

*The
Lost Saint*

A
DARK DIVINE
NOVEL

BREE DESPAIN

EGMONT
USA

New York

CHAPTER ONE

The Sky Is Falling

THURSDAY NIGHT, SESSION #82

“You can do this, Grace,” Daniel said between sharp breaths. “You know you can.”

“I’m trying.” My fingers trembled as I tightened them into fists.

It was the pain of the transition that always surprised me—no matter how prepared I thought I was. It started as an aching sensation deep inside my body. Pooling in my muscles, making my shoulders shake and my legs throb. My biceps felt like they were on fire.

“Come on, Grace. Don’t quit on me now.”

“Shut up!” I said, and took another swing.

Daniel laughed and countered to the left. My blow missed his mitt entirely.

“Agh!” I stumbled forward, but Daniel caught me before I fell and pushed me back up. I gritted my teeth and rocked back on my heels in the grass. I was *supposed*

to be more agile than this. “Stop moving around.”

“Your opponent”—Daniel panted—“isn’t going to stand still and just let you hit him.” He held his boxing mitts out in front of him, welcoming a new attack.

“He would if he knew what was good for him.” I jutted forward with a combination of a hook and a jab, which Daniel deflected with his mitts. He spun out of my way, and my next swing went wildly into the air.

“Gah.” I shook my head. My moonstone necklace bounced against my chest. It felt warm against my already flushed skin, pulsing with heat.

“You’re pushing your punches too much. Save your energy. Quick jabs. Send your arm out with a snap and then bring it back immediately.”

“I’m *trying*.” The pain in my muscles mounted. But it wasn’t from fatigue. It was my powers. My “abilities,” as Daniel called them. They were always lingering there, just out of reach, whenever we trained. And if I could just push through the wall of fire that stood between them and me, I could grab on to my powers and use them. Own them.

I cringed as the crescent-shaped scar on my arm throbbed and flared. I dropped my arm and tried to shake out the pain.

“Arms up,” Daniel said. “Rule number one: Never drop your guard.” He smacked me lightly on the shoulder. It was meant to be a playful hit, but the pain in my scar shot through my arm like electricity.

I glared at him.

“You’re getting annoyed,” Daniel said. That wry grin of his played on his lips.

“You think?” I sent another combination into his mitts. Three jabs and a hook. I felt a surge of power through my body—finally—and the last punch flew faster and harder than I expected. Daniel missed deflecting it, and my fist slammed into his shoulder.

“Whoa!” He jumped back and shook out his shoulders. “Rein it in, Grace. Don’t let your emotions have too much control.”

“Then why are you *trying* to annoy me?”

His smile edged from wry to devious. “So you can practice balance.” He smacked his mitts together and gestured for me to attack him again.

I could feel my powers pulsing through me—finally in my grasp. I laughed and bounced back several feet. “How’s this for balance?” I asked with a smile, and faster than I could think, my body went into a spin kick that landed squarely in one of Daniel’s outstretched mitts.

Daniel grunted and stumbled back. His knee wobbled and gave out from under him, and he went flying backward toward the ground.

“Oh no!” I lunged for him and caught him by the arm. But it was too late to stop him from falling, and I toppled with him onto the grass.

We landed side by side on the lawn. I was momentarily

stunned—hitting the ground had knocked the wind, and my powers, right out of me. Daniel rolled onto his side and moaned, startling me back into reality.

“Oh no, I’m sorry!” I sat up. “I wasn’t thinking. My powers kicked in and I . . . Are you okay?”

Daniel’s moan turned into a half laugh. “That’s not the kind of balance I was talking about.” He winced and pulled off his mitts and tossed them aside.

“Seriously, are you okay?”

“Yeah.” Daniel leaned forward and rubbed his knee. He’d trashed it pretty badly when he fell from the parish’s balcony a little less than ten months ago. And since I’d cured him of the werewolf curse right after he fell, he’d lost his superhuman powers and had to wait for it to heal like any other regular person. Even after spending weeks on crutches and doing a regimen of physical therapy, he still had a lot of trouble with his knee. “Beatin’ up on a gimp. What would your daddy say?”

“Ha-ha.” I made a face at him.

“Seriously, though. You’re getting good.” He groaned and lay back into the grass, tucking his arms behind his head.

“Not good enough.”

