

AWAKENED

(BOOK #5 OF THE VAMPIRE LEGENDS)

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Also by Emma Knight

SWORN (Book #1 of the Vampire Legends)

TAKEN (Book #2 of the Vampire Legends)

BITTEN (Book #3 of the Vampire Legends)

CHOSEN (Book #4 of the Vampire Legends)

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“Doubt that the stars are fire,
Doubt that the sun doth move his aides,
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But never doubt I love.”

--William Shakespeare

CHAPTER 1

Rachel's eyes opened in a foggy haze as she gazed up at the morning sky. She lay there, on the cold, damp ground, and the cool crisp air breezing past her face made her lips chatter. She couldn't understand why she was laying on the ground. Why was she even outside?

She felt a cold hand touch hers, felt fingers caressing her face. She blinked again as the morning rays of the sun hit her face and then saw a guy, staring down at her, gazing into her eyes. She blinked again, wondering if she were seeing things. But he still remained, staring and smiling at her.

She took her hand and pinched her leg, hoping to wake from this dream, but it didn't help. She was awake, laying on the ground, in the cold, crisp air with a complete stranger.

She tried to remember what had happened the night before. She thought she must be hungover; thought maybe she made a terrible mistake at a dance club and ended up with this random guy. Then again, she didn't recall going to a dance club. She was completely lost, not a clue as to why she lay there and who this guy was.

She started to lift her head off the ground feeling the weight on her neck as she arose. She had a terrible headache that radiated through her spine and neck. She wasn't feeling right, either. Her whole body felt weak and exhausted, she didn't know what happened to her. It was almost as if someone gave her a roofie or

something. It was the strangest feeling, one she'd never had before. She didn't recognize her body, something was off, but she couldn't pinpoint exactly what it was.

She sat up slowly and waited a few minutes for the world to stop spinning around her. She was dizzy and felt nauseous, but above all her physical ailments, she felt scared. Why was she alone in some random field with a guy? What had she done? This was unforgivable, and she was sure something she'd regret once she remembered what had happened.

"Rachel, thank God you're ok. I was so worried about you!" Benji said.

"Huh?" Rachel said, in a fog.

"I've been sitting here all night watching you, I'm so glad you're OK and that nothing happened to you. I can't thank you enough for what you did for me," Benji said.

She looked at him, confused, and said, "I'm sorry, but who are you?"

Benji looked back at her with a stunned expression on his face, "What do you mean who am I?"

"I mean, who are you?" Rachel said, getting defensive. "What's going on?"

"You're joking, Rach! Stop kidding around!" Benji said.

"I'm not joking," Rachel said in a serious tone.

"Seriously?" Benji said. "What happened to you?"

"I don't know. I was hoping you'd be able to tell me what's going on here," Rachel asked.

"You saved my life. Remember?" Benji said. "Remember, the Red Amulet?"

“The Red what?” Rachel asked. “I don’t even know you.”

“Stop saying that, my love. I love you and you love me,” Benji said.

“Um, excuse me? I don’t love you. I don’t KNOW you!” Rachel said, suddenly feeling like this guy was crazy.

“C’mon Rach. Stop acting like this. It’s me Benji. Don’t you remember?”

Rachel stopped and looked him up and down, trying to place him. She had no idea where she’d met this guy or who he was. She couldn’t believe that he’d said she loved him. That was insanity. Was he a crazy person?

“Listen, I’ve gotta get outta here. I need to get home. My parents are probably worried about me,” Rachel said.

“No, they’re not. Trust me,” Benji said. “They disowned you.”

“Oh, stop it!” Rachel said. “They love me, stop saying that.”

She felt his cold hand touch her leg and she jumped back.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Rachel said. “Don’t touch me.”

“I love you,” Benji said. “Please snap out of it. Please!”

“Stop saying that. You don’t love me, either. Whatever happened between us was not love. What did happen anyway?” Rachel asked as she looked down to find all her clothes still intact and her hair still in place. She worried for a second that something happened between them that she’d really regret.

“Please Rachel. Please. I love you. Just come with me. We can go back to the castle. That will help you remember,” Benji said.

“Castle?” Rachel questioned. She didn’t know what to make of this guy. Was he some fairytale character living in some fictitious fantasyland? Was he serious? She was curious, but not curious enough to find out.

“No, I’m leaving,” Rachel, said as she stood up to walk away.

“Where are you going to go?” Benji said.

“Why does it matter?” Rachel snapped.

“Please, come with me. Don’t go!” Benji begged.

“I’m not coming with you to your *CASTLE*, you creep. Leave me alone now!”

Rachel yelled.

“Rachel, don’t do this. Don’t go. Not after all we’ve been through!”

“I can’t hear this anymore. I have to go!” Rachel said as she walked quickly away from Benji.

