on campus. Sticking out like sore thumb was something he tried to avoid, even though the clothes he wore were rather uncomfortable to him.

Phoebe and Vincent entered the room. Kira quickly closed the door and turned to face them. "This is...unexpected."

"Phoebe said that you wanted to talk to me."

She looked at Phoebe then Vincent. "Yeah, but I didn't think you'd come here."

Glancing around Kira's room, Vincent began to ask his questions. "So, tell me. How are you feeling?"

With a weak laugh, Kira replied, "Not so good." She headed over to her bed and sat down, her arms folded at her waist. "I've been having these nightmares. They're so bad that they've caused these headaches. The doctors can't find anything wrong with me. I'm beginning to think I'm going crazy. Then there's this..." She pushed up her right sleeve, showing the foreign writing etched into her skin. "I don't know what it says."

Vincent's eyes focused on her arm. "I do."

Kira continued to explain, "I woke up this morning and found my scissors on the floor. My only guess is that it happened in my sleep."

“But you’re right handed,” Phoebe pointed out. “You couldn’t have done that.”

Kira dropped her head. “I know *I* didn’t do it. Sephryn did.”

Chapter 2

Kira sat on her floor with Phoebe's five red stones surrounding her. Before her lay the single black pearl. She listened carefully as Vincent gave her a few instructions. Nervousness fluttered through her stomach as Vincent sat down before her, signaling Kira to pick up the large pearl. In his hands, he held a similar pearl.

Sitting quietly on the bed, Phoebe expressed her concern to Vincent. "Maybe we should wait until you get your full strength back."

"I'll be all right."

Kira took a deep breath. "Okay, I'm ready."

"Remember," said Vincent, "keep yourself as relaxed as possible."

She nodded.

Phoebe watched and waited as they both closed their eyes and allowed themselves to enter the unseen world.

Vincent opened his eyes and saw the familiar green field and bright blue sky. He began to make his way to the marble glass table, hoping that Kira would already be there. When he ap-

proached the meeting place, he found no sign of Kira, only the newly formed butterfly that took off into the air.

Frantically looking around the field, he could see Kira off in the distance. She wasn't walking his way; instead, she remained sitting on the ground. He rushed over to her and saw something that confused him. Dozens of vines held tightly onto her, resembling ropes over top of her skin and white dress. Kira's eyes looked up helplessly at Vincent.

"I can't get up," she said, her voice pleading.

The large crystalline butterfly caught their attention as it glided between them and landed on a single violet flower. The grass behind the flower began to stir. The butterfly had no time to react as a large black snake sprang from the grass, striking the crystal insect and devouring it whole.

As this happened, the vines holding Kira weakened, granting her freedom. Kira struggled to her feet and moved away from the vines. Then her eyes caught sight of something terrible. Dark menacing clouds pushed their way through the perfect blue sky, carrying intimidating lightning and thunder with it.

Vincent saw the clouds, too, but he was more interested in the vines that began to move on their own, pushing upwards and taking the shape of a human. With more twisting and turning within themselves, the vines melted away, revealing the form of Sefhryn, dressed in solid black.

The ground started to rumble as rocks and dirt overpowered the healthy green grass, stripping away everything familiar to Vincent. And like dye added to clear water, Kira's white dress faded in to an infinite black.

Kira stood close to Vincent. Her hands instinctively went up to her head as a strong migraine geared up for an attack. The pain appeared to hit Sefhryn just as hard. He stood there and held his head, silently begging the pain to leave him.

"Do you see now?" Sefhryn called out, torment in his voice. "I'm not causing this. The pain is as great to me as it is to her!"

"Maybe not intentionally," Vincent shot back, "but you are the cause." Placing his hand to Kira's forehead, Vincent eased the

pain. The temporary cure seemed to work for Sephryn, as well. But the small act of kindness had a great effect on Vincent. His form began to fade. As Vincent's hand left Kira, his form became solid.

Sephryn grew frustrated upon seeing this. "You're too weak to help me."

"Help you?" said Vincent, not hiding his anger. "Help *you*? That will *never* happen! You got yourself into this mess, you can get yourself out."

"Someone on the outside must do that," the sorcerer explained. "You bound my powers, remember? Kira's poor mind cannot contain me much longer. Everyday that passes, she grows closer to death. We are *both* dying. To save her, you must release me."

Vincent turned to Kira. "How long have you known he had invaded your mind?"

She whispered her answer, "Not long after Phoebe and I arrived back home."

"And yet you chose to say nothing when I last visited?"

Kira dropped her gaze. "I was scared. I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking straight."

Vincent looked back at Sephryn. "I'm not helping you, I'm helping Kira."

The sorcerer appeared disgusted at this but seized the opportunity. "Very well," he said, extending his hand out for Kira. Hypnotically, she walked toward him. Vincent tried to go after her, but was stopped by an invisible barrier.

