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Also by Alex Duval
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About the Book

Jason is blissfully happy with Sienna, the beautiful, intoxicating vampire he has loved ever since moving to Malibu and entering her wealthy, cliquey, party life. But their happiness is under threat as Sienna's parents don't believe a human-vampire relationship can work and forbid Sienna from seeing Jason.

As they try to get around the ban with secret meetings, Jason's vampire aunt, Bianca, throws a new problem into the mix. Jason has to make a decision that could change his life for ever. There are exciting new possibilities right at his fingertips, but what hidden dangers lurk beneath the glamorous surface?

VAMPIRE BEACH LEGACY

Alex Duval

RED FOX BOOKS

To Peter Sharoff

Special thanks to Laura Burns & Melinda Metz

One

'THERE'S THIS JUICY French girl I'm trying to seduce,' Jason Freeman told his juicy French girlfriend, Sienna Devereux. 'I need to have some lines ready to go.'

'I'm almost positive Madame Goddard isn't going to have pick-up lines on the test.' Sienna laughed. She pointed to the French textbook lying open between them on her bed. 'I am *also* almost positive that some version of this reading comprehension exercise *will* be. So read this story about Jacques and Pauline at the Tour de France aloud, and then I'll ask you questions.'

'Who cares about Jacques and Pauline?' Jason replied. 'All I can think about is the French babe.'

'Oh, yeah?' Sienna raised one eyebrow. 'What's this girl like?'

Jason opened his mouth to answer.

'In French,' Sienna added.

'*Très jolie. Et, um, très . . .*' Jason struggled to come up with more French words for a moment, then gave it up. 'She's way gorgeous. Long black hair. These killer lips. Amazing legs.' He slid one arm around Sienna's waist.

He could hardly believe that he and Sienna were officially together now. And, thankfully, Brad Moreau - Sienna's old boyfriend, and one of Jason's first buddies when he started DeVere High at the beginning of senior year - was actually OK with the whole deal.

'This girl clearly has a lot of depth,' Sienna teased, playfully slapping Jason's arm away.

'Oh, I'm just getting started,' Jason said quickly. 'She's insanely smart. She always knows where the best parties

are. And you know what else?’

‘What?’ Sienna asked, her dark eyes warm as she looked at him.

‘She’s a vampire, which means she has super strength. You should see her play beach volleyball.’

‘Hmmm. And you think you have enough to offer this fabulous French vampire goddess woman? You, a mere mortal?’ Sienna asked.

‘Well, in the sixth grade I won a hot-dog eating contest,’ Jason answered. Sienna snickered. ‘Plus, when a car breaks down, I can dial AAA with incredible speed. No one’s faster. I have also been told – admittedly by my little sister – that I am the less British version of Jude Law. What more could any French vampire goddess woman want?’

Sienna burst into giggles. It was good to see her laugh. Sienna hadn’t done much laughing since the crossbow killer started murdering vampires in Malibu right before Christmas. The guy had mistaken Jason for a vampire and shot him on the first night of the hunt. If the crossbow bolt had landed an inch or two lower, Jason would be dead.

Dominic Ames, a vampire and longtime boyfriend of Belle Rémy, Sienna’s best friend, *was* dead. So was a human girl Detective Tamburo had wrongly assumed was a vampire. Tamburo had planned to kill Sienna on the last night of his vampire-hunting cycle. He’d actually had her in his car while Jason had been right behind in his VW Beetle, trying to get to Sienna before it was too late. An eighteen-wheeler had been caught up in the middle of their car chase, and Tamburo’s El Dorado had shot off one of the cliffs in the Malibu hills. He died. Sienna lived – but only thanks to a transfusion of Jason’s blood, straight from his wrist.

‘Of course, I can also burp the Pledge of Allegiance,’ Jason went on. He knew he was being a dumbass, but he just wanted to keep Sienna laughing a little longer. It was the beginning of February, and she still wasn’t quite back to her

usual self. She was a little quieter. A little more serious. A little less . . . Sienna.

Jason could tell that it was mostly because Belle was so messed up. She was grieving for Dominic in a huge way. Sienna had been going to therapy sessions with Belle because Belle found it impossible to do them by herself, and Sienna's parents had insisted Sienna get some therapy of her own too. They thought she needed help dealing with the trauma of almost being a victim of the crossbow killer.

'Enough goofing around. Back to the book,' Sienna instructed. 'You have to pass French or you don't graduate. And I'm telling you one thing right now: there's no way I'm going out with a high-school boy once I'm in college.' She gave him a teasing smile.

