

# Vampire Beach Initiation

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*Random House Children's Books*

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## About the Book

Malibu: a town full of very beautiful, very rich, very cool people - who just happen to drink blood. Jason has discovered the secret of the coolest clique at school, but has little time to worry about what it's like to live alongside vampires - he's too hung up on the sexiest girl in town, Sienna Devereux.

But when his old friend Tyler turns up and starts to mess with the wrong people, Jason begins to realize that there's something weird going on in De Vere Heights. The boys have a huge problem that even Jason's new vampire friends can't fix ...

A sinister and glamorous tale of vampire life - with added sex appeal!

# **VAMPIRE BEACH**

Initiation

Alex Duval

RED FOX BOOKS

For L.A.'s finest writing group -  
Chris, Drew, Emily, Kathy and Matt

Special thanks to Laura Burns & Melinda Metz

# ONE

'HEY, FREEMAN! WAIT up!'

Jason Freeman grinned as his friend Adam's voice carried across the wide-open courtyard of DeVere High. He turned, and found himself staring into a camera lens. Adam Turnball jogged toward him, jostling his ever-present camcorder as he filmed.

'I haven't been getting the hand-held camera effect I want in my film,' Adam explained. 'The camera's not shaking enough, so I'm thinking I must walk very smoothly. I'm extremely graceful, you know.'

'Hence the jogging?' Jason asked.

'Yeah.' Adam turned off the camera and bent over, sucking in a long breath. 'I tell you, bro, I suffer for my art. Running is not my strongest subject.'

Jason chuckled. He rarely understood what Adam was talking about, but he always found the guy amusing. 'I don't even think that thing's switched on half the time,' he teased him. 'You've been making this movie ever since I met you and so far, apart from some party footage, I haven't seen squat.'

Adam fell into step beside Jason as they made their way toward the parking lot with the rest of the juniors and seniors who could drive. 'Let me guess: you think I use the camera as a shield between myself and the harsh realities of high-school society. That I don't feel safe without a camera. That I'm only comfortable viewing the world at a distance, through a sanitizing camera lens.'

'No, actually, I think you just like to freak people out by pretending to film them all the time,' Jason replied.

'Damn, you got me.' Adam grinned. 'But you know I always like footage of you. The Michigan farm-boy wholesomeness, the all-American blond good looks. Why, you could be the next Brad Pitt, my friend.'

'I've never set foot on a farm in my life,' Jason said. 'I'm from a suburb of Detroit.'

'Details.' Adam waved his hand dismissively in the air, his hazel eyes twinkling.

As they passed through the tall arch over the entrance to DeVere High, Jason took in a lungful of the warm California air. The scent of flowers mingled with the smell of the ocean half a mile away. Sometimes he still couldn't believe he lived in Malibu now. It had been several months, but the place hadn't lost its ability to wow him. 'I can't believe it's November and I'm still wearing Texas,' he commented. 'Do you have any idea how cold it is in Michigan right now?'

'Too cold for me,' Adam said. 'Anything below sixty-five qualifies as freezing as far as I'm concerned.'

'Hey, Freeman,' Brad Moreau called as they passed him. 'Turnball.'

'What's up?' Adam replied.

Jason nodded at Brad, his best friend on the swim team. But he didn't head over to the carved stone bench where Brad sat. Because Brad wasn't alone; he had Zach Lafrenière with him. And Zach was radiating 'no humans allowed' vibes that could probably be felt on Mars.

'What's with the vampire conference?' Adam asked, lowering his voice. 'Something going down I should know about?'

'You shouldn't know about any of it,' Jason muttered. 'And neither should I.' That was the single most astonishing thing about Malibu so far: the fact that the coolest kids in

school weren't your usual 'cool' kids. In fact, they took 'cool' to a whole new level!

They were vampires.

Most days, Jason expected to wake up and realize that half his new friends being vampires was just a bizarre dream. But so far it hadn't happened. Adam was the only other person he knew who understood the truth about Zach, Brad and the rest of that posse. And Adam didn't seem to find it nearly as freaky as Jason did.

But then, Adam had grown up with the vampires. And Jason had only met them a few months ago. Maybe over time, he'd get used to knowing such a massive secret. Maybe.

'Let's just go,' he said gruffly, wanting to change the subject. The way Zach looked at him made him nervous. Of all the vampires, Zach was the only one who put Jason on edge. The others mostly acted like normal - normal for SoCal - people. But Zach was different. More powerful. More reserved. And definitely more unwilling to befriend Jason - or probably any human.

'Aren't you going to wait for Brad?' Adam asked.

Jason shook his head. 'We don't have swim practice today. Coach Middleton said since it's a holiday week, we could have the time off. He figured nobody was going to be at their best two days before Thanksgiving.'

'Sweet,' Adam said appreciatively. 'Hey, that means we can hang after school tomorrow, right? I've been meaning to force you to watch the entire *oeuvre* of Stanley Kubrick, a subject in which your knowledge is sorely lacking.'

