



BLACKWYNTM
**THE DARKEST
NIGHT**

L.L. GALARZA

BLACKWYN
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NIGHT**

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The beginning of the Blackwyn Saga

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*As a child, I feared the dark.
But what truly terrified me...
was the loss of my light.*

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CHAPTER ONE

THE WAR OF DAY AND NIGHT

The windshield trembled under the steady push of the wind. Trees blurred into dark streaks along the sides of the road, and the sky was beginning to fade into that part of the day Ethan Blackwyn never fully trusted.

He rested his forehead against the cold glass. For a moment, he saw his reflection: pale skin, straight dark hair. Nothing unusual that any nine-year-old boy wouldn't have. But his eyes always gave him away—one deep brown, the other pale amber, catching what little light remained.

Outside, the sun sank behind the mountain. The last golden light slipped between the trees. To anyone else, it would have been just a sunset, another ordinary ending to an ordinary day. But to Ethan, it felt like something more.

His heart beat faster. He knew what came next. He always did: darkness. And even if he never admitted it out loud, he hated it.

“I wish it wouldn’t end,” he murmured.

Then his expression changed. “Wait,” he whispered to himself. “I’ve got it.”

He unbuckled his seatbelt and rolled the window all the way down, letting the wind rush into the car. Then he leaned forward and began counting under his breath.

One, two, three—

He pushed off with his knees and leapt outside.

He didn’t fall. Instead, he surged forward, suspended above the highway as if the sky itself had caught him midair. Golden light flared beneath his feet, steady and bright, and he ran across the open air toward the mountain.

That stone beast towered higher than any building he had ever seen. At its peak was a single eye—or rather, a crack—so dark it seemed to swallow the light around it.

Ethan stopped at the edge of the abyss. Heat gathered in his palm. A sword of fire formed there, golden flames rising from the hilt and curling along the blade. He gripped it tightly. “You’re not going to put out the light!” he shouted as he charged forward. “You won’t beat me!”

He drove the glowing blade into the beast’s eye.

The mountain split apart and light erupted from within. The dying sun burned once more behind the clouds, ripping the sky in two.

Ethan pointed his sword at the shattered remains of the mountain.

“Take that, stupid mountain!”

“Ethan, what are you doing?”

A voice jolted him.

He blinked, and the world snapped back into place. He was still in the back seat. The window was open, and the seatbelt hung loose beside him.

His father’s eyes met his in the rearview mirror. “Ethan! Put your seatbelt on. Now.”

He fumbled for it until it clicked into place.

“You know you’re not supposed to take off your seatbelt,” his father said, his jaw tight. “Never. Got it?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And roll that window up.”

Ethan did. The wind cut off, leaving only the engine’s distant hum.

“I was just looking at the mountain,” Ethan said, rubbing the back of his neck.

“Then look at it from your seat.”

“He’s just enjoying the ride,” his mother cut in, turning in her seat with a gentle smile. “That mountain looks beautiful... like it’s on fire.” She glanced at her husband. “Don’t you think, Adam?”

“Yeah, it’s pretty,” his father replied without taking his eyes off the road. “But rules are rules.”

“Don’t be like that.”

“Then how should I be, Amy? It’s dangerous.”

“Alright, alright. Ethan won’t do it again. Right, sweetie?”

Ethan let out a resigned sigh.

“Yes, Mom.”

“There. Let him enjoy the ride. Don’t ruin his excitement about going to see Grandma.”

“And the party, Mom. It’s going to be awesome!”

“Of course it is! Now how old did you say your mom is turning, honey?”

Ethan’s father exhaled slowly, the tension in his hands easing slightly on the steering wheel. The last time he had argued with his wife, it had taken her nearly three days to speak to him again.

“She’s turning eighty. So when we get there, Ethan, you’ll help her with whatever she asks. That’s your present for her.”

“Whatever she asks?”

“Whatever,” he said. “No excuses.”

Ethan nodded. With his mother, he could negotiate. With his father, not a chance.

