

A WALK
IN THE
SUN



A VAMPIRE NOVEL
BY
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www.AWalkintheSun.com

This book is dedicated to my son Nicholas,
who is my hope, love, and joy in life.

Prologue

*I have tasted the treasures of life's kiss
Watched lovers stroll lonely footpaths
With secrets untold.*

*I have ignited passion to dreams
Lifted lost faces out of their darkness.*

If you look into my eyes,

You may see visions of my past

Where I was born

How and why I became what I am.

I am Nicholas Justine.

I am a vampire,

And this is my story.



CHAPTER ONE



MY MORTAL BEGINNINGS

The year was 1874, and the snow lay heavily on the grounds of Justine Manor. My mother's cries echoed down the corridor of the west side of the house as the doctor struggled to deliver her first child. She had known Dr. Reims all her life. My mother looked up into his eyes and grasped his hand like a desperate child.

"Timothy, is everything all right?"

"Yes, Emily." He smiled reassuringly, and wiped the perspiration from her forehead. Everything is fine."

Dr. Reims asked my mother to bear down once more as she carried on into her eighteenth hour of labor. Meanwhile, my father waited downstairs in his study, nervous and anxious. Trying not to worry, he paced the floor and watched the clock. He had never felt so useless,

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so vulnerable, so scared. Standing at his desk, he finished another glass of port.

“How much longer?” he asked. “What is the doctor doing?”

My father was a man of little patience. Used to being in control, he refused to tolerate fools. He was recognized in High Society as being one of the best solicitors in London, becoming powerful and successful, respected and feared. He was a solicitor who had never lost a case, a man obsessed with winning the game. There was only one person he didn't judge or try to control and that was my mother, for he adored everything about her. He loved her beyond words. Emily was his world. He couldn't bear to hear her crying out in pain.

“Goddammit,” he said. “It has been eighteen hours, how much longer does she have to suffer?”

As the clock struck 7:04 a.m., my mother bore down one last time. A gasp of joy filled her room as Dr. Reim announced she had given birth to a boy. Suddenly that joy turned into panic, as he saw my mother begin to tremble. Something was wrong. My mother was bleeding heavily and had lost consciousness. Quickly, Dr. Reim tried to stop the bleeding, but there was nothing he could do to stem her hemorrhaging. For the next thirty minutes, he fought to save her until the room fell in silence, and my mother lay lifeless.

Charlotte, my nanny, held me in her arms, comforting my cries as the two nurses began to prepare the room for my father to enter. Clean blankets were

arranged over my mother from her shoulders to her feet. The basket of bloody sheets and towels had been covered over near the dresser. Dr. Reim sat devastated, too upset to speak.

Thank God the baby had survived, he thought. But why, God? Why did Emily have to die? Pulling himself up, he left the room and made his way down the stairs to my father's study. It was said that when my father heard the news, he rushed up the stairs. Not willing to accept that nothing could save my mother, he tried to wake her. Holding her in his arms, sobbing uncontrollably, he begged her to come back. Kissing her pale lifeless face, he cried out her name, lost in disbelief.

"Emily, Emily, I can't live without you," he wept. "Please don't leave me, please don't leave me." As Charlotte carried me out of the room, my father never asked to see his newborn son. That was the day he lost his world, the day he decided to push me aside. As the winter sun shone through the window and kissed my mother's face goodbye, an empty silence came over Justine Manor.

My mother was laid to rest only one mile from the house in the village churchyard in Essex, and it seemed as the snow fell and laid its blanket upon the many wreaths and flowers at her graveside, the heart of Justine manner had laid itself to rest beside her.

I was named Nicholas Edward Justine, a name my mother had chosen for me. My room faced the north side of the house. It had two large windows where I could look down onto the courtyard and servants' quarters.

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My nanny, Charlotte, raised me with much love and care. As the seasons changed and the years passed by, she had requested many times that I might be moved to a brighter room with a view of the trees and extensive grounds. But my father insisted that the room I had slept in since birth was satisfactory.

My years growing up at Justine Manor were made up of intense study. Books were my world. Since I was not allowed to venture out of the grounds, they provided me with many adventures. Rarely was I allowed to play with other children. Charlotte's comfort and support became my sanity, and my imagination and love for writing became my best friend. My father had very little to do with me and never once tried to veil the scars he blamed me for. Occasionally I would be summoned to dine with him. Two places would be set at either end of the long mahogany table. I addressed my father as Sir. As the minutes ticked by, and each course was served, I would avoid looking up at his face, terrified that for a split second he might read the enmity I carried in my heart for his selfishness.

