

Phoenix

Urban Fantasy

Von Isfet

Kapitel 1: Crashing

Lillian was tapping her fingers on the top of her desk as if she were extraordinarily bored. However she usually didn't do that sort of thing since she hated to offend the teacher and showing such a display of boredom would, at least in her mind, definitely count as a pretty obvious offence. This meant that she was probably very far away with her thoughts. She didn't do that often and tended to avoid it, especially in class.

Yet Blake really didn't give a damn since this meant he could blatantly stare at her without being caught. For now. He wasn't much of a poet but if he'd been good with words he would have liked to describe her in a poetic way for just one time in his life. She was the only girl he would do that for - and that said a lot. He hated poetry.

Something hit his head from behind. Blake quickly glanced at Miss Foster who was currently discussing the latest piece of gloriously pretentious literature that they had to do in this class. She was completely distracted because she liked to fawn over such useless bullshit, so he turned around to scan the back of the room for the culprit. Warren, who was seated directly behind him, was wagging his eyebrows in a completely inconspicuous way. Blake glared at him, but Warren just grinned and then pointed towards Lillian. Blake furrowed his eyebrows in confusion - what exactly did he want now? The heavily muscled boy repeated the gesture though, and after following the other's look more closely, Blake noticed that Warren was directing his absolutely subtle behaviour at an Afro-American teenager sitting right next to Lil. Landon was staring at Blake with an angered expression. When he saw the attention he got he glared at Blake and then turned around to give Miss Foster the impression that he was actually listening to her.

Coward.

Blake put his ellbows back on the desk again and wallowed in his misery. Yes, misery, because with one look at Landon every and any sort of day-dreaming he may have been capable of, had dispersed into oblivion for at least the next few hours. Seeing Landon always made him feel down. Warren was such an idiot, even if he only meant to look out for him. It's not like Landon could do anything. If he wanted to stare, he could freaking well stare all he liked. Lil wasn't even his girlfriend, so why was any of this Landon's business anyway?

Yet, he didn't dare do it again.

He was trying to eat his pencil case when the school bell finally rang. That was probably appropriate timing, as eating a pencil case was perhaps not the best of ideas he'd ever had. He threw his things into his sorry excuse of a bag and put an arm around Warren's shoulders as soon as his friend was ready to go. In the corner of his eyes he could see Miss Foster moving in their direction. He reacted quickly.

"Warren, where do we have to be in about ten minutes?", he asked loudly.

Warren caught on pretty fast, thank God.

"Oh, I thought you needed to see the doctor about your ... er ... ankle problem?"

Blake tightened his embrace, feigning to be in pain. "Oh that, yes. But Warren, I really don't wanna go! Oh, but I have to, don't I?" A whiny tone had crept into his voice.

By now, several other students were looking at them with mixed expressions while fleeing the classroom. Most of them didn't seem to care, others appeared curious and suddenly found something on their phones that distracted them so utterly that they became unable to find the door.

Upon hearing this short conversation Miss Foster, who had been a natural force about to strike a few seconds ago, flawlessly went into mother-hen mode instead. "Blake, my boy, is everything alright?"

Blake grinned sheepishly, ruffling the hair on the back of his neck.

"Yeah, of course, Miss Foster. Just my ankle is all. Warren is gonna take me to the doctor now. We really need to get going. Though I totally hate that place, you know."

"Oh, but I could drive -"

"Thanks, Miss Foster, but we're cool!", he interrupted before she could say anything else. "See ya."

They were out of the classroom and school in record time. Blake glared at that horrible place and then turned his attention to the parking lot. It was cram-full, what a surprise, so they needed to search a bit until they finally found their ride in form of a sandy haired boy who was emanating the darkest aura this side of the planet.

Josh stood in front of his rusty old car with his arms crossed and his serious face on. Not that that was unusual, that grimace had somehow been glued to his face since birth. Blake had seen pictures and man, those were creepy.

"Hey Josh", Warren greeted him. "Miss Foster was trying to abduct Blake again."

"Hm", said Josh.

