

London Nights

Book 1: The Lost Boy

Von Ulysses

Kapitel 5: Who is Who in Whitechurch Manor

Richard found his new friend sitting on the bed in his room. Kearon stared at the fairy lights which Richard had strung up across a shelf filled with books and more of Tariq's mementoes. At least he had stopped crying.

"How is your friend?"

"Being an arsehole." Richard huffed. "But I know he's going to be okay. He's hurting, that's when he gets like this." He could almost hear Jonathan's voice, scolding him for analysing him. "Give him some time."

"I really didn't mean to... ever since the change, I can't control my powers anymore as I told you and what I did there was a defence mechanism."

"I know, don't worry, I know. You said that at least three times now"

Richard felt tired. The day had been long, the night stressful. It wasn't his favourite pastime to fight with his family but tonight some of them really hadn't presented themselves from their best side. The sound of his phone going off interrupted Richard's gloomy thoughts. It was a Skype call coming in and at that moment, Richard remembered that he actually had a date set up for tonight.

"Dammit, give me a sec."

He grabbed the phone and answered the call.

"Hey, Tariq, I'm sorry, I totally... oh."

"Hey there, sweetie."

Richard stared at the screen for a moment. Or rather at his boyfriend who sat there stark naked.

"You definitely forgot the call or else you wouldn't be dressed." the Ifrit gave him a dirty grin. The tone of his voice combined with his sexy Arabic accent made Richard shiver but now was definitely neither the time nor the place.

"I did forget the call and I'm also not alone." Richard said rubbing the back of his head.

"What?! Dude!" Tariq almost fell off the chair as he hastily tried to get his jeans back on. "Who is with you? Please don't say it's Velkan, I will never hear the end of it."

"No, it's not Velkan." Richard chuckled and looked over to Kearon who sat on the bed and tried to appear distracted. By now Tariq reached for his shirt on the floor and put it on.

"Presentable?" Richard chuckled.

Tariq nodded. "And almost died of a heart attack, thanks for asking."

"My poor big guy." Richard turned the phone around. "This is Kearon."

Kearon's cheeks flushed a little but he waved. "Hi."

"Hi... I'm Tariq." came the Ifrit's voice over the speakers. "Nice to meet you."

"Same."

An awkward pause followed which Richard used to return the screen to him and head for the door.

"I'll be right back, okay?" Richard smiled at Kearon before going out into the hallway. He closed the door behind himself.

"Richard, what the hell? What is some goth fae kid doing in our room?"

"It's a long story. Probably too long for now. I just don't want you to get the wrong idea."

"What idea? What is he? 14?"

"Almost, he's 15."

"I'm definitely not getting the wrong idea but I'm also really confused."

Richard smiled warmly. "I miss you, big guy."

"I miss you, too." Tariq kissed his index and middle finger and tapped the screen. "Do the others know that you are hiding minors in our room?"

"They do. It's been some commotion about this tonight. I want Kearon to stay here but Syd isn't thrilled because Kearon is a Banshee. And then something freaky happened with Kearon's powers and Jon got the full blast of it."

"Is he okay?!" Tariq sat up, his eyes widened.

"He's fine, don't worry. I think Kearon showed him his worst fears or something."

"Shit, that's not good. Maybe I should give him a call."

"I wouldn't. He's in the drawing room getting pissed out of his mind."

"Sounds like him." Tariq sighed. "I should be there."

"It's fine, Tariq, really. Take care of your brother and I'll take care of this."

"I'll take your word for it." Tariq shook his head. "I'm gone for two weeks and there's chaos in the house, eh? And what is a Banshee?"

Sometimes Richard forgot that Tariq didn't come from the same background as he did. The Ifrit had spent most of his life in Saudi Arabia and he had also been human for most of it. He had learned a lot about the supernatural world on his travels with Jonathan but the Banshee were reclusive and so he obviously hadn't crossed paths with them.

"It's a sort of fae."

"He said ominously."

"I should get back to him." Richard felt uneasy leaving Kearon alone for so long. "He's been through a lot and I want him to feel at home."

"You're too good for this world, sweetie."

"Thanks. Rain check on our date, okay?"

