

Story Writing Samples

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-Z Pictures Script, Ennis, Scene-

Ennis

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EXT. CITYSCAPE - A RAINY NIGHT

In the distance, a city of concrete and glass stretches into the horizon. Dark clouds fill the sky as rain pours down.

FIONA (V.O.)
(Tired and apathetic)
There are nearly four million people in
this city. Every day they get up, go to
work, go home, and then go to sleep.
Repeat process.

-BEGIN MONTAGE-

- A family moving into a duplex.
 - A BUSINESSMAN screaming into his cell phone and using his briefcase as an umbrella.
 - A WOMAN throwing plates at her partner, crying. We see the exterior of her building. There, a shadowy black MONSTER, crawls in, attracted by the emotion.
- END MONTAGE-

FIONA (V.O.)
They're all out there, living and
dying. Unaware of what's around them,
what they're creating.

EXT. A CROWDED STREET - NIGHT

Commuters rush about in the rain, trying to keep out of the deluge. In their shadows and amongst the darkness of the buildings, monsters, in various shapes and sizes canter about. You can barely see them in the crowd, they blend, the people and these things.

FIONA (V.O.)

But I know. I see.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN

People step away from a HOMELESS MAN, rocking, deranged. As people part, they reveal shadowy monsters, crowding him and whispering.

FIONA (V.O.)

I see how we feed them, how we invite them into our homes. We make them real.

-BEGIN MONTAGE-

-The family unpacks, not seeing the monsters crawling in and out of the shadows of their belongings.

-The businessman, a writhing monster in his shadow.

-The woman throwing plates at her partner readies to throw another plate as the black monster climbs up her back, now mimicking her movements and adding a fierceness to her throw.

-END MONTAGE-

FIONA (V.O.)

I see them, and when they get out of hand, I hunt them.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A zippo lights up momentarily and then goes out. Feminine lips pull from a thinly rolled cigar. Faintly burning runes illuminate on the brown paper as she takes a drag. We see FIONA ENNIS, 35, holding in the smoke from the strange cigar, her eyes closed. Her bright blue eyes open as she releases the smoke, causing it to curl about her thickly. Her long black hair, sloppily pulled back, is cut shorter at the sides. Fiona rubs at her head in exhaustion and pain.

FIONA (V.O.)

All I've got is more questions.

Fiona sits in a tween's room, covered in posters of boy bands. She stares across the room at a GIRL, 16, contorted on her bed, upside down, head twisted all the way back, facing Fiona. Clearly possessed, her eyes are yellowed, her hair is stringy, and her skin is glossy with a sheen of sweat. A low deep hiss resonates from her throat.

FIONA

You don't mind if I smoke, right?

Fiona takes a drag of the cigar and blows it at the possessed girl, making her cough and recoil. It's eyes flair brighter.

FIONA (CONT'D)

Kid wants me to quit. Well, it is a filthy habit, but it calms the nerves, y'know?

The Girl slowly and quietly begins speaking in tongues. Fiona, annoyed, kicks the bed in annoyance. The possessed girl cowers slightly.

FIONA (CONT'D)

None of that. Now Let's cut to the chase, yeah? You know why I'm here. Now, are we going to do this the easy way?

She waits, the girl growls and crouches to attack. Fiona sighs in frustration, stands.

FIONA (CONT'D)

Fine.

Fiona puts her cigarette out on the bedpost and then takes off her jacket revealing a host of strange black tattooed symbols. The girl eyes the tattoos in fear and backs away, climbing the wall to get away.

FIONA (CONT'D)

Oh, no running away now.

The girl continues crawling up into the high corner of the room. Fiona approaches, coming face to face with the drooling and snarling girl.

POSSESSED GIRL

You...are...nothing.

Fiona reaches out, takes the creature by the face, and throws it back down onto the bed. Gripping it by the neck, the creature struggles, scratching into her arm. Fiona winces but doesn't let go. The creature glares and then starts to laugh.

POSSESSED GIRL (CONT'D)

(defiant)

We...are....many.

Fiona rolls her eyes and then looks around theatrically.

FIONA

Yeah, well, I don't see your wretched brethren coming to save you.

