

BLAME

by Allison Duggins

Father's chamber exploded with voices clamoring at once to be heard.

"Vincent should be punished," Rachel called out, louder than the rest. "Paul and the others almost died because of him. Ellie did die."

"What would you have us do?" Father asked, dreading the answer.

"Banish him!"

"Banishment! Who would protect us if Vincent is banished? You?" Father stated in an angry tone.

"We have the sentries," Rachel angrily retorted. "We don't need his protection."

"Oh really?" William stated. "What about the outsiders? You saw what they did to Randolph. Would any of you be able to handle them?"

Rachel and the others looked around at the crowd, realizing William's comments were true and that they were unwilling to volunteer for the job if it came to pass.

"Then he must be given the silence," another voice stated

"That's not enough," Rachel stated.

"What about other restrictions?" someone shouted.

"Such as?" Father questioned.

"Something he would be forced to abide by," someone else said.

"Restrict Vincent Below, not allow him Above," another said.

"Not allow Catherine down either until the punishment is over," Rachel commanded.

Vincent looked at the others, alarmed at the idea of not seeing Catherine.

Father bowed his head and nodded in agreement.

"A message should be sent to Catherine, so she is made aware of the punishment and must abide by our rules," Rachel stated in a flat voice.

"Father, please..." Vincent stated.

"It must be done. I'm sorry, Vincent." Father said regrettably. "For the crime of bringing Dimitri down and introducing the illness that affected us and killed Ellie. Judgement is suggested for the silence and restriction to the tunnels for one month. All in favor, please so indicate."

Vincent and Father watched as a majority of the community turned their backs on him. Vincent gave a small smile when Father, Mary, William, Pascal, Mouse and Jamie did not turn their backs on him - but still they must abide by the majority.

"I will tell Catherine myself. The sentence will begin now."

Vincent bowed his head in acceptance, wondering how he was going to live without Catherine's presence for a month. He could send notes, that he was certain of. They will endure this. They will.

END