

HARBORVIEW IMMORTALS EXTRA

A large, leafless tree silhouette stands against a starry night sky. The sky is filled with a vibrant purple and blue nebula, with numerous stars visible. The tree's branches are intricate and spread out across the upper half of the image. The ground is a solid black silhouette.

# Scars from the Past

EMMA PETERSON

**Scars from the Past**  
**A Harborview Immortals Story**  
**Written by Emma Peterson**

Copyright 2022 by Emma Peterson/CLI

Cover image courtesy of Unsplash Free Images

This story is a work of fiction. References to real people, places, or historical events are used fictitiously. All other characters, names, events, places, and so on are strictly products of the author's crazed imagination. Any resemblance to actual places, events, or persons—living, dead, or zombie—is completely coincidental.

This story contains mild adult content.

## August 2000

Jacob didn't understand why so many of his fellow centuries-old vampires hated airplanes. While it was true that they had lived during a time when the idea of large objects flying high in the sky would have seemed impossible and terrifying, he thought it utterly silly to harbor such dread when they were now perfectly capable of flying high in the sky themselves. At least with a plane, one could reach their destination in a timely manner and without an overabundance of exertion.

He looked out of the window. While his eyes took in the darkness of a clear night sky, his thoughts were on the family he had left behind, and an unexpected snort of laughter escaped him as he reflected on events from earlier that evening. Xan had spent a number of hours following up his usual random acts of endearing silliness with bold and repeated proclamations that he had only been "taking a piss," and it had taken a long and awkward minute to deduce that the eight-year-old had apparently misunderstood the phrase "taking *the* piss" from their beloved British vampire friend Becky. Dominic's legendary stoic demeanor had no chance against the hilariousness of the situation and even he had let slip a brief chuckle while Jacob had laughed so hard that he came close to crying.

It had only been an hour since he kissed them both goodbye, but he missed them fiercely and was already counting down the days until he saw them again.

His smile gradually faded as his mind turned to the plane's destination. Returning to Georgia was not something he had planned to do anytime soon—or ever again, if he could help it—and the closer he got, the more those little pinpricks of trepidation in his chest that he hadn't been able to ignore started to feel like outright stabs. Soon, he would be in the presence of the son of his former owner... who also happened to be the man he had once loved... who also happened to be the vampire who had killed and turned him against his will.

The last time Jacob saw James had not ended well, to say the least, and it had taken an astronomical display of Dominic's dark power to finally convince him to stand down and leave Jacob alone. Now he was going back without the safety net of his lover's protection, a fact that understandably worried Dominic. But the James he would soon be facing was no longer the James of old, a tormented soul who had done unspeakable things in response to an act of cruelty he had been forced to commit in order to save the life of the one he loved. Jacob knew that he hadn't been the only victim that awful night. While his physical scars were only skin-deep, James' emotional scars had run right down to the center of

his being, corrupting everything that Jacob had loved about him until only madness remained.

Jacob pushed those thoughts aside. There would be more than enough time later to contemplate what was. His mind turned to the other reason, the *main* reason, he was making the trip. His niece, and Xan's namesake, Alexandra. James would have never even bothered contacting Jacob if not for her and the ordeal she was currently facing with an ex-boyfriend who was about to learn that the wrong kind of persistence would very likely get him killed. Jacob couldn't help but notice that her present situation was much like his own had been, all those years ago. Surely James had noticed it, too. Perhaps that was why he had reached out to him in the first place, out of a desire to avoid bearing witness to history repeating itself in the worst possible way.

He rested his head against the back of the seat as he absentmindedly thumbed the cover of the book on his lap, his newest copy of *Bertram Cope's Year*, one of his favorites. (The old copy, a highly coveted and often-read original, had been retired to the bookcase where many of the rare first edition books Jacob had collected over the years had also ended up.) While he didn't think he would fall asleep, he must have, because the next thing he knew, the plane was landing and the pilot was announcing their arrival over the intercom:

"Welcome to Georgia, Mr. Corbin."

Jacob cringed upon hearing the surname he had vowed never to use again. However, he didn't fault the pilot for using it; the private plane ride was a courtesy extended by James and as far as he knew, Jacob still acknowledged the last name that they shared, a gift from James' father—one given by birth, one given by ownership.