"Must be desperate, that woman", Warren laughed.

Blake let go of him and sighed. "Look, guys, she just wants to help me. Or something."

"Wonder why she thinks you need any sort of help", Warren grumbled. "I mean, I'm not doing that well in English too and she's never tried to help me."

"That's because there is no helping you, War. Too late for that."

Josh made a humming noise that somehow sounded as if he were agreeing with Blake which resulted in Warren going into ranting mode. Not that Josh seemed to care, he just kept staring at the other teen with mild boredom added to his serious-expression.

Blake on the other hand had completely zoned out. His gaze was fixed on two people a few cars further away. They were kissing passionately and he couldn't see their faces completely, but Lilian's light brown hair and her delicate stature were a dead give-away. He wished Lil's boyfriend would just succumb to spontaneous combustion or a random meteor falling on his pretty little head. Unfortunately David was a very lucky boy and unlikely to be struck by tragedy any time soon. He was class president in their parallel class and his parents were obviously wealthy people as he had been driving a Mercedes ever since he got his license and was always wearing brand name clothing. Of course he was also top of his class if not of the school in terms of his grades and nobody really seemed to dislike him, except for Blake. A meteor would rather change its course than hit a slimy bastard such as this guy. Way to go, wonder boy.

Thing was that that meant Lil liked intellectual people. And intellectual, Blake was not. What a shame. He would have kept switching from imagining how David would meet his end, to himself dying tragically only so Lillian would be able to see him for the hero he really was, but he was brutally brought back to Earth by Warren.

"Zoe's on the move, man", he said in a far too happy voice.

Blake groaned and turned his head in the direction she was supposedly coming from. Of course she was surrounded by her girl-lackeys, the lot of them exuding an air of superiority due to their quiet laughter and elegant gait. They also looked like a very tight group and seemed to make fun of anybody they came across, unless they were attractive males. People moved out of their way when they saw them.

"What, you don't wanna see her?"

Blake didn't answer. He didn't need to, Warren and Josh knew that he wasn't really into Zoe. But as he could never have Lil, he had started this relationship in hopes of forgetting about her. He had also done it to try and make her jealous, which hadn't worked out at all. Now he was stuck with Zoe.

Josh stepped into his field of vision and demonstrated his irritation by rolling his eyes. "Why don't you dump her already?", he asked with his low, gravelly voice that didn't really fit his lithe built and his rather normal height. He had to be quite annoyed, because he obviously deemed this situation important enough to form a full sentence instead of simply grunting, huffing or snorting which was his usual repertoire.

"Oh come on, she isn't that bad", Warren said.

Blake knew that. Which was probably why he hadn't ended this yet. Zoe had a really tender side and she could be compassionate, if she wanted to. Sometimes, in her better moments, she even recognised that her public behaviour hurt other people and that what she did was bad, but then she always said that it was the way things were now. People had been caught up in this fight for popularity when she had entered school. It wasn't her fault that she had tried to fit in. Blake didn't care about things like popularity so he wouldn't know. Being loved and looked up to by everyone put so much pressure on you. Why anyone would want this he had no idea. Anyway, he didn't really give a damn if she was evil to people and trampled all over their feelings all day long. His friends might think that that was why he wanted to get rid of her, but actually he liked that part of her. Sort of. They were kindred souls in that area, only Warren and Josh weren't aware of Blake's late night activities, which included hurting people quite a lot. Zoe on the other hand had connected the dots quickly after starting to date him. And after talking about all of it, she had understood. She may be demanding, somewhat shallow and ruthless and she just wasn't Lillian, but she had good points too.

Right now she was waltzing over to them, having hugged her girl-troop goodbye. Josh was awarded with a false smile, Warren received a genuine one and Blake got a passionate kiss. Well, another plus was that Zoe was extremely good at this. She was also hot.

They were still at it when the engine revving interrupted them and they quickly entered onto the back seats. Warren, who had called shotgun, was blabbering about how Josh desperately needed to do something about the HP of his super old car before it began driving backwards for it was so terribly slow that a snail would seem like a rocket compared to it. Of course he was exaggerating, as the car wasn't even that slow, but Warren would be Warren. Blake turned to Zoe.