She didn’t know where she was walking to but figured she’d eventually get her bearings and figure out where she was. She knew she’d find her way back home somehow.

CHAPTER 2

Rachel walked up the front walkway to her house in Pennsylvania. She was overjoyed to be home and felt a sense of security walking up towards her front door. She reached into her pocket, looking for her house key, but it wasn't there.

That's odd, she thought to herself.

She stopped and listened; she heard her dad's voice coming through the door. He sounded angry. She suddenly wished she didn't stay out all night. She knew she was going to be in trouble.

Rachel lifted her right hand and put her pointer finger to the round, lit up doorbell and pushed it.

DING DONG.

She heard footsteps growing louder towards the door and then she saw her father's face peeking through the curtain in the door. He took a second look, blinking his eyes. Then, he opened the door, slowly, staring at her as if he was confused or angry. She couldn't make out his expression really.

"What are you doing back here?" her dad said.

Rachel looked at him in confusion, "What do you mean?"

"Why did you come back? Did you forget something?" her dad asked.

"Um? I live here. What are you talking about, Dad?" Rachel asked.

"No, you don't. You haven't lived here for years," her dad replied.

"C'mon Dad! Don't kid with me," Rachel said. "Can I come in now?"

"Why do you want to come in?" her dad asked.

"Because I LIVE HERE!" she said, in a booming voice. "What do you want me to do pitch a tent in the lawn and stay outside?"

Her dad laughed and cracked a smile. "I guess you can come inside."

"I'm going up to my room," Rachel said.

"Well...it's not exactly your room anymore," her dad said.

Rachel had no idea what he was talking about. She couldn't understand it. She was gone for one night and he cleared out her bedroom. What was he talking about?

"What do you mean? I was here yesterday," Rachel said.

"Rachel, are you Ok? What happened to you?" her dad asked.

She knew he'd eventually ask her about last night. She was surprised he wasn't angrier though. It was almost as if he didn't realize she'd gone out.

"I'm sorry. I know I should have called, or texted. It won't happen again. I promise," Rachel said shamefully.

"Huh?" her dad said. "What are you talking about?"

"Oh," Rachel said. "I thought you were asking about last night."

"Last night?" her dad said.

"Yeah, I'm sorry I stayed out all night. It's totally out of character and I'm sorry. I hope you and mom weren't too worried about me. I didn't mean it," Rachel said again.

She waited for a response from her dad, but didn't get anything but a blank, confused stare.

“Ok, I’m coming in, Dad,” Rachel said, as she scooted by him in the doorway.

She was taken back a little bit at the changes in the house. She was surprised, but figured her mom went through one of her re-decorating frenzies last night and changed things around while she was out. There was no other explanation she could think of.

On her way up the stairs to her room, she could hear her father’s footsteps trailing behind her. Why was he following her? She wondered.

As she came to her door, it was closed shut. The sign on her door that said *Rachel’s Room* was taken down and the nail hole closed up.

“Huh?” she said out loud.

She turned the brass handle to her door and opened it, surprised by what she saw.

“Dad! What’s going on?” Rachel yelled. “Where’s all my stuff?”

“Rachel, I was trying to explain that to you before. You don’t live here anymore,” her dad responded.

“Dad, seriously. What did you guys do with it? Where’s Mom? I need to talk to her about this. It’s one thing to go and change up the downstairs or your bedroom, but why did she have to change mine?” Rachel questioned angrily.

“Rachel, you haven’t lived here in two years. What do you expect?” her dad said.

“Two years!” Rachel yelled. “Why do you keep saying that?”

“Remember Bedford? Remember how you disappeared this past year? Remember you HATE us?” her dad said.

Rachel looked at him in surprise. She had no idea what he was going on about. Was everyone crazy today? She thought. If they weren't crazy than she must be going mad.

"Ok, seriously. This isn't funny. Where did you put all my stuff?" Rachel said. "Is this some sort of prank? April fools joke? Speaking of which, what day is it?"

"It's December 1st," her dad replied. "It's been a long time, Rachel. A really long time. I'm surprised you came back to us."

"Well, I'm back. I don't know what you're talking about, but I want to put my room back together. Where'd you put my things?" Rachel asked.

"Um...they're in the garage. But why are you going to put your room back together. You can't stay here!" her dad said, sternly.

"What do you mean I can't stay here? Where do you think I should go then?" Rachel questioned.

"I don't know. Where have you been living this past year? Why don't you go back there? You're probably more welcome there than here. After all we've been through you don't seriously think you can just march back in here as if nothing happened, do you?" her dad remarked.

"All you've been through? It was ONE NIGHT! Don't get all worked up over it. You're completely blowing this whole thing out of proportion," Rachel said, letting out a little laugh. "You and Mom are so dramatic! Where's Mom anyway?"