'This French thing is unjust,' Jason said. 'I already have foreign language credits. I took two years of Spanish back in Michigan.'

'In case you haven't noticed, this isn't Michigan,' Sienna replied. 'That sound you hear? That whooshing? We call that the o-ccean. That's one way you can tell you're not in Michigan.'

'O-ccean,' Jason repeated slowly.

'Or, *en français, la mer,*' Sienna added. '*Répète, s'il te plaît.*'

'*La mer.*'

'*Donne-moi un baiser chaud et mouillé, bébé,*' Sienna said, in flawless French. '*Répète, s'il te plaît.*'

'*Donne-moi un baiser chaud et mou-something, bébé,*' Jason said, attempting to *répéter* what Sienna had just said.

Sienna gave him a slow smile, then leaned over and kissed him.

'What was that for?' Jason asked. 'Not that I'm complaining.'

'You wanted a line to snag your French girl, so I gave you one. You just said, "Give me a hot, wet kiss, baby,"' Sienna explained.

'I did?' Jason tried to remember the words he'd mangled. 'Well, I always did have a way with the ladies. How do I say it again?'

'*Donne-moi un baiser chaud et mouillé, bébé,*' Sienna told him.

'All right, all right, I'll kiss you. You don't have to beg,' Jason teased. He threw the French textbook to the floor, pressed Sienna back against the pillows and kissed her.

Sienna pushed him away before he'd had nearly enough of her. 'Not in front of the children!' she teased, gesturing to the mound of stuffed animals that had come with the parade of get-well cards after her 'car accident'.

Jason's blood had helped Sienna heal from her severe wounds almost instantly. But the vampires of DeVere Heights were very careful about keeping up the appearance of being human, which meant that after a near-fatal car crash, Sienna would have weeks of 'recovery', accompanied by weeks of visits by friends with cards and presents, most of the presents being stuffed animals.

'The children like to see Mommy and Daddy getting along,' Jason joked and kissed her again.

'You need to study,' Sienna said at last. 'I told you, if you don't graduate, I'm going to have to find myself a new guy.'

Jason leaned off the bed and picked up the French book. 'Fine. But there are a lot of good-looking high-school girls. I might just find myself somebody new too.'

'Yeah, right.' Sienna took the book and flipped back to the page they'd been working on. 'Jacques and Pauline at the Tour de France . . .'

They kept at it for an hour. French, French, more French, nothing but French. '*La leçon est terminée,*' Sienna finally said, closing the book. 'Class dismissed.'

Jason let himself flop back on the bed. He loved hanging out in Sienna's room. He wouldn't want it for his own, but there was something about spending a little time in her space - all candles and sheer curtains around the bed, and

more pillows than any human could ever use - that just made him feel good.

'I'm kicking you out now,' Sienna told him cheerfully. 'My mom and I always watch *Project Runway* together and it's about to start. She'll be miffed if I miss it. Besides, it's kind of fun.'

'You vampires and your rituals,' Jason mock-complained as he stood up.

It had been an adjustment getting together with a vampire. A big adjustment. For one thing, it meant accepting that Sienna had to feed on other guys. That had felt like a punch in the gut the first few times it had happened, even though she made sure to do it in private, not right in the middle of the dance floor at a party or something, the way a lot of vampires did.

He'd come to terms with that one - basically because he'd *had* to, but there were still times when he felt like a complete outsider. There were a lot of secrets about the way vampire society operated that Sienna wasn't free to tell him. In spite of it all, though, being with a vampire had started to feel surprisingly ordinary.

Sienna walked Jason over to the door and kissed him, her arms wrapped around his neck. 'You know what? I want to tell you something,' she said when the kiss ended. Her lips were still just a breath away from his.

'What?' Jason asked. She suddenly sounded so serious.

'I just feel . . . safe when you're around. Safe and happy. My parents should be paying you instead of that therapist I see,' Sienna told him, her dark eyes intense. 'You have made my life a better place to be.'

Jason smiled. 'So, how much money are we talking here?' he began. 'What kind of bucks does your therapist . . .?' He let the sentence trail off. What she'd said was too big to joke about. The fact that she trusted him in that way meant everything to him. 'I'm always going to be here for you, whenever you need me,' he said seriously. 'I promise.'

Two

MY LIFE JUST can't get any better, Jason thought.

He couldn't stop smiling as he steered the Bug home. He knew he was being kind of a geek, but what Sienna had said had made his night. That and the fact that she'd been willing to spend hours helping him with his French.