"You seen my sister, Zo?"

Blake had overslept, naturally, and not been able to check if Hayden had even left the flat or not. Afterwards he hadn't encountered her anywhere on the school grounds and promptly started worrying. Still it might just be that she had a short day which was likely, she was two years beneath him after all.

His girlfriend threw him a look that stated I-am-not-her-baby-sitter, but she refrained from saying any of that out loud. "She was here this morning. So she didn't skip, alright?."

He nodded slowly, his heart a bit lighter at the thought that she hadn't ignored school for another day yet again. It wasn't that he was concerned about her grades, as he didn't care much about school himself, but her not going to class would mean that she was elsewhere. Doing drugs, booze and probably boys. None of which sat well with him.

He glanced at his mobile and noted a message from Twister.

Meeting tonight, urgent, it said. He felt Zoe's head bump against his shoulder as she tried to read the SMS. When he locked the cell she pursed her lips, but didn't complain.

Blake wondered what might have Twister taking the time to add an *urgent*, because he really was far too lazy for such things, normally. Must be important then.

"Soooo". Warren dragged the word. "My place or Zoe's?"

"Yours", Zoe shot back. "Don't wanna have to clean up the mess again. Last time was a complete disaster, alright?"

Warren gifted her with a burning smile that he probably rated as innocent and honest, but actually was rather shark-like. Far too many teeth. Zoe huffed and settled more firmly against Blake's side so he put his arm around her shoulders. He saw Josh glaring at them through the rear-view mirror, then giving a low growl that somehow sounded like "seatbelts".

"Fine", Blake mumbled. It was Josh's call after all. He prompted Zoe to do as their driver pleased and she finally obliged after a short staring contest.

The second they were finished Josh hit the brakes, hard.

A loud screeching noise assaulted Blake's ears and he could feel the car going down on its front wheels and skid to the left. He had no idea what was happening. All of a sudden Blake was thrown into the seatbelt and then backwards and to the right, where his head connected with the window in a very non-friendly way. For a moment he saw stars and felt completely out of this world. It didn't seem like they were moving anymore. He heard miserable groaning from the front part of the car and suddenly the blood pumping through his veins increased in volume so that it turned into a wild rushing. Pushing himself slightly away from the window and rubbing his hurting forehead unconsciously he threw a frantic look at Zoe, but she appeared to be fine. She didn't react to anything though, instead her huge eyes were fixed on something in front of the car. Blake turned to follow her gaze. What he saw made his head spin.

A few metres away the side of a several-storey house had apparently melted onto the street. It was a mass of steel, glass, concrete and burning wood, spewing dark black smoke in some places. Here and there the wreckage had an orange tint as if it were glowing still and the air above the ruined building was flickering from the heat.

A motorcycle lay half submerged on the side of the street, the rider was nowhere to be seen. As he let his gaze wander he saw two or three cars that had been caught beneath this catastrophe and there were people surrounding one of them, trying desperately to get a young woman out of it. Loud crying and shouting dominated the whole place, and a car alarm was blaring over it all.

The agonised groaning noise sounded again and Blake realised that he had totally forgotten about Warren and Josh.

"Guys, are you alright?", he demanded, pushing himself in between the front seats. Warren was silently gaping at the terrible scene in front of them, but Josh had blood running down his face, as did the steering wheel. He was holding his head, his form tense and he didn't respond to Blake's questions.

Blake decided that it might be better to get him out of the car. He nudged Warren in the shoulder to gain his attention.

"Warren, get out. Help me with Josh."

Warren looked at him blankly as if he hadn't understood a word he had said. He was about to pinch the other when he heard one of the back doors opening and closing. Then Zoe appeared next to Josh and tried the handle of the driver's door. Blake realised that she wouldn't get in without his help, so he squeezed himself into the front and took the key out of the ignition, pressing the button on the attached remote control. As a result everything automatically unlocked itself and Zoe was finally able to open the door.