'Hey, I've seen *The Shining*,' Jason protested.

'That's not enough,' Adam told him. 'What do you say - a DVD marathon *chez moi* tomorrow?'

'Sure,' Jason told him. They'd reached the parking lot. He nodded toward his 1975 Volkswagen Karmann Cabriolet, parked under a palm tree to the right. 'I'm that way.'

'And I remain in the bike parking section,' Adam said ruefully. 'Not that I don't love my Vespa. I just wish it had, you know, four wheels and a backseat to make out in.' He held up a fist, knuckles out toward Jason.

Jason bumped fists. 'Later.'

Adam took off for the Vespa with a wave, and Jason headed for his car. He wondered where his younger sister, Danielle, was. He'd forgotten to tell her there was no practice today. He could've driven her home. But a quick scan of the parking lot revealed no sign of Dani. She must have caught a ride or taken her usual bus.

'Guess I'm flying solo,' Jason murmured, unlocking the car. He began to lower the roof; it was way too sunny and gorgeous to ride with the top up.

'Want some help?' a voice asked from behind him.

Jason recognized that voice: *Sienna*. He felt a rush of nervous energy - *that* was just one more thing he'd got used to. Sienna Devereux made him hot, she was a vampire, and she was taken. Strangely, perhaps, he was having the most trouble with that last one.

He didn't turn around. 'I've got it, thanks,' he said.

Sienna didn't leave. He laughed and glanced over his shoulder. 'You're not really here to offer help, are you?'

'Nope,' she said, her plump lips curving into a smile. 'I'm here to ask for some. Can you give me a lift home?'

Jason finally turned to look at her full-on. Man, she was sexy. Her dark eyes were gleaming with amusement, and her long black hair was pulled into some kind of messy knot on top of her head. Jason longed to pull out the pins that held it up and let her silky hair spill down over his fingers. He shook the thoughts away. She was Brad's girlfriend. He was Brad's friend. That meant that most interesting thoughts about Sienna had to be banished from his mind.

*She and I are just friends*, he reminded himself. 'What's wrong with the Spider?' he asked. Sienna's imported Alfa Romeo always seemed to be out of commission.

She shrugged. 'I think it hates me.'

'That's impossible,' Jason replied. She raised one perfect eyebrow, and he realized that he sounded like a complete dork. 'Cars don't have feelings,' he added quickly. 'Unless you know something I don't.'

'I know *lots* of things you don't,' she said lightly. She opened the passenger door and folded her long legs into the VW.

'So I guess I'm giving you a ride home.' Jason laughed. He hooked the folded top into place and climbed in beside her. 'Why don't you just get a new car? Your parents have the money.'

Sienna turned in her seat to look at him. 'Really now, Michigan,' she purred. 'If I had a new car, I wouldn't need rides home, would I?'

'My point, exactly,' he told her.

She shook her head, smiling. 'Well, where would be the fun in *that*?'

Jason grinned and found himself gazing directly into her beautiful dark eyes. Then he realized he'd been staring at her for just a bit too long.

Sienna leaned toward him. Close. So close Jason thought she was about to kiss him ...

In fact, she gave his Michigan State key chain a casual flick with her finger. 'I think you have to use the little metal thingy on the end of this in order to make the car go,' she teased.

Jason turned the key in the ignition, trying to shake off the feeling that something had just very nearly happened between him and Sienna. 'Ha! Like you'd know,' he retorted jokingly. 'Your car *never* goes.'

As he pulled out of the parking lot onto the Pacific Coast Highway, he caught a glimpse of Brad and Zach still sitting on the bench outside school. 'Why didn't you just wait for Brad to take you home?' he asked Sienna.

She didn't answer, and for a moment he wondered if she'd even heard him. He shot a glance at her, and she was frowning.

'He had to ... do something with Zach,' she finally replied.

Jason nodded. It was just like he'd suspected. Brad and Zach were busy with some vampire-related business. Sienna didn't want to be specific about it, and that was OK with him. When he'd first found out about the vampires living in his gated community of DeVere Heights, he'd got pretty involved, pretty fast. One of them had turned rogue and killed a girl from school. Jason had ended up tracking him down and fighting him, all alone, in an alley. It had been that or let another girl get murdered.

If Zach Lafrenière hadn't turned up at the last moment, Jason knew he would probably have ended up dead. The whole experience had taught him everything he needed to know about the vampires: they were outrageously strong, they could change their physical appearance, and they knew some seriously freaky fighting moves.

He wasn't anxious to get that up close and personal with vampire business again. Being friends with some of them was enough - Sienna and her best friend, Belle, Brad and his oldest friend, Van Dyke. Even Zach was OK. Jason felt that they were good people and he knew their parents did a lot of charity work in the community. Beyond that, he didn't want to know much about the day-to-day vampire activities. His own private don't-ask-don't-tell policy.