Most of their friends were at the beach, the movies or the mall, indulging in full-on cases of Senioritis. Their college apps were in. The schools had their transcripts and their SAT scores and their recommendations - everything the admissions officers would use to make their decisions. What Jason and the other seniors did this last semester didn't really matter. Unless they really screwed up, by, say, not passing French, which was a required subject at DeVere High for some insane reason - probably because the money for the DeVere Library and the DeVere Symphony Space and the DeVere Athletic Complex and almost everything else that was cultural in Malibu was funded by the Devereux family, who happened to be French. Just like almost every important family in Malibu.

And all those French-ancestored, very important families also happened to be vampiric and living in DeVere Heights. Where else? Jason suspected that he and his family were practically the only regular humans who lived in Malibu's most exclusive gated community. And he *knew* he was one of the very few regular humans who'd made it into the uber-popular group at DeVere High.

Sienna could have been out having fun with any of those ubers tonight, Jason thought as he pulled into his driveway. He knew she could have been indulging in some Senioritis of

her own. Instead, she'd chosen to help her French-challenged boyfriend study. He grinned. He was one lucky individual.

As he climbed out of the car, he heard the soft purr of his friend Adam Turnball's Vespa pulling in behind him. Turnball - as in, not of French ancestry, not even especially good in French! Adam was mid-level popular at DeVere High, except to the movie nerds - Adam was a god to them - and definitely not a vampire.

'What's up, my brother?' Adam called as he parked the moped. 'Is everything copasetic?'

Jason laughed. Who but Adam talked like that? 'Ultra copasetic,' he answered. 'Come on in. Mom hit Malibu Kitchen today. Let's see what she brought home.' He led the way into the house and straight to the kitchen. His father sat at the table, brow furrowed, shoulders hunched, surrounded by stacks of papers, forms and receipts. A calculator was positioned at his elbow.

'Hey, Dad, we're doing a food raid,' Jason announced.

'I always fast before I come over,' Adam told Mr Freeman. 'I like to have belly room because you guys always have the best chow.'

Mr Freeman answered with a grunt. *Weird!* Jason thought. *He usually talks too much to my friends.*

'What are you in the mood for?' Jason asked Adam, opening the closest cupboard. It was only then that his brain registered what his eyes had just seen: forms, receipts, calculator, cranky and distracted father. Jason knew these could mean only one thing: his dad was in the middle of his usual February pre-tax family financial review. A financial review that would include Jason's college fund, which happened to be seven thousand dollars light for a reason that Jason absolutely could not explain to his parents. He'd withdrawn the cash to buy back a vampire artifact that his friend Tyler had stolen and pawned. That was the kind of thing parents just didn't understand.

All the saliva in Jason's mouth dried up. His father was going to go ballistic. *Maybe I'm wrong*, Jason told himself. *I could be wrong*. He swallowed hard, then forced out the words, 'Whatcha workin' on, Dad?' while peering over at the table to see if statements for his college fund account were in the mess of papers.

'Just going over our financial stuff so I won't go nuts at tax time,' his father answered.

Adam's eyes widened. Jason could see he understood that they had walked into a Code Red situation here.

'Hey, you know what? There's a *Godfather* marathon on tonight. It's starting . . . basically now,' Adam said. 'We all have to watch it. We're men. That's what we do. We watch *The Godfather*, then quote it on all occasions to the bafflement of womankind,' he finished in a rush.

'Yeah, Dad. You've got ages to worry about tax,' Jason added, getting on board with Adam's Plan of Distraction. 'Let's do *The Godfather*. I'll get snacks.'

"'Leave the gun, take the cannoli,'" Adam encouraged, already quoting. 'Now that has to be an offer you can't refuse, Mr Freeman,' he added, in his best Brando imitation.

Jason's father twisted his neck from side to side, trying to work out the kinks. 'I'm almost done here, and it's wiped me out. I'll have to take a pass.'

Almost done? Jason thought. Surely that meant that at any minute his dad was going to find out about the missing cash.

'I completely forgot. I didn't do my chem homework for tomorrow. I should take off,' Adam said, inching toward the door.

Rat attempting to abandon sinking ship, Jason thought. Well, there was no way he was letting this rat leave. As long as Adam stayed, the extreme badness that was about to rain down on Jason would be delayed. And the delay would give Jason's dad some cool down time.

'You can use my chem book,' Jason told Adam, giving his friend a meaningful glare. 'I need to finish up the assignment anyway.'

Adam replied with a reluctant OK-OK-I'll-stay nod and Jason turned back to the cupboard. 'Here, we'll take these wasabi peas,' he said, hurling the bag at his friend. 'And, um, this black licorice.' He tossed the package over his shoulder in Adam's direction and heard it hit the ground. 'And now a couple of sodas.' He plucked two Dr Peppers out of the fridge. 'So let's get upstairs to the Wonderful World of Chemistry.' Jason started out of the kitchen, knowing Adam would follow.