He tucked the book into his black leather duffle bag and headed toward the exit, sparing a friendly nod for the pilot who regarded him with open fascination. It was an expression many humans in the know had in the presence of vampires, although to Jacob, it was the equivalent of being giddy around any apex predator. Slowly, he descended the stairs, and then, at last, he stepped onto the pavement of the private runway.

For the first time in eighteen years, he was in the place he had once considered home.

Two figures approached him from a distance. Even under the cover of night, Jacob knew immediately that the taller of the two was James. Their vampiric bond, while somewhat muted after almost two centuries of separation, was still there, drawing them together. The shorter figure was also a vampire, and Jacob could sense the familiarity in him straight away; James had turned him, too. By choice, Jacob hoped.

The shorter vampire stayed back as James continued his approach, gradually emerging out of the darkness and into the lights of the runway. The tall, tan, and muscular vampire flashed Jacob a hesitant smile, and his thick, jet black hair swayed in the breeze. He still had the bluest eyes that Jacob had ever seen; even when they were children, it was all he could do not to constantly stare directly into them, mesmerized by their beauty.

“Hello, James,” he said, now that they were finally face to face.

“Hello, Jacob,” James replied in the gentle drawl that hadn’t faded over the years. “How was the flight?”

“It was fine. Thank you again for making the arrangements.”

“You’re welcome.” James paused before cautiously continuing. “How is... your Eye-talian?”

Jacob knew that it wasn’t an easy thing for James to inquire about Dominic, but his Southern upbringing demanded politeness, even if it caused discomfort. As a slave, he had been continually flabbergasted at a society that saw no wrong in owning people yet expressed pearl-clutching horror over any lack of *pleases* and *thank yous*.

“He’s doing well.”

“I’m surprised he didn’t come with you, all things considered.”

“I told him that everything would be okay,” Jacob said with a reassuring nod. “So he decided to stay home with our son.”

James’ eyes widened upon hearing that. “You have a son?”

It was just as well that the pilot chose that exact moment to interrupt them by giving Jacob his suitcase. “Thank you very much,” he said when he realized that James was too stunned to acknowledge the man.

The pilot took his leave, and the other vampire who had been waiting patiently approached the duo. The sense of familiarity that Jacob had felt when he first saw him intensified, along with a touch of *déjà vu*. He was certain that he had never seen this vampire before and yet felt he knew him all the same.

“I’ll take that for you,” he offered, reaching for Jacob’s suitcase.

“Thank you... um...”

They both looked to James, who was still visibly reeling over Jacob’s casual admission of fatherhood.

“Oh.” The vampire jerked back to reality and remembered his manners. “Pardon me. Jacob, this is my companion, Nathaniel. Nathaniel, this is my... this is Jacob.”

Nathaniel smiled kindly. “It’s so nice to finally meet you. I’ve heard a lot about you.”

“Good things, I hope,” Jacob said, glancing at his former lover.

“Very good things. And not just from James.”

Jacob frowned in confusion. “Then who...?”

Now it was Nathaniel’s turn to glance at James, who gave him a nod of encouragement. “From my Papa Solomon.”

Jacob’s lips moved, but it took a few seconds for enough shock to subside for him to form words. “Solomon was your grandfather?”

“Yes, he was,” Nathaniel replied proudly.

That long ago night, after Jacob was given the twenty lashes that left his back raw and bloody, a fellow slave named Solomon had carefully carried him to one of the shacks where the rest of the slaves resided. After what had happened, along with James’ subsequent disappearance, it was correctly presumed that he was no longer welcome inside the main house. Jacob had spent an entire month face-down on a musty cot while Solomon had tended to his wounds, and he was certain that the man’s intervention was the only reason that he hadn’t succumbed to infection or been sold off to the bastard who demanded he be punished in the first place for daring to refuse his advances.

There were so many things about Jacob’s time as a slave that he didn’t care to remember. However, the kindness of Solomon was one of the few things he recalled fondly.

“It’s an honor to meet you,” Jacob said, still awestruck. “Solomon was one of the best men I’ve ever had the pleasure of knowing.”

“He certainly was,” James agreed.

Nathaniel nodded appreciatively. “Thank you, both. I’ll be at the car whenever you’re ready.”

He left them there, wheeling Jacob’s suitcase alongside him.

“Are the two of you...?” Jacob asked.

“Of course not,” James replied. “I watched him grow up. And in case you were wondering—”

“I was.”

“—yes, he *wanted* to be turned.”

“Good.”

