

PART 10 FORGIVENESS

Adora was fading away, feeling her consciousness slowly disappearing; a ravenous cold spreading from her fingertips and numbing all her limbs. She was dying. She knew it, it was a risk she had taken when she chose to stay in the castle.

The lips on her neck were slowly draining her life energy, mercilessly, but at the same time the contact against her skin was almost tender. She tried to lift one of her hands to push the vampire away, but she had no strength left. She was only able to utter her name faintly.

"Ca...Catra..." she said in an almost inaudible whisper, but she seemed to react.

She raised her head quickly, and watched her with her slitted pupils. Her irises were the same color as the blood that soaked her mouth and dripped from her chin. A savage expression disfigured her beautiful face; the beast that slept in her had taken control of her body. Catra came to her senses when she realized what was happening: her pupils returned to their normal color and size, and a panicked expression took over her features. She stifled a whimper as she lunged at her to cut off the bleeding. She tried to cover the wound in her neck with her hands, but Adora felt the blood gushing relentlessly through it. She could barely keep her eyes open. She didn't have much time left.

"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry..." Catra sobbed disconsolately as tears streamed down her cheeks, dragging the traces of blood that still glistened in her mouth. One of her them caught the rays of night light coming through a nearby window, catching Adora's attention. It looked like a shooting star. "Make a wish" she thought to herself in delirium. She raised her hand unconsciously to catch it. The vampire looked up as she noticed the contact. Her face reflected infinite suffering, as if all the pain and loneliness she had tried to repress during the years she had been alone had suddenly taken hold of her. Adora couldn't bear to see her like that, she didn't want that to be the last image she had of her. She tried to talk to her, but she had no strength left. She looked at Catra as her mind sank into lethargy and gave her a soft smile. "Don't cry, I'll stay with you. I promise" she thought before fading into shadows.

She woke up hours later in her room. Her eyelids were heavy, she was unable to lift them. The faint rays of light drew strange figures in the darkness, shifting shadows that took on impossible shapes through her closed eyes. She could not determine whether she was still dreaming or not. She tried to move, and was surprised to find that she was able to do so. She felt a new vitality, as if her body had been plunged into a restful sleep that made all the accumulated fatigue disappear. She blinked confused, trying to clear the last remnants of sleep as she unconsciously put a hand to her neck. Nothing, there was no trace of the brutal wound that had torn her throat and nearly killed her. Had it been just a nightmare? She shook her head in confusion. When she tried to sit up she noticed a weight on her chest; Catra had fallen asleep with her head resting on her, as if she had been watching over her all night. Adora noticed the blood staining her hands and face, and felt a knot of panic form in her throat. She had been on the verge of death, and the creature that had almost killed her was resting only inches away from her. She tried to remain calm; it was Catra, she obviously hadn't consciously attacked her. Adora knew she would never hurt her. But still she couldn't help but feel afraid for the first time since she had arrived. She hesitated for a moment about whether to wake her or not, but she didn't have time to decide; Catra's breathing changed, and she opened her eyes slowly. She didn't seem to be fully



awake, and she had to look around a couple of times to remember where they were. When she realized that Adora was conscious, she awakened completely.

"Adora! are you...are you all right?" she made a move to approach her to examine her, but Adora instinctively moved out of her reach.

A fleeting expression of pain flashed across Catra's face, which she tried to hide by ignoring Adora's movement. It was barely a second, but Adora could see it. She cursed in silence.

"I'm sorry..." the vampire murmured averting her gaze, uncomfortable. "I just wanted to know if you were okay. I'll let you rest." she stood up up from the chair where she had fallen asleep to leave.

Adora watched as she approached the door, not knowing what to say. Catra's shoulders were slumped, she was the spitting image of hopelessness. She seemed to hesitate for a moment before crossing the threshold. Adora opened her mouth still trying to find the words; she didn't want her to leave, not like that.

"Wait!" Adora exclaimed, extending an arm in her direction. Catra turned to look at her and she could see the relief on her face.

"Wait, I.. I'm just..." The words she was about to utter died on her lips.

Was she going to ask for explanations? To accuse her of what had happened? She knew what she was exposing herself to by staying in the castle, Catra had tried to warn her since the first day, but Adora had ignored that the monster was still there, that it had not left, that it could wake up at any moment. No, it wasn't fair to accuse her. She had stayed to help her, and she did not intend to break her promise.

