

# **†aken**

**(BOOK #2 OF THE VAMPIRE LEGENDS)**

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Also by Emma Knight

SWORN (Book #1 of the Vampire Legends)

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## Chapter One

Benji leaned towards Rachel and clasped her warm hands. He worried what she would say when he told her his secret. He wavered, trying to determine if he wanted to tell her the truth about himself, or make something up.

He looked into her green eyes and with his free hand, brushed her hair from her face.

“Swear again,” Benji said, his voice quivering. “Promise me you won’t tell.”

“I swear. I *swear*,” Rachel replied, staring back at him with her large eyes.

Benji took a deep breath and exhaled, closing his eyes for a moment. He had never shared his secret with anybody before, especially not a human, and he was working through an inner struggle, debating how to tell her. He looked around the covered bridge to make sure nobody else was around.

He looked back at Rachel, still staring at him, and felt her hand get clammy. He knew she was getting more nervous with each moment of anticipation.

“I’ve never told anybody this before,” Benji began. “I hope you will still think of me the same way after I tell you.”

He stopped speaking, closed his mouth and swallowed. He felt his voice getting weak. He didn’t want to continue, but knew he had to at this point.

“What is it? Just tell me already!” Rachel said.

Benji inhaled. “I’m a vampire.”

Rachel stared back at him with a confused look on her face. He felt her warm hand slide out of his, as she took a step backwards. Silence filled the air as they both stood there, staring at each other.

Benji didn't know what to do. Should he tell her more, or should he wait for her to say something? He couldn't tell what she was thinking, but it wasn't the response he was hoping for. He was angry with himself for letting their relationship get this far, and angry that he told her his secret. He knew it was a bad idea all along, but she gave him no choice. He knew she would leave him if he hadn't.

Standing there on the covered bridge, Benji watched as Rachel began to shake her head in disbelief. She looked him up and down as if he were some sort of alien.

"Vampire?" Rachel said. "Stop lying. Tell me the truth."

Benji didn't know how to respond. He could tell her it was a lie and make up something else: something less scary and more believable. He thought for a moment but knew he had to stick to the truth.

"I am telling you the truth. I'm a vampire. I haven't been completely honest with you about everything, but I want to make it right now. I will tell you everything," Benji said, looking at her, trying to read her changing expressions.

Rachel took another step backwards and said, "No! This can't be. Vampires don't exist."

Benji could see her body begin to shake as she moved even further away from him. He wanted to comfort her and tell her everything was going to be OK, but he couldn't get close to her.

"Please hear me out," Benji said, trying to salvage the remaining bits of their relationship. "I was born 3,000 years ago. I live in a castle, but have to flee when danger nears," Benji said, trying to help Rachel make sense of it all.

"Stop saying these things. You aren't making any sense," Rachel said, waving her hands in the air.

“I told you I lived with my parents in a house near AHS, but I don’t. I don’t have parents and I don’t live in a house. I live at Lyndvia Castle,” Benji said.

“This is crazy. I feel like I know nothing about you. I can’t do this,” Rachel said as she turned away.

“Wait, let me finish. I won’t hurt you, I promise. I don’t feed on humans.”

“Stop! Don’t come near me. I need to go now,” Rachel shouted as she began to walk quickly away from Benji and the covered bridge.

Benji stood there, and watched Rachel leave him behind.

“Stop, don’t go! I promise I can explain it all,” he yelled after her.

He started running towards her, which made Rachel run even faster. “You swore you wouldn’t tell!” Benji screamed.

Benji stopped running, realizing it was useless to follow her. He knew she was scared and didn’t want to be with him anymore.

He came to a stop along the side of a dirt road and sat down. He replayed what had just happened over in his head, but still couldn’t believe it.

Did he really just tell his secret?

Part of him was glad he shared it with her. But a part of him felt regret. He wondered if he had just made the biggest mistake of his life.

