



# DAYLIGHTERS

A SAMPLER



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## CHAPTER ONE

Claire stared at the creaking billboard that marked the town limits of Morganville, Texas, and thought, *I ought to be crying*. Her best friend, Eve, already was, in helpless, furious sobs. Claire held on to her and did all the sympathetic things right – murmured that it would be okay, patted her on the back, hugged her.

But although she said all the right things, she felt . . . empty. Dry as the sand that blew through the desert outside the police cruiser’s windows. They were sitting in the back seat, behind steel mesh, and the doors wouldn’t open from the inside. It was made like a taxi, but it most definitely wasn’t, since it took you only where you *didn’t* want to go. Namely, to jail.

And across from where their cruiser was parked, four limp vampire bodies were being loaded into two of the town’s ambulances – strapped tightly to gurneys, in case the wood still buried in their hearts to keep them temporarily dead didn’t work. Claire identified the slack faces as they were rolled by: Oliver, once town Founder Amelie’s second-in-command, now disgraced and in exile. Jesse, the vamp that Claire knew the least well, a beautiful woman who looked ridiculously young and fragile now, robbed (temporarily, hopefully) of her vampire life. Then Myrnin, Claire’s bipolar vampire boss and friend, his dark hair an untamed mess around his still, white face.

Finally, and most horribly, Michael Glass, Claire’s friend and the love of

Eve's life. His skin had turned the colour of pure white marble, and his blue eyes were open and dull. He looked deadest of them all.

'It's fine,' Claire whispered, making sure to keep Eve's face turned away as Michael's body was rolled past. 'Vampires can shake this off. It's no problem for them as long as the arrows come out soon; they're not leaving them in the sun or anything. Just breathe, okay? Breathe.' It wasn't so much what she was saying as the fact that her voice was steady and calm, a lifeline in a tossing ocean of chaos.

Eve took a deep breath, and her sobbing slowed and hitched to a stop. She sat back as the ambulance doors slammed shut and one after the other the big vehicles pulled away, onto the two-lane blacktop heading toward downtown Morganville – if Morganville had anything that could be described as a downtown. She wiped her eyes on the back of her hand, smearing what little eye make-up she had left. The glitter of her ruby wedding ring caught the light, and for a moment Claire's wall of numbness shuddered and threatened to collapse to reveal the pain and fear she'd hidden behind it.

'Did you see Michael?' Eve asked. She caught her breath on another sob, and her reddened eyes held Claire's. 'Did he look okay?'

Claire couldn't say that, because the sight of his icy skin and blank eyes had thoroughly unnerved her.

'He'll be fine. You know he's tougher than this,' she said. Which was a totally true thing, and beyond any argument.

'I know – God, why did this *happen*? What do they want from us?'

Eve said it as a rhetorical wail, but it was the question that churned in Claire's mind, over and over. *Why?* They'd been heading back to Morganville to warn Amelie about several things, not the least of which was the deadly growth of an anti-vampire organisation called the Daylight Foundation – and the fact that one of Amelie's most trusted agents, Dr Irene Anderson (once of Morganville), had joined the other side.

But they'd been met by the local police instead of Amelie's people, and things had gone downhill from there. The cops had first separated out the humans – Claire, Eve, and Claire's boyfriend, Shane, plus the prisoner, Dr Anderson. Then, without any warning, they'd taken down their vampire friends, who had just been wheeled into the ambulances and driven off to fates unknown.

Claire twisted in the seat to look into the car behind them. The cops hadn't had an easy time getting Shane into the other cruiser; they'd ended up handcuffing him and threatening a taser. He sat stiffly in the back seat, staring holes into the distance as if it was in for a beating. Next to him, Dr Anderson slumped against the window as if she didn't care whose prisoner she was any more.

Claire knew why they'd separated her from Shane, and she knew that Eve needed her right now, but she wanted desperately to be with him and to ask all the questions burning in her mind. *Why would Hannah Moses do this?* After all, Police Chief Moses was their ally, their good and trusted friend. But she'd shown no hesitation, no remorse. The only way to interpret what had just happened was that Hannah had freely and willingly joined the Daylight Foundation.

