

Luna, Nightswatcher I

I can still hear the voice of my mother calling out to me sometimes, bursting through the air as thunder when the rains overtake the lower valleys.

“Luna,” she calls out, “come to me.”

But it is more often sunny than stormy here, and even when it does rain: the clearest sound is most often the whistling of the wind as it weaves through an endless sea of grass. Welcome to the Grasslands.

There is a Magic in the air which fills these lands with an ancient and ethereal song. It’s faint, but if you develop an ear for it, it is everpresent. Madeline says that if you listen well enough, you can cast spells which behave like free-form improvisations of the Grand Melody. She would know. She is an Enchantress, after all.

She is also the Sovereign of the Grasslands and Governess of the Chateau de la Carapace, which we both call our home.

The Château is an enormous turtle’s shell embedded into the side of the largest hill of the central pastures. Many years ago, it was excavated and converted into a citadel overlooking the village of Kamiko, where most of the defenseless inhabitants of the Grasslands reside under Madeline’s protection. It is said that the shell is the remnant of one of the great titans, god-like beings who used to hold dominion over land and sea.

I don’t spend much time thinking about it though, truth be told. Compared with the wondrous things I’ve seen in the Grasslands, the stories of the titans are a relatively trivial footnote to a strange and extraordinary world.

My name is Luna, and I am a Foundling of the Grassland Watch.





Together, my sister Kitsune and I safeguard the village of Kamiko and ensure that all the peace-loving inhabitants of the Grasslands can enjoy their lives in safety. She is the Daywatcher, and I am the Night's.

It was not always this way. The Night is far more dangerous and terrible than anything under daylight in the Grasslands. Kitsune is a greater warrior than I am, and before I came into my affliction it was without question that she was better-suited to brave the terrors lurking under the cloak of nightfall.

We all have our eccentricities in the Grasslands: Kitsune, for example, shares her body with the spirit of a snow fox. This gives her extraordinary reflexes and heightened senses which are ideal for a bladesman of her skill. By all rights, it should be her protecting the Grasslands in its darkest hours.

But if she did, there would be no one left to guard the peace-loving residents of the central pasture in daylight.

Let me explain.

I am marked by the Curse of the Undead.

A person who is bitten by one of the Undead becomes Cursed.

First comes the Sickness. For three days after you have been marked, you are baked alive by a terrible fever. You grow hyper-sensitive to light and sound, and are consumed with paranoia and hallucinations. These gradually subside, but they only mark the beginning of what is to come. This process is called Unbirthing.

After the Unbirthing comes the Thirst. Those marked by the curse can no longer eat regular food without great pain, and the sustenance is inevitably rejected by their body. If they refuse the thirst, then they wither away like a living carcass and the hunger grows deeper until all they crave is still-living flesh.

Then, when they do give in—and everyone gives in eventually—they will eat until the blood stops pumping, leaving the rest of the remains behind for the lesser animals to forage.

If they give in before that happens, they retain more of their humanity, but the Thirst once quenched will only sustain a member of the Undead for several days before it returns.

These are the trials of the unliving: the flesh-eaters we call Ghouls, and the blood-drinkers are called Vampires. I am a Vampire, but do not worry! I have a special arrangement which keeps things more... copacetic. I may be the only vampire alive who has been able to retain all of her humanity, and for that I am very grateful. But that is a story for another time.