It took almost an hour of intense sparring before my powers even started to manifest, and once they kicked in, they lasted only, what, like thirty seconds? That was the thing about my *abilities*. They came in spurts whenever *they* felt like it—totally uncontrolled by me. My

wounds healed over more quickly than those of a normal human, but I still couldn't draw on that power the way Daniel used to be able to. I couldn't heal myself on my own terms. I'd get bursts of speed or agility, like my body had a mind of its own—like when I kicked Daniel just now—but I usually couldn't control *when* it happened.

After Daniel's doctor gave him the go-ahead to be active again, we started training together three nights a week—when I wasn't grounded, that is. We'd go running, try out some parkour moves, box with mitts like we did tonight, practice trying to hear and see long distances. But even though I was notably faster and stronger than I had been even a few months ago, it was beginning to seem like, no matter how much I tried, I'd never be able to use my powers the way I wanted—instead of them using me.

Daniel sighed. He pointed up in the sky. “Looks like we quit just in time. Meteor shower's started.”

I looked up as a shooting star streaked through the dark, clear night above us. “Oh yeah. I almost forgot about that.”

Daniel and I had planned on tracking the meteor shower after tonight's training session. We were supposed to count how many meteors we saw in a thirty-minute period for an extra-credit science project at school.

I knew it bothered Daniel that Principal Conway

wouldn't even consider letting him graduate last year—he'd missed way too much school during the years he'd spent on the run from the curse that used to plague his every thought. But I, for one, was happy he hadn't left for college yet. And with his attending summer school, doing some extra credit, and testing out of a few classes, we'd get to graduate *together* next spring.

"I'll get the light," I said after I pulled off my glove wraps. I flexed my fingers, stretching out my sore knuckles as I crossed the yard behind Maryanne Duke's old house. I flipped off the porch light, grabbed my hoodie, and headed back over to the lawn. With my sweatshirt draped over my chest like a blanket, I took in a deep breath of autumn air and melted into the cool leaves of grass next to Daniel.

"That's six," I said after a long moment.

Daniel grunted in agreement.

"Oh! Did you see that one?" I pointed above my head at an especially bright star that glistened through the sky until it fizzled into nothing.

"Yeah," Daniel said softly. "Beautiful."

I glanced at him. He was lying on his side, staring at me.

"You weren't even watching," I teased.

"Yes, I was." Daniel flashed me another one of his wry smiles. "I could see it reflecting in your eyes." He reached out and brushed my cheek with his fingers. "One of the most beautiful things I've ever seen." He

hooked one of his fingers under my chin, drawing my face closer to his.

I looked away from his deep, dark brown eyes, surveyed the curves of his muscles under the thin running shirt he'd worn for our training session. Then my gaze flitted to his shaggy hair, which had settled into a nice golden blond over the summer—all the dark had finally washed out. I followed the lines of his jaw and then rested my gaze on the curve of his smiling lips. It wasn't his devious smile anymore, but the one he saved for moments like this—the one that meant he was truly happy.

He was still warm from our sparring match, and I could feel the heat radiating off his body only a few inches away. Drawing me to him. Willing me to close the gap between us. I looked back at his eyes, loving the feeling that I could get lost in them forever.

It was moments like these when I still couldn't believe that he was even here.

That he was still alive.

That he was *mine*.

I'd watched him die once. Held him in my arms and listened to his heartbeat fade away into nothing.

It happened the night my brother Jude lost himself to the werewolf curse—just days before he left a note on the kitchen table, walked out into a snowstorm, and disappeared. The same night Jude infected me with the powers that taunted me now.

The night I almost lost everything.

“There goes another one.” Daniel leaned in and touched a kiss just beside my eye. He trailed his lips across my cheek and down my jaw, sending a tingling sensation through my body with the deliciousness of his touch.

Daniel’s lips came to my mouth. He brushed them softly there at first and then pressed gently. His lips parted, and he mingled them with mine.

My legs ached as I pulled him closer—finally closing the distance between us.

I didn’t care that we were out in the yard behind Maryanne Duke’s old house. I didn’t care that we were supposed to be tracking the meteor shower for class. Nothing existed outside his touch. There was nothing under the falling stars except Daniel and me and the blanket of grass underneath us.

Daniel jerked his head back slightly. “You’re buzzing,” he whispered against my lips.

