

The Howling Wind

The Alex Hayden Chronicles Book Two

By

Michael Andrews

Text Copyright © Michael Andrews 2014

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior consent of the author.

This novel is a work of fiction. The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are the work of the author's imagination. Any resemblances to actual persons, living or dead, or events that have occurred are entirely coincidental.

Acknowledgements

As usual, I have several shout outs to the people who helped me to bring my book to life.

To Rebecca for her wonderful ability to spot all the mistakes that I deliberately put in the drafts. Any mistakes that remain are all of my own making.

To Jessica at Coverbistro for such a great design!

Without you, this book would still be sat on my hard drive.

Chapter One

“Come on Alex, we’ll be late,” Harry yelled at me as I fastened up the buttons of the dress shirt that I was being forced into against my will.

“Another minute!” I shouted back as I looked into the mirror. The reflection was almost mocking me as I stared at myself. Dressing up was not something that I enjoyed and when it was for a cause that held little or no meaning to me, it grated even further on my being. I fished out the bowtie and hooked it around my neck, fastening the clip to the side, hidden under the small collar. I had never learned to tie a proper one so Harry and Eirwen had finally given up and bought me a pre-tied one. I picked up the black dinner jacket from the back of the chair and with it hung over my arm, I headed downstairs to meet a similarly dressed Harry.

“You look smart,” he smiled at me and reached out to ruffle my hair. I ducked away from him as it had taken me fifteen minutes to style it in the short, spiked style that I had recently started sporting. He laughed and clapped me on the shoulder before we headed out to the elevator to take us down to the underground car park.

“So we are going to this party because?” I left it hanging.

“Because this is a celebration of Vanessa’s boss becoming the new Chief Superintendent.” He saw my frown. “It means that the post of Superintendent is now vacant,”

“And DCI Bach thinks that she’s the woman for the role,” I finished for him. My face screwed up. “So we are her back up for her schmoozing up to him in an effort to win favour?”

“She is in a good place at the moment, what with solving the murders,” Harry explained as if I was a child. I sighed as I had been involved in political manoeuvring for more years than I cared to remember.

I settled in to the passenger seat of his blue Audi A5 and listened to the sounds of whichever rock band was currently playing on the radio as he drove up the ramp and onto the streets. The party was at the Hilton Hotel which overlooked the beach so we had around a fifteen minute drive to get there. I stared out the window, thinking about the last two months since the encounter with Beddows and Brynhild van Hightinger, and the reappearance of Eirwen, my pretend mother, back into my life.

I had come to Blackpool in my wanderings, hiding from my former sire, Chlothar, and had finally decided that I was too tired to continue running and hiding. I saw the pier in the distance, jutting out into the Irish Sea, I remembered sitting on the end looking over the dark horizon, waiting for the sun to rise and end my existence. That was until Harry Shepherd interrupted me and my life changed in an instant.

Finding out that his son had gone missing eighteen months earlier inspired me to change my mind and with the hunt for the vampire pack, and the subsequent battle with them, a bond of sorts had been formed between us. I knew that he was looking at me as some sort of substitute for Connor, and his insistence of taking care of me brought back long lost memories of my own mother and stepfather, who had passed a millennium before.

I had enlisted the help of Matt, my computer genius partner who had found erased CCTV footage of the night Connor had vanished and to my horror, he had not just run away as was supposed, but he had been approached and seemingly willingly gone with Chlothar, my sire, the one who had turned me a thousand years previously. This weighed heavily on my mind. I had not divulged this information to Harry, or to Eirwen who, like me, was in hiding from our former master.

“We’re here,” Harry told me, interrupting my thoughts and I grimaced as I saw a long line of people, all suited and booted in their finest, filing into the hotel reception.

“I still don’t know why I have to be here,” I groused.

“You’re supposed to be my nephew for starters, and if Vanessa does get the Superintendent’s job, then there is another vacancy coming up,” he grinned as I shook my head. “Secondly, you’ve been getting moody over the last couple of weeks and I thought a party might cheer you up.”

“I’ve not been moody,” I shot back, sounding exactly like the moody teenager that he was claiming I was, before chuckling to myself at the absurdity of my statement.

“And thirdly,” he paused, flashing a look of worried concern at me. “Bill told me that Petra is coming back to visit for a week.”

