

Left to Ashes

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Chapter One – Passing through the Gethsemane

I love my Mom.

She has always been there for me, and she's been my champion.

My name is Keenan Stewart. And this is my hell.

Hell for me started six months ago. But let me tell you why I'm here at all.

I lived with my Dad, Patrick in Toronto. Every day after school I'd come home and do my homework. Then I'd get to go to something like soccer, Scouts, or another activity. Free evenings were spent with my Dad watching TV, or just spending time together.

But then my Dad got laid off. It's this darned economy.

He got a new job, but with it he's only home one week in a month. He said I couldn't live with him anymore, even though it broke his heart to have to send me away. So he called my Mom Maria, and arranged for me to live with her and Cameron, my step father. Cameron has two daughters of his own, Diane and Karen Reaser.

I arrived in London, Ontario about a week after my Dad had informed me. At least he took me for pizza and games before I had to move. Oh, I was 17 when I moved in with Cameron and my Mom.

Shortly after I moved in, my Mom started having issues. She was always emotional, and started *seeing* things that may or may not have been there. So Cameron decided it was best

that she visit the local psychiatric facility.

That was last week. She's still there.

So here I am attending Cairine Wilson High School. I made one friend, her name is Justine. She's somewhat popular, so I sit with her friends at lunch, but otherwise I try to stay out of everyone's way.

There's another group of students here that no one seems to know about. They're the Cullens. Moved here about a year ago, or so Justine says. There's Alice Cullen and Jasper Hale, Emmett and Renesmee Cullen, and Edward and Bella Cullen. Justine thinks they're stuck up. They keep to themselves, but no one has really said why. They're quiet in all their classes. Their adoptive father Carlisle Cullen is a doctor over at St. Joseph's Hospital.

"Um... you're Keenan, right?"

I looked over to the person next to me at the table. It was Emmett Cullen. He never spoke in English class unless it was to go to the washroom, and I think he only asked once in the short time I've been there. It was the first day, actually. And he never returned either. I didn't see him until like two days later.

"Yee... yeah. Why do you ask?" I looked over at Emmett to see what he wanted.

Emmett looked at his book for a moment, and then back at me. "Alice is having a party this weekend. Saturday night at our place. The whole school is invited. I was... wondering if... you wanted to come?" He pulled out a nicely crafted paper invitation. "It's a masquerade party."

"So I have to like... wear a costume?"

Emmett nodded. "It is October, lots of halloween parties. Alice tends to get a bit... excited, and goes a little... okay a lot overboard when she plans them. You should come, it'll be a lot of fun."

I shifted a little in my seat. "I'm... flattered that you'd think to ask me, but won't your girlfriend be jealous?"

I swear Emmett was going to blush, but the colour of his cheeks never changed from the paleness I was used to. "She's not my girlfriend, and um... I just meant as friends. Speaking of which, do you wanna go bowling next week? Perhaps Wednesday?"

I blinked and just looked at Emmett. This guy was a gorgeous hunk. Oh yeah, I'm gay. I forgot to mention that. He was so freaking sexy that it wasn't funny. Every girl in school wants him, and he's inviting me to his party, and he wants to go bowling? Very strange.

"Um... I'll try to attend your party, and bowling. Thank you, Emmett." I smiled to him.

The bell rang, and I left the classroom, casually. English was the third period of the day. I

didn't have a fourth class, so I headed out of the school, and started to walk home. I lived close enough that I could walk. My step father didn't want me driving any of his precious cars, and he sold my Mom's car because she doesn't need it. He didn't seem to think I might want to learn to drive.

I made my way into the house, and went to my bedroom. Now my Mom and Step Father live in a small house. Originally it was planned for only two kids, and then I got added. So I got the small guest bedroom. It wasn't very big at all. Room enough for a dresser, a bed and a desk. Although my step sisters both had laptops to do their homework on, I had to use paper and a pen. If I had an assignment to hand in, I could use the "family computer" to type it up on. It was a 5 year old obsolete piece of junk that in reality only I use.

I suppose that's why I had to use it.

And it was in the laundry room of all places. I wasn't even allowed to move it into my bedroom. So I was constantly getting interrupted when I had to use it. The only time I had to check e-mail was at school. I e-mailed my Dad, but he could rarely reply due to work. When he did he told me to keep my chin up, etc.