"Surprised?" gloated Sephryn. "You may have bound my powers on the outside. But here, I'm just as strong." He placed his hands on Kira's shoulders and slowly turned her around until her back faced him. He then moved her long hair to the side and slid the dress off of her back, exposing her skin. Kira kept her hands over her chest, preventing the dress from falling off completely.

Sephryn held his left hand out, calling forth a dark quill pen. The long, deep-blue feather faded into view and allowed its own-

er to snatch it from the air. He moved his free hand over Kira's skin, as though he were feeling a clean sheet of paper before marking its surface. He then positioned the quill over her back.

With clenched fists and teeth, Vincent could only watch as the sorcerer ran the sharp-tipped quill over Kira's flesh, cutting words onto skin.

Kira didn't flinch or attempt to move. Instead, she stood there and accepted the pain. Telling herself that this was the only way to feel normal again, was her only way to battle the sensation.

Several minutes after beginning his writing, Sephryn stepped back, his form disappearing.

With her energy spent, Kira collapsed to the ground, her form also dissolving from sight.

Phoebe knelt down beside Kira as she tried to wake her friend. Blood soaked through the back of Kira's sweatshirt and onto her rug. *What happened?*

Pushing away the grogginess in his muscles, Vincent helped Phoebe lift Kira onto her bed, face down.

"Are you going to heal her?" asked Phoebe.

"Not yet," he replied. "We need to remove her shirt."

With the scissors from the desk, Phoebe began to cut the sweatshirt away from the wounded flesh. "Sorry about this, Kira. I'll buy you a new shirt, I promise." After the sweatshirt was removed, she undid the bra strap, as well.

"We need to clean away the blood," Vincent calmly instructed. He then brushed the hair off of Kira's face in order to check her current state of consciousness.

Phoebe grabbed a bottle of water that sat on the dresser and began to pour the warm water over her friend's back. Symbols, hidden underneath the blood, began to show through. She glanced down at the bed sheets and cringed. "Uhm, I guess I'm buying you new sheets, too."

Her eyes moved over the intricate symbols that were sliced deep into Kira's skin.

"What is it?" she wondered out loud.

"It's a spell," Vincent replied. "Sephryn believes it will help him."

Phoebe tried to study his expression but found nothing. "Well, are you going to help him?"

He avoided the question. "I need to write this down."

Exhaling in defeat, Phoebe handed him a notebook and pencil from the nightstand.

Vincent quickly copied the words onto the paper, double checking it before asking Phoebe for another favor. "Can you heal her for me?"

Understanding that his energy was severely depleted, she did as he asked, healing Kira's arm, as well.

Vincent stood and silently read over the spell.

"I should have known," he said to himself.

"What?" asked Phoebe as she retrieved a new shirt from the dresser.

Kira began to wake up.

"He's being himself, again. The spell," Vincent pointed out, "it is intended to separate two joined minds, relapsing them back into their previous form."

Phoebe handed Kira the clean shirt. "And that means?"

"It will bring Sephryn back before I bound his powers."

Phoebe nearly dropped her jaw. "So he'll be here in this world, with a body and powers?" She looked at Kira. "I guess he planned for this, too."

Kira spoke up, her voice shaky, "He planned for everything."

"He didn't plan on this." Vincent turned the notebook over and began writing.

"What are you doing?" Phoebe asked.

"I'm changing a few things."

"He's laughing at you," informed Kira.

Vincent kept writing. "He can laugh all he wants."

Kira lowered her head and squinted her eyes as a new migraine began its onslaught. Stern and relentless, her eyes opened

and fell on Vincent. "As I said before, binding spells can't last forever." The voice was Kira's but the person speaking was not her.

Vincent looked up, his eyes settling on the girl as he tried to get a mental imprint of the fragmented energy coming from her. "May I go to your room," he asked Phoebe. "I suddenly feel unwelcomed here."

Dumbfounded, she replied, "Uh, I don't mind." Phoebe stepped closer and whispered, "Is there anything else you need?"

He looked at Kira, the muscles visibly tensing in his face. "Kira is resting now. Which is something I must do."

"That's right," Kira's voice said as Sephryn continued to speak. "Rest now. You are no good to me without any energy."

Vincent looked back at Phoebe. "I don't want you to stay here with him."

"I'll be fine." She smiled. "I need to watch over Kira and make sure he doesn't do anything else to her."

With hatred conveyed in his voice, Vincent aimed his last words at the sorcerer. "You harm either girl while I'm away, then the deal is off." He exited the room, leaving the three in silence.

Phoebe locked the door and turned to face the image of Kira sitting quietly on the bed.

"What a funny pair you two make," Sephryn said through Kira.

"I'm not talking to you," Phoebe made clear as she took a seat at the desk. She then picked up a pencil and a book of puzzles. She flipped through the pages and found one that interested her.

Kira smiled as Sephryn continued speaking, "You don't have to talk. Just listen. Don't you see it? How he orders you around like a servant?"