'Jason,' his father called.

Jason stopped. This was it. His life was over.

He turned around.

'Don't blow up the house,' Mr Freeman joked.

'Just pens and paper, no chemicals,' Jason answered, wondering if his father could possibly have forgotten to look at his account.

Mr Freeman stood up and started gathering his piles of receipts together. 'I think we're in decent shape for April. The—' He was interrupted by his cell. He pulled it out of his pocket and checked the screen. 'It's work. I'll take it upstairs. I might need the computer,' he said.

Jason felt like the oxygen in the room had turned to helium. That's how relieved he was. As soon as his dad left, he rushed over to the table.

'Do you think he could have forgotten how much money you were supposed to have in the account?' Adam asked as Jason scanned the piles of paper for his college account statements.

'By a few hundred bucks, yeah. By several thousand, no way,' Jason replied, spotting the statements and snatching them up. The most recent one was on top. And the total . . . was exactly what his father would have been expecting. *Not* minus seven thousand. Jason stared at it, his mind whirling.

The account was exactly as it had been pre-pawn shop. The seven thousand dollars had miraculously reappeared.

His dad must have checked only the current total, because down a few statements it was clear that Jason had taken out the cash – right when Tyler had rolled into town from Michigan. Tyler had owed his drug dealer some serious cash, so when he had gone to a party at Zach Lafrenière’s place – Lafrenière, as in French ancestry, as in vampire – he hadn’t been able to resist picking up a silver chalice that looked like it was worth enough to save his butt.

It was. But the chalice was also an heirloom used in sacred vampire rituals, and the vampires were not at all happy that it was gone. In fact, they had planned to kill Tyler in retribution. Jason had managed to save his friend’s life. And then he’d bought back the chalice in a gesture of good will. In the end, the only thing that had got hurt was his college fund.

‘Somebody put the money back,’ Jason told Adam. ‘There’s a statement – a statement I’m going to, um, disappear,’ he added, folding the statement and putting it in his pocket, ‘that shows me taking seven thousand out. Then, three weeks later, it shows that there was a deposit for seven thousand going back in.’

‘Hmm. Looks like you were the recipient of a special grant,’ Adam said. He tore open the bag of wasabi peas and popped a handful in his mouth. ‘Dr Pepper! Now!’ He stuck out his tongue and fanned it with his free hand.

Jason handed him a soda, and Adam drank it down. ‘I love those things, but I always forget how insanely hot they are,’ he explained.

‘You’re not supposed to scarf them,’ Jason laughed.

Adam coughed a couple of times, then cleared his throat. ‘As I was saying, it seems like someone made a contribution to the Jason Freeman Needy Boy Foundation.’

‘Who would do something like that?’ Jason asked. ‘Not that I don’t appreciate it, but I can’t think of anyone who—’

A car horn cut him off.

'That's for me!' Jason's sister Danielle called from upstairs. 'Wave or blink the lights or something to let them know I'm coming.'

'Remember when Dani didn't think she'd have any friends at her new school?' Adam asked.

'Yeah, for that whole day and a half,' Jason replied as they walked over to the front door. He flipped the porch light on and off.

'Who's out there, anyway?' Adam said, peering through the long narrow window next to the door.

'Kristy, of course,' Jason said, taking a look. 'She and Dani start to wither if they are apart for more than eight hours. And that's Maria, Billy . . . and I think Ryan Patrick from down the block is driving.' Jason turned to Adam. 'So what's our thinking on Ryan? He spent last semester in Paris as an exchange student. He lives in DeVere Heights. But Patrick is not a French last name.'

'True. But he's always been a member of the V-crowd, ever since we were kids,' Adam answered. 'I think odds are that he's a Friend of Dracula.'

'Where are you off to?' Jason asked as Dani rushed toward the door. The heels of her leopard-print Stella McCartney shoes – the ones she 'love, love, *loved* and could not live without' – were clicking on the tile of the entryway and her auburn hair was flying around her face.

'Big date?' Adam chimed in.

'No, just the movies. No parties on Wednesday night. Nothing juicy,' Dani explained.

'Just the movies,' Adam repeated, shaking his head sadly as Dani hurried out to the car. 'Even a bad movie is better than pretty much anything else the world has to offer.'

'You need to get out more,' Jason told Adam as he watched his sister and her friends drive off. He didn't think he'd ever seen Ryan in the mix before. But at this point Dani had even more friends in Malibu than she'd had in Michigan.