



CHAPTER 11

Discovery

"Flashlights, check! Water, check! Snack, check!" Jude was gathering items for their trip, short though it might be.

"Ok, Jude, you got the stuff. Colin, you have the picture, right?" Jenna said excitedly.

"Yes, right here." Colin pulled it out of his pocket. Jude leaned over to get a better look at it.

"Who is she?" Jude asked.

"This is the girl I was telling you about," Jenna explained. "This picture is the same picture that we saw in the mansion. Colin found this in his G'ma's attic. We have no idea why it was there."

Colin began to feel dizzy and his head started to hurt again. Every time he looked at the photo, he would feel terrible. Jenna grabbed his hand. "Colin, it's going to be ok."

Instantly, he felt better. No fear, no pain, no headache. In fact, he felt energized.

The day was becoming slightly overcast, but it only made the outside breeze more amazing. The coming silver in the sky was making the leaves on the trees gray, but not gray enough to warn a storm's arrival. Excited energy was taking over Colin as the three began their trek into the woods. This might be the last time they have to spend together, and it was going to be worth it, no matter the outcome.

"Compass!" Jude said, and Jenna handed over the tool. Colin was glad to have someone a little older to help as he wasn't up on his survival-in-the-woods skills. Jude obviously wanted to find the house with no problem.

They walked for what felt like forever, but eventually, they made it. There it was, standing in all its glory. The white mansion with vines dressing it. They walked up to the entrance way. Something seemed different, like there was an intense darkness coming from inside...beckoning them to come in and look around.

"Wow," Jude said, impressed. "This place is really creepy. Did you guys even get to check it out inside last time?" He asked.

"No, we just looked inside for a while ...before ...you know." Jenna told Jude.

"Ok, well, show me what you saw," Jude stepped aside to let Jenna lead the way.

The door was unlocked, of course. But if it hadn't been, Colin was sure they could have gotten in without problem.

"Wow, look at this place," Jude said as all three walked through the front door, Jenna in front.

"It is so old!"

Colin saw what Jude was talking about as he came through the door last. The wood paneling with cracks and peels made an eerie feeling enter all three of the intruders. The air was damp, water damage was on the walls and ceiling, and even tree branches had found a home down the hallway in the corner.

"There's not much light in here. I feel like someone is watching me. Maybe eyes from behind a wall, or something," Colin said.

"I know. Stay close to me, Colin." Colin knew Jenna's plan was to protect him no matter what.

There was a console to the left that had thick dust on it and a mirror above it on the wall.

Colin was drawn to the mirror. He looked over and, for an instant, he thought he saw two red eyes staring back at him

"AGGH!" Colin jumped back. He blinked and the eyes were gone.

"What was that?" Jenna asked.

"Oh, it was nothing. I'm just scaring myself. I need to stop that."

"Well, don't do that," Jude said. "If you freak out easy don't look in mirrors." Jude laughed a little, which lightened the mood.

The stairs on the right were lined with frayed and faded burgundy colored carpet that led the way up. There were rooms to the right and left, but it was too dark to see what those rooms were. Colin shivered with a chill. The shifters stood tall. Colin was grateful.

"Where's this picture?" Jude asked as he got out his flashlight.

Jenna led the way to the picture on the stairway wall and Colin got out the smaller identical picture.

First things first. The two images were compared. They were identical.

"Amazing," was all Colin could muster. He stared at the girl in the picture on the wall. She smiled sadly back. He focused. Her dark gray eyes pierced his. Colin got closer to the image. The corners of her eyes began to droop. Her mouth started to fall into a frown. Colin shook his head, closed his eyes, and got the same pounding headache he'd gotten before. He looked again. Now, her mouth was open, still in a frown, and her eyes were angry.

You are part of the blood! It seemed to say. Colin felt nauseous and his peripheral vision was spinning. It another moment, his vision was blacking out before he completely passed out on the stairs.

A noise thudded from upstairs. It sounded like a heavy person just jumped off the top of a bunk bed. Colin shook his head and came back to reality and looked up. The darkened mansion was blurry. Nothing was there. Where was Jenna? Where was Jude?

"Jude? Jenna? Where are you?" Colin sat up. He felt a wave of weakness pour over him and decided to take it slow.