Nothing was making any sense, and Claire *needed* it to make sense so badly. *Humans have taken control of Morganville*, Hannah had told her, as their friends – their mutual friends – lay still on the ground. *Vampires are being quarantined for their own protection.*

It couldn't be true. It just . . . couldn't. And yet it so obviously was.

'Where are they taking him?' Eve was staring after the flashing lights of the departing ambulances. 'She said something about quarantine. What does that mean? Do you think they're taking them to the hospital? Do they think they have some kind of disease?'

'I don't know,' Claire said. She felt helpless, and she knew if she let herself feel anything, she'd be just as angry as Shane looked, sitting in that other cruiser. He seemed ready to chew through the steel mesh. But if she got angry, she would also have to let in everything else, all the other emotions that bubbled and threatened inside her. And if she did that, she would collapse, like Eve was doing.

Better not to feel anything right now. Better to stay strong.

The driver's side door opened, and Hannah Moses got behind the wheel of the police car. She settled in and buckled her safety belt in one smooth motion. A deputy got in on the other side – *new*, Claire thought. Someone she didn't know.

But she did recognise the pin he wore on the collar of his uniform – a rising sun, in gold.

Symbol of the Daylight Foundation.

Eve lunged forward and grabbed the mesh, threading her fingertips into it as Hannah started the engine of the cruiser.

‘What the hell are you *doing*, Hannah?’ she demanded, and rattled the mesh, hard. ‘Where are you taking Michael?’

‘He’s safe,’ Hannah said. ‘Nothing will happen to him. Trust me, Eve.’

‘Yeah, you know what? Bite me. I *don’t* trust you. You just stabbed us all in the back, you horrible bi—’

Claire grabbed Eve and dragged her away, changing the word to a protesting yelp. ‘Stop,’ she whispered fiercely in her best friend’s ear. ‘You’re not going to accomplish anything by making her angry at us. Just wait. Be quiet and wait.’

‘Easy for you to say,’ Eve hissed. ‘Shane’s coming with us at least. Michael – we don’t even know where they’re taking him!’

She had a point. Claire really hated to admit it, but there was absolutely nothing they could accomplish, locked in a police cruiser. And antagonising the lady who held the keys to their handcuffs probably wasn’t the best strategy.

‘We’re not giving up,’ she told Eve. ‘We’re just . . . biding our time.’

‘And what do you think they’re going to do to him while we’re biding, exactly?’ Eve asked, yanking at the mesh again. ‘Yo, Hannah! How does it feel to stab your friends in the back? Hope you didn’t get blood all over your neatly pressed uniform!’

The deputy turned around and gave her a cold, hard stare. ‘Sit quietly,’ he said. ‘If you don’t, I’ll shock you until you do.’

‘With what, your breath? Ever heard of flossing, Deputy Dimwit?’

‘Eve,’ Hannah said. It was a warning, a flat and naked one, and it was reinforced by the deputy – whose breath, in all fairness, did kind of reek – taking out a taser.

Although Eve was still simmering with rage, she let go and sat back, folding her arms over her chest. Then she kicked his seat. Didn’t do any good, because the seat was reinforced with a steel plate, but she probably felt better for doing it.

‘Hey,’ Claire said, and reached her hand out toward Eve. Eve hesitated,

then took it and gripped hard. 'It'll be okay. He'll be okay.'

Eve didn't say anything. She was probably thinking, *You don't know that*, and she would have been right. Claire *didn't* know that. She felt cold and helpless and vulnerable, and she didn't know how any of this could really be okay . . . but for now, in the moments between opportunities, all she could do was pretend.

She expected they'd be taken straight to the jail, or at least to the courthouse, but instead the two police cruisers turned off and headed for the outskirts of Morganville. Claire recognised the area, and she didn't like it at all. Nothing good happened out here on the fringes of town; it was full of abandoned buildings and abandoned people.

'Hey,' she said, leaning forward but careful not to touch the mesh. 'Excuse me, but where exactly are you taking us?'

'Don't worry. You're not in any danger,' Hannah said. 'I have someone who wants to meet you. We're almost there.'

