

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

My Immortal Knight

*All Knight Long*

Delilah Devlin



MY IMMORTAL KNIGHT: ALL KNIGHT LONG  
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# **MY IMMORTAL KNIGHT: ALL KNIGHT LONG**

**Delilah Devlin**

## **Dedication**

To Lena Austin for her expert advice for the Tarot reading, and to my sister, Myla Jackson, for her imagination and loving partnership.

## CHAPTER ONE

The small sign in the café window read: Welcome Vampires and Sanguinarians! (*No blood products provided – none permitted on premises! The Management*).

Joe Garcia snorted. Every human in the place was a walking, breathing blood product—a portable soda fountain for the Fanged Ones.

He pushed through the glass door and tried to dampen the hope that rose in his chest, causing his heart to beat faster and his hands to sweat. Thusfar, he'd met only disappointment in his long search. This might be just another dead end—the last one he could afford before his cash ran out and his credit card was maxed.

Professor Carlson was his last hope.

Inside the cafe, enticing aromas assailed him. The smell of roasted coffee beans, which had been his life's blood in another existence, was overlaid with the tangy scent of the real thing—the warm, viscous red stuff. The latter reminded him he hadn't fed this evening, and hunger gnawed at his belly, making him edgy and irritable.

And something else enticed him. Something dark and sensual perfumed by a female musk with a tincture so unique it immediately sent a curl of heat to his groin.

He walked past the coffee bar without acknowledging the barrista's greeting and wound his way through the tables, ignoring the human appetizers. His gaze was fixed on a menu board at the entrance of a roped-off area in the back, that read, "Vampire Survey Here". An arrow pointed down to a table laden with a stack of pamphlets.

He brushed past the table, searching the back of the restaurant for his quarry.

"Sir, are you here 'bout da survey Professor Carlson is conductin'?"

Joe turned toward the voice flavored with a deep Louisianan accent. A pleasant-faced girl with black corkscrew curls all around her head sat at a table near the cordoned entrance.

He bit back the rude retort that immediately came to mind and answered, "Yes. I need to speak with her."

"Well, you'll have to complete a screenin' survey first," she said pleasantly but firmly, holding up a stapled document.

Joe sighed and accepted the papers. What the hell? Five more minutes wouldn't kill him.

"Do you have a pencil?" she asked. When he shook his head, she gave him a superior smile and extended a short, sharpened pencil.

Joe didn't like her attitude one bit, so he reached for her hand, running his fingers over her palm before taking it.

Her smile slipped and Joe could well imagine her thoughts. Another vampire wannabe was hitting on her. He smiled and let her see his teeth.

Her eyes narrowed and a single brow rose. She wasn't impressed.

That actually gave Joe hope he was in the right place after all. His sharp fangs hadn't fazed her.

"You can take a seat with the other guy," she said, indicating the first booth along the back wall.

Joe walked over and slid across the vinyl seat opposite a young man dressed in black leather and sporting no less than five facial piercings. The piercings glittered like tinsel in the dim light and Joe wondered how the kid could stand leather in May – New Orleans was already sweltering, even at night.

Turning over the top page of his survey, Joe quickly scanned the questions. He hoped like hell they were only meant to screen out the weirdoes and pretenders. Otherwise, he was screwed.

He wet the tip of his pencil on his tongue and read the first question.

"Do you consider yourself a Vampire or a Sanguinarian?"

Since he had no clue what a Sanguinarian was, he checked, "Vampire."

"If you checked 'Vampire', skip to question 6."

Maybe this wouldn't take so long after all.

In the middle of the page, he found 6. "How often do you have the urge to drink blood?"

He checked the block beside, "More than three times a day." *Three times a night would be more accurate.*

"How often do you drink blood?"

"Once a day."

"Do you drink your own blood?"

"What would be the point?" he muttered, and checked "No."

When he reached the question, "Do you drink blood during sexual encounters?", he'd had enough.

He tossed the survey to the table and started to rise.

"She won't see you unless you finish the survey," Metal Boy said, without looking up from his form.

"She'll see me."

The young man's mouth twisted into a sneer. "You'll have to wait your turn. I was here first."

Joe lifted his lips and showed him his fangs.

Metal Boy smirked and then lifted his lips, displaying a whole row of sharpened teeth.

Joe took a quick glance around the café to make sure no one was near, and then leaned over the table and shook his head. He let the change come over him, reveling for once in the wildness that surged in his veins as the bones in his forehead and brow shifted, and his skin stretched tightly.

The boy's eyes widened until the whites symmetrically framed his irises. "I-I've just thought of somewhere else I need to be," he said, and quickly scooted off the seat and ran for the exit.

Satisfied that vamping was good for at least scaring the shit out of punks, Joe took a deep breath and relaxed, feeling his face reform to his human mask. Then he headed back to the girl with the wild hair.

"I'll see her now," Joe said, not even trying to conceal his impatience.

"Have you finished dat survey?" she asked, her nose buried in her Cosmo magazine. When he didn't respond, she raised her eyes.

Something in his expression made her hesitate. "I'll see if she's free."

Joe smiled grimly. "You do that."

She was back in a moment. "Professor Carlson'll see you now. You left your survey on the table, but I gave it to her."

