



AUTHOR PROFILE

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## Beyond the shadows

While the city was covered in the darkness of the night, everyone was retreating to their homes to sleep—everyone except him. He was a vampire who had escaped from everyone and lived deep within the forest. As a result of a mistake he had made, he was trying to stay away from humans by the decision of the council; but with each passing day, the hunger inside him was steadily increasing. He wanted blood.

This situation had begun to trouble him. He could not be satisfied with animal blood.

A Glimpse from the Past

Years ago, vampires were able to drink human blood, but they had to do it carefully.

They were not supposed to reveal themselves to humans because humans were waiting for a chance to bring about their end.

Vampires were a great danger to humans.

At that time, there was a vampire who had not yet reached his youth; his name was Arthur. Arthur was not aware of the seriousness of the events. No one paid attention to him because he was just a child—until that moment.

One night, he ignored the rules. Unable to stop the desire inside him, he plunged into the city. He attacked many people until morning.

The next day, the city fell into chaos. People began hiding in their homes in fear, while hunters began coming out of theirs.

With weapons in their hands, they started searching for vampires everywhere. Even innocent vampires who could not escape were killed.

The Vampire Council, among whom was also the ancestor of the vampires, gathered immediately.

They assembled fifty kilometers away from the city, in the deepest part of that forest feared by humans, inside a great pile of stone that extended underground. Everyone was in deep silence.

Arthur stood in the very center, his hands and feet chained, anxiously waiting for the words that would come out of the council leader's mouth.

The board leader spoke. "Because of one person's mistake, we are all in danger," he said. The leader's voice was very harsh.

Arthur, with the mind of a child, replied, "Human blood is our right," he said, and continued, "Is it a crime that we are stronger than them?"

The leader answered angrily, "Power, if not controlled, is a disaster—and with your mistake, you have given birth to that disaster."

Arthur could not say anything because the vampires who had lost their loved ones in the hunters' attack were looking at him with sorrow and emotion.

That night, Arthur was punished, but the council did not think it was enough.

The leader spoke in a tone that allowed no objection:

"From this day forward, human blood is forbidden to Arthur. The other vampires will continue to live in accordance with the agreement they made with humans.

Whoever breaks the rules will be punished in the harshest way. This rule is very important for the continuation of our kind.”

For the other vampires, this rule was not that important because they had always lived that way; but for Arthur, it would never be easy.

Arthur could not say anything because those who had lost their loved ones were looking at him with the hatred they carried inside them.

From that day on, Arthur began to stay away from humans. He survived on animal blood.

This situation made him weaker, but he somehow continued to hold on to life.

Arthur grew up with this prohibition. They always told him, “To become attached to a human endangers your entire species.” For this reason, getting close to humans was not just love for him; it was also a crime.

Present Day

Arthur never forgot that night. The council leader’s voice echoed in his ears: “Do not approach humans,” “Do not be weak,” “Emotions are weakness,” “Whoever breaks the rules is punished.” But now he was very weak because he could not end the desire inside him.

He wanted blood, yet breaking the rules could bring about his end.

For centuries, he had resisted greatly in order not to break this rule; but recently, the desire inside him had been increasing more and more. It had become unbearable.

He began to move toward the park. Arthur was looking at the city from the edge of the forest.

Even though it was forbidden, he had come closer. In the past, he could not approach the city because of his guilt, but now the desire inside him had clouded his eyes.

Animal blood was not enough to keep him standing. With the crimson glow that passed through his eyes, he scanned the city.

He heard more than one heartbeat—one more irregular than the others, more broken and angrier. It was coming from the park.

Arthur's eyes shifted toward the park. The park was almost empty; there was only a young girl sitting on a bench.

Her head was bowed, and her face was hidden by her hair. Because of a slander spread by the friend she had trusted the most,

she had been dismissed from the hospital where she had barely been appointed, after earning her place in medical school through sleepless days and nights of hard work.

She had been accused for refusing to take the blame for a mistake made by another doctor; they had placed all the blame on her.

The place to which she had devoted years of her life had suddenly treated her like a stranger and thrown her out the door.

Arthur took a step; a branch snapped. The girl lifted her head in fear.

"Is someone there?" she said.

Arthur stepped out from between the trees. "It's not safe to be here at this hour," he said.

The girl let out a mocking laugh. "Today, there's nothing left inside me that includes safety," she said.