“Oh that’s just bloody marvellous!” I hissed. “She’d better have gotten an attitude improvement.” The image of the sixteen year old blonde sprang to mind with mixed emotions attached to it. She was an attractive girl for sure, the way that her green eyes sparkled when she was enthusiastic about a subject. Unfortunately for me, that subject seemed to be the various ways that she wished to end my existence. While she was a skilled fighter, I was confident in my ability to remain better than her, unless she got her crossbow out. The shots that she had fired off in the Church of the Merciful Heart certainly showed prowess that I hadn’t seen for centuries.

“Just let her get settled in to Bill’s before you two go head to head again, will you?”

“I’d be perfectly happy to avoid her altogether but I doubt that’s going to happen, is it?”

I saw Harry slowly shake his head. Since being exposed to the supernatural world that existed around him, he had become firm friends with his neighbour Bill, something that despite our reluctant alliance those months ago, still rankled with me. After all, can you imagine what it is like living next to a born killer who is ready to wipe out your entire race if the order came down from The Comitia?

The Comitia. How my body had shivered when I found out that they were the ones who had sent Petra to help her uncle. They were the ruling body of humans who reluctantly accepted the existence of my kind with open arms while in the background, were plotting ways of ridding the Earth of all paranormal creatures. It didn’t matter that some of us actually helped humans to grow and progress, pouring money and brains into projects, while humans seemed bent on destroying the natural world around them.

I pushed the door open and stepped out, putting my jacket on and fastening the buttons while I waited for Harry to do the same. We walked over to the reception, the picture of a normal family, well, an uncle and nephew anyway.

“Harry!” the loud shout of Detective Sam Jackson echoed over the buzz of conversation of the people in line.

“Hey Sammy,” Harry shook the offered hand of his partner.

“Hi Detective Jackson,” I smiled at him. “How’s your wife?”

“Oh, she’s fine and so is little Samuel Junior,” he replied, his chest puffing out proudly. “You must come round sometime and see the little blighter.”

“Is he still screaming the house down?” I asked. The last thing that I needed was to be anywhere near a two week old baby when it started wailing. Even with the ability to turn off my higher strength hearing, crying babies did nothing for me.

“Unfortunately yes,” he frowned. “And I have no idea how a baby that small can produce so much shi... ah, pooh.”

I chuckled at his scrunched up nose, my own mirroring it at the imagined stench of a dirty nappy. We filed past the waiting crowd, Harry and Sam’s status of detectives enough to bump us through. We made it into the large function room that was decorated in a mixture of the black of the police and the bright orange of the new Chief Superintendent Greg Leighton’s favourite football team. Loud music played through speakers and I could quickly count over a hundred people already inside. Guessing that the figure would double by the time that everyone was inside, I tried to sneak off to the side before a firm hand clapped on my shoulder.

“Oh no you don’t! If I have to endure this, then so do you!” I looked up into the faked smile of the tall figure of Eirwen, my fellow vampire and former mother figure. Now that she was confident that she was under the protection of The Council of Vampires, she had allowed her hair to grow back into her normal platinum blonde instead of the dyed black while she was in hiding. Dressed in a gown of pure gold, she looked stunning.

“I see you’re keeping a low profile, mother,” I sniggered.

“It’s not very often that I get to party, so why not?” she replied. “You never know, I might even get lucky.”

“Yuck!” I made a gagging motion. “You’re my mother! I’m not supposed to have thoughts like that about you.”

“It’s just a shame that you were turned so young,” she cupped my face. “Another three or four years and you would have the girls fighting for you, especially that Petra girl.”

“Oh puh-lease!” I scowled. “She hates our kind with a venom. If I was in bed with her, she’d likely stab me through the heart while I slept.”

“So is Uncle Harry here?”

“Over at the bar with Jackson. What about Vanessa?”

“She’s talking with CS Leighton and Commissioner Edwards somewhere. Let’s get a drink and then go and socialise.”

She left me no choice but to follow as she took my hand and half dragged me to the bar. Despite wanting to try to blind the night with alcohol, I knew that with so many police in attendance, the likelihood of getting served was nil so I spent the next three and a half hours being tortured in a manner far worse than those of medieval times. After all, there are only so many times that your cheeks can cope with being pinched by women in their fifties or older, your shoulder being clapped by the strong arms of law enforcers and only so many times you can avoid the attention of the mob of teenage girls who found themselves in attendance, their evening entertainment now focused on trying to capture me into a dance.