When Claire had left Morganville, a lot of rebuilding had been under way around town, but not in this area. Nobody had thought it much worth saving, she suspected. It had been home mostly to tumbledown old shacks, rotting warehouses, and long-dead factories.

Now, gangs of men moved with purpose, most in orange vests, and bulldozers noisily levelled uneven ground, piling up the shattered remains of brick, wood, and rusted steel. Other teams were putting up the frames of buildings in areas that had already been cleared. Beyond, it was obvious that a lot more construction was under way, some of it already painted and finished. She could imagine what Shane was muttering in the other car: *Great, I leave town and suddenly there are good jobs*. He liked construction, and there were a lot of men and women out there, dressed in work shirts and jeans, hammering, hauling, bulldozing, and creating.

It was a whole new Morganville. It looked . . . cheerful. Hopeful.

'What brought this on?' Claire asked. 'All these new houses?'

'They're for the new members,' Hannah said. Her voice was calm and level, and it didn't give away anything at all. Her deputy, the one wearing the

Daylight Foundation's rising sun pin on his collar, glanced back at Claire. 'By joining the Daylight Foundation, they can receive free, new housing if they want it. It's attracted a lot of enthusiasm and support. Half of these people working out here are volunteers.' She slowed the cruiser and made a left turn. 'There's something to be said for leaving the past behind and building a new future, don't you think? Especially in a town whose history is as dark as Morganville's.'

Claire didn't want to agree, because she still felt there was a lot she didn't know and didn't fully understand, but what Hannah had just said made sense – or it would, if she trusted the Daylight Foundation even a little bit.

Speaking of the Daylighters . . . they'd renovated one of the old warehouses and built themselves a brand-new headquarters.

It was a large building just ahead, fresh and gleaming with paint and shining metal, with a big rotating sign on top of the roof. It shone soft gold in the sunlight as it turned – the same symbol that was on the Daylight Foundation pin the deputy wore. A simple image, something that should have looked hopeful. Sunrise, a new day, all that.

Claire didn't believe it. What she did believe was that the building, for all the cheerful way it had been painted, looked like it would be easy to defend if it came to a fight. The windows were all high, narrow, and didn't look like they opened at all. Thick walls, too. In fact, if you ignored everything but the construction, it could just as easily have been a prison.

Hannah pulled up in the generous parking lot – a newly paved one, still fresh and black with bright white stripes marking off spaces. There were about fifty cars already present, but they filled less than a third of the available slots. *You could put half the cars in Morganville in here*, Claire thought, *and have room left over for massive bus parking*. Two police cruisers were already in place, plus Hannah's and the one pulling up in the next slot that carried Shane and Dr Anderson. She thought she might have recognised a few other vehicles, but nothing jumped out at her with any certainty.

There were, she realised, no vampire-dark-tinted cars in the lot at all. Not a single one.

Hannah turned the engine off, but neither she nor the deputy got out



immediately; instead, Hannah twisted to look at Claire and Eve through the mesh. 'Here's how this is going to go,' she said. 'You're going to behave yourselves, get out, and walk with us into the building, and you're going to act like civilised young ladies while we introduce you to the man in charge.'

'Or what? You'll put a note in my permanent record?' Eve scoffed.

'Or you'll end up handcuffed, maybe tasered, and the end result will be exactly the same, only with a lot less smiling,' Hannah said. 'So I'd really rather skip all the unpleasantness and make this as painless as possible for you.'

'Oh, sure, you're only thinking about us,' Claire said. 'I understand completely.'

Hannah gave her a long, troubled look, as if she understood that Claire's apparent surrender was more worrisome than Eve's open aggression. 'I'm trying to help you kids,' she said. 'Don't make me regret it.'

'I'm not a kid, and you *ambushed my husband*,' Eve said. 'I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that there are plenty of things you're going to regret. Probably very briefly, though, if that makes you feel better.'

Hannah exchanged a shrug with her deputy. 'Well,' she said, 'I tried. If you want to make it difficult for yourselves, that's certainly your right, I suppose.'

The two of them got out, and Hannah opened Claire's door, grabbed her by the arm, and shoved her against the cruiser with firm strength.