James sighed and blinked at Jacob, his blue eyes so bright that they seemed to glow. “I’m not the same vampire I was back then.”

“I wouldn’t be here if I thought you were,” Jacob told him. “Now, let’s get out of here before a plane lands on us.”

\* \* \*

After Nathaniel dropped them off and excused himself with a knowing gleam in his eyes to go “run errands,” Jacob could only stand there and gape at the house. After parting ways with James back in 1804, he and Dominic had relocated

three hundred miles north to an area not far from what would become Atlanta before permanently moving to Harborview, Pennsylvania in 1982. He'd had no intention or reason to believe he would ever come back to this place. Now, there he was.

"I bet you broke a lot of hearts when you did this," he said, marveling at the gorgeous contemporary home that now stood in place of the old plantation house.

James shrugged. "Yeah, well, I don't much give a damn that I did. Besides the old house being a reminder of the past, I wanted to make the entire thing light tight, not just the basement."

"The whole house is lightproof?" Jacob gawked at all of the blacked out windows, impressed.

"'Tis. Every inch of glass is laminated and has multiple layers of light resistance, plus backup blackout shutters. Nathaniel oversaw the whole project from start to finish."

"Did he now?"

James shook his head when he saw Jacob's raised brow. "*I watched him grow up,*" he reminded him.

"And just how long has he been grown up now?"

"I... he... just..." Flustered, James grabbed Jacob's suitcase. "Come on."

Any ill feelings Jacob thought he might have upon entering the house proved to be non-existent. It was so far removed from everything he remembered that it was simply a house. Nothing more.

"Old things are passed away," he murmured as he followed James through the living room and up the stairs.

"Behold, all things are become new," James said, completing the verse. "I guess all those bible lessons we had to suffer finally paid off."

"Better late than never."

"Indeed." James opened a guest bedroom door and gave him the suitcase. "Here you go. Feel free to look around. I'll be downstairs if you need anything."

He paused as if he wanted to say more. Ultimately, he just nodded and walked away, leaving Jacob simultaneously curious as to what he had been planning to say and relieved that he didn't say it, whatever it was.

Once James was out of earshot, Jacob pulled out his phone and called Dominic to let him know he had arrived. He barely had time to go into specifics before Xan confiscated the phone from Dominic and proceeded to inquire about an "Uncle Bob." After picking the child's brain some more, Jacob concluded that he was referring to another bit of British slang ("Bob's your uncle") and made a mental note to thank Becky later for confusing the hell out of his kid by inadvertently leading him to believe he had another uncle besides Dominic's twin brother, Demetrio.



Nathaniel stopped in the hallway just outside of the doorway and raised his hands apologetically when he saw that Jacob was on the phone. Jacob beckoned with his free hand in return, inviting him into the bedroom.

"I'm going to go now, goober. Give Dominic a kiss for me, and give you a kiss for me, too... Oh, shush, that's not gross... Okay, I love you... Bye." Jacob returned the phone to his pocket. "My son," he explained.

"I gathered," Nathaniel replied thoughtfully.

"You're wondering how I have one?"

"It doesn't matter, as long as you have him."

Jacob jolted at the profoundness of the vampire's statement. It felt as though he were face to face with a younger-looking version of his old friend, from the compact body, unblemished brown skin, and soulful brown eyes.

"That sounds like something Solomon would have said," he remarked wistfully. "I know you're not him, but I see so much of him in you. It's surreal." Jacob shook his head. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't put that on you. You are your own person."

Nathaniel smiled. "Thank you for recognizing that. I don't mind the comparison, though."

"What was he like as a grandfather?"

"The same way he was when you knew him, I imagine. Probably more outspoken since James treated him—and everybody—as equals and not property. We weren't free as far as the country was concerned, but we were free here at home."

"I'm sure that didn't go over so well," Jacob guessed as he took a seat on the edge of the large bed in the center of the room.

"It didn't matter," Nathaniel said, sitting down in a chair at a nearby desk. "James inherited everything after his father died, including Papa and the others. There was nothing that anyone could do about it."

Jacob's hands were clasped in his lap and his thumb caressed the gold signet ring that Dominic had given him shortly before nearly delivering on his vow to kill a delirious James if he didn't leave Jacob alone. "I was worried about how things would be after I left. I'm glad to know that everything worked out. At least something good came out of what happened that night... I assume you know the story?"