Finally, with CS Leighton making his speech of appreciation for everyone attending, I found myself outside in the cool, midnight air. I could hear the faint lapping of the waves and as I leaned against a planted palm tree, I allowed myself to relax and calm my body from the on edge state that it had been in.

As my body became in tune with my surroundings, I felt a wrongness. I kept my eyes closed as I opened my mind, casting my empathic sensors about to see if I could locate the source of the feeling.

“There you are,” the slightly slurred voice of Detective Jackson interrupted my search. “Harry is looking for you.”

“Is he ready to go?” I asked hopefully.

“I think so,” he hiccupped, just as Harry appeared over his shoulder. I jumped back as I felt the change in Jackson’s body and vacated the spot where he emptied the eight shots of Sambuca and god knows what else onto the floor.

“Let me call you a taxi, Sam,” Harry said, taking his car keys from him. He fished out his mobile and as I half listened to him speak with the taxi company, the hairs on the back of my neck prickled. I looked around again but could only see people milling around, trying to remember where they had parked their cars or waiting for taxis, just like Sam would have to.

My eyes fell onto a family of four whom I had seen earlier. They had mainly kept to themselves during the party, although the daughter, who looked to be around sixteen, had given me a few discrete smiles. I blushed as her eyes now caught mine, her brown eyes like dark chocolate pools but as she brushed a strand of her brown hair from her face, I saw her father say something in her ear. She stiffened immediately and looked down at the ground. I didn’t need my empathic senses to feel the anger flowing from him and when he caught my gaze, there was a look of hatred in his eyes that made me shiver. I wondered who this man was and what he had encountered to make him have such hatred like that. “Who are they?” I asked as DCI Bach appeared by our side.

“That’s Ian Norris and his family,” she replied after noticing who I was asking about. “Last month, he relocated his electronics company to the town, which is great news as it has created around two hundred jobs in the area.”

Any further conversation was cut short as a taxi pulled up and Eirwen and Vanessa offered to make sure that Jackson got home safely. How safe he would be once he got home was another question, as surely his wife would have something to say about the state that he had gotten into.

I looked back over to where the Norris’s had been stood but they had disappeared, either into their car or a taxi of their own. A blonde figure was stood in their place however, one that I now figured to be the cause of my earlier feeling.

“Oh for Christ’s sake,” I hissed, causing Harry to look at me.

“What’s wrong?”

“It’s not my fault, okay?”

“What isn’t?”

“Hello Detective Shepherd,” the sweet, clear voice of the sixteen year old girl announced her presence.

“Oh. Hello Petra. I thought you’d be at your uncle’s?”

“I thought that I’d do a quick scout around, just to see if there have been any changes.” Petra Farrelly replied. She gave me a once over look. “Well, it isn’t true what they say.”

“And what might that be?” I sighed.

“You can scrub scum up.” She smiled at me. “You actually look quite good in that. One might even forget what you are.”

“Thanks, I think.”

“But just remember, I won’t forget.”

“I wouldn’t expect you to.”

“Okay, knock it off the pair of you. We’ll have no fighting here. Save it for a practice mat,” Harry scolded us. “Are you okay to get home or do you want a lift?”

“I’ll have a lift thanks.” Petra replied. “But I call shotgun.”

“Don’t,” was all Harry said to me as I bristled to retort. “Just get in the back please, Alex.”

I bit my lip and got in behind Harry, not giving Petra the pleasure of being the person to be sitting in front of me. I pretended not to be listening as Harry asked her how she had been and she told him about the new training that she had undertaken after leaving Blackpool. Shaking my head, I settled down for the short ride home, pleased when I finally got back to my room and shed my suit. Even though it was still early and I didn’t need any rest, I climbed into the four poster bed and drew the drapes around it. I lay on the bed and, for the next two hours, thought about police politics, the strange behaviour of the Norris’s and finally, how the return of the sixteen year old hunter would change the atmosphere of the neighbourhood.

Chapter Two

I awoke to the smell of coffee, drifting through the drapes of my bed. My pretend uncle had got me hooked on the damn stuff over the last month and I now looked forward to my wake up mug of strong, black coffee. Pulling the drapes back, I quickly drained the cup before getting myself ready and heading downstairs.