Then she zip-tied her hands behind her. 'Sorry,' she said. 'But I can read the tea leaves. The two of you aren't going to go quietly.'

Shane was making trouble, too, trouble enough that Claire heard the deputy in charge of him cursing as he tried to manhandle her boyfriend into submission. Hannah let out an impatient, frustrated growl and spun Claire around to face her. 'Calm him down,' she said. 'Do it now.'

Claire lifted her chin. 'Why?'

'Because if you don't, he's going to get hurt.'

Claire looked past her. Shane must have thrown an elbow before they'd gotten him under control, because the deputy had a bloody nose. Now Shane was dodging and kicking, trying to get past the man's defences again. Probably just to get to her, because there was no way he'd be getting out of the handcuffs he was wearing.

‘Shane,’ she said. ‘Don’t.’

Hannah, moving slowly and calmly, unsnapped the strap on her holster and drew her gun, which she held at her side. She stared straight at Shane. ‘She’s right,’ she said. ‘Don’t make me raise this weapon, Shane.’

‘Screw you,’ he said in a ragged pant and gave Hannah a defiant grin.

She raised the gun, all right.

She pointed it at Claire.

Shane froze in place, his grin fading fast. ‘You’re bluffing.’

‘Probably seems that way,’ Hannah said. ‘But you know me well enough to know I don’t point a weapon unless I’m ready to shoot to kill. I like you, Shane. I like your girl here. But you’re testing me, and I really don’t think that’s a good idea.’

He stayed still. The deputy got hold of him and wrenched his bound hands up high enough to make Shane stand on tiptoe, his face twisted in pain. He put a hand on Shane’s shoulder. ‘Walk, punk,’ the man growled.

Shane walked.

Claire did, too. Eve had subsided into a watchful silence, but even so Hannah had her zip-tied as well. That was almost certainly a wise move. People underestimated Eve a lot, because of her funny sarcasm and cute-as-a-button face, but they did it at their peril.

They left Dr Anderson handcuffed and silent in the car behind them, and Claire wondered about that.

Someone had put in a fresh sidewalk to the door of the warehouse, and there were newly planted bushes and sprigs of trees around it. Even so, walking up to it felt like walking up the steps to one of those old-time gallows; she didn’t know what was going to happen to them once they were inside. The thick glass doors had the rising sun symbol on them, and the words THE DAYLIGHT FOUNDATION beneath it.

And, in gold lettering, ALL ARE WELCOME IN THE LIGHT. That sounded nice . . . unless you’d met their followers under less well-lit circumstances. Say, in a lab where they were ripping vampires apart.

Hannah opened one of the double doors, and a breath of chilled air raised goose bumps on Claire’s bare arms. She had expected cavelike darkness, but as her eyes adjusted from the bright outdoor sun, she realised

that it was nearly as bright *inside*, thanks to a giant skylight over the central atrium in which they stood. Bathed in the glow was a wooden desk with the Daylighters symbol on the front of it, and a well-dressed older woman who smiled kindly at them.

‘Mrs Hodgson?’ Claire blurted. She knew the woman; she was a neighbour on Lot Street, where their old Victorian house was located. A nice lady, always puttering in her garden with her flowers and waving to them pleasantly. She’d brought over cookies for Christmas a couple of times. Snickerdoodles.

‘Claire? Eve? And oh, my, Shane, too.’ Mrs Hodgson looked politely distressed at the sight of their restraints. ‘Now, don’t you worry at all. There’s absolutely nothing to be afraid of here. You’re in the light now. You’re safe.’ She got up from the desk, revealing that she was wearing a fitted suit that was straight out of the 1960s, complete with a strand of shiny pearls, and came around to clip badges on their shirts. ‘I’ll just take care of putting your IDs on. Can’t let you in here without identification, can we? There, now. That wasn’t so bad, was it?’

‘Thanks, Doreen,’ Hannah said. ‘Let him know we’re here, won’t you?’

‘Absolutely. Can I get y’all anything? Some water, maybe?’

‘Beer,’ Shane said. ‘Shiner Bock if you’ve got it.’