"Broad strokes," Nathaniel responded. "Papa never wanted to talk about it too much and James never wanted to talk about it at all, but I pieced together what I could from eavesdropping on the others. You were quite the topic of conversation around the house sometimes, long after you were gone."

Jacob tucked an unruly lock of hair behind his ear. "It was a party, a big one full of all kinds of fancy and important people," he started with a long sigh. "I was told to keep to the kitchen. I think my complexion hit a little too close to home for



some of the guests. Maybe some of them even knew who my mother was. One of Mast—”

He paused, cutting off the word and hating just how easily he had almost slipped right back into slave-speak.

“One of James’ father’s friends came into the kitchen and found me. He chased the others out and decided he was going to have his way with me. I pushed him off me and then all hell broke loose.” Jacob laughed bitterly. “All because I made the grave mistake of considering myself a person instead of property. Silly me.”

“You don’t have to go on,” Nathaniel told him. “I know what happened next.”

“Did you know they all cheered with every single lash? My punishment was very entertaining, apparently. I guess it’s a good thing they didn’t hang me. The show would’ve been over much quicker.”

Jacob blinked away the tears he didn’t know he had left over everything that had happened that night.

“But they all died bloody and I’m still here, so the joke is on them,” he concluded.

“I’m glad James came back and did what he did to them,” Nathaniel said softly, his eyes hazed over in anger. “I know it’s wrong, but I am.”

“I am, too,” Jacob admitted. “I’m not going to pretend to be heartbroken that he killed his father and all the other people who were there that night. I just wish it would’ve ended with them. Well, I don’t wish for it now, but back then...” He studied the other vampire. “I’m glad you were given a choice. That’s the way it should always be.”

“It didn’t feel like a choice, really. I just knew I wanted to be near him.”

“You’re in love with him.”

“All my life,” Nathaniel said, his expression full of adoration. “But he still thinks of me as the little kid who followed him around everywhere.”

“That could change,” Jacob pointed out. “You never know.”

“I know that the only thing James is capable of loving is his guilt over what he did to you. You moved on, the entire world moved on, but a large part of him is still stuck in 1804. I’m afraid it always will be.”

The faint sound of a closing door caught their attention. The vampires looked at the bedroom doorway and then each other.

“James?” Jacob asked.

Nathaniel nodded. “He’s going to the tree. He goes there a lot.”

Jacob looked at the doorway again. He knew what he needed to do.

So did Nathaniel.

“If you’ll excuse me, I’m going to finish preparations for your trip tomorrow,” he said as he rose to his feet.

“You’re not coming with us?”

“This situation with your niece is too important. I would just get in the way.”

Jacob strongly suspected that his refusal to accompany them had absolutely nothing to do with Alexandra, but he opted not to interrogate him further.

After Nathaniel left the bedroom, Jacob made his way down the stairs and through the massive house. It took some searching but he finally found the door that led out back and stepped outside.

He halted, frozen in place, frozen in time, as he laid eyes on the enormous Southern live oak tree that dominated the backyard. Memories of random moments under the tree with James bombarded him, from childhood to adulthood and all the years in between. Sharing a pilfered peach and thinking he had never tasted anything so divine. Discreetly tracing letters on each other’s hands before James boldly decided to teach him the alphabet properly. Holding hands, holding each other, their first kiss, their first *everything*, right up against the tree with bark digging into his back, screaming into one of James’ hands and spilling into the other.

With a shaky sigh, Jacob walked over to the tree and stood beside James.

“I couldn’t bring myself to get rid of it,” James explained. “I hope you don’t mind.”

Jacob craned his neck, peering up to the top of the huge oak. “This tree represents the little bit of beauty that we found in a fucking ugly world. Never cut it down.”

“I figure it’s one of the oldest trees in the state,” James said. “And one of the biggest.”

“I’d like to think we’re responsible for that.”

“How so?”

Jacob smirked. “As much as we... contributed... to it, it had to have some benefits.”

James blinked at Jacob, nonplussed. “I... I don’t think that particular type of... contribution... has any effect on plant life.”

The vampires stared at each other before laughing, which was the last thing Jacob expected he would do that night.

Equally unexpected was James’ laughter. The sound of it was inexplicably pleasing.

“It’s nice to hear you laugh again,” he said quietly. “It’s been too long.”

“It has,” James concurred just as quietly while lowering his head.