Fiona's eyes begin to darken, and her tattoos take on an inky quality. The creature's face contorts in horror and then screams.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The creature's screaming continues. RACHEL TENN, 20, a biracial millennial with thick short hair tied into knots, sits, cross legged, headphones on, amongst the wreckage of the hallway. She works on her computer, bobbing her head to music as she focuses. Just then, the racket in the other room stops. A beat later, Fiona emerges, putting on her coat. Dark circles lay beneath her eyes. Lethargically, she lights another cigar. In the room behind her we see the girl, scared but normal, curled up on her bed sobbing. Fiona trudges past Rachel and she starts to pack her things. The PARENTS of the girl rush up the hallway and into their daughter's room.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

The girl and her parents huddle together, crying, and praying. Rachel enters and smiles down at them.

RACHEL

(excited)

Congratulations! You're one of the few surviving victims of a class four spectral possession! Do you mind if I take your pulse?

The girl gives no answer. Rachel takes her pulse anyway. She then pulls out a flashlight, examining the girl's eyes, ears, and throat. Finally, Rachel feels her forehead.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

You're a bit feverish, but that's just your immune system kicking into overdrive.

Rachel pulls a packet from her bag and hands it to the parents.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Here's a write up on what to expect and how to take care of your survivor.

The parents take it, unsure.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Just treat this like the worst flu in the world. Pray if you like, but you know, just give her lots of love!

MOTHER

How can we possibly thank you?

RACHEL

Acceptable forms of compensation are located on page four.

Rachel hands them a business card: "Fiona Ennis, Spectral Investigations and Removal", followed by a number and email.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to call! Tell your friends about us!

With a parting smile, Rachel exits.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY- NIGHT

Rachel hurries down the hallway to where Fiona leans against the wall, puffing on her strange cigars, looking like she's just survived a bar fight.

RACHEL

What the hell took you so long?

Fiona rubs her forehead, groaning a little, and pushes off the wall.

FIONA

Don't give me shit, Rach. My car's in the shop.

Walking down the hallway, Fiona and Rachel pass an open door. Inside, an African Voodoo Priest lays dead on the floor, his neck twisted all the way around. They pay the sight no mind and continue, stepping over the body of a Rabbi. His cheeks, eye sockets, and skin are shriveled, the life sucked from him.

RACHEL

Still?

INT, LIVING ROOM, NIGHT

They walk down the stairs to the living Room where a lifeless Medicine Man kneels, with a staff shoved down his throat.

FIONA

Yeah, they have this weird thing about not giving it back until I pay them.

They pass a deceased Hindu Priest. Congealed blood mars every orifice, as though he'd been turned into a bloody fountain.

RACHEL

Imagine that.

Fiona and Rachel exit the apartment of horrors.

-Cryptozoic Character Creations-

Cryptozoic Project:

Type: Artifact, Automated Rocket Launcher

Focus: A rocket launcher on a weapons cart.

Action: A long cylindrical rocket launcher sits atop a stone fashioned weapons cart. The apparatus itself is a dark brass color while the rocket, half jammed into the head of the gun, is a darker shade of steel. The launcher is gas fed by a metal coiled line that runs from the back of the gun up to a thick gas canister attached to the top. A thick piece of thick leather is bolted to the bottom of the gun for a shoulder rest and two brass handles are at the front to balance and aim the launcher like gun. One handle has a metal flip up cover, protecting the trigger switch of the devastating weapon. Bits of long round rockets and additional metal attachments can just be seen laying on the cart around the Launcher at the edges of the scene.

Environment: A stone fashioned weapons cart.

Flavor: The name pretty much says it all, this device does random damage to attacking troops (show just the launcher, no creatures)

Type: Necrotic Cleric, Awakener Guide

Focus: A Necrotic cleric helping a new necrotic from its tomb.

Action: A slender ageless female Necrotic Cleric with diamond vex gem eyes stands next to the head of a stone slab inside a dark crypt lined with stone caskets. Her black hair is done up in a large, braided bun atop her head and wears a long black robe with black fabric wrapped down her forearms to the fingers, as well as around her neck and the lower half of her smooth porcelain face. The long nails of her slender fingers stick through the black gloves of her robe. A simple black belt decorated with ruby vex gems hangs around her narrow hips. She has one arm stretched out in offering toward a waking male Necrotic that struggles to stand from the stone slab. Her opposite hand holds two sharp hooked wand like tools used to place vex gems into the corpse's eyes to 'wake' them. The new Necrotic braces himself with one arm on the stone slab as he shakily stands. He wears rags of white beneath dusty disheveled ceremonial silver armor plates that adorn his strong shoulders, chest, waist, and feet. The former corpse has long straight white hair, about thirty years when he died, and eyes that twinkle diamond white with new Vex gem life.