I wasn't surprised to see Bill sitting at the kitchen table, as the old hunter was a regular visitor to Harry's house, making sure that he was settling into the new world that he had become embroiled into. However, my stomach took an unpleasant turn when the blonde hair of Petra came into view as I walked into the kitchen. I nodded at Bill, said a brief greeting to Harry and ignored the girl as I washed up my cup in the sink.

"So, what's your plan for this evening, Alex?" Harry queried.

"I thought I'd have a fly about, grab a virgin and slaughter her while feasting on her blood before dumping her body in the sea," I smiled back. I didn't need my skills to sense Petra's pose stiffen immediately.

"He's kidding, Petra," Bill chuckled, knowing of the antagonism that existed between the pair of us. I flashed him a grin that reassured him that I was.

"I am going to go on a fly around though, just to sweep the area," I told them. "It's been too quiet around here and that doesn't sit well with me."

"Well, maybe killing off those vampires has sent a warning out that we're not to be messed with." Petra remarked, pride in her voice at her part in the fight.

"It will have sent out a message, but one that told Eirik van Hightinger exactly where Eirwen and I are living," I frowned. "I was expecting some type of retaliation by now."

"If the Council are protecting Eirwen like she says they are, maybe they've warned him off?" Bill posed.

"Eirik is not someone who takes much notice of the Council, and Brynhild certainly will ignore anything that they say."

"Why don't you take Petra out with you so that she can get some experience in what you are looking for?" Harry suggested.

"I don't think so," I snapped and turned quickly, walking into the lounge to get my trainers. I could hear Bill and Petra arguing and for once, I sided with the young hunter. There was no way that she and I were going to become friends, so the idea of teaching her skills that ultimately she could use against me was not something that I was willingly going to do.

"It was just an idea," Harry said, making me jump. Not for the first time, he had managed to walk up on me without my knowledge, something that I was going to have to look into. My mind had always alerted me to anyone who approached me, but somehow the detective continually evaded my defence.

"I know that you want us to be pally pally, but it isn't going to happen," I told him. "I'm going to go and have a cruise about and I'll pop into the station later."

"Be careful out there," he replied but before he could pat me on the shoulder or anything, I was up and gone, speeding through the door and into the air.

I struggled at first to get any height as a bitter cold wind blew in from the Irish Sea, but finally finding a slightly warmer air current, I glided up to a height of a few hundred feet, far enough from the ground that it would be impossible for a human to see me. Dressed all in black, I didn't need my glimmer glyph which was pleasing as I could concentrate on searching the streets of Blackpool.

After agreeing to stay, I had first thought about becoming a Batman-like figure, searching out criminals and bringing them to a swift justice, until Eirwen pointed out that I would start to attract the attention of the media if I did. My childish dreams of heroism faded so I settled for texting Harry with any major crimes that were taking place while keeping a sweep going for anything non-human. It was my one concession to him so far, allowing him to get me a mobile phone.

Tonight was looking like it was no different to the others. I landed quietly in a darkened alley behind the main promenade and walked around the corner. With winter now in full swing, darkness came early to northern England so not many businesses were still open. Most of the holiday season businesses had closed down for the winter period but there were still a couple of the arcades open so I decided to amuse

myself on my favourite zombie killing shoot 'em up. However, as I walked in, I frowned to myself as I could see that it was already occupied by a dark haired kid who looked to be a couple of years younger than my own appearance.

I walked over to the change machine, pushing in a twenty and getting the necessary amount of pound coins in exchange. I nodded at the middle aged woman who worked the concessions counter, flashing her one of my killer smiles that I knew softened her heart towards me. A quick smile and a polite manner always worked well with the staff who allowed me to stay beyond what they would any other under-aged kid without them looking to call my parents. Moving behind the young lad, I could see that he was putting in a decent performance, killing the rampant zombie army, but as his character succumbed to the flesh eating monsters, he let loose with a string of curses that would have made even Eirwen blush.

“Hey, you’re pretty good at this,” I said as way of greeting.

“Nah, I’m okay but looks like someone from here is awesome. Look at that top score!” The lad turned towards me and I stood stock still as I recognised his face from the party the previous evening. Deciding that I wanted to find out a little more about him, I pulled out a couple of coins.