"She's not here," her father said.

"Where'd she go? The store?" Rachel asked.

"I told you the other day where she was. Don't pretend you don't know," her dad said.

"Is she on vacation?" Rachel said. "The other day? I don't remember her leaving."

Rachel felt her dad's hand touch her forehead, "You're not well," he said. "You should get some rest. We can talk about this when you wake up."

"I feel fine, Dad. Completely fine. The only thing that's bothering me is you telling me that I don't live here and that I can't stay in my own house. I think you're the sick one here, not me!"

"Listen, Rachel," her dad said. "I'll let you stay here under one condition."

She looked back at him in awe, what was he even suggesting? Was there another option to not staying here? Was he kicking her out?

"What's that, Dad?" Rachel remarked.

"You need to see a shrink," he said, in a serious tone. "You need to work out these issues if you are going to live under my roof."

"A shrink?" Rachel questioned with a laugh.

"Yes, a shrink. A therapist. It's clear it's what has to happen. We have to get to the bottom of this," her dad said.

"Um.. OK dad, whatever you say!" Rachel said, assuming he was joking.

"I'm not kidding. You either agree to it or you're outta here," he said.

"Ok, fine. I'll go. Whatever you want, Dad," Rachel said.

"All right, I'll set up an appointment for you with Dr. Goldman, he'll be the perfect person to help you through this. You're mother saw him before she was admitted.

And he still visits her now, talks to her, you know?" her dad said.

“Huh?” Rachel questioned. “Mom? A shrink?”

“Rachel, please. Don’t rehash this right now. I’d rather let sleeping dogs lie,” her father said.

Rachel hated that expression, yet her father used it all the time.

“OK, OK! Whatever you say. Let me just get my things,” Rachel said.

“Ok, I’ll help you,” her dad said. “But remember, if you do ANYTHING that I don’t agree with, you’re back out. Do you understand me?”

“Yes! Yes! I get it,” Rachel said. “I’ll be good.”

Then, out of nowhere, her stomach began to growl and she felt an insatiable hunger come over her. She couldn’t believe how hungry she felt. It was like a hunger she’d never experienced before. She clutched her stomach and ran downstairs to the kitchen to get some food, hoping she could get control of this feeling.

CHAPTER 3

“Rachel?” Mark said, in a surprised voice. “Is that you?”

“Mark!” Rachel said, in an excited voice. “What’s up little bro!”

“Wow, crazy to see you again!” Mark said.

Rachel didn’t know what was up with her family today. It was as if they hadn’t seen her in ages. She couldn’t figure it out.

“Um, yeah! Here I am!” Rachel said, going along with it.

“What are you doing back here?” Mark asked.

“Well, I came home today. Aren’t you happy to see me?” Rachel said, playing with him.

“Well, yeah, I guess so. But what did Dad say? Was he angry?” Mark asked.

“Not too much!” Rachel said. “I got off easy this time!”

“Clearly!” Mark said.

She then took a closer look at Mark and realized he looked different to her. She couldn’t pin point exactly what it was but it was as if he was a different person. He didn’t quite look like himself and the way he was acting around her was odd. Sure, the conversation was normal, but it was almost as if he was hiding something. It was very out of character for him.

“What’s wrong Mark? Are you ok?” Rachel asked.

“Yeah, why wouldn’t I be ok?” Mark snapped. “I’m just feeling a little off today, that’s all.”

Rachel watched as Mark washed some blood off his hands in the kitchen sink.

“What happened?” Rachel asked.

Mark turned around and looked at her, trying to cover up his hands, “Oh, nothing.”

“What’s on your hands? Did you hurt yourself?” Rachel asked concerned.

“Oh, that. It’s nothing really. Just a minor scratch,” Mark answered.

It looked like more than a minor scratch to Rachel but she didn’t press it any further. She didn’t want to upset him and he was already acting a little strange. She didn’t want to alienate him.

“So why’d you come back anyway?” Mark asked.

“What do you mean?” Rachel asked. “I was only gone for a night! Why are you and Dad acting as if I’ve been gone for a long time?”

She waited as Mark looked at her, as if he were trying to read her.

“What?” Rachel asked. “Why are you staring at me?”

“I’m sorry. It’s just that, well, you have been gone since we moved,” Mark said.

“Moved?” Rachel asked.

“Yeah since we moved back here, you’ve been gone,”

“You’re funny, Mark!” Rachel said. “Stop playing games with me!”

“I’m not playing games. Don’t you remember?” Mark asked, still staring at her with an odd expression.

“Remember what?” Rachel asked.

“You know, Bedford, AHS, Benji?” Mark said.

Then, all of a sudden, Rachel had a flashback to a moment she had with Benji where they were kissing on the balcony of his castle. The flashback came and went quickly and then she shook her head, trying to remember it all, but she couldn't.