She put her hand to her neck unconsciously, searching for the ghost of the wound that was no longer there while she tried to find the right words.

"What happened last night?" she asked. Catra ducked her head, avoiding her eyes. Adora realized she was clenching her fists so tightly that she had begun to bleed. Scarlet droplets were falling on the carpet covering the room, a reminder of the nightmare.

"I had a dream," Catra said quietly. She still wouldn't look at her. "It was... I relived my curse. In it I could feel the beast awakening in me for the first time. It must have affected my control somehow, because before I knew it I had pounced on you and..." her voice broke. She raised her head at last and Adora could see that her eyes were full of anguish "I'm sorry, Adora. I couldn't even react, it took over and when I woke up you were underneath me and there was blood everywhere and..." Catra's breathing quickened; she was unable to articulate a coherent sentence

"But, the wound is gone. I don't understand..." Adora said confused.

Catra swallowed before continuing.

"My blood...has healing properties. My wounds regenerate in the blink of an eye and I thought...maybe it could have the same effect on you," she replied. "I didn't know what else to do." she whispered finally.

"Oh" Adora said uncomfortably. She seemed to realize something, because her eyes widened all of a sudden "If you gave me your blood, does that mean I'll turn into a vampire?" There was a hint of panic in her voice, and Catra was alarmed.

"No! No, it doesn't work like that. In order to turn you have to die with vampire blood in your system, and you don't...I mean, you're still" she wasn't able to pronounce the word "I'm not even a regular vampire, I might not even be able to turn you into...this." she didn't know how to continue, but Adora nodded to indicate that she understood.



They both fell into a heavy silence. It had been a mistake, she should never have let her stay with her in the castle; she had put her at risk unnecessarily, just for a selfish desire. So she wouldn't be alone.

Catra felt as if suddenly the bond between them had snapped. She hugged herself. She had always thought that loneliness was the worst thing that had happened to her, even more so than the monster that held her captive, but this feeling of loss...it was unbearable. She knew what she had to do, what she should have done from day one. She steeled herself and opened her mouth to utter the words that she knew would destroy her for good....

"It wasn't your fault" Adora suddenly muttered.

Catra looked at her surprised. She watched her as she slowly got out of bed and stood up. Her heart shrank when she realized that she was still wearing the blood-stained camisole she had worn the night before. Adora didn't seem to mind though. She looked up at her with a shy smile.

"I'm fine, see? I'm completely okay." she said, stretching out her arms to reaffirm her words.

The first rays of morning sunlight pierced through the thin curtains framing her in a pool of light. She seemed to have come from another world, a creature fallen from the sky that had arrived there to save her. Catra swallowed in an attempt to keep the lump in her throat from unraveling into tears. She didn't deserve to be treated gently. Another person would have run away from there as soon as they regained consciousness, Catra would've accepted it if she had reproached her for what had happened; if she had yelled at her, called her a monster. But Adora wasn't like that, she had listened to her and continued to offer her warmth, unreservedly, unconditionally. She didn't deserve her.

"Someone else in your place would have run away by now. It would be the smartest thing to do," she said with a whisper. Adora gave her a resigned smile.

"I never said I was smart," she replied simply.

Catra couldn't help but burst out laughing at that statement, and heard Adora's laughter join her. It was funny, how a few words made all the guilt disappear, the anguish that had gripped her insides since the night before, when her whole world had collapsed around her as she saw her pale and bloodied on that couch, as she knew herself responsible. She had never considered the possibility of ever feeling this way about another person, let alone a girl who had burst into her life to turn everything upside down; that her mere presence would make her pulse race to the point of almost losing control of herself.

She had fallen in love with her.

She had known it for some time, although she had been afraid to put a name to what she felt. However, admitting that fact to herself suddenly cleared up all her doubts. She took a deep breath to calm herself and looked at Adora again. She was still laughing, and Catra thought she would be able to listen to that sound forever.

She tilted her head to one side and smiled.

"You have no survival instinct, golden girl," Catra said tenderly.

Adora opened her eyes in surprise and blushed slightly. She looked adorable.



“Yeah, well, you know me. I like the risk.” she let out a nervous chuckle, trying to hide her embarrassment. Catra didn't insist. Suddenly she remembered something.

“Come to think of it, why were you in the library last night?” she asked.

Her reaction left her speechless. Adora let out an oath and slapped her forehead.

“Rats! I completely forgot about it! I found something! When I show it to you, you'll realize that my lack of self-preservation has its advantages.”