“James—”

“Tell me about your son.”

Recognizing the deflection for what it was, Jacob consented to a reply. "His name is Alexander," he began, reaching into his pocket for his wallet. He flipped it open to one of the many pictures he carried of the boy and showed it to James.

"Xan for short. He just turned eight a couple of months ago."

"He's a human child?"

"Yes."

James' curiosity was palpable. But Jacob knew that the same learned politeness that prompted the vampire to inquire about Dominic when he couldn't have cared less also prevented him from demanding to know how two vampires ended up parents to a mortal.

"He's precious," James said after realizing that Jacob would not volunteer any additional information. "And I reckon you spoil him rotten."

"A little." Jacob looked up from the picture to see James watching him carefully. And a touch sadly. "You know we'll need to talk about a few things you may not want to talk about before I leave, right? It doesn't have to be a whole thing, but *something*."

"I know. I was just hoping to put it off because this was going much better than I thought it would."

He had a point. Jacob certainly hadn't anticipated ending up at the tree under and against which he'd had copious amounts of forbidden sex and discussing whether or not the results of all that sex had acted as some sort of weird, growth-enhancing fertilizer. The idea made him chuckle again, and he decided to cut James some much-needed slack.

"Let's just focus on my niece," he said. "We'll head out at sundown tomorrow, deal with that situation, and get back here before dawn. But after that..."

"After that," James conceded. "Thank you, Jacob."

"You're welcome, James."

Jacob reached out and gently touched James' shoulder before returning to the house, feeling strangely optimistic. He went upstairs to the guest bedroom, changed out of his casual suit into even more casual pajamas, and crawled into bed where he talked to Dominic until dawn.

\* \* \*

The next night, during the two hour drive to an area near Brunswick, James filled Jacob in on the details of Alexandra's life that he had missed out on since leaving Georgia. She was forty-one now, which was the only thing Jacob had known for certain. After selling and moving out of her family's house, and then moving to her present location, she opened what would become a rather successful

coffeehouse called Alexandra's. While the name wasn't all that original, much of the menu was, and it was one of the many reasons why the place was so renowned.

She never married or had children, but as far as James had been able to ascertain, she also had no pressing desire to do either of those things. It was her reluctance over the former that was at the heart of their journey. Alexandra came from old money. *A lot* of old money. And it seemed that the old boyfriend was doing his damndest to stick around in order to acquire a share of it.

Now, as they sat at a table and enjoyed a Caffè Americano, some light jazz, and the immensely calming atmosphere of the establishment, James used his head to motion ever so subtly to his left. "That's him, blond hair, appalling goatee, sitting alone at the table by the wall. The one who keeps looking around like he's expecting someone." He took a sip of his drink in an effort to look casual. "He's waiting to see if she'll come out from the back."

Jacob ran a hand through his hair and used the opportunity to look to his right. He spotted the man James described and instantly hated him. "Has he ever put his hands on her?" he wanted to know.

James glowered at the vampire, obviously affronted. "We wouldn't be here if he had because he would be dead."

"I wasn't implying that you would have allowed that to happen. What's his name?"

"Roy Edwards."

"And he comes here every night?"

"My sources say yes," James replied. "He doesn't go to her house anymore since there's an order barring him from the property, so he just sits there in that same spot, waiting to see if she shows her face."

"Does she?"

"After he gives up and leaves right before closing, yes."

That was unacceptable to Jacob. And the more he contemplated it, the angrier he became.

"What are you going to do?" James asked.

Jacob glanced at the man again, his hands tightly gripping the glass coffee mug. "Something I normally don't like doing. But in this case, I'll gladly make an exception."

He maintained his grip on the mug for another five minutes, until the beverage had cooled down. Then he rose to his feet, mug in hand, and casually weaved his way through patrons and tables until he reached Roy's table and suddenly "tripped," spilling his drink all across the tabletop and the man's formerly white shirt.

"Shit!" Roy looked down at his ruined shirt and then up at Jacob. "What the fuck?"

"I am so sorry," Jacob said, feigning remorse.

Roy stood up and glared at Jacob. "You damn well should be, you clumsy motherfu—"

"Stop talking."

Wide blue eyes stared at Jacob. Roy's lips moved, but no sound came forth.

Jacob acted fast, before the concerned server headed their way could hear him. "You will tell her that everything is fine."

"Oh my goodness," she drawled when she reached them. "I'll get this cleaned up for y'all right away."