His pale, almost waxen, complexion made him appear sinister, yet at the same time he was a handsome man, tall, dark, and athletically slim. He dressed impeccably, but never wore anything that lifted his stern, stiff manner. Though my mother had long passed away, my father had continued to wear his wedding ring. One thing that struck me as strange was the large ruby ring he wore on the third finger of his right hand. It was so out of

character for him to wear such a piece of ornate jewelry. As a young boy, I remember secretly gazing across the table at the mysterious large jewel that flashed like fire from his hand. I wanted to touch it, look at it closely. Yet I knew not to ask questions. That was not my place, and when dinner was over, I would be sent back to my room.

By the time I was eight years old, I had begun suffering from extreme nightmares about my father. His lack of love and constant rejection haunted my dreams with darkness and fear. I'd awake in fits of terror, crying and screaming to find Charlotte at my side trying to comfort me. The nightmares continued for a while, then slowly they occurred less and less. I can't remember when they stopped, but it seemed when they did, there was always something else to replace my hauntings.

As my adolescent years arrived, I had become accustomed to pain and numb to its torment. Tears did not help. My prayers were not answered, and it became clear to me that my father was never going to change. Everything about him was a mystery. His long trips away from home that no one spoke about. The days he'd spend alone when he'd return. Though I never heard him be rude or act mean to the servants, they all feared him. And so did I. His presence was powerful, silent and strong. A brilliant solicitor, respected and honored, but to me he still remained a heartless, cruel, man.

I spent my seventeenth birthday with Charlotte and as always she tried to make it special. My father was away, so I continued to work on my first novel. I dreamed of

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one day becoming a successful writer, a dream I decided to keep to myself. I wanted nothing more than to leave Justine Manor and prayed that my book might make that happen. I managed to finish it that same month. My father was still away, so I ventured into the city to deliver my work to a handful of publishers.

London overflowed with energy. The people were different. The air was different. This was a city that embraced excitement. I imagined myself living there, away from all the negativity and fear I'd absorbed growing up. Charlotte could stay with me. I would take care of her. I'd have a place of my own that overlooked the Heath. Sinking back in my carriage, I dared to dream, and it felt wonderful. You could say that I was beginning to be rebellious, but I didn't see it that way. All I was doing was rejecting a life that was not good for me. As we drove back from the city, I watched the rain begin to fall. I thought about my father and what he would say the moment I told him I wanted to be a writer. The thought made me shiver. I could already visualize the distaste in his eyes. Still, that wasn't going to stop me from telling him the truth.

I arrived back at the house to find Charlotte waiting for me by the front door. Her eyes were red and swollen. When I asked her what was wrong, she began to weep. "Nicholas," she sobbed, "it's about your father. Something terrible has happened. I'm so sorry Nicholas."

I remember standing frozen in disbelief, as she held my hands and told me my father had passed away. He had died four days ago in Paris from pneumonia.

Mr. Wakeman, my father's solicitor, received the telegram that morning. He was waiting in the sitting room to see me.

For a moment, I felt I was going to cry, but something inside me numbed my emotions.

I walked into the sitting room and saw Mr. Wakeman by the fireplace. The whole thing was so surreal. Trying to concentrate, I listened to what he had to say. He told me that my father's body was on its way home and that he would be taking care of all the funeral arrangements. Then he took an envelope from the inside of his jacket.

"This is for you, Nicholas," he said. "Your father requested I give this to you if anything ever happened to him." Mr. Wakeman sat forward noticing my uncomfortable reaction. "Nicholas", he spoke warmly. "Your father and I go back many years. I remember you as a young boy. I remember when you met my daughter Elena. You must have been about nine years old. You and Elena played for hours here in this very room whilst your father and I attended to business. Do you recall that day?"

"Yes," I answered. Mr. Wakeman paused for a moment reading between the lines of my obvious silence.

"Nicholas, I know your father wasn't the kind of man who expressed his emotions openly, but there was no doubt how much he loved you. I am not sure if you are aware of this, but when your mother passed away, your father made you the sole heir of his estate. I'll arrange for us to meet at your convenience after the funeral."

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He shook my hand and expressed his condolences again. “Try and get some rest, and please do not worry. I will take care of everything.”

After Mr. Wakeman left, I disappeared to my room. I needed to be alone. I sat on my bed staring at the envelope in my hands. I opened it carefully and began to read the note my father had left for me. It simply read:

To my son Nicholas,

I have always loved you and hope that one day you will be able to forgive me. God bless you, my son.

God bless your happiness.

Sincerely,

Your father, Edward.

As I read the note over and over again, a mountain of sorrow filled my chest. Why couldn't he have told me this when he was alive? All I had ever wanted was for my father to love me. Now it was too late, much too late. I wept.