Arthur suddenly fell silent. The hunger inside him was burning his throat and hurting his heart.

He wanted to extend his fangs; his vision was beginning to darken—but he restrained himself.

"You're upset," he said.

"Are you a psychologist?" the girl replied.

“No,” Arthur said slowly. “But I can hear your heartbeat.”

The girl frowned in surprise. “What?”

Arthur had already spoken a lot with the mysterious girl. He wanted to step back, but his feet would not move from where he stood.

The distance between them was small. The wind blew the girl’s hair aside.

Arthur focused on her; he could see the blood flowing through her veins. The hunger tore him apart inside.

“Stay away from me,” Arthur said suddenly.

The girl looked surprised. “I was already here—you came,” she replied.

Arthur closed his eyes. “I could hurt you.”

Despite this sentence, the girl did not run. Perhaps because of what she had experienced that day, she no longer smelled fear.

“I’ve already been hurt enough,” she said slowly. “I don’t have the energy left to be afraid of a stranger.”

Silence fell between them. The girl seemed lost in deep thought. Minutes passed. Finally, she spoke again.

“What’s your name?”

Arthur hesitated. For years, he had avoided saying his name, but he could not stop himself.

“Arthur.”

“It sounds old,” the girl said.

“I am old,” Arthur replied.

The girl smiled faintly. She stood up. “My name is Lilly,” she said, “and today my life was ruined.”

Arthur looked into her eyes. There was more anger than fear there.

"The hospital?" he asked.

Lilly looked at him in surprise. "How do you know?"

Arthur did not answer; he only lowered his head slightly.

"I hate them," Lilly said. "They blamed me to save themselves."

Arthur's hunger rose again. Lilly took a step closer.

"Your eyes... they were different a moment ago."

Arthur stepped back. "Don't come closer."

"What are you?" Lilly whispered.

A long silence stretched between them. Arthur clenched his hands to avoid losing the battle taking place inside him.

"I'm not human," he said in a whisper.

Lilly froze. She was afraid, but she did not run.

"You're joking. If you're joking, it's not funny."

Arthur shook his head from side to side. For a brief moment, Lilly saw his fangs extend, and a bright crimson shadow passed through Arthur's eyes.

Lilly held her breath and asked fearfully, "Are you a vampire?"

Lilly did not actually think Arthur was a vampire; she asked only to be sure because she had heard about vampires as a legend from her mother and father.

For the first time, Arthur told the truth in front of a human without hiding it.

“Yes,” he said.

How could Lilly have known how much that one word would change her life?

Without reacting, Lilly looked at him for a long time.

“So you want blood,” she said.

Arthur’s throat burned. “Yes.”

Lilly hesitated. “Are you going to kill me?” she asked.

“No,” he said firmly, and continued, “I don’t want to kill you.”

It was a confession, and in that moment, an invisible bond formed between them.

After a long silence, Lilly began to speak. “If I help you, will you help me?”

Arthur narrowed his eyes in confusion.

“I want the life that was taken from me back...”

After that night, everything changed. As the nights went on, the hunger inside Arthur began to change. It was no longer just a desire; it was a need.

When he was near Lilly, this need grew even stronger because he could smell the scent of her blood—but at the same time, he was strangely calming down. It was as if the scent of her blood both drove him mad and soothed him.

As for Lilly, she was becoming a little braver each night. Her fear had turned into curiosity, and her curiosity into habit.

One day, when they met again in the park, Lilly was explaining the evidence she had about the hospital.

“You should be careful,” Arthur said. His voice was lower than usual.

Lilly noticed. “Are you okay?” she asked.

Arthur did not answer because at that moment his eyes turned red and his fangs extended.

To avoid appearing weak in front of Lilly, he had not drunk anything for two days. He had tested himself—but it had been a mistake.

He took a step back. “Don’t look at me,” he said through his clenched teeth.

Lilly did not want to move away; she stepped even closer. “Arthur—”

“Don’t come closer!” he shouted.

Lilly stopped, but she did not run.

Arthur ran his hands through his hair and collapsed onto his knees. His throat was burning. In front of his eyes, the vein in Lilly’s neck had become distinct.

Lilly shook her head. “You can control it,” she said.

Arthur suddenly lifted his head. His eyes were completely red. “Controlling it is one thing; enduring it is another,” he said.

For a brief moment, there was silence. The wind began to blow harshly.

Lilly slowly opened her bag and took out a small needle and a tube. Arthur looked at her in shock.