Environment: A dark stone tomb and caskets.

Flavor: A female necrotic cleric. Her job is to guide new necrotic who have been "awakened." Show her helping a new necrotic stand from the stone slab where she implanted diamond gems in its eyes.

Type: Witch, Scourgecrag Witch

Focus: A crazed witch casting spells.

Action: A hunched crazy ugly old witch in tattered dark grey robes stands over a bubbling cauldron with human bones floating around in its venomously purple boiling waters. Her greying lackluster face is etched with age lines and her shriveled lips are stretched into a wicked smile revealing what remains of her gapped rotted teeth. Her eyes are black, soulless, and she wears a

large ruby vex gem amulet around her neck. Scraggly strands of black hair stick out at every angle beneath her pointy dark grey decrepit old witch's hat. She is hunched and looks straight ahead at us, her sharp nails raised to the sky as she summons wicked spells. A dark energy gathers, swirling around her left hand, while a fierce twisting bright blue spell launches from her left hand toward us. A snowbank with protruding black roots here and there takes up the background behind her. Shriveled black bushes fill the bottom foreground corners as though we have just pushed through the bushes and found her at the ready.

Environment: A snowy hill side.

Flavor: A horrible, ugly, curse-flinging witch who lives in a craggy, snowy area (like N. Scotland). Make sure she has a pointy hat!

Type: Elf, Elf Dramaturge

Focus: An elf writing at a table in a pub.

Action: A male elf with long pointed ears and slender features sits at a wooden table in a tavern writing. He has a quill in one hand which is rested to write on a scroll unfurled before him and is dressed in simple brown leather travelers gear consisting of a dark brown jacket and a peasant's shirt tucked into dark pants. His leather satchel lays on the table next to his parchment. The Elf's face is angled down toward his writing and his thin frame is relaxed. His hair is a chestnut brown, short, and perfectly styled back. Despite his smooth light skinned face, his bright golden eyes look toward us with a shifty smirk, his other hand craftily pulls a wicked looking dagger from his knee-high dark leather boot, ready to shank an unsuspecting enemy. Vague images of people dance in the fire light on the wall behind his table.

Environment: The fire lit wall of a tavern.

Flavor: This elf rogue/bard is a playwright but can also handle himself in a fight.

Type: Artifact, The Void's Wager

Focus: A man reaching into a box holding a dark void.

Action: An ominous ornately carved black metal box is in the right foreground on a wooden table with the lid open. Inside the box we can see a black swirling void, so strong it sucks the very dust from the air around it in twisting streams. A human man stands behind the box and stone stable with dark brown eyes and strong features is seen waist up reaching toward the box in fear, as though it is somehow making him reach out to it. The man has short dark black hair has a stress streak of grey at the temple, thick black eyebrows. His long, pointed face is panicked as he reaches toward it, his teeth gritted and his eyes wide. He wears a long sleeved dark grey shirt buttoned at the front with metal toggles. Leather straps to a holster on his back cross his broad chest. The man looks disheveled, as though it had taken him some effort to get to this point and is in over his head.

Environment: A stone crypt.

Flavor: A box with a swirling black void, and a scared-looking guy who is extending his hand, about to reach into it.