"Everything is fine," Roy told her in a monotone voice.

She looked from Roy to Jacob for confirmation.

"Please don't trouble yourself because I'm a klutz," Jacob said with a disarming smile. "But thank you very much for offering."

He sweetened the deal with a wad of bills pressed into the palm of her hand. She peeked at her hand and gasped; clearly she had been expecting all ones.

"Follow me," he said to Roy after the server left them.

There was no need for Jacob to look over his shoulder to make sure that the human was behind him. His hold on Roy's mind was firm and unrelenting. He was a prisoner in his own body, forced to do whatever Jacob wanted. It was a feeling Jacob remembered all too well, because he had experienced the exact same thing right before James killed him.

He stepped outside into the warm night air. To avoid the bulk of the people who were coming or going or loitering out front, he walked about twenty paces down the sidewalk and casually leaned back against the side of the building. At a glance, they merely looked like two guys shooting the breeze.

"You have questions," Jacob began, locking eyes with Roy. "Unfortunately I don't have time to give you answers, and it wouldn't matter anyway because you aren't going to remember parts of this conversation. What *does* matter is that Alexandra is my niece, and your behavior will no longer be tolerated. If you ever go near her again, you will die. And if you're wondering how it will happen..." Jacob flashed a deadly, fang-filled smile. "Use your imagination."

Roy moaned worriedly when the vampire pushed off the wall and stood directly in front of him. It was all he was capable of doing to express the sheer terror he must have felt.

"You won't remember me," Jacob continued. "You won't remember what I am. But any time you even *think* about her, you'll remember the fear you feel right now."

He contemplated adding in a bonus, like making Roy piss himself whenever he acted like an asshole, but the reasonable part of his conscience knew he had done enough.

“Now walk away and don’t look back.”

Jacob watched as he left, his sharp eyes trained on the back of Roy’s head until he was just another shadow in the darkness. He wondered whether or not he had sent the bastard scurrying off while his car was still in the parking lot but then decided that he didn’t care. With that out of the way, he went back into the coffeehouse.

As he was about to return to his table, deciding to order another Caffè Americano to replace the one he didn’t finish, he spotted James glancing pointedly at the counter. Jacob looked in that direction... and saw Alexandra staring directly at him.

Then she started walking toward him.

She was just as naturally beautiful as she was the last time he saw her in 1982. Her hair, even pulled up in a ponytail, was still a lovely brown mess, much like Jacob’s. While that was where their physical similarities began and ended, for Jacob, it still felt like he was looking in a mirror in many ways. And it made his heart ache.

“Was that man... was he bothering you?”

Like James, her drawl was gentle. Soothing, even. Jacob imagined that his mother’s voice must have sounded similar and he hated her all over again. But Alexandra wasn’t his mother, and for all he knew, she might have had no idea who the woman even was. Jacob didn’t think that was likely though. Many Southern families obsessively tracked their history, some as far back as their arrival from overseas, all while giving no thought whatsoever to their ancestors having destroyed the histories of others.

“Sir?”

“I’m sorry.” Jacob shelved his sour feelings as best he could and focused his attention on the only living proof that he had ever existed. “He wasn’t bothering me, and he will no longer bother you.”

The woman’s mouth opened in astonishment. “How did you know?”

“I know what it’s like to have an ex-boyfriend who refuses to let go. I guess I recognized the signs.”

Alexandra smiled gratefully. “Well then... thank you.”

“You’re quite welcome.”

“Would you like—”

“We’re actually about to leave,” Jacob interrupted, trying to keep his voice level. “We’re not from around here and we’ve got a long drive ahead of us.”

“If you’re ever in the area again, please stop by,” Alexandra offered.

Jacob, who had no intention of ever returning again if he could help it, nodded appreciatively. “I’ll be sure to do that. Take care of yourself, Alexandra.”

He walked away before common courtesy got the better of him and made him introduce himself. James stood up as he approached.

“Let’s get out of here,” he said, his eyes full of sympathy.

They exited the coffeehouse and returned to James’ black Volvo. Neither vampire said anything for the first half of the trip, and Jacob was content to let Steve Perry serenade them all the way back to James’ house. But once they hit Highway 82, he decided that he needed to vent, after all.

“How many men like my father do you think were tortured and killed because of women like my mother?” he asked as he leaned back against the headrest and stared blindly out of the passenger window.