“What are you doing?” he said.

“I don’t have another way,” she replied.

"You can't do this."

"I'm a doctor," she answered. "I know how safe it is."

Arthur stood up, but his head was spinning. "Lilly, this isn't a game."

"This is the only thing I have," she said in a calm but determined voice. "If I let you take my blood in a controlled way—not uncontrollably—I won't be harmed, and you won't lose control."

This offer shook both the monster inside Arthur and his heart at the same time

. For a vampire to take blood willingly from a human would strengthen forbidden bonds, and that bond would become impossible to break.

Lilly placed the needle into her arm. A tube began to fill, and the scent of blood spread into the air.

Arthur's eyes darkened, but this time he did not attack; he only breathed deeply.

When the tube was full, Lilly held it out to him. "Drink slowly," she said.

Arthur took the tube. His hands were trembling. For a moment, his eyes met Lilly's—and at that moment, the physical bond between them became visibly real.

It was as if an invisible bond was tying their hearts to one another.

Arthur drank the blood. It was nothing like animal blood. It was warm and strong, but the strangest part was that it not only calmed the hunger inside him—it also satisfied his mind.

There was silence for a long time. Arthur's fangs retracted, and his eyes returned to normal.

Lilly swayed slightly, but she did not faint. Arthur immediately caught her.

"Are you okay?" he asked, his voice completely gentle this time.

"I'm fine," Lilly whispered. "I'm just a little dizzy."

Arthur helped her sit on the bench. "We're not doing this again," he said in a firm voice.

Lilly looked at him. "We are," she said. "Because you can't deny that you need this."

Arthur fell silent because it was true. But there was something he did not know at that moment: this bond was no longer only physical.

Lilly rested her head on Arthur's shoulder. She was tired, but she was not afraid.

Arthur, for the first time, had been able to suppress his hunger—but he did not know what the price of that would be.

The hunger had been brought under control, but his heart no longer was.

Arthur did not yet know which one was more dangerous...

That night, there was a heaviness in the air. The roads had darkened because the clouds were hiding the moon, and the streetlights were not enough.

As Lilly left the house, she had a bad feeling inside. She thought it was because of the darkness of the weather,

but that was not enough to ease her heart. She was going to meet Arthur.

The park was quieter than usual. Only the sound of leaves blowing in the wind could be heard—and footsteps.

Lilly quickened her pace. She had just reached the park when she felt the footsteps very close behind her.

Fear filled her. She wanted to turn around, but she couldn't. She stopped.

The footsteps stopped as well.

The fear inside her grew even stronger. She began walking again. This time, the sound was closer.

When she gathered her courage and turned around, she saw two men. Their gazes were disturbing.

“Are you walking alone at this hour?” one of them said in a mocking tone.

Lilly did not answer and continued walking quickly. The men swiftly moved in front of her.

“It’s not hard to answer,” the other one said.

Lilly stepped back. Her heart was beating very fast.

Arthur, who was waiting at the corner of the park, felt it. He did not think for even a second—he started running. He ran at a speed no human mind could comprehend.

By the time he reached Lilly, one of the men was trying to grab her hand.

“Let me go!” Lilly shouted.

As the man’s hand moved toward Lilly’s cheek, another hand gripped his wrist tightly. Arthur twisted his arm sharply toward his waist.

“Let go. Didn’t you hear her?” he said.

Frightened, the man looked at the other one as if asking for help—but he saw him lying on the ground, his face pale.

“Who are you?” he managed to say.

Before he could react, Arthur’s fist struck the man’s face.

Arthur beat him mercilessly, nearly to death, while Lilly stood frozen, staring at Arthur’s reddened eyes.

His anger had merged with his hunger. The scent of blood coming from the man’s face spread through the air. He was about to lunge at his neck—when he saw Lilly’s frightened expression.

He released the man and stepped back.

"Lilly, are you okay?" he asked, his voice soft.

Lilly nodded. "I'm fine."

Arthur took her wrist and checked her pulse. "Lilly, you shouldn't have come alone."

"I couldn't help it. We were meeting at this hour," she said.

"You could have been killed," Arthur said.

"You could have killed them," Lilly replied.

Arthur looked away. "I wanted to," he admitted honestly.

"But you didn't."

"Because of you."

Lilly fell silent for a moment. "If I hadn't been here, would you have done it?"

Arthur could not answer.