I remember at the funeral feeling numb as I watched my father's coffin being lowered into the ground. I wanted to cry, I wanted to feel like his son, but the shame of his rejection had left me feeling like a fool. I was a stranger at my own father's funeral. Everyone around me knew him better than I. That day no tears fell down my sunken cheeks, but inside my heart my tears fell like rain.

When we arrived back at the house, I managed to escape a roomful of people I did not know. I sat on the

back steps of Justine Manor, wishing they'd all just leave and disappear. It was then I heard a soft sweet voice I did not recognize behind me. Turning around, I saw a beautiful girl staring like an angel beneath the gray winter sky.

"Hello, Nicholas", she said quietly. "I hope you don't mind, but I wanted to see you before leaving. I'm so sorry about your father."

I looked up at her, wondering how she knew me. She smiled gently. "You don't remember me. I am Elena Wakeman. My father is Charles Wakeman. The last time I saw you, we were nine years old."

"Of course," I answered, taken by her beauty. I stood up to greet her. "Please forgive me. It's been a long time."

Elena smiled calmly as if she knew me, and as strange as it seemed I sensed maybe she did. From that moment on, it seemed destined that she and I would meet again. The more I spoke to her, the more I wanted her. I set out to see her again that week, and when I did, I set out to marry her. Her fiery red hair and emerald green eyes were as vibrant as the morning sun. I didn't know how I was going to win her heart, but that wasn't going to stop me from trying.

For the next few weeks, I tried to come to terms with the strange and difficult emotions I felt for my father. Losing him had changed something inside of me. I missed him deeply, yet at the same time I felt cheated and angry because he'd told me he loved me after he'd died. There were no warm memories for me to cling to,

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not one treasured moment with my father to remember. The last time I saw Elena's father, Mr. Wakeman, he had given me my father's ruby ring. He told me my father had left strict instructions that I should put it in the family safe. I guessed that he had presumed that I would never want to wear something of his, but he was wrong. His ring was his only possession that mattered to me. It was personal, priceless, and it helped remind me that I was my father's son.

After his death, a weird and dark emptiness hung over Justine Manor, and it wasn't long before even more darkness and grief made its way through its walls. Charlotte received news that her sister had passed away suddenly. I offered to take her to the funeral in Nottingham, but she insisted it was best she went alone.

Walking her down to the carriage, I held her hand just as she had held mine when I was a child. Her blue wintercoat was buttoned up to her scarf, her tired soft eyes adrift in sorrow. Before she left, she placed a small wooden box in my hand. "This is for you, Nicholas," she said. "I've been meaning to give you this since your father's funeral."

I opened the box to find a gold cross and chain. Filled with emotion, I relived the moment when Charlotte had given me my first Bible when I was five years old. She had taught me the Lord's Prayer. She had taught me to believe in God. This was something that would have infuriated my father, for he was a non-believer. Crucifixes and Bibles belonged in churches, not in Justine Manor.

Charlotte hugged me tightly. “Keep safe,” she said. “And do not worry about me. I’ll be fine.”

As the sun spread its veins of gold through the heavy gray clouds, I watched the coach pull away and prayed Charlotte would return home safely. The news about her sister had left me thinking about my father.

I sat at my desk trying to ignore the clock’s irritating hands that ticked loudly with an air of defiance. I walked to the hearth, then back to my desk. Back to the hearth, back to my desk, back to the hearth, back to my desk. It was no good. I couldn’t settle. I decided to visit my father’s grave for the first time since his funeral. As my thoughts blew like lost leaves across a cold winter breeze, I reached the cemetery where both my mother and father were laid to rest. I stared down at my parents’ graves and hoped that maybe they could hear my prayers. The weathered white angel that blessed my mother’s grave gazed down with a silence that seemed to whisper my name. I brushed away the dead leaves that had gathered at her feet wanting to believe it wasn’t my imagination. For a moment, I visualized everything that could have been, and for a moment, I felt like I belonged. Wiping the dirt from my mother’s name, I exhaled my pain and whispered goodbye. Maybe now my father had found peace. Maybe now he could surrender his paper shield to the wind and fly like a warrior to my mother’s side. Dipping my head, I closed my eyes.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

CHAPTER TWO



MY AWAKENING

Christmas passed without any snow. I had seen Elena before she left to visit her aunt in Brighton for the holidays. Charlotte had not yet returned home. Her aunt had insisted she stay an extra week.

Though a whirlwind of change had left me astray, I'd began to accept that it was time to move on. My dream of having Elena was becoming a reality. The afternoons we had spent together proved more than just a casual friendship. We were drawn to each other, destined to be together. There was no doubt in my mind that she knew how much I loved her, but I needed to be patient. I didn't want to rush her. I knew she was coming home the following week; only seven days, but it seemed so long. Trying to relax, I flicked through the newspaper and

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noticed something that caught my attention, an article about a small traveling fair in Whitechapel that some were calling a devil's circus. The police were considering closing it down due to reports about some disturbing sideshows that were leaving audiences shaken and confused. I had to see this, I thought. True or false, it sounded like a great storyline for my next book.