There was a knock on my door, and then Karen let herself in.

"You know, KAREN. It's polite to wait for a response before you barge in!"

Karen just rolled her eyes. "Well nerdbrains, Diane said supper is ready. So if you want any, you'd better come downstairs!"

Karen left, and I finished up the few last things I had with my homework. I stood from my desk, and went downstairs to the kitchen. Cameron, Diane, and Karen were there eating. I took my seat, and quietly served myself what little was left.

I looked to Cameron. "I won't be home on Saturday night. I was invited to a party." I'd say that we always had to tell him where we were, but it was *me* who had to tell him where *I* was. Diane and Karen had almost complete freedom.

Cameron just grunted and kept eating his steak. Karen looked at me like she was a vulture or something. "Who'd invite you to a party?"

I swallowed my vegetables and replied, "Emmett Cullen."

Karen just seemed to freeze, and then sneered. "Yeah, well you can't get there. He lives in the boonies, and no buses can get there! Good luck!"

I think Karen has wanted the Cullen's but will never admit it. Diane was just quiet, and ate her food. When dinner was over, I cleaned up the table, and did all the dishes... by hand. I was expected to do this for every meal when I was home. Which was almost every night. Since my Mom had been in the mental hospital, my evening activities had been cancelled.

Now I'm pretty much just a slave boy.

When I was done, I quietly made my way to the laundry room. I sent my Dad an e-mail with another update, and told him about the invitation to the party. He's wanted me to make more friends since moving to London, but Cameron's made that really difficult. Before he could catch me, I sent the e-mail and signed off.

I went back to my bedroom, and got the book *White Night* from *The Dresden Files* by Jim Butcher. Since I wasn't allowed to watch TV or surf the internet, although my step sisters were allowed to, I went out onto the porch and started to read.

When I go to school in the morning, I get a ride with Diane. We're the same age, and we're both in grade 11. Karen graduated and attends Fanshawe College. She wants to eventually go to the University of Western Ontario, but her marks aren't good enough. Anyway, so Diane drives me to school. I walk home because she has a forth period class, and I don't.

Diane is reasonably nice to me. When around Cameron and Karen she acts hostile, but in the car alone we either drive quietly, or talk about whatever. She asked me about my invitation to the Cullen's party. But she said she couldn't drive me, since her and Karen would be driving together.

The whole school was invited to the Cullen's party, so it was natural to assume Diane and Karen would go. I guess I was special or something to get a personal invitation.

When I got to school, Diane and I went our separate ways. I went to go in the south entrance, only to find Emmett standing by the door. When I got there, he even opened the door for me. "So how are you today, Keenan?"

"Um... I'm fine. Were you waiting for me?" He stepped beside me and we walked to my locker.

Emmett just nodded. "Yeah, Alice wanted me to make sure that you're not allergic to any specific foods."

I raised an eyebrow, "No, but why would she worry about that?"

Emmett just shrugged. "She's strange that way. Um... I gotta get to class, but perhaps after English we can do our homework together?"

I shrugged and headed into my first period class.

The rest of the day went quietly, and boring. I had to sit with Justine and her friends, and ate a salad quietly. I tried to be small and unnoticed. It worked. Even Justine didn't try to engage me in conversation. The story of my recent life.

Although I saw Emmett again in English, he had gone pretty quiet. He didn't even try to talk to me. So after the period was over, I just went home as usual. It could have been fun to hang out, but there's always Saturday night.

Just after I had gotten home, and settled down to doing my homework, the doorbell rang. I stood up and went downstairs to answer the door. There was a man wearing a brown uniform that said UPS.

“Yeah?”

“I have a package for a Keenan Stewart.”

“That's me.” The man handed me a device that looked like a PADD out of *Star Trek: The Original Series*. I signed my name, and took the envelope he had given me.

I closed the door, and went into the family room. I opened the envelope, and inside it was a black American Express card with my name on it. I raised an eyebrow. No where did it say where this had come from.

About 10 minutes into my wondering, the phone startled me. I reached over and answered it. “Hello?”

The voice was that of an older lady. “Is this Keenan?”

“Yes, may I ask who is calling?”

“Keenan, this is your Aunt... your Aunt Susan.”