“Too many to count,” James responded.

“And they just got away with it. Do you think any of them felt guilty about what they did?”

“I don’t know, Jacob.”

“I hope she did,” Jacob said harshly. “I hope she never knew a minute of peace until the day she died.”

He peered down at the upturned hand that rested on his thigh and covered it with his own. There was nothing romantic in the gesture; it was an offer and acceptance of solace, and nothing more. Often were the times during their past human lives when James had consoled him in the very same way for the very same reason.

When they finally got back, James escorted Jacob to the guest bedroom door because he was a gentleman through and through. While there were still a few hours left until dawn, Jacob wanted to be alone to process everything he had gone through that night.

“Will you keep watching over her?” he asked.

“For the rest of her life.” After a moment, James added, “Why didn’t you just tell her who you were?”

“Telling her who I am would’ve served no purpose except to satisfy my own desire for revenge against a woman long gone. It’s not my niece’s fault that she is my mother’s descendant.”

James nodded in understanding. “Are you going to be all right? You’re more than welcome to join me and Nathaniel in the parlor.”

“Tomorrow night,” Jacob promised. “After we’ve talked.”

“Then I’ll leave you to it. If you need anything...”

“I’ll holler.”

James chuckled. “Okay. Sleep tight.”

Jacob went into the bedroom and closed the door, then he trudged over to the bed and flopped down on it, face-first. He missed Dominic, he missed Xan, he missed home, and he wanted nothing more than to be away from Georgia, away



from his past, and away from all the reminders of who and what he used to be. But first, he needed to rip off the scab of tentative peace that he had forged with James since his arrival and confront the festering wound of their troubled past. It was time for a resolution.

And, with any luck, healing.

\* \* \*

The next night, after a dinner that consisted of blood and wine, they got the ball rolling by walking past the tree and around the rest of the expansive backyard that comprised most of the property. There was nothing back there now except grass, vibrant in color even in the moonlight, but Jacob could clearly picture the rows of cotton and derelict shacks as they once were, including the one he had lived in until being granted the privilege of moving into the main house at the age of fourteen.

“Why didn’t you do anything with all of this?” he asked, gesturing at all the open space. “Build something? Plant something?”

“Because it would’ve been disrespectful to all the people who lived and died here,” James answered dolefully. “I tried my best to do right by all of them.”

“I believe you did.”

“I tried to do right by you, too.”

Jacob’s jaw clenched. He had wanted to have this conversation, and now it was happening. His right hand slid into his pants pocket and absentmindedly toyed with a quarter; he always kept one in there to pull out of Xan’s ear at any time.

“I felt so goddamn helpless when my father gave me that ultimatum,” James continued, refusing to meet Jacob’s eyes. “And after... after I...”

“Whipped me,” Jacob whispered.

James winced as if he had been struck. “After... that... I had to do something. That’s why I tried to make it up North, get some help, and find a way to get you out of Georgia. But then another solution presented itself.”

Jacob remained silent. He knew how the story ended.

“I truly thought you would see being a vampire as an opportunity.” James turned to face Jacob, finally able to return his gaze. “A chance to be free from racist trash. We could’ve gone anywhere, we could’ve done anything. No one could’ve stopped us.”

“James, that’s easy to say when you’re not the one considered property. I couldn’t imagine the idea of slavery not existing because it was all I had ever known. Even in that supposedly magical place called the North, slavery was only just abolished the same year you came back.” Jacob paused and ran a hand over his

face. “How different would our lives be today if you had only given me time to work up to the idea of being turned instead of forcing it on me?”

“I’ve asked myself that same question every single day for almost two hundred years,” James said regretfully.

“And it’s time for you to stop,” Jacob replied firmly. “I forgave you a long time ago for turning me. Now you need to forgive yourself.” Sensing a rebuttal, he grabbed the vampire by his muscular arms. “I’m happy, James. And despite how it happened, I owe that happiness to you. Now you deserve some happiness of your own, and it’s closer than you think, if you would just stop making excuses and accept it.”

“Jacob, I can’t.”

“Yes, you can. Why did you even give him the choice to become a vampire if you didn’t want to be with him?”

Jacob waited, ready to continue arguing if need be. But instead of arguing, James took a long, deep breath in resignation.

“I... I’ll... I’ll try.”