“Huh?” I asked, and kissed him.

He pulled away. “I think it’s your phone.”

I noticed the buzzing, too. My cell phone in my sweat-shirt pocket.

“So what?” I grabbed the front of his shirt playfully and pulled him closer. “They can leave a message.”

“It could be your mom,” Daniel said. “I just got you back. I don’t want to lose you for another two weeks.”

“Damn it.”

Daniel smirked. He always thought it was hilarious when I swore. But he did have a point—about my mom, that is. She had only two modes since Jude left: **Zombie Queen** and **Crazed Mother Bear**. It was like her own personal brand of bipolar disorder.

I'd left for the evening before she got back from seeing Aunt Carol off at the train station, so I wasn't sure what mode she would be in, but if it was of the overbearing sort, I could possibly be grounded again just for the act of not answering her calls on the second ring.

I sat up and dug into the pocket of my hoodie, but I'd already taken too much time, and the call ended before I pulled out my phone.

"Crap." I couldn't take another two weeks of not seeing Daniel outside of school. I flipped open my phone to check the missed call info, mentally crossing my fingers that it hadn't been my mother, but what I saw made me cock my head in confusion. "Where's your phone?" I asked Daniel.

"I left it inside. On my bed." Daniel yawned. "Why?"

I stood up, still staring at the display on my phone. A dark feeling crept under my skin. My hair stood up on the back of my neck, and my muscles tensed in that way they did when my body sensed danger. The phone started ringing again in my hand. I almost dropped it.

"Who's calling you?"

"You are."

I fumbled with the phone and almost dropped it again. I pushed the Answer button. “Hello?” I asked tentatively as I put it to my ear.

Silence.

I looked at the screen on my phone to make sure I hadn’t missed the call or accidentally hit the Disconnect button. I returned it to my ear. “Um, hello?”

Still nothing.

I looked at Daniel and shrugged. “It must be some weird kind of flyaway.” I was about to hang up when I heard something on the line. It sounded almost like a hand covering the receiver.

“Hello?” My skin tingled. Goose bumps pricked up my arms. “Who’s there?”

“They’re coming for you,” a muffled voice said over the phone. “You’re in danger. You’re all in danger. You can’t stop them.”

“Who is this?” I asked, panic rising with the tension in my muscles. “How did you get Daniel’s phone?”

“Don’t trust him,” the trembling voice said. “He makes you think you can trust him, but you can’t.”

Daniel reached for the phone, but I shook him off.

“What are you talking about?” I asked.

“You can’t trust him.” The voice on the line seemed suddenly clearer—like the hand muffling the receiver had moved out of the way—and the familiarity of it made my heart nearly stop. “Please, Gracie, *listen* to

me this time. You're all in danger. You have to know that—" The voice cut off with a clatter, like the phone had been dropped, and the line went dead.

"Jude!" I shouted into my phone.

ABOUT TEN SECONDS LATER

"Wait!" Daniel called after me as he tried to push himself up from the ground.

But I'd hit the button to call back Daniel's cell, and was off the grass and across the back patio before it even started ringing. I could hear his ringtone faintly playing a metal guitar version of "Moonlight Sonata" from his apartment in Maryanne's basement. I felt a burst of supernatural speed and, in a matter of seconds, flew around the house and down the cement stairs that led to the apartment.

The old yellow door was slightly ajar. My palms suddenly went sweaty. Daniel was normally a bit compulsive about keeping his door locked. The hinges groaned as I pushed the door open a little farther.

"Jude?" I called into the studio apartment. The phone had stopped ringing, and the apartment was dark, but I could see a pair of Daniel's Converse lying on the ground next to a crumpled pile of laundry. The sofa bed was pulled out but the blanket was missing, and the sheets were halfway off the thin mattress.

"Gracie, wait." Daniel appeared at the top of the

stairs. “That may not have been your brother on the phone.”

“It was him. I’d know his voice anywhere.” I was absolutely, upon threat of death from my father, not allowed to enter Daniel’s apartment with him alone—but I took a step into the doorway anyway. “Jude, are you here?”

“That’s not what I mean.” Daniel limped down the steps. “I mean, Jude may not have been *your brother* when he was calling. He may have been under the influences of the wolf.”