‘Oh, now, you stop that,’ Mrs Hodgson said. ‘You’re far too young to drink, you scamp.’

This wasn’t a situation where any of them were inclined to be smiling, but Shane did, a little, and shook his head. He mouthed the word *scamp* to Claire, with his eyebrows raised.

She raised hers back.

‘Just some water might be nice,’ Hannah said. ‘Thank you kindly.’

She led Claire over to a padded chair nearby and pressed her into it; Eve got seated next to her. The deputy kept Shane standing.

The anteroom was pretty plain, dominated mostly by the desk manned by Mrs Hodgson, but there were some photos on the walls – Claire squinted against the glare from the skylight and made out the shapes of several people in one of the pictures, standing in front of this very building – but in the early stages of renovation, it looked like. She could make out that one

was Hannah, and one was the new Morganville mayor, Flora Ramos. Apart from that, the others were a mystery – except that she noticed a pattern, and a recurring face. A short man, slight build, nothing really remarkable about his features.

Doreen Hodgson came back bearing water bottles, and following behind her was the same man, in the flesh.

He wasn't very imposing in real life, either – shorter than Shane by at least four inches. He wore a plain black suit and a white shirt; the only spots of colour on him were his very blue eyes – almost the same startling shade as Michael's – and a red silk tie and pocket square. His face had a vaguely Eastern European shape to it, but that was really all that Claire could tell about him.

That, and the fact that his Daylight Foundation pin gleamed like real gold.

He nodded to Hannah and said, 'You can let them go now. I'm sure that we're all going to be civilised. Besides, they can hardly drink their water if their hands are tied. It's important to start this conversation with trust.'

Hannah nodded to her deputy, and as he unfastened Shane's handcuffs, she pulled out a utility knife and sliced through the zip-tie cuffs on Claire's wrists, and then Eve's. Doreen hurried to put bottles of water into their newly freed hands – cold, sweating bottles that reminded Claire how long it had been since she'd had anything to drink.

'Thanks,' she said, and put the bottle down on the chair where she'd been sitting. 'Not thirsty.' It was a lie, but she didn't know enough yet to trust anything about this situation – not even a sealed water bottle.

The man's pale eyebrows raised just a touch. 'It's a name brand,' he said. 'I can promise you that it hasn't been tampered with.' He extended his hand toward her. 'I'm Rhys Fallon. And you must be Claire Danvers.'

'Are you in charge here?' Claire asked him, without shaking the hand he was holding out. He lowered it to his side, not visibly offended.

'I suppose you could say that,' he said. 'Although I like to think that it's more of a collaboration, not a dictatorship.'

'If you're in charge, you can take us to our friends, right now,' she said.

'Your friends . . . ?'

'Michael,' Eve said. 'Oliver, Myrnin, Jesse. You know. The ones you had shot and carried off.'

‘Ah.’ Rhys clasped his hands behind his back and, for the first time, studied Eve. He spent a strangely long time at it, and there was something about his body language that altered, just a little. ‘Eve Rosser, is it not?’

‘Eve *Glass*,’ she said, and raised her chin to make the point more forcefully. He didn’t seem to notice.

‘I’m delighted to meet someone who is so . . . legendary in Morganville. The descriptions I’ve heard don’t do you justice.’ He smiled at her with a little too much wattage to direct at a married woman – an angry married woman at that. ‘Well, I am very sorry, and I wish I could grant your request, but it isn’t possible just now. Michael and your other friends are being well looked after, and after they’re completely recovered, they’ll be placed into protective custody. You’ll be able to visit later, perhaps.’

‘I want to see my husband, and there’s no later and there’s no *perhaps*. I want to see him right the hell now. I don’t care who you think you are, you can’t—’

‘Yes, I can,’ he said, and Claire was struck by the fact that he stated it without emphasis. It wasn’t a bluff; it wasn’t a boast. It was just . . . fact. It even had a tinge of regret to it. ‘I’m sorry, Miss Rosser—’

‘*Mrs Glass!*’ Eve’s face was flushed now, and her fists clenched.