"Is anyone here?" Colin asked aloud. He didn't know what to do. Should he run? How could he when he felt so tired. His head began to hurt again. Fear ripped through his chest like fire and his palms were sweaty. His breathing became heavy to keep up with his fast-paced heartbeat as he realized he was all alone. Now what?

Something growled from upstairs. It sounded almost like a beast from a sci-fi movie. He looked up and saw nothing, but Colin now knew that he wasn't alone at all.

He couldn't move. Footsteps at a slow and steady gait were obviously coming for the stairs. Colin's heart didn't slow as he heard another growl getting closer. Colin looked again. Still, nothing. Footsteps, closer. Colin wiped his sweaty forehead.

Then there it was at the top of the stairs, glaring right into Colin's eyes. It was a large mist, white in color; the vapors made it look like a violent storm cloud. Its eyes were evil with crimson color. Where were Jude and Jenna?!

The mist surrounded Colin at once. Its chill made the sweat on Colin's body almost freeze. His teeth clattered immediately, his body shook uncontrollably, and fear was heavy on him. The evil shifter's red eyes were one inch from Colin's brown eyes. Colin about fainted.

You... You are her blood. You are the chosen. Chosen to die! The mist tore into Colin's mind with such force, he felt as if someone were pushing his head down with strong hands. Colin felt like he had forgotten clothes in a horrible snow storm, as the mist was increasingly freezing and wet

against his skin.

Come with me...up stairs with me. Talk with me. It spoke into Colin's mind.

"But...I...I...came to look at her," he pointed at the girl on the wall as he held his throbbing head.

Hmmm....Your grandmother? Its red eyes were darker now.

"What?" Colin, still terrified, asked. *What is this monster talking about?* Colin thought.

Your friends can't save you. Not now.

Follow me. Colin was afraid to not obey. He stumbled to his feet, still feeling weak.

Come with me now... the mist said.

As the shifter led the way, the pain started to go away and Colin found his feet. The ghost-like being led Colin up the stairs and around towards the hallway. On his right was an open door, with no light in it whatsoever. Colin didn't know why he didn't fight more. Of course, he could never win against this evil shifter, but wasn't it worth trying?

He followed this bad shifter into the dark room. As he entered, a red light began taking over his vision. And there he saw it. A shrine-like area had been created. Pictures of that same young girl from the hallway were everywhere. She was young in some pictures and older in others. Why was this girl such a big deal?! And why did this shifter call her his grandmother?!

Colin thought of Jenna and Jude, wherever they were. Bravery came over him. "Who are you? And who is this girl?"

A horrible growl rose up from the shifter and turned into a mighty laugh that lasted for a few minutes.

She is mine and I am hers. You live from her, you are her blood. Don't you know? You are young, your spirit is fresh.

Still confused, Colin responded with, "I don't know what you're talking about. My own 'blood' isn't around. I don't know them. I don't know what you want with me. Why should I care?" Colin felt bolder now.

The mist got bigger, obviously showing his power. *You are unwanted, I know. Your mom left you, and you don't know who you are. She is your grandmother, you are her blood.* The mist paused. *This is my Annalynn. Your grandmother.*

Colin looked over the pictures that adorned the walls. The pretty girls, all around him, seemed to look at him. Their eyes started drooping. Their mouths started frowning and then all opened as if to speak.

Colin covered his ears and hunched over. "I can't do this! I don't want this! Leave me alone!" he screamed in defense.

The mist was over him, he could feel the cold again. Colin sat on the floor and grabbed the back of his neck, as if trying to protect himself.

"Jude! Jenna! Where are you!?"

Then, the cold was gone. Colin stood and looked up. The pictures were back to normal and the mist was gone. Then, he saw it. A dark lump was rising from the ground.

Right before his eyes, the mist had shifted into a young man. He still had the same fierce red eyes, but he was tall with dark hair. He wore a brown robe and seemed to be steadily floating. "Who are you?!" Colin whispered. "What do you want from me?"

The shifter's red eyes could only look at Colin even though he moved about the room. Even when his body turned around, his head was stationary and his eyes never averted. The shifter walked closer to Colin until he was right next to him, the only thing between them was the old photo of "Annalynn" that Colin clutched.

"You are her blood! You are mine!"

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For more information, please call Elaine Riner at 423-245-4954 or e-mail at eriner@timesnews.net