"Okay, but keep me informed."

"I promise. Love you, Tariq."

"I love you, too." The Ifrit smiled into the camera before leaning forward to end the call. Richard looked at the dark screen for a moment. He hadn't been completely honest. Right now, he wished for nothing more than that Tariq would be here with him. However, his family needed him and Richard was determined not to get in the way of that. Tariq would be back with him soon enough. He slipped the mobile into his pocket and put on a smile before returning to his room.

Kearon was still sitting on the bed and looked a bit uncomfortable.

"I'm sorry."

"What are you sorry for? You didn't make this awkward. I forgot the call and... well..." Richard rubbed the back of his head. "I mean, yeah... you're a minor and all."

"I get it." Kearon nodded eagerly, obviously keen on leaving this conversation behind.

"Let's get some sleep, shall we? You can have the bed and I'll sleep on the floor."

"Oh no, I couldn't..."

"No discussion about this. You take the bed." Richard narrowed his eyes. "After getting you out of that factory I won't have you sleep on the floor again."

Twenty minutes later, Richard had switched off the fairy lights. The floor wasn't too comfortable despite the thick Persian rug but he had slept in worse places than this. Kearon lay on the bed and looked up at the canopy.

"I can't sleep."

Richard had to agree. He was tired, held down by the weight of exhaustion, but sleep eluded him. "Me neither."

"So..." Kearon turned over so that he could look down towards Richard. His eyes shone in the twilight of the room like purple gems. Richard knew that his own eyes got a bit of a shine when the light reflected off of them not as much as Velkan's since he wasn't a full-blooded wolf. "Jonathan... the guy from earlier...?"

"He's a witch, as you might have guessed." Richard smiled. "Well, it was rather obvious. Jon's relatively new to the mansion, he only moved in here about a year ago together with Tariq. They used to travel together and do jobs which weren't always legal. Jonathan calls himself an "Obtainer", that's posh for thief. Tariq is an Ifrit, but he wasn't born one. You could say he caught it."

"That's possible? Like a virus?"

"More like an STD."

"What?!"

Richard cleared his throat. "I'll tell you another time. We were talking about Jonathan, weren't we? Jon's... difficult, sometimes. Don't let him get to you. He can be an asshole, but he's got a good heart. Otherwise, Velkan wouldn't love him so much."

"Oh? He and Velkan?"

"Yes." Richard nodded. "They hit it off right away. At least sexually... I mean..."

"I'm 15, Richard, I'm not a baby." Kearon giggled which sounded so innocent that Richard couldn't help but smile.

"Okay, they were going at it like rabbits. I'm actually happy that they calmed down a bit because I walked in on them several times and that is more than I ever wanted to know about Velkan and definitely about Jon."

Both started to laugh and for a moment, it seemed as if they had been friends for a long time.

"Sounds disturbing."

"You have no idea." Richard snorted, still cackling. "Well, he makes Velkan happy. That's what counts."

"So Velkan is a wolf?"

"Exactly... you want me to give you the rundown of who is who in Whitechurch Manor? I'm warning you, it's a lot to take in."

"Hit me."

"Okay then." Richard turned on his back and counted by his fingers. "Well, I should start with Elisabeth. She owns this place. She's a vampire and was born in the late 1800s. You'll like her, she's nice. Well, I think she is but I'm also not a constant thorn in her side." He chuckled. "Honestly... she's like a mother to me."

"And Velkan is like your big brother?"

"Yes." Richard fell silent for a moment. Saying this out loud made him realize how blessed he really was after so many years of being unwanted by the world. He was

home and he had a family. He continued in order to prevent the tears from further rising into his eyes.

"Elisabeth is Velkan's sister-in-law. She is married to his younger brother Tobias. And Velkan and Toby are the sons of Jeremiah Ward, the Wolf Jarl of London."

"Holy shit."

"Right? But don't mention that. It's a touchy topic with Velkan. Even though I'm officially a member of the family, too, I don't get to see them often because Velkan and his dad have a difficult relationship. Velkan's son Declan is a nice guy. You'll like him; he's just a few years older than you."

"A son?"