‘—but you must accept that things are different here than when you left town. I believe for the better, but you may not agree quite yet. I hope you will, in the end. I sincerely do.’ He cleared his throat and glanced away for the first time, at Hannah Moses. ‘We’ll have to discuss the . . . legitimacy of your marriage at a later time.’

‘*What?*’ Eve almost went for his throat, right there, but Hannah restrained her with a cautionary hand on her shoulder. ‘What are you talking about? We were married! In the church!’

‘As I said, a conversation for a later time, perhaps. I am sorry to upset you.’

He might have been sorry, but he had definitely upset her, big time. Eve’s cheeks had gone from flushed to pale now, and she looked shaky. She hadn’t expected that, at all . . . not that.

Claire said, ‘I want to see Amelie.’

That got his immediate undivided attention. His eyes were very blue, and in fact not at all warm. Not cold, either. Just . . . expressionless. ‘I’m

sorry, perhaps you didn't understand,' he said. 'It simply isn't possible. And it will not be anywhere in the near future. If you want to talk to the person in charge of Morganville, it is no longer a vampire. It is Mayor Flora Ramos, the duly elected representative, which is as it should be. Or don't you agree that humans should govern themselves? Your reputation was . . . somewhat different. I thought that you had stood up for the free will and rights of humans in this town.'

'Depends on the human,' Claire said. 'As far as I know, Hitler had a heartbeat, and I wouldn't vote him to be in charge.'

That earned her a slow, warm smile. 'You think Mayor Ramos is Adolf Hitler?'

'You're drawing false connections, and I don't know who *you* are. But I'm betting that Mayor Ramos answers to you.'

'That's an interesting inference, and I think you might be surprised about how much free will the mayor has. Shane? You're unaccountably silent.' He suddenly turned and looked at her boyfriend, who stared back without any shift in his guarded expression and said nothing. 'Are you going to let your girlfriend do all the work?'

'Yeah,' Shane said. 'Why? Is it bugging you, *Rhys*? What kind of name is that, anyway?'

'Irish. I meant no disrespect, I simply thought you'd be more—' Rhys just shrugged. 'Well. Forceful.'

Shane just smiled his sweetest, nicest smile, but his eyes were hard. And dangerous.

'He is,' Claire said. 'So am I. So's Eve. You'd better start answering our questions, right now.'

'You know, I appreciate your passion, but you betray your very young age when you speak that way to me, because I am not *your* prisoner, Claire. You would do well to note that fact very carefully.'

There was a menace in his tone now, something subtle but all the more serious for it. Fallon held Claire's stare for a long moment, and then, without looking away, said, 'Ah, Irene. How fare you, my friend?'

Claire turned just as the glass door closed behind Dr Irene Anderson, who stood there blocking their way out. Once, Dr Anderson had been

Claire's professor at MIT; once, Claire had trusted her, even liked her. Now she just loathed the sight of her – especially free, armed, and with a pale gleam of hatred in her slightly deranged eyes.

Dr Anderson racked the shotgun she held, just for emphasis. 'I'm fine, Rhys, thank you,' she said. 'Which is more than I can say for all our compatriots back in Cambridge. They killed them. They killed them all.'

'Even Dr Davis?'

'He's dead. They're all *dead*.' She aimed the shotgun at Claire, Shane, and Eve. 'Hannah, step aside. We can't leave these collaborators alive.'

'Irene!' Fallon's voice was an unmistakable whipcrack of command, and she flinched and looked at him, startled. 'No one is doing anything so reckless here. Put that down, *now*.'

'But—'

'Did you hear what I said? What is wrong with you, woman? You'd take a shotgun to three people hardly older than children?'

'Trust me, they're adults,' she said. 'And they didn't hesitate to kill *us* when they had the chance. You're making a mistake, Rhys, a big one. You can't deal mercifully with these . . . vampire lovers. I've told you before, the world is better off if you just end all this once and for all. No half measures. Do *not* underestimate them.'

That was kind of a compliment, Claire supposed, but it was also terrifying when combined with the loaded shotgun and the half-crazy look on her face. Dr Anderson would very much *like* to kill them. And apparently, the only thing that was really standing in her way was Fallon, and as far as Claire could tell, he was thinking about his options.