-Cryptozic, Equipment Art Descriptions-

Card Name	Card Game Text	Card Theme	Item Type	Item Game Text	Item Rarity	Item Name	Art Description
This is the name of the card.	This is the card's basic mechanics.	The card's general artistic theme.	The type of equipment.	This is the mechanic that is added to the card when this piece of equipment is added.	The rarity of the equipment. The rarity ranks are Uncommon, then Rare, then Legendary	Create a name for the item	Add the description of the item for the artist to draw (64 x 64 pixels max).
Orson's Dream	Look at the top X cards of your deck. You may put a troop from among them into your hand, then put the rest on the bottom of your deck.	dream	Head	Troop permanently gains +1/+1 as well.	Legendary	Orson's Dream Helm	This helm is made of thick dark leather and is open at the face. The edges of the helm are thick, fuzzy, and hard to look at. A swirling vortex like symbol is etched into the center of the forehead.
Orson's Dream	Look at the top X cards of your deck. You may put a troop from among them into your hand, then put the rest on the bottom of your deck.	dream	Gloves	The cost of the Troop is reduced by 1.	Rare	Slight Of Hand Gloves	This glove is made from thick dark leather and rises to its wearers mid forearm. The edges of the glove are thick, fuzzy, and hard to look at. A swirling vortex like symbol is etched into the back of the glove.
Orson's Dream	Look at the top X cards of your deck. You may put a troop from among them into your hand, then put the rest on the bottom of your deck.	dream	Chest	CIP: Gain 2 Life.	Uncommon	Concocting Chest Plate	This chest plate is made from thick dark leather and covers its wearers torso. The edges of the chest plate are thick, fuzzy, and hard to look at. A swirling vortex like symbol is etched into the upper center of the chest plate.
Stealth	Target troop is unblockable this turn.<p>Draw a card.	stealth	Chest	Effects are permanent.	Legendary	Chest Plate of Silent Strike	This thick black metal chest plate is forged with a defined muscle structure and covers its wearers chest and shoulders to the upper forearm. Thin sharp designs are etched into the metal around the edges.
Blood Pathogen	Whenever your opponent would choose a card to discard, he instead reveals his hand and you choose the card for him.<p>Whenever an opponent discards a card, deal 2 damage to that player's champion.	disease	Weapon	TBD	Uncommon	Staff Of Infection	This long metal staff looks corroded and rusty. Rust stains decorate the edges and look more like dried blood than actual rust. A ruby tops the staff. Sharp designs are etched into the metal around the jewel.

-Pandora Syndrome- Novel-

Stories of Ithiria

Pandora Syndrome

Book One

Written by: April Wahlin

Prologue

Beginning of the End

So, there I was, encased in about ten feet of cement, and walled into the basement of an Ahab's coffee shop. Being buried alive was just about as much fun as you would think. I couldn't breathe, couldn't see, couldn't move. My skin ached— not just because of the cement, but because the sun was coming up. Terrible as that felt, it was good to know that at least some of my vampiric senses were still firing.

After all my years as an immortal, I still wasn't a very good vampire. My current situation was an embarrassment to my supernatural race.

This couldn't really be the end of me, could it? I mean, realistically, the lack of nourishment would eventually make me lose consciousness, but then what? Technically, I should live forever.

The cement was still wet, giving me the slightest tease of movement. Unfortunately, every time I tried to dig my way out, a bit more of my flesh ripped, more bones popped, and more ligaments contorted. So, I forced myself to be still.

My thoughts flailed between pain and rage while the faces of my loved ones passed through my mind's eye. The sheer horror of my situation was quickly crushing the logic center of my brain. Thankfully, my thoughts soon retreated into the safety of memory. They offered something to cling to, something to stem the panic creeping in. So, I let them come.

Unfortunately, they settled on the night of my death. The night all this started. The night I met Remy.

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**I stumbled drunkenly out of the Viper Room.** Unfortunately, the poorly lit streets were devoid of my companions for that fateful night. It was to be a pub-crawl of epic proportions along Hollywood's infamous Sunset Strip. Sadly, it would end up being far more epic than any of us anticipated.

I still wasn't exactly sure how I, the Birthday Girl, had managed to get left behind by my brother, Jack, and my supposedly best friend, Rosetta. I thought about flagging down a cab, but as I patted the non-existent pockets on my tight purple dress, I realized that I'd spent all my cash on Long Island iced teas. I regretted wearing the impractical dress, as it had forced me to have my brother hold my ID card. My currently MIA brother.

Though I had to admit, the dress did a lot for me. Curve-wise I was always more Bettie Page than Betty Cooper, a figure that was less popular with the fashionable eighties' girls of today. I was also the complete opposite of the tan skinned California blond stereotype, what with my pale complexion, dark eyes, and black hair. Thankfully, with the dress, high heels, and metric ton of makeup that Rosetta had forced me to wear, I was right on par with the dolled-up club goers of the Hollywood night scene. However, now that I was tipsy, lost, and pissed off, I doubted I cut a stunning figure.

Only a few stumbling stragglers like myself were left outside the club at this hour. I thought about looking for a payphone, but aside from my lack of change, I didn't even know the number for our apartment, seeing as how I'd only moved in with my brother the week before.