Once again, Daniel had a point, and I shivered at the reminder of the things my brother had done before while under the control of the wolf. The crescent-shaped scar in my arm twinged, as if to punctuate the memories. But still, if Jude *was* here, I needed to know. My heart sped up as I took a step inside the apartment.

“Jude?” I flicked the light switch a couple of times. Nothing happened.

My footsteps kept time with my heartbeat as I walked deeper into the dark room. Apprehension tightened in my muscles. Tingling pain spread through my tendons. My body was preparing for something—flight or fight.

I passed the sofa bed, inspecting the crumpled sheets for the phone Daniel said he’d left there. Daniel opened the bathroom door and cautiously eased inside the tiny room. I heard the opening and closing of cabinets, and then the rustling of the shower curtain.

The tingling pain spread to my fingertips, and I tightened my hand around my cell phone. I hit the Redial button once more. I could hear the ringing through my end before the metal tone of Daniel's phone began. The noise was soft at first, but then it rapidly got louder and closer.

My body whirled on instinct toward the sound. I landed in a crouching position, ready to pounce. A small growl escaped from my lips.

"Whoa, Gracie!" Daniel said. He stood in front of me, his hands up in a defensive position, and his cell phone clutched in one of his fists. "It's just me. I found my phone in the shower."

I lunged at him and threw my arms around his neck. "Holy crap, I thought you were . . . were . . ." I held my breath and pressed my moonstone necklace to my chest, letting anxiety slowly drain out of my body. I don't know exactly what I'd thought was behind me. A werewolf with a phone in its jaws? I felt positively ridiculous now.

"It's okay." Daniel brushed his fingers through my hair. "Nobody's here."

"But someone *was* here," I said. "Unless you have a habit of talking on the phone in the shower."

"Try using your powers to tell if it was Jude," Daniel said. "Use your senses like I taught you."

I didn't have much hope that it would actually work, but I took a deep breath, held the air in the back of my

mouth, and tried to let it fill my senses like Daniel had explained to me at least two dozen times in the last few months. I was supposed to be testing the air for hints of my brother, trying to sift out a faint familiar taste or smell beyond Daniel's almondy scent and the tang of oil paint that always filled his apartment. I let my breath out in a long, frustrated hiss.

Daniel gave me a hopeful look.

I shook my head. I'd failed again.

"It's okay," Daniel said. "It'll come. It just takes time." That's what he *always* said.

"Yeah, I know." I hoped he wasn't going to launch into his usual speech about how it takes balance, and how I'm doing great so far, and how most Urbat take *years* to develop their powers. "Besides, I don't even know if I remember what my brother smells like, and I certainly haven't ever tasted him before."

Daniel smiled. *Lecture averted.*

I took his cell phone from him and used my *human* eyes to inspect it for clues. The face was cracked, like it had been dropped, and I was surprised it still worked. I checked the time and the number of the last call made from the phone. "He definitely called me from this." I shuddered. "He was right in here while we were just outside."

"What did he say?" Daniel asked.

"He said I was in danger. That we were all in danger.

He said, ‘They’re coming for you,’ and that I couldn’t stop them. And he said that I couldn’t trust someone else . . .” I bit my lip and hesitated. “I don’t know, but I think he meant you.”

Daniel crossed his arms in front of his chest. “Sounds like his feelings toward me haven’t changed.” A look of concern settled in his dark brown eyes.

I wondered if he was thinking the same thing as me—that maybe Jude had other intentions for breaking into the apartment. Maybe Jude had thought Daniel would be here alone and vulnerable? But that didn’t make any sense. If he had wanted to attack Daniel, my presence certainly wouldn’t have stopped him. It hadn’t stopped him before.

“Did he say anything else?” Daniel asked.

“No. The call cut off. I think he dropped the phone. He seemed nervous. Maybe his hand was shaking.” *Or maybe he’d been about to go through the change.*

“Do you think he was messing with you?” Daniel asked. “Maybe this is just some kind of twisted game to him. He never wanted us to be together in the first place.”

“I don’t know.” I looked down at the phone in my hands. “I guess it’s possible. But it doesn’t make sense that he’d come back here just for a practical joke. I think he’s got some other motivation.”

Maybe it was my new wolf instincts taking over

again, or maybe it was just some kind of sibling connection, but something deep down told me that Jude was right . . . we were all in danger. I just didn't know if *he* was the one we were all in danger from.