Still, the thought of his grandmother loosened something inside him, and he remembered her last birthday clearly: the big cake with strawberries and cream, the whole family singing loudly, though not especially in tune.

After blowing out the candles, Ethan had whispered, “Take a bite. Just a tiny one, please.”

She arched an eyebrow at him. “Only because you asked.”

She leaned toward the cake with exaggerated slowness. And then—chomp! She took a bite straight out of it.

When she straightened, her dentures were stuck in the frosting between two strawberries.

The entire table burst into laughter. Ethan nearly fell off his chair. She plucked them free, then lunged at him and clamped her toothless mouth onto his cheek.

“Birthday bite!”

Cream smeared across his face, and he laughed so hard he didn’t even try to wipe it off.

After that, whenever he misbehaved, she would narrow her eyes and warn him, “Don’t make me go for the other side.”

The memory faded as the car rolled deeper into the evening.

“It’s getting dark,” his father said, glancing at the fuel gauge. “We’ll stop soon. Fill up and grab something to eat.”

“Do we have to?” his mother asked. “It’s getting really dark.”

“I’d rather not push it. Full tank is better.”

Ethan watched as the trees were no longer green shapes but shadows pressed together along the roadside, and the headlights were the only steady thing ahead.

Then something moved.

At first he thought it was branches shifting in the wind, but the movement was too sharp. One shape vaulted along the tree line while another skimmed low beside the road.

He leaned closer to the glass.

Wide wings folded and opened. One hung a moment too long, suspended in the air, as if it wanted him to notice before surging forward again. Their long bodies twisted midair. They had flat heads and tails tapering to points.

They looked like crows torn from a dream, stripped of their eyes.

“What are they?” he whispered. Then, louder, “Dad... Mom... there’s something out there.”

His father glanced into the mirror. “What kind of something?”

“Shadows. They’re moving.”

“It’s just the trees,” his father said. “The dark makes things look different.”

His mother leaned in and squinted. “I don’t see anything, sweetie.”

Ethan looked again, but there was nothing there now, only the night.

He reached into his backpack, pulled out his spiral notebook, and began to draw: wings first, then the body, then the long tail. Whenever something unsettled him, he trapped it on paper.

He didn’t know it yet, but that figure was only the beginning.

“We’re here,” his father announced as he steered off the highway.

The car rolled into a gas station that looked as though it had been forgotten by time. Cracked concrete stretched beneath rusted pillars streaked with oil, and fluorescent lights buzzed overhead—one dead, one flickering, the others struggling to stay alive. Nine empty parking spaces and only one dust-covered car.

Behind the pumps stood a squat brick building with a sign that flickered unevenly: GR_ND N_RTH GATE R_STAUR_NT, some letters burned out entirely.

“Let’s stretch our legs,” his father said as he pulled into the parking lot. “And we might as well grab something to eat.”

His mother got out first, crossing her arms as the cold air hit her. His father walked over to the pump, and the click of the gas nozzle echoed in the silence.

“Come on, sweetie,” his mother called softly.

Ethan stepped out slowly. The air smelled of rust and fuel, and the highway behind them lay empty, swallowed by the night.

He stared toward the brush beyond the lot. “What if we just keep driving?” he asked. “I’m not hungry.”

His father didn’t look up from the pump. “We’ve been in that car five hours. We’re stopping.”

Ethan lowered his gaze and followed his parents toward the restaurant, glancing once more at the darkness between the pumps.

Through the large front windows, the place was completely empty. Too empty.

“Are you sure it’s open?”

His mother pointed to the faded decal on the door. “It says open twenty-four hours.”

“Go on,” his father said, holding it wide.

Behind Ethan, something darted across the lot.

He turned sharply, but there was nothing there.

Still, as he stepped inside, he couldn’t shake the feeling that the shadows he’d seen on the road had followed them all the way there.



*If these pages stirred something inside you... it
wasn't by accident.*

*Some stories find the people who need them—
even in the dark.*

*If you want to see where this one leads, follow
the path:*

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