"Yeah." Richard shrugged. "Told you this was getting complicated. Anyway, Velkan moved in here first of us after breaking up with his boyfriend back then. He was also the one who blessed us with Sydney, even though I think Syd and Liz go way, way, way back."

"And Sydney is...?"

"You'll know it when you meet him." Richard sighed. "Don't get me wrong, he's okay. He's also really infuriating sometimes. Wait..." He sat up and reached for his phone to scroll through the photos. "That's Syd."

"... he has horns." Kearon said incredulously.

"I hadn't noticed." Richard quipped with a smirk. "He's... I actually can't say what he is. He's annoyingly vague about this. In any case, he's old. Really, really old. We're talking centuries, maybe millennia. And he used to be revered as a God and that still shows, if you ask me."

"He's really good-looking though, with that dark skin and the horns. But what is he wearing?"

"Judgmental, are we?" Richard raised his eyebrows.

"No! I didn't mean..."

"I'm teasing you. Sydney lived in Paris when Velkan met him. Believe it or not, he's some really big number in the Parisian supernatural underworld. The Lord of the Bone Market. Doesn't get any more pretentious."

"I see..." Kearon muttered in a strangely subdued tone. "And who else is there?" he added quickly.

Richard scrolled through the photos again. "Well, there would be Castor."

"Wow, that's an impressive beard. And all those tattoos."

"Right? Castor is a tattoo artist. I keep wondering if I should get one done by him... but anyway, he's a Kelpie, Scottish like me but lived in America most of his life and one of Velkan's best mates. When Cas moved in here because he was looking for a place, Velkan and Sydney had a thing going... like friends with benefits, you know?"

"They were...?"

"Boning, yes." Richard sighed, this all sounded so insane when spoken out loud. "And somehow Cas got involved in this and they were hanging out together. At least they used to when Velkan brought me here after we met in Glasgow. I was 17 back then and I guess they thought I was too stupid to notice but come on... when things got more serious between Cas and Syd, Velkan backed out of it."

"Is everyone gay in this house?"

Richard laughed. "It may seem that way but there are nuances. Velkan and Jon are gay; Velkan says that one time when he ended up with a son doesn't count. Tariq doesn't like labels but for the sake of the argument let's say he's gay, too, Cas and I are bisexual and Sydney is pansexual. Fitting if you consider that he claims that he was

the one who the myth of Pan is based on.”

“Okay, okay. You have a very confusing family structure, you know that?”

“Told you.” Richard put the phone away again. “That only leaves Myra. You know her already. She’s the sweetest if you ask me. Human, but she has this gift which allows her to see through the veil and even tell what kind of supernatural we are. She only 18 but super smart, a child prodigy. Oh and Castor’s sister Crea, but she only comes to visit from time to time. That’s everyone.”

“And you’re all living here together?”

“As a family, yes. A weird one, but... yeah, a family.”

Kearon yawned heartily. “I’m sorry.”

“Want to try and sleep? There will be time enough for more tomorrow.” Richard pulled the sheets a little higher since he felt a bit of a draft on the floor.

“Okay, sleep well.”

“You too, Kearon. Goodnight.”

It became quiet in the room for a moment. Richard looked at the window and out towards the night sky while he finally felt that his eyelids were becoming heavier.

“Richard...?”

“Hm?”

“Do you really think I can stay here?”

If he had still doubted his decision, the tone in which Kearon asked this would have convinced Richard that he was doing the right thing. As it were, it only served to strengthen his resolve.

“Of course.” he said and he meant it. He would fight tooth and claw for it if need be.

The bright light of the sun pierced through Jonathan’s eyelids like hot daggers and pulled him from the embrace of an intoxicated sleep. Pain flared up behind his eyes and flooded through his head. He groaned and forced himself to open his eyes despite the fact that the pain intensified by what felt like tenfold.

He lay slumped over on the sofa in the drawing room, the empty decanter in his arm like a sparkling crystal teddy bear. The heavy aroma of the whisky still clung to it and filled Jonathan’s nose. Nausea reared its ugly head but Jonathan fought it down.

He blinked into the blinding light until he could make out the tall, broad form of Castor in front of the window. The Kelpie had pulled open the curtains and allowed the sunlight in.