A light turned red in front of him, and Jason eased to a stop. To the left, the Pacific Ocean spread out to the horizon, its gray-blue water calling to him. Maybe he'd slip on his new wetsuit and try some surfing this evening. Now that it was getting toward winter, the sun went down early. But he'd discovered that surfers stayed on the water until the very last drop of light was gone. He would definitely have time to catch a few good waves. He'd only taken three

lessons so far, but he already knew enough to go out on his own.

The late afternoon sun glinted off the water, and a warm breeze ruffled his hair. It was hard to believe it was almost Thanksgiving. Warm sun, clear blue sky, crashing ocean surf – life just did not get any better.

‘You are seriously zoning,’ Sienna commented.

The light was green. ‘Sorry,’ Jason replied as he hit the gas. ‘Sometimes the whole Malibu thing still distracts me.’

‘What “whole Malibu thing”?’ she asked.

‘You know, the unrelenting incredibleness of the place.’ That was the best way he could describe it.

‘Yeah. I’ve been to a lot of places, and Malibu is still the most beautiful,’ Sienna agreed.

Jason glanced at her in surprise. Sienna’s family – in fact, all the vampire families – had more money than he could even imagine. When she said she’d been to a lot of places, he believed her. The Devereuxs vacationed in Europe, Asia, even Australia. He’d seen the photos scattered around their house. It was nice to know that California still held up, even with that kind of competition.

‘Any big plans for Turkey Day?’ Sienna asked as they turned off the highway and headed up the hill toward DeVere Heights.

‘The usual: lots of food, football on TV,’ Jason told her. ‘My Aunt Bianca is coming in from New York. Danielle has about thirty outfits lined up to run by her. She approves of Bianca’s fashion sense.’

‘Well, who wouldn’t?’ Sienna said. ‘The woman knows how to dress.’

Jason’s eyebrows shot up. ‘You know my aunt?’

‘Sure.’ Sienna gave a languid shrug. ‘I mean, it’s not like we’re best friends or anything, but I’ve met her. Her husband was on the hospital board with my mom.’

‘Oh.’ Jason knew that Aunt Bianca had helped his father land his new job at the Los Angeles advertising firm – the

new job with the huge raise that had led to them moving out here to Malibu. And he knew that Bianca had suggested they buy a house in DeVere Heights. But somehow he hadn't realized that Bianca knew Sienna and her parents. 'I guess Bianca's husband was really involved in all the Malibu charities and stuff, huh?' he asked.

'Yeah.' Sienna glanced over at him. 'Didn't you know that?'

'I never really thought about it,' Jason said. 'Aunt Bianca was only married to him for four years before he died. And it's not like they spent much time in Michigan - they were always off in New York or L.A. or Paris or someplace else exotic. I met him at their wedding and maybe once or twice after that.'

'So he wasn't exactly Uncle Stefan,' Sienna guessed.

'I guess he was, technically,' Jason said. 'I just never thought of him that way. We've seen a lot more of Bianca since he died than we ever did before. I think my mom is happy to have her sister back.'

'Makes sense,' Sienna said. 'But you should be glad Bianca was married to Stefan. If it wasn't for that you wouldn't be living in DeVere Heights.'

'What do you mean?'

'Bianca used his contacts. You know, pulled some strings for you guys,' Sienna explained. Then she grinned. 'We don't let just anyone live up here, you know,' she teased.

'So if it weren't for Uncle Stefan, I never would have met you,' Jason said. 'I guess I do owe him one, then.' *Was that too much?* he wondered the second the words left his mouth. Sienna always seemed to be flirting with him, but he didn't usually flirt back. He mostly figured that she was just kidding around.

Sienna didn't answer, but she gave him a long sideways look that sent the blood racing through his veins. Jason turned into the driveway of her ultra-modern house and stopped the car.

'Thanks for the ride,' she said casually, climbing out and closing the door behind her.

'No worries.' Just having her out of arm's reach made Jason relax a little. Sometimes it was hard to remember that they were only friends when she was so close by. He reached for the gearshift, but suddenly Sienna turned back to the car.

'Did I drop a pen in there?' she asked, leaning in over the door. Her hair, loosened by the wind on the drive, slipped out of its knot and fell forward around her face.

Jason's pulse sped up. *Friends!* he thought. *Who am I kidding?* She was searching the seat, but she soon found her pen and looked up. Jason stared at her lips, slightly parted, then raised his eyes to meet hers. She held his gaze and didn't move away. Without meaning to, Jason found himself leaning toward her ...

His lips were barely an inch from hers when the phone rang.

Jason jumped in surprise as a Backstreet Boys song played out from his cell. 'Dani's idea of humor,' he explained to Sienna. 'She's always changing the ring.' He dug in the front pocket of his jeans and eventually managed to extract his phone, but he didn't recognize the number on the screen. He hit 'Talk'. 'Hello?' he barked into the mouthpiece. This was the worst-timed call he'd ever had.

It was too late. At the other end the caller had already hung up. Jason shrugged and turned back to Sienna.

But she was gone.