Phoebe tried not to listen to him. "You're wasting oxygen, you know."

"Do you think you are an apprentice to him? He can not guide anyone. He barely has enough sense to guide himself, let alone a weak girl like you. Oh, he may say that I'm feeding you lies, but you know the truth. He will never consider you as an apprentice.

History has proven that. Many women who studied magic have *Fallen to the Dark*--went mad with power-- while others can not control it. The truth is, women are not as focused as men."

With teeth clenched, Phoebe felt her temperature start to rise. "Unlike you?"

"I'm very much sane, and I haven't lost control of my abilities. Proof there that men are superior. Women are also a distraction. I've seen how it affects Vincent. The poor wizard has never known the touch of a woman. He has never had, what your world favors, his 'first kiss.' The study of magic as seen to that. But here you are, his only distraction, and he can't...*won't* do anything about it. You are eating away at him, threatening to destroy what he has become. I know you see it. But would he ever truly love you emotionally and physically if he knew the real you?"

She sharply turned to him. "The *real* me?"

He smiled. "You're not a true good girl, are you? In fact, you are the opposite of dear, sweet Kira. And I bet *she* doesn't know half of what you've done--high school years alone. When your father died, you began your little downward descent and threw away your innocence to a boy you barely knew. And he wasn't the only one."

"Shut up," Phoebe demanded, keeping her voice low. Her grip on the pencil increased.

"And the satyr..." he pointed out. "It *was* your fault, you know. Any self-respecting girl wouldn't go off alone in strange place. But there you were."

Standing in anger, Phoebe approached the body of her friend and towered over her. "I said, shut up!"

"You deny it?" the sorcerer asked, the question taunting the girl's fragile walls.

That was all Phoebe could take. With her right fist balled up tight, she threw her weight into one strong punch, landing on Kira's cheek and jaw, knocking *them* unconsciousness.

Shaking out her fist, Phoebe left the room, her anger still boiling. With a relaxing breath, she then opened the door to her room and stealthily slid inside.

Vincent sat in the center of the room with a few papers scattered around him, along with his ancestor's ancient book--the very book that caused the needless deaths of many innocent people.

"Uh," she began, trying to explain her early return. "Kira and her 'roommate' decided to call it a night."

Not picking up on her uneasiness, Vincent looked back at the papers, his current attention locked on the puzzle before him. If the circumstances had been different, he would have easily picked up on rippling in Phoebe's energy.

"I think I've found away to separate Kira and Sephryn," he said, "without restoring him to his former self."

She went over to her bed and sat down. "That's nice."

Finally sensing her underlying stress, he focused his eyes on her and asked, "What's wrong?"

Phoebe let out a small laugh. "You always seem to be asking me that." She continued speaking when he didn't reply. "I now know how Sephryn managed to divide Lunatus."

Vincent turned his attention back to the papers. "He has a natural gift of taking the truth and twisting it around."

"The truth," repeated Phoebe, keeping her voice low.

He looked back at her, concern hinted in his expression. "Was he talking to you?"

She gave another laugh, showing more nervousness than humor. "Yeah. He sure likes to hear himself speak." She decided to change the subject. "So, you found a way?"

"Uh, yes. I just need to work out a few small details." He began to stack the papers into the open book. "I should work on this in the morning when my mind is more focused." After closing the book, it vanished.

"Here, you can sleep on the bed," offered Phoebe. She could tell he was greatly in need of sleep and a soft bed was the best cure for that.

Vincent stood up, thankful for the offer; however, he politely replied, "No, I can take the floor."

"Guys are all the same, no matter where they're from," she ranted in a sarcastic tone. She then turned the sheets down and repositioned the pillows. "Listen, we can share the bed. There's room enough for the both of us, so why not?"

He appeared baffled at this. "You have no problem with that?" Phoebe was unlike anyone he had ever met. Most ladies would never think twice about the man sleeping on the floor. But sharing the same bed? Then again, he had to remember this place called Earth held many strange customs.

"I don't have a problem if you don't," she stated. "We're both mature people here."

He still felt a little awkward, but decided not to argue. Arguments with Phoebe rarely ended in his favor.

"You're right," he gave in. "Let's get some sleep."

Phoebe made her regular nightly rounds; brushing her teeth, washing her face, and dreading tomorrow's classes. When she returned to the room, Vincent was already asleep on the bed. All the worry he constantly carried with him seemed to melt away. There was also a brief moment of peace that greeted Phoebe. She hated to see him completely caught up in matters of "life and death." To her, dealing with those matters was probably the only way Vincent felt a sense of self-worth. But why? There was nothing he had to prove and nothing he had to atone for. At least, that was how she saw it.

Turning off the light, Phoebe crawled into bed and under the covers. Even though she was able to talk him in to sleeping on the bed, he remained above the covers, keeping a small amount of space between them.

She smiled to herself. *Yup, they're all the same.*