“Not really? We've lived here the whole time though,” Rachel said. “Bedford?”

“Remember Dad's job got transferred up to New York? We moved for a year and then after you left things got really bad for the family and mom went into the hospital. Then, Dad decided to move us back to Pennsylvania. He felt the move was all a terrible mistake and he wanted to bring the family back home, back to better times,” Mark said.

“WAIT WHAT? Mom's in the hospital?” Rachel shrieked.

“Yes, it was all too much for her after you left. She couldn't take it. She's in a coma now in the hospital. Doctor's aren't sure if she's going to wake up,” Mark said.

“But why? What do you mean?” Rachel asked. “This is MY FAULT?”

“Well, I guess so. Indirectly it is your fault. You caused us a lot of stress and grief. It was all so unpredictable one day to the next and nobody knew where you were going or where to find you. It was really hard on us,” Mark said.

“I had no idea. I don't even know what you're talking about. I never did anything,” Rachel said.

“Listen, Rachel. I don't really want to go over this with you now. It's really not a good time for me. I have to go now,” Mark said, looking down at his watch.

“Wait, but you just got here. Where are you going?” Rachel asked.

“I have to go. Stop asking so many questions!” Mark said.

CHAPTER 4

Rachel went upstairs to start putting her room back together. She was puzzled by the fact that everything was in boxes but didn't want to keep questioning it. She started taking her things out of their boxes one by one. She pulled out old trophies, posters, and her clothing. Her favorite MTV t-shirt was there, in the box with her Dr. Martin shoes that she loved so much. Then, she pulled out some old photographs of Dana and all her friends. She hung them back on the wall in their proper places and continued unpacking. She was happy to see her room take shape again, just as she'd remembered it.

As she reached down to the bottom of one box she found a dusty picture album, blew off the dust and opened it up. She was confused by the photos she saw and didn't know who these people were. It was pictures of her with a group of girls she didn't know. Then she saw pictures of a homecoming football game and her sister Sarah as a cheerleader. It didn't look like the high school she remembered and all the kids were strangers to her. She didn't recognize one of them. This was all very confusing to her. Maybe what everyone was saying held some truth, she thought to herself. Still, she didn't want to believe it.

Then, she pulled out her cell phone to text Dana. She missed her; it felt like forever since they'd hung out for some strange reason. She wanted to see what she was up to and if she wanted to hang out.

Rachel: Hey Dana! What's up? Wanna come over?

Dana: Rachel?

Rachel: Who else would it be!

Dana: Is it really you?

Rachel: Um, yeah! Stop acting weird. What's up?

Dana: Where are you?

Rachel: Home. You?

Dana: In PA. Where else!

Rachel: Me, too!

Dana: You're back? When did you come back? Are you just visiting family?

Rachel: What do you mean?

Dana: It's been a while. I'm surprised to hear from you.

Rachel: What happened last night? Do you know why I woke up in a field?

Dana: What? What are you talking about?

Rachel: What did we do last night?

Dana: IDK. I wasn't with you.

Rachel: What do you mean? We ALWAYS go out together! Seriously, what happened?

Dana: Rachel? Are you sure this is really you?

Rachel: Yes. It's me.

Dana: Prove it then. This is too weird.

Rachel: I'll come over. No actually you come here. I don't want my dad to get mad at me.

He's already a little pissed I didn't come home last night.

Dana: It's late, I can't tonight. Will I see you tomorrow?

Rachel: Yeah, I'll see you in school tomorrow. Pumped for our math class together. Ugh,

Mr. Malloy is such a loser and that tupe is redic.

Dana: Gotta go my mom's here to see me. See ya tmw.

Rachel: Bye xoxo

Rachel thought about her text conversation with Dana and thought it was a little strange, but assumed she was in on this whole joke. It was like everyone was ganging up against her to convince her that she's been gone or missing for a long time. What a strange and odd joke to play on someone, she thought.

She continued to empty her boxes and then found her diary wrapped up inside a towel in the bottom of a box. She opened it up and realized that the lock on the side had been broken and pages were missing. There was an old entry from a few years ago about the Dutch Fair and then a big gap in pages where someone must have torn them out or something. Then, a random half page with the name Benji written on it. She didn't know why pages were ripped out of her diary or who Benji was, but it was the second time today she'd heard his name. She thought back to the morning, waking up with a Benji, but she didn't think it would be the same person. She didn't know that guy. It must have been a different Benji.

It was late and this day was completely exhausting to Rachel. She couldn't run this mystery over and over in her head one more time. She lay her head down on her soft down pillow, crawled under the covers and quickly fell asleep. She was excited to see Dana tomorrow and finally catch up about what happened to her over the weekend. She had to get to the bottom of her Saturday night antics.

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