“See that you do.” Jacob smiled warmly. “Now, are you going to invite me to share some of that Macallan I spotted in the parlor or have you lost all credibility as a Southern gentleman?”

James gasped. “How dare you?”

The vampires grinned at each other and headed back to the house. They entered the parlor where Nathaniel was waiting for them with whiskey glasses.

For the rest of the night, they drank and shared various tales from the past, like the time when a bible-thumping do-gooder was gracious enough to inform James and Jacob that the Lord loved all of his creations, even “lesser ones” like the Negroes.

“She really said that?” a horrified Nathaniel asked.

“She really did,” Jacob confirmed. “And so James called her...”

“... a rank bitch,” James said before gulping down the rest of his drink. “I thought for sure my father was going to punish me but he didn’t. Apparently the woman was hoping to get his attention, romantically. My assessment of her character prevented any chance of that, which was exactly what he wanted.”

“Lucky for you,” Nathaniel said as he held out his glass for James to fill again.

Their eyes met while James poured. Jacob sipped on his own drink to keep from telling them to kiss already.

When dawn was nearly upon them, Jacob decided to turn in because he wanted a full day’s rest for the plane ride home the next night. He glanced back at the parlor where James and Nathaniel remained, sitting on opposite ends of a

brown leather sofa and never taking their eyes off each other while conversing. It was adorable.

While there would always be occasions when some unpleasant element of his former life would rear its ugly head, Jacob was thankful that he had been given the opportunity to confront the demons of the past. He was also thankful that he had nudged James in the direction of confronting his own. Someday, the demons would be laid to rest for good. One advantage to immortality, whether voluntarily acquired or forcibly received, was that they would have plenty of time to work on it.

He crawled into bed and reminded himself that at the same time tomorrow, he would be in his own bed with Dominic's arms wrapped around him. Realizing this, he fell asleep with a smile.

\* \* \*

The same pilot who had flown Jacob to Georgia now took his suitcase and waited at the private plane to return him to Pennsylvania.

"I asked him to stop calling you by my last name," James said as he handed Jacob his duffle bag. "I figured you weren't too keen on it anymore since it was never your own."

"I appreciate that," Jacob replied to James before turning to Nathaniel, who stood beside him. "Keep an eye on him for me."

"I'll do my best." Nathaniel offered his hand. "I'm so glad we had a chance to meet. I hope we can do this again one day, under less troublesome circumstances."

Jacob shook the vampire's hand. "I hope so."

Nathaniel left him alone with James, who favored him with a melancholy smile.

"You and I both know that you're never coming back to Georgia," James said.

"I'll admit it's not high on my to-do list, but never say never," Jacob replied. "Besides, you've got *much* better things to do now than worry about my travel plans."

"Well, that *is* true."

"Don't break him."

"Hush." A frown briefly passed over James' handsome face. "Make sure that Eye-talian takes care of you and your boy."

"He will."

"May I hug you?"

Jacob nodded and found himself pulled into an embrace that was every bit as comforting as it had been ages ago. After allowing himself a few seconds to wallow in the sensations it caused, he stepped back and looked up at his first love, his killer, his maker... his *friend*... with eyes that weren't exactly dry.

"Goodbye, James."

"Goodbye, Jacob."

Jacob got onto the plane and settled into a seat, and any lingering sadness vanished as the anticipation of seeing his family grew stronger. He peered out of the window and saw James and Nathaniel waving at him, and he waved back. Then he pointed at the two of them and gave a thumbs up with an eyebrow wiggle, which caused them both to burst into unheard laughter. It was the best conclusion to the trip that he could have hoped for.

Shortly after, the plane took off. His past was behind him once again. Every minute and mile that passed brought him closer to Harborview.

And his future.

Thank you so much for reading *Scars from the Past*. For more information about the *Harborview Immortals* series, future projects, and random geekery, please follow me at [www.emmapetersonwrites.com](http://www.emmapetersonwrites.com).

**Harborview Immortals:**

Family Matters (#1)

Family Matters: A Halloween Interlude (#1.5)

The Rising Son (#2)

Two Princes (Coming soon!)

**Harborview Immortals Extra:**

An Unexpected Addition

Small Packages

Like Fathers, Like Son

Last Summer

Scars from the Past

The Gentle Giant (Coming soon!)

**Harborview Immortals Flash Fiction (canon-adjacent):**

Birth of a Monster

To Protect and Serve

Last Look

Tuck & Chuck