Tears threatened my eyes. Even if I'd known the number, he likely wouldn't answer. I'd seen Jack with a busty blonde earlier, and late as it was, he would undoubtedly be too drunk or too "distracted" by said blonde to be any help. So, I doubted there was any way short of magic to conjure up my asshole sibling.

Dejected, I wandered around the side of the club and into the parking lot.

In my drunken state, my emotions were going haywire. The situation had finally overwhelmed me. So, I yelled. It was a furious, inarticulate sound that trilled on until I was out of breath. It didn't help, but it felt good.

Disoriented, I slunk toward the black façade of the Viper Room, leaned against the wall, and closed my eyes.

Awesome, Dora. "Happy birthday to me," I half-sang aloud.

In response, I heard the sudden snap of my stiletto heel. Scrambling to catch myself, my hand scraped the side of the building and I slammed unceremoniously onto the ground. Angrily, I ripped off what was left of my heel and chucked it across the parking lot, followed quickly by Rosetta's glittering accessories, which flew through the air like little shooting stars. I'd catch hell for that, but I didn't care, served her right for ditching me.

Leaning back against the wall of urine-soaked nightmares, I gave in. The terrible night had won. With choking sobs, the tears came. Mascara began rolling down my cheeks in thick, black streams. My breath hitched and my chest constricted. I sucked in air, but it wasn't enough. All I could do was sit there and shake with strangling, uncontrollable sobs as the panic attack began.

"You never came to find me," a deep voice suddenly whispered in my ear.

My panic turned to shock, and I scrambled back to find the most handsome man I'd ever had the good graces to flirt with hovering over me. I remembered marveling at him back in the bar. It had been unladylike of me, but it was my birthday after all. Sadly, I'd gotten little more than his name before he'd disappeared into the depths of the Viper Room.

Remy stared down at me with a thin smile, his blue eyes seeming particularly bright in the dim streetlight, almost silver. His features appeared sharper than they had in the club, his perfectly styled deep brown hair now a frame of blackness around his masculine face.

As I studied him, I felt my body relax and my breath begin to calm. His eloquent brows were arched with just the faintest hint of worry. I also noticed a tick in the muscle of his jaw. Whether it was holding back a laugh or a curse, I wasn't sure.

"Where did you come from?" I managed after a moment, my voice coming out in an emotional rasp.

"I came from the bar, remember?" he teased.

"Yeah, I know—" I began to say, but then stopped myself. "Never mind." I sighed, dabbing at my eyes with the mesh sleeve of my dress.

"Why are you crying?" he asked, crouching next to me.

"I'm all right," I croaked.

"I did not ask if you were all right. I can see that you are not," Remy replied with a cool voice. I shivered a little at the sound. "I asked, why are you crying."

"Right," I sighed dismally.

I looked up into his eyes, they were understanding and calm, making me feel like I could tell him anything. Unfortunately, instead of calmly stating my situation, my words poured out of me in a flood of verbal incontinence.

"Well, I got ditched by my brother. I don't have money for a taxi. My makeup's a mess. I broke a heel. I lost my friend's earrings..." Remy just stared down at me. "And now you think I'm a hag."

I shifted awkwardly, trying to hide my face from him.

"I think no such thing," he replied and placed a finger under my chin, gently lifting my face up to meet his.

Our gazes locked and the place where our skin touched seemed to almost hum with an electrified connection. I felt inexplicably drawn to him. His eyes fell to my lips then and my blood heated.

"Listen. I could give you a ride," he told me with a scoundrel's curve to his lip.

The logic center of my brain fired up then. Captivating or not, Remy was a stranger, and I was staggeringly drunk. I considered my options as I looked around the alley replete with garbage, and worse. I really didn't have much of a choice. Either I got a ride with him, or I spent the night in the alley.

I nodded and tried to stand, but immediately lost my balance. I was nearly back on the filthy ground when Remy's arm snaked around my waist to catch me. I barely had time to gasp

before he had me on my feet, steadying me against the wall. He was warm. Well, warmer than I was at that moment, and he smelled like good musky cologne. I felt dizzy with the scent of sandalwood and fresh water.

“You–You’re strong,” I stammered as I tried to take a step, momentarily forgetting about my lack of heel. He tightened his grip, saving me from stumbling anew. “My hero,” I breathed.

“What makes you think I am a hero?” Remy asked darkly, his lips suddenly inches away from mine.

