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**-Without-**

I struggled in the darkness, trying desperately to get free, get the hood off, anything. But it was to no avail, the person holding me was stronger, bigger and clearly determined not to let go. A door opened and the smell of mouth wash and rubbing alcohol reached my nose. I felt my stomach start to cramp.

This couldn't be real. It wasn't supposed to be like this. I was going to get married; live happily ever after, away from the darkness and violence. Away from my family.

I was pushed down in a hard and uncomfortable seat and my hood tugged off. Swallowing and gasping for air I looked around. Upon seeing where we were, my earlier fear doubled.

"What are we doing here?" I managed to ask, already knowing.

"Guess," the one who had just removed my hood said mockingly.

"No," I whispered, scrambling off the dentist chair and to the back of the room. There was no back door or window to escape through.

"This was your choice darling," my father told me, stepping closer to me, away from the others. "You chose to be with a mortal."

I felt my eyes go wide. "But you can't take my teeth. I need them."

"Normal-looking human teeth will grow out in a day or so. You'll be fine for your wedding." Like I cared about the wedding. They were going to take my teeth. But they couldn't do that. It wasn't right. They just couldn't.

Only they could.

There were four of them besides my father, all big, strong and loyal to him. I glared at Tommy when I noticed him in the back. He had always been dad's favorite. Always been so eager to serve. The good son. I wanted to spit or yell at him but I was paralyzed with fear as the four of them began to approach me.

There was no point in struggling, but I did, for a moment, ramming my elbow in Tommy's gut. Then they got a good grip on me and slammed me down in the dentist chair again, holding me down. I couldn't see as a bright light was turned on right above me.

It happened faster than I thought it would. My mouth was forced open and while I still couldn't see I could feel when something scraped around my left incisor. I tried to beg for them to stop but all that came out was a gurgle.

Then white hot pain made my skull feel like it was on fire, like a bomb had detonated in there. I tasted my own blood, felt it gush down my throat. But it wasn't over yet, and no one seemed to care I couldn't breathe, couldn't see, couldn't think.

“Pa?” Tommy’s questioning voice made a sliver of hope grow inside of me. Please Tommy make it stop.

“Get it done quick. Stopping now will only make it worse.”

And like always, Tommy did what father said, what father wanted. When the second tooth was dropped into something metal, the hand forcing my mouth open let go and I wailed. I wasn’t sure how much time passed, a minute or an hour. Maybe a life time.

“Don’t worry,” my father suddenly whispered, leaning close and touching my hair. I struggled to get away from him but my brother was still holding my shoulders down. “You will learn to live off human food. I hear it’s not so horrible after the first few years. Let her up.”

Tommy immediately let go of me, and first then I realized the three others were gone. Still feeling dizzy with the pain I forced myself to get up, my hands reaching for the metal container holding my teeth. I picked them up, staring with horror at my fangs, my beautiful beloved fangs. I felt wetness trail down my face, tears, snot and blood from my still bleeding gums. The later was staining my favorite shirt. I didn’t care. It didn’t matter anymore.

Nothing mattered.

“Natalia,” Tommy said, reaching for me. Suddenly realizing my father and Tommy were still in the room, made me shake. Not with fear this time. No, with righteous anger. They had done this to me. I screamed a blood curling scream I knew even the people down the street would hear. My father plastered on the bored expression he usually reserved for children throwing temper tantrum during Gatherings.

“I hate you,” I shrieked. Neither my father nor Tommy seemed too bothered by hearing this. Crying, I sank to the floor one had over my bleeding mouth and the other clutching my bloody fangs to my chest. “I hate you,” I said, again, weaker. Because it wasn’t their fault. Not really.

I had brought this on myself.

Falling in love with a human. How foolish. How weak. They had all tried to tell me. I hadn’t listened. I hadn’t, and now I was paying for it. Everything I was; gone. I wasn’t vampire. I wasn’t human. I wasn’t anything.

I stared up at my father, feeling defeated. He smiled as if he could read my thoughts in my eyes. “Don’t worry darling. You’ll learn to live with it. Everyone hates themselves and how their lives turned out a little bit.”

**END**