“Do you fancy pairing up?” I asked. “There’s a two player option.”

“Sure,” he smiled. “I could use some help. Didn’t I see you last night at that party for that policeman?”

“Yeah, I was dragged there by my uncle,” I played it cool. “I’m Alex.”

“Jake.” He offered me his fist and having watched a few American films recently, I rolled up my own and bumped it in greeting. “My Dad told me that we had to go as well. He knows him through his business or something.” We put in the money and the game started up. I decided to play it cool, allowing Jake to take the lead rather than showing off my supernatural reactions and before I knew it, we were already on the tenth level with only a loss of three lives.

“So you’re pretty good at this,” Jake said, breaking my concentration. “I mean, I can tell you’re holding back.”

“What do you mean? You’ve got a higher score than me,” I pointed out.

“Yeah but you’re not taking the shots that you could. When you need to though, you nail every shot.”

Busted!

“I guess I’ve just had more practice than you,” I offered, “This is my favourite game in here.”

“I can relate to that,” he sniggered. “Nothing like killing zombies is there?”

I paused to look at him, wondering if there was a hidden meaning in his words. However, his face reflected his enthusiasm for the game, so I just put it down to the thirteen year old boyish enjoyment that I’m sure it was.

“So when did your family move here?” I asked as we walked over to the concessions counter. “I heard that your dad is like some big owner of a company.”

“Urgh,” he pulled a face. “We moved here last month ‘cos my Dad decided he wanted to move the company here as the cost of wages is less, and people will be more willing to work for lower wages as they’d be happy just to get a job.”

“Sounds a bit mercenary,” I chuckled. “But totally right from a business point of view.”

“I guess so, but Liverpool? Why couldn’t we have gone to Manchester or Liverpool or somewhere less, um,” he paused.

“Less run down?” He nodded. “It’s okay here, especially during the summer. It kind of all closes down in the winter as most people come here for the touristy shit.”

“I’ll trust you on that,” he grunted. “As I said, my Dad knows that copper from somewhere and it was Mr Leighton who persuaded Dad to come here. Something about paying less tax or something as well.”

I heard a low bleep and buzz and looked around, only to see Jake pulling a mobile from his jeans pocket. He frowned as he read the text message and as much as I wanted to sneak a peak, I decided to respect his privacy. After all, Harry and Eirwen had tried to impress on me the need to look like I was actually Harry’s nephew, and a fourteen year old lad, so making a friend of sorts would help.

“I’m sorry Alex, but I’ve gotta shoot,” Jake sighed. “My Mother has told me that I need to get home.”

“No problem buddy,” I reassured him. “My uncle can be a bit overbearing at times as well.”

“Will you be here tomorrow?” He had a look of a little lost puppy and I guessed that being the son of a rich businessman had its drawbacks. He had told me in our small talk that his sister and he were being home-schooled so I nodded and agreed to meet him around the same time the following day. He beamed a smile at me and, with another fist bump, left the arcade.

I wandered down towards the end of the pier and took up my customary seat on the end, wanting to enjoy a little peace and quiet to ponder but that was soon interrupted. With a soft sigh, I waited for her to talk.

“So it looks like you’ve made a new friend, or is he your next meal?”

“I thought that we had agreed to avoid each other Petra?” I asked without turning.

“I know it’s only going to be a matter of time before you start killing again, no matter what Uncle Bill says,” she snarled. “You’re all the same, you blood suckers. You kill without mercy or conscience and think you’re above the law.”

If she was going to insult me any further, she didn’t get a chance as with a burst of speed and anger, I pinned her against the side of a closed down café that was some forty metres from where I had been sitting. I could feel my eyes turning red as my animalistic nature fought to take control. I held her still, my fingers slowly tightening around her throat before I stopped myself from strangling the life from her. Letting her go, she dropped to the ground, gasping for air and I looked her in the eyes, my fangs fully bared.

“Do not think for one minute that if I or mine are threatened in any way, I will not react with the full fury of my arsenal,” I hissed at her, making her shrink back against the wall. The look of fear was evident in her bright green eyes and I fought to control myself, to bring myself back to human form. “You are correct in that all vampires are capable of killing at will as individually, humans do not have the ability to fight us. However, not all vampires choose to kill at will. Some show respect and restraint for humanity, and it would be nice if that was reciprocated every now and then.”

