

On the Window's other side

Von June-flower

Raw Diamonds

Daemon knows these children.

He has known them ever since: these kids without parents, destined to be like him one day, young and inexperienced but eager to learn, eager to fight. Eager to follow the example he sets and full of pride to be his student. They don't know the world at all.

There's Theresa.

Even as a child, she can't hold back. Patience is a word she doesn't know, stubbornness her second name. She fights with skill, but too fast, uses too much power in her haste to rid the world of the dangers of the night. She doesn't hold back, no matter how much she has tired herself out already. It's not only one time Daemon has to carry her back to the safe house, her fragile little body thrown over his shoulder, while she keeps complaining she can walk by herself. Normally, she falls into an exhausted sleep after a few minutes of ranting and cursing.

She's the strongest one of his students, maybe even the most skilled fighter: she can use multiple weapons, fight in different kinds of styles, and face a large number of opponents at the same time. She never cries, like Marina, and never sulks like Ten and Nadya. Whenever something is bothering her, she disappears into the training quarters and doesn't come back for hours until someone finds her asleep on the floor of the training room or the bathroom. She has grown a lot since Daemon came to meet her first, the little girl facing him boldly, requesting to be taught by him in order to become stronger. She never told him what she wants to fight. But even today, she still isn't able to hold back. Even her seemingly endless energy is bound to run out sometime. It's good Cassidy always is with her.

Cassidy is the one with brains.

He's truly a genius – his IQ is high enough to shut up anybody asking for details. He's just like his mother when it comes to brains – and just like his father in his appearance: red, short hair, freckles all over his face and arms, tall and lanky.

He's the one who does the calculations. How many enemies, how dangerous? How much time and power available to him? Not wanting to, he still has been born the ideal leader. Working in a team is his one great asset, Daemon just can't picture him as a lone hunter like Theresa might be one day. Until it comes to that, he hopes the two of them will stay together, because it's the easiest way for them. Cassidy is the calming influence, the balancing power to Theresa's wild energy and raw force. He's the only one Theresa still tells of her nightmares, the only one she confides in. When

he's ten years old, he forces Daemon to take him seriously by laying out a complicated trap in a two-hours training-session – almost luring his teacher into it. Almost. From then, Daemon has tried his best to help him develop his ideas, his brilliance, because however much hunters need brute force, being cunning and intelligent is a rare trait and sorely needed nowadays. Sometimes he even thinks Cassidy might be a good predecessor – possibly when he, Daemon, will go down fighting one day. But he's not supposed to favor his students, and truly, he doesn't.

Jaqueline sometimes reminds him of himself.

Cool, quiet, always in the background – but deathly a hunter if he chooses to be one. When he's twelve, the blond boy is brought to him by a fellow teacher who doesn't know what to do with the boy any longer, the lonely little child refusing to train, to interact, to live and to even eat with his other students. Daemon gave one look at him and took him back to the safe house he considers home – as long as they are there – where he left him standing in the middle of the living room. Soon the other children were staring at him curiously while Jaqueline ignored them all. Only when Jay took his hand and told him to come to dinner, he moved, for the first time he reacted – and until now, they're the inseparable twins, Jaqueline and Jay. It's Jay to whom Jaqueline comes when something is bothering him, it's Jay who has been partnered with Jaqueline for so long time Daemon can't remember who has been Jay's partner before Jaqueline came along. But the boy has been good for him.

Jaqueline is the unseen and unheard threat, the quiet killer from the shadows. It's still not enough to sneak up on Daemon, but for the wolves and rippers, it's more than enough. His precision is more than accurate; his kills are quick and lethal. He's a good hunter even though he still is unable to work with other hunters than with his team. Daemon can just hope they'll be allowed to stay together. But then, he muses, anyone who'll try to tear apart those seven students of his without their consent will be up for an unpleasant surprise.

Jay is Jaqueline's other half.

And, like Theresa and Cassidy, they are their exact opposites. Where Jaqueline is quiet and calm, Jay is hyperactive and humorous, where Jaqueline is calculating and preparing, Jay storms forward wildly, almost like Theresa. The girl and Jay get into fights whenever Daemon isn't looking, they fight for food, for training, for nothing and everything – and nobody stops them because they know they're doing it for fun. Teasing Theresa is Jay's favorite pastime. Only when Jaqueline isn't there, he changes, suddenly there's the little boy Daemon saw on that day, bloody and injured, crawling away from a pack of werewolves which had killed his parents, who's hiding between the dark trees, shaking in fear. Jay doesn't remember this part of his childhood anymore, and Daemon is glad for him. But still, Jay is funny and loves to play tricks on his fellow students – and on his teacher, as well. He has not once managed to fool Daemon, but nevertheless, he continues trying. He loves challenges.

As a fighter, Jay is quick and unbelievably hard to target. There's not as much force in his blows as in Theresa's or in Terrence's, but his agility and his own instinct – partnered with Jaqueline's gift of quiet hunting – make him as deadly as any hunter can get. He'll be a normal, average hunter one day, with a sunny nature, loved or at least liked by everyone. Daemon hopes he'll experience the routine hunters know one day: Doing boring patrolling duty on abandoned grave yards, writing reports, keeping watch. Because unlike some of his other pupils, Jay is average, and average hunters

will survive. Daemon doesn't think about what future awaits his extraordinary students, though.

Ten is the one he knows longest, and if he'd ever have a daughter, she would be like her.