## Chapter Two

Rachel peered over her shoulder as she ran down her block, checking to see if Benji was still following. She was scared and out of breath. She had never run so fast, or as far, as she'd run tonight.

As Rachel neared her house she saw the flashing blue-and-red lights of a police car in her driveway. When she looked closer, she saw her parents standing at her front door with the police. Now Rachel was even more worried and scared. Why were the police at her house?

Rachel stopped and watched as her parents stood there, gesturing to the police officers. She couldn't make out what they were saying, but they didn't look happy. She stood there watching, as she caught her breath. She composed herself, and began to walk towards the house.

As she neared the front lawn, the motion sensor light lit up her face. She stood there like a deer in headlights as the police officers and her parents turned their heads and stared right at her.

"Is this her?" one of the policemen asked.

"Yes, this is Rachel," her dad said.

Rachel's heart began to beat faster, and all she could think about was turning and running in the other direction. She didn't want to deal with this situation, whatever it would bring. She couldn't understand what the police could possibly want with her.

Rachel continued walking towards the front stoop, as the two police officers stared her down.

"Rachel Wood?" the police officer asked, as he looked down at his papers.

"Yes," Rachel said.

"Do you know anything about a Robert Greene?"

The two police officers stood there and waited for her to respond.

“Um... yes,” Rachel said in a quiet voice. “He goes to my school.”

“Yes, he does go to your school. We know that. We want to know what you know about the fight tonight. Witnesses said you were in the middle of it.”

Rachel didn't know what to do. She didn't know how to answer. She was in the middle of it, but she didn't want to confess everything that she had found out tonight. She was just beginning to process it all.

“I wasn't really in the middle of it,” Rachel said back, “but I did see it.”

“We need to know all the information you have on this. A few football players at AHS are in very serious condition at Westchester North Hospital.”

Rachel felt her heart sink. She didn't know what to do.

“We need to know who beat them up. Can you tell us who you were with?”

Rachel couldn't lie to the police.

“Benji> He's another student at AHS.”

The police officers looked at each other, and then one began to write in his notebook. She saw him write Benji's name.

“Where does Benji live?” the officer asked.

Rachel didn't know what to say. Should she tell them he is a vampire and lives in a castle?

“I'm not sure,” Rachel replied.

“You don't know where your friend lives?” the officer questioned.

“Well, we are not really *friends*,” Rachel said. “We just met.”

The two police officers looked at her with questioning eyes. “What is the nature of your relationship?” the officer asked.

Rachel didn't know how to respond. She didn't know what they were. Were they friends? Enemies? Boyfriend and girlfriend? She didn't know.

“I said we’ve only just met. We were becoming friends, but I don’t think I want to be his friend anymore,” Rachel answered in a sharp tone.

“Why not?” the police officer asked.

“Because he’s not who I thought he was,” Rachel replied.

The police officer shook his head in agreement, as if he knew what she was talking about. “Do you know anything else about the fight?” the police officers asked again.

“No, I don’t believe I do,” Rachel said.

“Thank you for your time. If you hear from Benji call the station right away. We have a search team out for him. All we have is one blurry cell phone picture of him, but can’t make out his face. Oh, and if you think of anything else, please let us know,” the officer finished.

“Ok,” Rachel said, feeling worried.

“Thank you officers,” Rachel’s dad said, a serious look on his face.

“Come inside Dear,” Rachel’s mom said. “I think we need to have a little family meeting.”

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Rachel’s heart was thumping out of her chest and her hands were sweating. She followed her parents into the living room and sat down on the couch.

“Who is this Benji character?” her dad asked, as he made himself comfortable on the couch across from Rachel.

“Some guy I know from school,” Rachel said.

“How old is he and what grade is he in?” her mom asked.

“Well, he’s a senior, he’s 18 I think, not really sure,” Rachel replied in a soft voice.

“18!” her dad screeched out. “What are you doing with an 18 year old guy?”

“I’m not doing *anything* with him! I told you I just met him, I barely know him,” Rachel said, defending herself.