Lilly stepped closer to him. "I was scared—but not of you. Of them."

Arthur looked into her eyes. "They wanted to hurt you."

Lilly nodded. "But you didn't hurt me."

Those words took away all of Arthur's anger.

"I'm not afraid because you controlled yourself," she said.

Arthur's expression darkened slightly. "Control may not always be this easy," he replied.

“Forget everything. Let me take you home to thank you. I’ll cook for you,” Lilly said.

Arthur answered sharply, “I didn’t do it for your thanks.”

“Then we’re going,” Lilly said firmly.

They began walking toward the city together.

The city was as bright and noisy as always. As Arthur walked through the crowd, he slightly concealed his face with his hood.

Lilly opened the door of her apartment building.

“Third floor,” she said.

As Arthur climbed the stairs, he could smell the scent of humans seeping from the walls, but he tried to control himself. Lilly opened the door.

It was a small but warm home.

As Arthur stepped inside, he asked, “Does this place belong to you?”

“It’s the only thing I have left. Yes, it’s mine.”

The door closed. Silence filled the room. It was the first time Arthur had been in a human’s private space.

“Now the next question,” Lilly said. “Can vampires eat food?”

Arthur raised his eyebrows. “No.”

Lilly walked into the kitchen. “I want you to try. If you don’t like it, you don’t have to eat it.”

As she took out the ingredients, she continued talking to Arthur.

“Why did you invite me?” he asked.

Lilly answered immediately, "I told you—to thank you." Then she continued, "I didn't want to see you only in the dark. I wanted to see you in real life, too."

Those words softened Arthur's heart.

Lilly placed the food on the table. "Sit down."

Arthur sat on the chair, though he kept a little distance.

"Come on, taste it," Lilly said.

Arthur took a small bite. He couldn't taste anything, but he didn't want to disappoint Lilly.

Lilly began to laugh. "It's obvious from your face."

Arthur smiled faintly. "Human food isn't for me."

Lilly thought for a moment. "Alright then, let's do something else."

Lilly took her makeup bag out of the drawer. Arthur looked surprised.

"What are you doing?"

"I want to try something that will make you look like a human during the day," Lilly replied.

"I don't go out during the day."

"Maybe one day you'll change your mind," she said.

Arthur was about to object, but Lilly immediately stepped closer to him. Her fingers touched his face.

She gently spread foundation over his skin. When she finished, she stepped back.

"Look in the mirror."

Arthur looked. He really did appear more human.

“Strange,” he murmured.

Lilly tilted her head slightly. “You’re a handsome vampire.”

Arthur smiled faintly. “You’re a beautiful human—very.”

They began talking like a normal couple.

“Don’t you ever miss the daytime?” Lilly asked.

Arthur looked toward the window. “I do. But you get used to it.”

With hope in her voice, Lilly said, “Maybe one day we’ll see it together.”

For the first time, Arthur felt peaceful inside a human home.

“Daylight is dangerous for me,” he said.

“Not at noon,” Lilly replied. “At dawn, when the sun is just rising—the light is weaker.”

Arthur fell into deep thought. “I’ll try,” he said.

Before leaving, Arthur paused at the door. Lilly looked at him.

“Will you come again?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” Arthur replied.

“You know where I live now,” Lilly said softly.

Arthur smiled faintly.

When he stepped out into the street, he was not feeling hunger—he was feeling hope.

Just before dawn, they climbed to the quietest hill in the city. The air was cool, and the sky was turning from navy blue to purple.

Arthur's face was tense. As the light increased, a slight burning sensation began on his skin—but it was not unbearable.

Lilly stepped beside him. "Look," she said, pointing to the horizon.

The sun was slowly rising. Arthur narrowed his eyes as he looked. For the first time in years, he was watching the sunrise—seeing the sun itself.

When the light touched his face, he flinched slightly, but he did not completely retreat.

Lilly took his hand. "Is it beautiful?" she asked.

Arthur did not answer for a long time. "I had forgotten," he finally said.

"Sometimes it's good to remember certain things," Lilly replied softly.

As the sun rose a little higher, Arthur's skin began to burn more intensely.

"Alright," he said quietly. "That's enough."

Lilly nodded. "Still, you saw it."

Arthur looked at her. "Because of you."

As Arthur walked alone in the forest later that night, he suddenly felt a warmth.

This warmth was not his own emotion; it was a small joy Lilly was feeling at that very moment, passing through her heart and reaching him.

