

*Dear Reader,*

Like Mayhem, I experienced a period of time when my life was extremely unstable. I can still remember what it was like to be shaken so hard I thought my head would come off, to watch the room vibrate, to feel unsafe in my own home, to never know what was coming around the next corner. I wanted to run. I *always* wanted to run.

I ran to friends, but also movies and books, and although girls were more passively portrayed in movies like *The Lost Boys* back then, that feeling of teenagers prowling the night, taking out bad people, being unbeatable . . . that got me through it.

I guess that's what I tried to do here. I wanted girls who feel powerless to be able to imagine themselves invincible. And yes, I used a rape as the seed for that fierce lineage, not without thought. For me, there is nothing worse, and I like to think great power can rise up as a result of a devastating trespass.

Please know I took none of this lightly. Writing this now, my heart is beating hard and my throat is dry. This is the first time I not only really looked at my own past, the pain of loss, the pain of the loss of trust that comes when someone puts hands on you without permission, the pain of people dying, the shock of suicide, and put all of it to paper in a way that made

me feel victorious, strong, and warrior-like. It is also terrifying. I know I'm not the only one who had a scary childhood, and

I know I'm not the only one who clings to stories as salve to smooth over burnt skin. I am so sick of girls and women being hurt. This was my way of taking my own vengeance and trying to access forgiveness.

Thank you for reading and for those of you who can relate, I see you and you are not alone.

*Estelle Laure*