“You’re fifteen years old, Missy. You have no business with an eighteen-year-old guy. Especially an eighteen year old criminal,” her dad added.

“Honey, I think you’ve taken this too far. She’s only just met the boy, give her some slack,” Rachel’s mom interjected.

Rachel smiled at her mom and they looked at each other with knowing eyes.

“I trust you, sweetie. I know you didn’t have anything to do with this fight,” Rachel’s mom said. “But is there anything else you aren’t telling us?” Rachel’s mom questioned.

Rachel waited a moment, swallowed as if to hide what she really wanted to say and then said, “No, that’s all. There’s nothing else.”

Rachel instantly felt guilty. Her mother had been so naive and trusting about the whole situation, and she hated lying to her. She wanted to tell her parents the whole truth about Benji, but after what had happened tonight, she knew she couldn’t. She figured it was better if they didn’t know.

“Meeting adjourned,” her dad said, as he stood up from the couch.

Rachel went upstairs to her bedroom and shut the door behind her. She stood there for a minute, trying to process what had just happened. She walked into her bathroom, put her face in the sink, and splashed cold water over it with her hands. She stayed there for a few minutes, leaning into her arms, glancing at her face in the mirror. Did that really happen?

As she stood in her bathroom, she ran the night over and over in her head—her conversation with her parents, being interrogated by the police officers, the fight, and Benji’s secret. Her mind was flooded with information and all she could think about was Benji.

*Vampire?*

Rachel tried to convince herself that she misheard him, but knew she didn’t. Rachel didn’t know what to do. She didn’t know anything about vampires, except for what she saw on TV at Halloween. She wondered for a fleeting moment, if it could be possible, and decided she had to find out more.

She walked downstairs to her family computer and typed into the Google search bar: *“What is a vampire?”*

33 million hits came back. She clicked on the first and read it.

*“A vampire is a being who rises from his grave at night and lives off of the blood of humans by biting into their necks with their long, pointed canine teeth.”*

Rachel stared at the computer screen. She couldn't believe it. Benji couldn't be a vampire. He didn't have long, pointed canine teeth and he didn't rise from his grave -- or at least she didn't think he did. She remembered Benji had said he didn't feed on humans. If so, what kind of a vampire was he?

Rachel cleared her Google search and entered a new one: *“Are there different kinds of vampires?”*

7 millions hits came back. Rachel glanced at all the headings, trying to figure out which one to read first. She sat there, her hands shaking as she directed the mouse over a site called, *The Many Types of Vampires in the World today*. Rachel read on, and she couldn't believe her eyes.

*There are many different types of vampires that live across our world. There are immortal, mortal and psychic vampires— and the most feared of all are the immortal vampires.* Suddenly, Rachel remembered what Benji had said. Her mind flashed back to their conversation when he said he was born 3,000 years ago.

*It couldn't be. Was he...an immortal?*

Rachel closed her eyes and held them shut, hoping that when she opened them, her computer screen would read something different. As she opened her eyes, she saw the word IMMORTAL again, which made her mind shake. She had no idea what this even meant, and all her Google searches were bringing back different information. It was clear that Google didn't have all the answers about Benji because there were so many different types of immortal vampires.

Rachel stopped Googling, stared at the screen, and then began to laugh. She closed the browser window and got up from her computer. She couldn't believe she had let herself get so carried away

with this whole vampire thing. She knew this was all fictitious and mythic and that vampires didn't really exist.

As she walked back upstairs to her room, she tried to figure out what was so different about Benji. If he wasn't a vampire, she figured he must be schizophrenic or bipolar or something. He was acting pretty crazy on the bridge.

As Rachel got to the top of the steps she heard the front door slam shut. Her heart started to pound. Was it Benji? Had he followed her home? Rachel heard her mom's voice coming from the kitchen, "Sarah, is that you?"

"I'm home, going to bed," Sarah shouted back as she flew through the front door.