That evening, I ventured into the city. I didn't want my personal driver knowing my whereabouts, so I asked that he take me to Covent Garden. From there, I'd continue alone. I waited for him to pull away and then crossed the street to where a hooded driver sat waiting for his next customer.

Climbing in, I asked, "There's a small traveling fair in Whitechapel. Have you heard about it?"

The driver only nodded and set off without the slightest hesitation. I assumed he must have known where it was. Eager and excited, I couldn't wait to get there and discover what all the commotion was about. The doors of the old coach rattled. The once-red velvet seats were now practically thread bare and proved to be very uncomfortable as we made our way across the bumpy dark streets. I checked my watch. We'd been traveling for nearly an hour. I began to feel nervous as I recognized that I was now completely lost. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea. I leaned forward. "Driver, how much longer?"

He didn't respond. I heard a noise in the distance. Someone was playing a piano. People were singing and yelling. It sounded like we were approaching a crowded

tavern. As the noise became louder, it quickly faded leaving only a haunting silence. A deep panic stirred in my stomach. I stared out onto the damp, empty streets. The smell of cheap perfume settled upon the chilly stale air as we slowly passed some dimly lit alleyways. Young girls stood and provoked the night. Shamelessly, they offered themselves, flaunting their bosoms and lifting their unwashed petticoats. I sat back in my seat, uneasy and awkward. I had never seen anything like this before. Where the hell was I?

Then the loud echoing of horses' hooves stopped. We had come to a halt.

"Driver, where are we?" I asked. At that moment, a blanket of fog began covering the doors and windows of the carriage. Desperate to leave, I offered the driver all my money, stating for him to take me back. Again he didn't answer. Climbing forward, I banged on the roof. "Can you hear me?" I yelled. "Please answer me!"

As the fog lifted, I realized the driver had gone. I'd been left alone in some back street from hell. I sat back on the seat, clutching the collar of my cloak as if it were a rope that could pull me out of this horrible nightmare. All at once, I heard a tap on the window, and through the mist, I saw a girl's face. Relieved to see someone, I opened the door. With a childlike innocence, the girl looked at me. Her long black hair fell loose over her shoulders. She clutched a red shawl that covered her white nightdress.

"Are you lost?" she asked.

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“Yes,” I answered. “I need to get back to Covent Garden. Do you know where I can find another driver?”

Her large dark eyes glistened unnaturally. “Yes,” she answered. “Do not worry. I have a friend who can take you back. Come with me. I do not live far from here.”

I began following her down the desolate street. The mysterious mist had now disappeared, but all I could think about was getting home. She led me down a long narrow alley where the smell of damp rotting wood sickened me.

“We are almost there.” She took my hand then turned and continued across a small churchyard and down some steps to a narrow arched door.

“You live here?” I asked.

“Yes,” she answered. “I work for the church. Father Hayden lets me stay here.”

Inviting me inside a candlelit room, she asked me to sit. I looked around, nervously waiting. Then, I began to notice some of the strange unusual ornaments and paintings she had stored in one corner of the room. Beside her bed was an old worn dressing table holding a large gold mirror trimmed with colorful jewels. The stones looked authentic, but how could they be? This poor girl was living in a room without windows.

She knelt beside me and gave me some wine. I didn’t want to drink it, but at the same time I didn’t want to offend her.

“What is your name?” I asked.

“Odessa,” she answered.

I drank the red wine. It tasted unusually thick and heavy. “Will your friend be here soon?” I asked.

She nodded. “Yes. He will be here very soon.”

As soon as I finished the wine, I began to feel dizzy. The room began to sway. My knees became weak. “Are you all right?” she asked.

Trying to pull myself together, I realized I could not stand.

“Let me help you,” she said. “Come lie on my bed. You look tired.”

Feeling disorientated, I let her help me to the bed. I needed to lie down. She rested my head against the cushioned headboard, then sat at her dresser and began brushing her long black hair. Still light headed, I watched her admire herself in the mirror.

“Tell me, Nicholas,” she said. “What do you think brought you here tonight?”

I didn’t remember telling her my name, and I didn’t understand the meaning of her question. “What do you mean?” I asked, still unable to understand.

“Come, now, Nicholas.” She smiled. “You must know that your being here with me is no coincidence.”

I tried to sit forward. “I’m sorry, but I have no idea what you are talking about,” I answered.

She turned on her stool to face me. “How is Elena?”

My heart stopped. “How do you know her?”

She smiled arrogantly. “I know everything about Elena, just as I know everything about you.”