She carefully guided Josh out of the car, calm and slow and talking to him the whole time. Blake had never thought he'd ever witness them being so supportive towards the other. He pushed the thought away, climbing out of the vehicle himself. Warren had somehow found his way back into the world as he slowly followed Blake's example. However he didn't seem to be able to turn his back on the melted building.

"Come on, we better get off the street", Blake said, pulling his friend with him.

The car had ended up on the wrong lane and created some skid marks all across the street. Now that he could see more of the whole scenery Blake noticed that there was a bunch of cars on the other lane, quite a few of which had crashed into the one before them. The problem was obvious as they, just like Josh, had turned right to come here, and the crumbled mass that had once been a rather tall house was lying just a few dozen metres behind the corner. That had obviously been enough for the first cars to stop, but one or two of the following had crashed into them. Josh, who tended to drive pretty fast, even in the city, had probably tried to avoid the accident, landing them on the wrong lane.

His car didn't appear to be damaged, but they had been lucky in so far as that they hadn't run over any of the busy people bustling around.

Blake turned to Zoe and Josh.

"Are you alright, Josh? Can you hear me?", he asked, stepping closer to his friend. Josh was still pressing one of his hands against his forehead, but he gave a grunt and fixated Blake with the one eye that wasn't completely covered by his fingers.

Suddenly, Blake felt a small hand weave itself into his. It was shaking. He squeezed it slightly in response.

"We should get him to the hospital", Zoe said.

Blake agreed. "Warren too. He's got a shock or something."

Josh let go of his face and started rummaging in one of his jeans pockets. "Gonna call 911", he murmured. "Gotta be done to death by now though".

Zoe snorted. "Oh stuff it, Grumpy. You can't even talk properly when you're not hurt. I'm gonna do the call, alright?" She got out her own phone to dial the number.

Blake took the opportunity to look at the wound. A small gash adorned the skin right of Josh's left eye and disappeared beneath his sandy hair which was clotted with blood. It was probably not very dangerous, but it sure as hell shouldn't be ignored.

"Man", Josh said, staring over Blake's shoulder, obviously just noticing what was actually going on here. If he didn't stop talking soon, he would break some record of having spoken more than his usual amount of words for one day while being sober. Well, at least his cognitive abilities were fine. Warren though ...

Blake glanced at Warren, who ... had become thin air.

He blinked and then completely turned around, only to watch his friend join the people who had gathered in front of the ruined building, trying to save whatever they could. His movements weren't sluggish at all, in fact he seemed to be back to his usual self, as far as Blake could tell from this distance. Meanwhile the trapped woman had been freed and was climbing through the front window of her car with the help of her saviours. Still more people were pouring in to help, but somehow the order they had had until a few minutes ago had dissolved into slightly panicked chaos, its source three men who were desperately making their way down from the melted monstrosity. The screams became louder, the voices turned hysterical.

All of a sudden a cone of fire burst from the still standing part of the building, engulfing the crumbled mess lying on the street below. The light was utterly unexpected and forced him to close his eyes which started leaking tears immediately. Terribly hot air burnt itself into Blake's lungs and he instantly shut his mouth and lifted his arms in front of his face. High pitched shrieking and the smell of roasted flesh hit him a second later.

What the hell?, he thought. Where had this come from? It had looked like he would imagine the flame of a giant flame-thrower. What would make fire react in such a way? Gas leak or something? He had no idea.

He risked a glimpse at the scenery. There were bodies lying all across the wreckage. Some still moving, others eerily motionless. Everything was tinged in dark colours, unless it was burning. Fires had broken out all over the place and people were throwing clothes at each other to suffocate the flames they had accumulated.

Blake felt lost. Whatever was happening here, it was horrible. He'd seen blood and been the cause of wounds and pain often enough to have gained a certain emotional blunting towards it. But none of these moments were anything compared to this movie scene. It was so unreal. If he went there to help, this shit might just happen again and then he would be one of those poor souls who'd given their lives in vain. He'd be like -

Oh shit.

Warren.

Far away the sound of several sirens erupted.