I didn’t wait for a reply but launched myself from the end of the pier, snagging a blast of warm air and headed over to the police station where Harry was stationed. Landing on my tiptoes in the deserted street next to the station, I slowly counted to ten to try to diffuse my anger, which was aimed more at myself rather than at Bill’s niece. How I managed to let her get under my skin so often was beyond me.

Walking into the station, I nodded a hello to the desk sergeant on duty, all of whom were now used to seeing me, and I wandered through into the office where Harry and the others were based. I looked around, surprised to see it empty so I let my senses take over.

“There’s nothing to indicate that this is anything other than an animal attack,” I heard DCI Bach’s voice echoing from the conference room nearby. “But after those murders of the women a couple of months ago, the Mayor and the new Chief Superintendent are both very twitchy and want us to check it out.”

“But why the whole department, ma’am?” a new voice asked. “Surely if it is just some hikers who got attacked, then only one or two detectives need to look into it.”

“We just need to cover all bases, and be seen that we take any investigation seriously,” Harry piped up. “The flack that we got over the murders was unbelievable so it’s more about PR than anything else.”

There were a few disgruntled murmurs before the scraping of chair legs indicated that the meeting was over. I took a seat in Harry’s chair, idly doodling on a scrap of paper when the eight strong detective team filed back into the office. Most recognised my presence with a nod, although Detective Jackson was still looking green around the gills as he sat down opposite me.

“Alex, you’re back,” Harry greeted me. “Find anything?”

“Not really,” I sighed. “I bumped into Petra while I was out, so you may get some grief off her uncle when you get back.”

“How much did you hurt her?” he groaned.

I smiled and shrugged before picking up the folder that he had just placed on the desk. I flicked through it, scanning the photos of white bones, some of which still had decomposing flesh attached to them. The report listed them as three John Doe's and a Jane Doe, but from the size of some of the bones, it would be a good guess that they were a family, or at least there were two adults and two children.

"So where were these found?" I asked, looking for something to pass the time.

"Eh? Oh, the bodies. Over in the woods at Marton Mere," Jackson grunted. Seeing my questioning look, he continued. "It's a local nature reserve out by the golf club. It's a popular spot for walkers as there's a reservoir and some woodlands."

"Any clue who they are?"

"Not yet. Doctor Stirling has run the DNA but there's no match," Harry replied. "But then again, we only carry records of criminals, so it's unsurprising."

I raised my eyebrows at his statement, which caused him to give me a questioning look.

"Really? You believe that?" I shook my head. Turning his monitor on, I pulled up a blank internet screen. My fingers blurred as I keyed into the secret database that nobody outside of certain agencies were supposed to know about, and by cross checking the now hacked records of Doctor Stirling with the information on the database, I printed off the details of the dead family. I motioned for him to follow me into DCI Bach's office where I handed Harry the printout.

"Leo Varsey, forty three, resident of Staines, Middlesex went on holiday five weeks ago and failed to return to work. His wife, Fran, also forty three and their sons Vincent, fourteen and Adrian, thirteen also were reported by their school to have failed to return," Harry read. "Letters were sent three weeks ago to the schools and employers stating that there had been a family emergency in Italy and that they were relocating before a car crash just south of Milan killed all four."

"But Dr Stirling put the deaths at thirty two days ago," Harry argued.

"What's this?" DCI Bach asked.

"It looks like there's been a cover up somewhere to hide the fact that these people are dead," I explained. "There are only two scenarios why this would occur."

"Either the family were not who they seemed and were non-human," the DCI started.

"Or they were killed by something not human, and I don't mean the beast of bloody Bodmin Moor!" I finished.

"Maybe Eirwen and you should go and look at the remains," she suggested.

"Can you swing that without the Doctor's approval?" Harry asked her. "If I remember rightly, he was getting a little close to the truth about the murders."

"Pfah!" I chuckled. "We don't need the good Doctor's permission to get in."

"Well, whatever you do, it will have to wait," DCI Bach told me. "It's sun rise soon and you won't get in and out before it's up."

"God! Firstly I've got Eirwen telling me what to do and now you're acting like my mother as well!" I grumbled.

I turned and left the office, ignoring the smiles on Harry's and Vanessa's faces before jumping into the air to take to wing.