She was three years old when they first met. The tiny bundle of clothing, black, curly hair and huge, brown eyes triggered protectiveness in him like he never had known before. He didn't want to train her, but she insisted, wanting to become a hunter, just like him. And if anyone trained her, it would be him, because he would be the one responsible for her death and no one else. Therefore, he made her train hard and she has met his expectations up well. She's good with her weapons and reacts to danger almost as fast as he does. She adapts quickly, as well, and there were more than just a few times when her instincts warned his students about approaching danger times ahead. Unfortunately, she forgets to pay attention, sometimes, especially when she believes she's safe. Ten is the one of his students who doesn't only believe he is invincible but that he can resurrect the dead, as well. She's the only one, as well, who can make him laugh sometimes: when she explains silly books she reads or gets all fired up in an argument. Then, suddenly, she's all quiet again, until she erupts in laughter. She's the one responsible for most of the fun they have in the safe house – even with Jay arguing with Theresa and Theresa fighting with Cassidy spectacularly. She's the one who takes care of all of them – whether she makes Marina take her medicine or reminds Jaq to eat, reprimands Jay when he's getting all too nasty with Theresa and saves Cassidy from getting beaten up – or letting himself get beaten up – by Theresa. But it wasn't Ten but Marina who first got along with Nadya.

Nadya is the last one who came to be part of Daemon's little circle of students and she's still the most reserved of them.

She treats Daemon with respect, seeing as he is her teacher now, but she still remembers her first teacher, a gentle, older hunter, who, despite his years, still was surprisingly quick and strong. She never told her friends what happened to him, but Daemon knows the story of the girl who went out hunting and who was attacked by a whole flock of rippers. Her teacher came to save her – and gave his life in the process. There still isn't a single reason why Nadya should blame herself – but she still did and no one was able to make her understand that she was officially out hunting and nobody ever could have known about the rippers. A slender, fifteen-year-old girl standing in front of him, refusing to look him in the eye – that's Daemon's first impression of Nadya. Marina, Marina with her cheerful chattering during days was what made Nadya wake up from her guilt-filled stupor. It was Marina who gave Nadya a reason to continue living.

Nadya fights best from the distance, in hand-to-hand combat she merely is average. But whatever she aims at the enemy from a short distance is bound to find his heart or his eye even in darkness. She's the back-up-plan whenever Theresa and Jay get out of reach and there's no Cassidy or Jaq to calm them and no Ten to sense the danger: she has often eliminated targets before anyone else even knew they were there. She's the protector from the shadows, a little bit like Daemon, but still, she'll have to work very, very hard to one day reach his level. They all have to; even though some show promising signs and others will excel in other fields.

Then there's Marina, the youngest of the children.

She's everyone's little sister. Everyone cares for her, everyone protects her, and Daemon is no exception. Born into a family who gave her up at the first sign of her seer potential, afraid she would become mad one day and turn against them, she has grown up with them. Only Jaq stayed reserved towards her because he mistrusted her power, but soon he realized the little girl with the spiky black hair and the nightmares is no threat to either him or his adopted family. They are her friends, her family and her. She adores Nadya who makes sure she's never alone by day, she loves Ten for her jokes and her happy nature, she hangs on to Jaq and Jay and Terrence like a little girl to her big brothers, and she blushes whenever she sees Cassidy. Only Ten has noticed, yet, and she doesn't know what to do right now, but Daemon knows they're still children and many things might change. And Theresa – Theresa is whom Marina would regard as her substitute mother, even though she's strict and impatient sometimes. Or maybe exactly for that reason.

Marina is of limited use in fights, but as a seer, she's irreplaceable. She still has to take her medicine regularly and she still wakes up crying and screaming at night. But at least, all the others are near, and Daemon can just hope his little seer will be able to live a happier and a longer life than other seers he used to know.

Who still remains is Terrence.

There's not much to say about him, maybe because even though Cassidy has Daemon's intelligence, Jaq his silence, Jay his swiftness, Theresa his forcefulness, Nadya his night sight, Ten his instincts and Marina his strength, Terrence is the one most like him. He doesn't talk much. He doesn't interact much. He doesn't even sleep much – for one simple reason: Similarly to his teacher, Terrence cares about protecting and defending his fellow students – his friends and his family – more than about himself. Eight years ago, Daemon encountered a ten-years-old little Terrence in the entrance hall of their safe house, sitting in the dark and clutching a kitchen knife. He'd go to the ends of the world to protect them all: Theresa, Cassidy, Marina, Nadya, Jaq, Jay and Ten. As would Daemon.

Much like Theresa, Terrence relies on brute force in a fight. But while the girl still has a dangerous agility and moves fast and cat-like, Terrence waltzes over anything – and anyone – who is stupid enough to stand in his way. He fights until he goes down or wins – and he wins, because in face of his ferocity and wild determination, no werewolf, no ripper and no creature of the night can stand. Next to this, his fighting skills are average, like Jay's, but his will to protect what's important to him strengthens him.

Now, three of them are down: Careful Nadya, funny Jay, strong Terrence, and if he doesn't find a way to save them, they'll die in two days.

"What are you crying for!", Ten shouts inside the room he just has left. "He will fix them! He can do anything."

That's just the point: Daemon is as powerless as they are, just another pawn in a universal chess game, and whatever they think of him as their teacher, he's not almighty. He knows death is a part of life, of hunter life, especially, but when it comes down to it, he refuses to accept. He still has two days left. He will find whoever is responsible for this theft of three valuable lives.

They're only children. They don't know the world at all. But he's old and he's a

hunter, and he knows there is no way to negotiate with death. Then, again, they aren't just children – they are hunters. And they're his children. They believe in him, they believe he can call back the dead. Expectations like that are a heavy burden.

Slowly, he follows down the steps of the staircase leading to the front door of the house which holds the lives of the seven people most dear to him. Children's expectations are especially heavy. He'll do whatever he will be able to do.

And hopes the nightmares of his children won't be haunted by new deaths soon.