“Good morning, rise and shine.”

“Fuck you, too.”

“Wasn’t that thing almost full last night?”

Jonathan looked at the decanter in his arm and shrugged. “Yeah.”

“Had fun getting shit-faced?”

“Yeah.”

“Next time invite me to the party, ‘kay?”

“Still grumpy because Syd ran away?” Jonathan sat up and regretted it instantly, but he remained upright and finally got rid of the decanter by putting it on the couch table. He set it down too close to the edge and caught it a second before it tumbled over. “Shit, that was close.”

“Can’t believe he really took off.” Castor shrugged and ran his hand through his thick ginger beard. “I probably shouldn’t be surprised but... whatever.”

"He had the right idea."

"What?"

"Never mind... my head is killing me."

"No wonder. Mrs Gunderson might finish the job when she wakes up again." The Kelpie winked.

"Excuse me?" Jonathan's brain was still sluggish, but then it came to him. "Aw, fuck. The sealing spell on the backdoor. She tried to open it."

"Yeah, why the hell did you hex the door? Gunderson went out like a light. She's okay though. I'm making breakfast instead."

"Precaution." Jonathan left it at that. "As for breakfast: Yours is better anyway... just don't tell her that. At least you don't make that British shit."

"Pancakes and bacon."

"Perfect."

Castor chuckled and walked over to the next window to pull open the curtains. Jonathan groaned as more light attacked his eyes.

"Go get cleaned up, I'll have the coffee ready."

"Sounds heavenly." Jonathan mumbled and collected himself from the sofa. He tried to keep the focus as he walked towards the door, even though the room blurred in front of his eyes repeatedly. "You're the best, Cas."

"I know. Tell that to Syd."

"I will... promise." Jonathan hit his shoulder on the doorframe, drawing a laugh from Castor. "Or maybe not." he mumbled on his way to the stairs.

After a shower and a change of clothes, Jonathan already felt better. Velkan wasn't in their room so he suspected the wolf had already gone downstairs for breakfast. Or to take care of poor Mrs Gunderson.

As he reached the grand staircase, he stopped, waiting for Richard to make his way up to him. Not quite the person he had hoped to see but it was as good a time as ever to clear the air between them.

"Morning."

Well, it was a start. Jonathan had never been an expert at situations like this. Apologizing wasn't his strong suit and it didn't get any easier.

"Morning. You look like you had a rough night." Richard came up to the landing. He was massaging his neck with his right hand and grimaced as a joint audibly snapped back into place.

"Likewise, I'd say. I was drunk and an asshole. You?"

"Slept on the floor in a draft." Richard smiled. "And yes, you were an asshole."

"I was... well..."

"I know. It's okay."

Jonathan couldn't hide his surprise. He searched for something in Richard's eyes that would tell him that the young fae hadn't already forgiven him but was only met with an honest smile.

"How can you be such a nice guy all the time, Richard? Doesn't it get annoying at some point?"

"Can't say it does. Maybe you might want to try it sometime."

"Nah." Jonathan waved off, happy to have avoided having to apologize. "My bad attitude keeps me young." He smirked. "How is our guest?"

"He's alright. We'll head into town and have breakfast there. I don't want to force him to have the full Whitechurch Manor experience just yet after last night. We'll get the rest of his things on the way."

"You have it all under control, I see."

"One person in this house has to be the adult in the room, eh? Might as well be me. See you later, Jon."

Richard started towards the stairs to the second floor but Jonathan wasn't quite ready to let him go yet.

"Richard?"

The young fae stopped and looked over his shoulder.

"Don't tell him that I called him a monster. That is if you haven't already."

"I didn't."

"Good, I mean..." Jonathan brushed some strands of his hair behind his ear. "Well, you know what I mean."

"You're sorry you said it."

Being talked to like this wasn't getting any easier either. Jonathan raised his shoulders helplessly.

"I won't tell him."

"Thanks."

Richard smiled warmly and nodded before continuing his way leaving Jonathan to feel relieved and ashamed at the same time. This damn family life should come with a rule book. And a warning label attached. Jonathan groaned and descended down the stairs, eager to have some coffee and Cas' amazing pancakes and to forget about this mess.