Hannah had quietly removed her handgun from its holster and was holding it at her side. Now she said, 'Irene, please put the shotgun down.'

That startled Dr Anderson, and her eyes widened when she took in the fact that Hannah had her own weapon ready. 'You'd shoot *me*?'

'I'm here to keep the peace,' Hannah said. 'You seem to be threatening it. So I'm asking you nicely, please put that down and let's all be civil.'

Fallon seemed to make his decision. He took three steps forward and put himself squarely in the line of fire – a position where Irene couldn't miss him if she happened to shoot. 'This isn't like you, my dear,' he said. 'Now

let me have that thing before someone gets hurt.'

Irene hesitated, but she lowered the shotgun from firing position and handed it over to him. Fallon took it and held it comfortably in the crook of his arm, as if he was long acquainted with proper gun safety procedures. 'Thank you,' he said. 'Mrs Hodgson, could you please show Dr Anderson to her quarters? I believe she could use a comfortable rest and a meal, and perhaps some calming medication. Thank you so much.'

It was all very warm and kindly, but Claire still felt chilled as she watched their nice old neighbour lady take Dr Anderson by the arm and lead her off through the far door, patting her and murmuring in a calm, grandmotherly sort of way. If the last scorching glance Dr Anderson sent back toward them was any indication, it wasn't working.

'I'd apologise for that, but it appears to me that there might be some justification for how much she dislikes the three of you,' Fallon said. 'Would you like to tell me your side of it? Or shall I just take her at her word? If I do that, you may very well be on your way to jail, charged with murder.'

'We didn't murder anyone,' Claire said quickly, as Eve took in a hot breath, ready to start yelling. 'We were abducted. We were held prisoner, at gunpoint. We fought our way free, and yes, people died, but we didn't have a choice.'

'They tortured Michael,' Eve said. 'They were going to kill us all when they were done with us. They were using Myrnnin, Oliver, and Jesse as lab rats, too.'

'But you *did* kill them,' Fallon said.

'Ever heard of self-defence?' Shane asked. He sounded as calm and measured as Eve was angry. 'It was a bad scene, and trust me, whether they were friends of yours or not, they were not good people. They kidnapped Claire's roommate, who didn't have diddly to do with anything, and nearly got her killed in the process. They *did* kill another guy who was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. A human guy.'

Fallon considered that for a moment, then looked at Hannah, who shrugged. 'We've only got their word versus Anderson's,' she said. 'Irene may be a friend of yours, but I know these kids, and they generally try to do the right thing. I'm inclined to believe them.'

'Sweet. Does that mean I get to hold the shotgun?' Shane asked.

'Perhaps some other time,' Fallon said. 'In any case, whatever crimes



were committed, they were not committed here, and thus would be outside of Chief Moses's jurisdiction. But please don't misunderstand: I take the deaths of my people seriously, and it counts against you. Your earnest cooperation is required to avoid any further unpleasantness. Because if there happens to be any trouble here in Morganville, it will not be so easily overlooked, do you understand? These are not the old rules, the Founder's rules. These are rules of law, and justice, and they will be enforced regardless of who you are or who you know.'

*Fine words*, Claire thought. She wondered if that was what had gotten Hannah on board his train. 'I see that your rule of law and justice doesn't extend to vampires,' she said. 'Seeing as how you're willing to have them shot on sight.'

'Non-fatally, you might have noticed.' Fallon's voice was mild, but firm. 'Everyone will get a fair chance in Morganville. That is why the mayor has joined us, and the police chief' – said with a polite nod toward Hannah – 'and most of the other prominent citizens and families. You see, once Amelie's threat to those in Morganville was removed, no one hesitated to speak their minds about how radically the situation needed to change.'

There was only one part of that Claire paid attention to . . . *once Amelie's threat was removed?* Well, she should have already guessed that; if Amelie was still in charge, she'd have wasted no time in shutting all this Daylight Foundation stuff down – no matter what the cost in lives. What worried Claire was that Amelie was old and clever and ruthless, but somehow she hadn't seen this coming.

What had happened to her? Where was she now?