And when Lilly lay down in her bed at night, an unexplainable peace filled her.

The bond between Arthur and Lilly had grown much stronger, and both of them could feel it.

Even an outsider could notice the attraction between them—including the council.

One night, for a change, they met at the stone bridge just outside the city. This time, the air was warm and calm.

The smile on Lilly's face never faded.

"Today, I anonymously sent the documents you found to the hospital management," she said. "Soon, the truth will come out."

Arthur felt her joy within himself. "You're happy," he said.

Lilly smiled as she looked into his eyes. "Yes."

Arthur's gaze drifted to her smile. Without realizing it, he said, "So am I."

Lilly looked at him. "Really?"

Arthur paused for a brief moment. He had not used such a word in years—perhaps he had never used it at all.

"You may not believe it," he said slowly, "but when I'm with you, the voice inside me goes quiet. Even the hunger."

Lilly's cheeks flushed at his words.

"So I'm useful," she said with a soft smile.

Arthur smiled very faintly. For him, that was something rare.

They sat side by side in silence for a while. Then Lilly grew serious with a question that came to her mind.

"Arthur," she said.

"Yes?"

"Why don't you drink human blood?"

The question fell into the night like a bomb. Arthur's expression changed.

"Lilly..."

He looked into her eyes.

"You told me you wouldn't hurt others," she said. "But you're a vampire, and drinking human blood is in your nature."

Arthur turned his eyes toward the river. "We used to," he said.

"And now?" Lilly asked.

"It's forbidden."

Lilly frowned. "Who forbade it?"

"The council," Arthur replied.

Lilly fell silent, but the question marks in her mind had not disappeared. "What about you?" she asked. "Have you ever drunk it?"

There was a long silence. That night resurfaced in Arthur's mind.

"Lilly," he said in a low voice, "I made a mistake. A big one."

Lilly felt a sudden tightness in her chest. "What kind of mistake?" she whispered.

"Years ago, I ignored the rules," Arthur said. "I entered the city. I was hungry. I couldn't control myself. I attacked many people until morning."

Lilly's breath caught, but she did not pull away.

"How many?" she asked softly.

"I couldn't count. I had lost myself—and I was still a child," Arthur said. "But there were innocent ones among them."

Lilly's heart ached. The regret inside Arthur was visible on his face.

"Is that why you don't drink it?" she asked.

"That's why it was forbidden," Arthur replied. "And that's why I forbade it to myself."

Lilly looked at him for a long moment. "I think you could drink the blood of those who want to harm you," she said.

Arthur shook his head. "Power, if not controlled, is a disaster," he said, repeating the council leader's words. "Once you cross the line, it continues."

Lilly took a deep breath. "You're not a monster," she said.

Arthur gave a painful smile. "That night, I was."

Lilly took his hand. "You're not now."

She wrapped her arms around Arthur's neck. Surprised, Arthur placed his arms around her waist.

At that very moment, a pair of eyes was watching them from the shadows between the trees.

Another vampire had approached silently. He had seen the blood tube Lilly took from her bag, seen her hand it to Arthur—and seen Arthur drink it.

This was a crime. It was forbidden. And worse, he had formed a bond with a human.

Arthur suddenly felt a shiver. He thought Lilly was afraid.

Lilly looked around. "It feels like someone is watching us," she said.

Arthur scanned the surroundings, but he was too late. The traces had completely disappeared.

The vampire who hated Arthur for the loss of his loved one immediately went to find the council leader.

Deep within the forest, beneath the pile of stones, the Vampire Council had begun to gather.

The leader had not yet made an official statement, but rumors had already begun spreading among the vampires.

"Arthur has grown close to a human again."

"He took blood willingly."

"The bond between them is obvious."

"This is a crime."

When the news reached the leader's ears, his eyes turned red and his face darkened.

"Him again," he said in a cold voice. "This time he's not alone. The human girl is helping him willingly."

The vampire who had seen them stepped forward. The leader rose to his feet.

"Prepare," he said. "This matter can no longer be ignored."

Meanwhile, on the bridge, Arthur and Lilly were unaware of everything.

Lilly rested her head on Arthur's shoulder. "Your past doesn't scare me," she said.

Arthur closed his eyes. "The future should," he replied.

Because for the first time, he was happy—and for vampires, happiness was the greatest weakness.