It was nearing midnight and Sarah had just gotten home from the Homecoming Dance. It had seemed like days since Rachel left that dance, but it had only been a few hours. Sarah ran up the stairs and bumped into Rachel. Rachel could smell the alcohol oozing from her pores.

Sarah tripped and fell on the floor, and she laid there, her face planted into the carpet. Rachel didn't know what to do. She had never seen Sarah like this before.

Rachel heard footsteps coming towards the staircase.

"Honey, are you OK?" their mom said, as she neared the landing.

Rachel knew she had to think quickly. She didn't want to leave Sarah laying there, almost passed out from drinking too much. She didn't want her sister to get in trouble. She knew Sarah had been through a lot lately with Gary, her ex-boyfriend who had broken up with her just a few days before. She knew Sarah was devastated and must have needed a release from the pressure of everything.

The footsteps began to climb the steps, and Rachel thought quickly. She grabbed Sarah's arm and dragged her into her bedroom and shut the door quickly. Rachel helped Sarah up and into her bed, as the footsteps grew closer.

"Sarah are you in there?" their mom asked again, this time in a louder, more nervous voice.

“We’re here mom, just chatting about the dance,” Rachel replied, trying to cover for Sarah.

“Did I hear a thud?” Rachel’s mom asked through the closed door. Rachel heard the door handle jiggle – it was locked.

“Yes, sorry, I dropped some books, didn’t mean to alarm you,” Rachel said.

“Can I come in?” their mom asked, still holding the doorknob.

Rachel knew she had to do something, and fast. She couldn’t just let her mom stand outside the room talking through the cracks, but she also couldn’t let her in to see Sarah like this. Rachel walked over to the door and cracked it open and stuck her head out.

Rachel saw her mom standing close to the door trying to peek in. Rachel whispered, “Sarah’s upset about Gary, I’m trying to cheer her up. It’s not really a good time.”

“Oh,” her mom whispered back. “Thanks Rachel, you’re a great sister.”

Her mom kissed her on the top of her head and turned to walk away. Rachel was in the clear. She shut the door again. She knew she had just saved Sarah from a lot of trouble.

Rachel sat Sarah up and gave her some water. She helped her change out of her dress and into her pajamas. Sarah was slurring her words as she retold her night to Rachel. Rachel wasn’t really paying attention, though, her mind still stuck on Benji.

“Goodnight, Sarah,” Rachel said as she walked out of her room through their adjoining bathrooms. Rachel stopped in the bathroom and looked in the mirror. She couldn’t believe what had just happened. She had been so kind to Sarah and wondered if it had been her, if Sarah would have done the same thing.

As Rachel entered back into her room, she walked over to her desk drawer and pulled out her diary. She felt like she needed a release and knew she always felt much better after she’d written in her diary. She opened it with the key that hung around her neck and began to write.

*Dear Diary,*

*I have a secret to tell you. I am not allowed to tell anyone. Benji told me he was a vampire tonight. I honestly don't think I believe in vampires, but it still creeps me out. He said that he doesn't feed on humans and he also said that he wouldn't hurt me. I trust that he won't hurt me, but I am nervous around him. I need time to figure things out with him. I ran away from him tonight and don't know when, or if, I will see him again. I wish I could talk to someone about this. I need some advice but I swore to him I wouldn't tell. I wish someone had been there to have see what happened tonight at the dance – how he fought off Rob and his friends. It was crazy. I don't think what he did was humanly possible. I don't know...*

*XOXO,*

*Rachel*

She locked her diary and pulled up on the lock, to make sure it was secure. She didn't want anybody snooping in her business, especially now. Rachel couldn't help but think about the incident at Rye Playland. It flashed back in her mind like it was happening all over again. Next, her mind flashed to an image of Benji beating up Rob and his friends tonight. Her mind jumped to the feeling of his cold fingers between hers, and his bright blue eyes piercing hers. She quickly snapped out of it, as she breathed deep to slow her breath. She knew something was different about Benji, but she didn't want to believe it.

She didn't want to believe he was a vampire.

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