My “stranger danger” instincts should have lit up then. Instead, my heart leapt, and I felt... at peace, like fate had brought me to this terrible alley just to gift me this moment.

Remy’s baby blues peered down into my dark eyes. There was intensity there, and yet something hesitant, as though he were waging some internal war. For a moment, I thought he might pull away.

I tightened my arms around him, attempting to keep him close. Remy’s will seemed to dissolve then, and his strong lips descended upon mine. My mind reeled. They were smooth, firm, and tasted lightly of brandy. My mind spun as that electricity between us seemed to intensify.

Remy broke the kiss, giving me a moment to catch my breath. His lips caressed the corner of my mouth, traveled across my cheek, to my jaw, and then down to my neck. Shock and pleasure coursed through me as he feathered kisses along the sensitive flesh.

Just then, movement across the parking lot caught my eye. My ecstasy faded as two dark figures with intent strides headed our way. One man wore a greasy faded t-shirt; the other sported a threadbare flannel. I stared at them over Remy’s shoulder, my heart still racing as he continued trailing kisses along my neck.

I wondered if these menacing figures had been watching me as I’d stumbled around drunkenly. I’d have been embarrassed about having an audience if it hadn’t occurred to me that, if not for Remy, I’d have made a wonderfully helpless victim.

“Remy,” I whispered. “There’s–”

“I know,” he breathed into my neck, causing me to shiver. “Between the chaotic bar and thug-ridden parking lot, we never seem to have a moment to ourselves.” He pulled away then, inhaled sharply, and frowned. “They are armed.”

As if on cue, the metal of their guns glinted in the dim streetlight. Remy turned quickly, keeping me protectively behind him.

“Evening, gentlemen,” Remy called firmly, greeting them as though they were pointing friggin daisies at us. “What can I do for you?”

One of them laughed as they came to a stop several yards away.

“Take a guess, asshole. We’re here for your money. Hand it over and everybody gets home.”

The second gunman nodded, thrusting his weapon forward for emphasis.

Remy stayed cool while somehow managing to hold me upright. “And if I am not inclined to surrender my funds?” Remy asked the men.

“Then we shoot you, take your money, and your slut,” the other said simply.

As I stared at their guns, a sudden wave of drunken bravery coursed through me then. “Great!” I slurred with as much dignity as I could muster. “This is just the perfect *cap* to my night!” I was apparently in the mood for jokes.

“Shut it!” the first gunman spat, pointing his pistol at me then.

Something in me suddenly snapped. I felt bold, like fire was rushing through my veins. I was invincible, or at least the alcohol circulating through my system thought I was.

“No, *you* shut it,” I yelled, taking a surprisingly steady step forward despite my lack of shoe. “I’ve had an epically shitty birthday and you clowns aren’t helping. So, go play somewhere else before someone gets hurt.”

Remy glanced back at me with a raised brow and a smirk, looking amused by my little outburst.

The muggers just stared.

“Besides,” I said, continuing my belligerent eruption. “I don’t have anything to take. Do you see any pockets on this outfit?”

The robbers seemed confused by my blatant disregard for their guns. To be honest, I couldn’t tell you why they didn’t scare me. It’s like I suddenly thought I was Wonder Woman or something.

“You better get control of your bitch,” the gunman in the flannel said with an angry spray of spittle.

I realized then how manic he was. I’d made a mistake. The guy clearly wanted to pull the trigger regardless of whether or not we gave him anything. I pulled on Remy, wanting him to leave with me, but he was solid as a statue, stopping me in my tracks. Flannel tracked me with his gun, ready to fire.

I don’t know which one actually pulled the trigger, but I heard the loud crack just before I was thrown back against the wall of the club. My chest ached and I felt like I was falling in slow motion, the scenery tilting and shifting around me until I was staring up at the streetlamps.

I blinked hard as Remy filled my vision. There was a wild, stunned look in his bright eyes. His lips moved, he was talking, but I couldn’t hear him. It was as if someone had turned down the volume on the world. A slow thumping echoed in my ears. I tried to speak, but my mouth wouldn’t respond. I was cold and my vision was going blurry.

I finally managed to read Remy’s lips. He was telling me to keep looking at him. Despite his urging, my head tilted down, and I saw the bloody flesh where my chest used to be. My head swam in horror, and everything went dark.