A sound came from the forest. The sound that echoed from the trees changed the atmosphere completely.

The air instantly turned icy. Arthur felt the call from the forest; his heartbeat quickened, and his eyes darkened.

Lilly noticed the change in him. “Did something happen?” she asked.

Arthur lifted his head. A storm was raging inside him. “They’ve noticed us,” he said anxiously.

Lilly’s heart began to race, and Arthur felt that too.

“Who?”

“The council.”

Lilly looked up in fear.

At that moment, twelve vampires emerged from the forest. One of them stepped forward with slow, heavy strides—it was the council leader.

His face was expressionless, but anyone looking at him could sense the anger within. Lilly sensed it too.

“Arthur,” he said, his voice as cold as ice. “Once again, you have broken the law.”

Lilly stood upright beside Arthur.

“I committed no crime,” Arthur said.

“You took human blood, walked in the city during the day, interfered in human life, and formed a bond with a human.”

The leader looked at Lilly. “The human girl helped you willingly.”

Lilly did not step back. "I was the one who wanted it," she said.

The leader's gaze hardened. "The courage of humans is empty."

Arthur stepped forward. "Leave her out of this."

"You already involved her. Was the massacre you committed years ago not enough?" the leader said.

Arthur shouted loudly, his voice echoing through the night.

"I paid my price! You can't kill her!"

The leader narrowed his eyes. "There's no need to kill her," he said. "We will sever the bond between you."

Those words made Lilly's heart ache. If the bond were broken, Arthur would not be able to control the hunger inside him. He was standing because of Lilly.

"No," she said firmly. "That won't happen."

Arthur felt Lilly's heartbeat quicken, and in that moment he made a decision. This was not a battle—it was a choice.

Suddenly, he pulled Lilly into his arms and began to run.

The leader's voice echoed behind them:

"You can run! But you are exiled, Arthur! If you ever return to our borders again, death will be yours!"

Arthur did not stop.

Lilly did not make a sound.

After a long journey, they reached a house that looked abandoned. Arthur slowly opened the door and went inside.

Lilly stepped in and looked around. "Is this it? The place no one knows about?" she asked.

Arthur nodded.

Lilly walked up to him and wrapped her arms around his waist. "What will we be now?"

Arthur was silent for a moment. "Now we will have our own rules," he said.

Lilly smiled softly. "We'll close the curtains during the day and go out together at night."

Arthur placed his hand on Lilly's face and gently stroked her cheek. "This life won't be easy," he said.

"If I wanted easy, I wouldn't have met you again," Lilly replied.

Far away, deep in the forest, the leader closed his eyes. "Leave them," he said to the other vampires. "A vampire who lives with a human cannot endure for long."

But he did not know something: the bond between Lilly and Arthur was not an ordinary one.

Arthur looked into Lilly's eyes. "Did we run away?" he asked.

"No," Lilly said softly.

Arthur continued, "We began again."

And he placed a small kiss on Lilly's lips.

### A Glimpse from the Future

The forest was no longer as it used to be. The council's stone hall had been destroyed. The leader had disappeared. The vampires had scattered.

Some vampires chose to live far away from humans; others chose to adapt instead of hiding.

Everything had begun with Arthur's escape. A vampire choosing exile for a human—choosing love over

power—had shaken the order, and change had spread faster than fear.

In a small, quiet town near the sea, there was a two-story house. Its curtains were always closed during the day. At night, laughter was never absent from the garden.

Lilly was sitting in the garden. The voices of two children could be heard from inside—one girl and one boy.

The girl resembled her father, and the boy resembled his mother. Yet neither of them was fully human nor fully vampire.

Both could walk in daylight, and both could sense the scent of blood.

Arthur was teaching his son something. “Control comes before power.”

“Mom, I saw the stones in the forest again.”

Lilly smiled softly. “That used to be a council hall.”

The little girl asked curiously, “What does council mean?”

Lilly hesitated for a moment but continued speaking. “The council was a place ruled by fear.”

“Are we afraid?” the little girl asked.

Lilly shook her head. “No.”

Just then, Arthur came over to them and looked up at the sky. “Do you remember the morning you showed me the sunrise for the first time?”

Lilly laughed softly. “Of course. How could I forget?”

Arthur looked at his children, then at Lilly.

The distant forest was no longer a threat; it was only trees. The council had fallen. The law had changed. And the vampire who had once been exiled had become the first step of a new beginning.

The End

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