He followed her to the farthest corner of the café, toward another booth. A green lamp suspended over the table lent the corner a warm glow. When he drew alongside the green vinyl seat, the girl indicated he should sit and promptly left. Joe turned his gaze to the figure seated on the opposite bench.

His research had told him the professor was considered an expert in vampire lore. She'd written papers, magazine articles, and books, and even been consulted by more than one movie producer. When he'd typed "vampire expert" in the Internet search engine, her name had popped up everywhere.

All his research told him she might hold the answer, but it hadn't said anything about how young or *drinkable* she was. Her hair was neither blonde nor brown, but the warm color of whiskey. Her eyes, hidden behind a pair of wire-framed glasses, glinted cognac. Her lips were a pale rosé.

The hunter within him woke.

Realizing he'd been staring, he cleared his throat. "You're Professor Lily Carlson? The author of 'Vampires: Myth and Reality'?"

Her gaze swept over him. An action so swift, he thought he might have imagined it. "And you are?" she asked, leaning over the table to extend her hand.

Joe froze. That indefinable scent was all over her. He had the urge to rub on her like a kitten in catnip. He eyed her small hand, afraid to touch it and feel the blood humming below the surface of her creamy, white skin. He was *that* close to jumping her. "I thought the survey was anonymous."

"Oh, it is," she replied quickly, withdrawing her hand. "You're responding to the ad, then?" At his nod, she looked vaguely disappointed. "Well, I suppose I should

review your answers. Please have a seat,” she said, waving him toward the bench seat opposite hers. “Thank you for taking the time to help me with my research.”

Bemused, Joe slid onto the seat. He knew he should get straight to the point, but he stalled. For just a few minutes, he wanted to be with a woman while she looked at him as if he was just like any other man. Well, perhaps like he was a man with a serious mental disorder. But at least, she wasn’t recoiling in horror or inspecting him like the Bearded Lady at a freak show.

Not that she was a great beauty, nor even as strong and fierce as his ex-partner Darcy. Dressed in a boring-beige suit, her whiskey-colored hair piled in a loose knot on top of her head, and her glasses sliding down her shiny nose, she looked like the schoolmarm she was. But while all the beige and brown should have made her look muddy, she glowed golden in the lamplight. And her scent—richly textured with something wild and animalistic—was extraordinary.

The woman opened his survey and glanced at his answers, then flipped the page. Her lips pursed for a moment, drawing his gaze to her full lower lip. “There are a few more questions I need answered. Do you mind if I learn a little more about you?” she asked, glancing up at him from beneath her gold-tipped lashes.

The surge of heat that centered in his groin was way out of proportion to her innocent question. Afraid he’d stutter over a tongue that suddenly felt too large for his mouth, he merely nodded.

“You understand the questions I’m about to ask you are part of a sociological study I’m conducting about our vampire subculture?”

Again, he nodded.

“All information you provide,” she recited as if from rote, “will be completely confidential. I hope you will answer me honestly,” she gave him a doubtful stare, “or to the best of your ability.”

She looked expectantly at him, so he nodded again.

Her gaze returned to his survey and she cleared her throat. “You...are a vampire?”

“Yes.” This was the first time he’d admitted that fact out loud, and he knew how ridiculous it sounded.

“So, are you a Psy or a Sang?”

“There’s more than one kind?” Joe asked.

“A Psychic vampire feeds on a human’s energy; a Sanguinarian is a blood-drinker.”

“I guess I’m a Sang.”

“You drink blood once a day?” she asked, her head still bent over the paper.

He shrugged, hoping she’d glance up at him again so he could see whether her eyes really were a warm, golden-brown. “More or less.”

She scribbled something in the margin of his survey. “Well, which is it?”

“Sometimes more.”



"Do you drink human blood?"

Joe wished she'd end this line of questioning, or he'd be drooling shortly. Her scent had every appetite revving into high gear. "Yes."

She glanced up from the survey. "How long have you had the urge to drink blood?"

"Since I woke up, tonight."

She blinked. "No, I meant...since ever."

"Last winter."

"Did you by chance suffer some sort of emotional trauma?"

Joe stiffened. If you consider I died, and the woman I loved had her boyfriend turn me, then hell yes! "Yes."

"Was the trauma centered around a love relationship?"

He drew a deep breath. The professor was determined to hit every sensitive nerve he owned. "Yes."

"A woman?"

He glowered at her and didn't respond.

She did another of those little sweeps of her eyelashes that left him feeling confused. "Woman," she said softly and annotated his answer. "Was it a sexual relationship?"

Every muscle in his body contracted. The memory of the last time he'd seen Darcy, the last time he'd been inside her, had his cock straining inside his jeans.

"Was it?" she insisted.

Joe nodded, feeling his face harden, knowing he looked as dour as the Grim Reaper right about now.

"You say, you drink blood during sex."

He felt like howling. "Sometimes."

She looked up, her head canting to the side. "Why?"

"To give myself and my host greater pleasure. The orgasms are worth dying for," he said, hoping to give her a taste of his discomfort.

"Oh." Her face suffused in pink, and she cleared her throat. "Do you use lancets to bleed your host?"

He didn't understand her question and stared.

"Do you use something sharp to pierce your host's skin?"

"My teeth. I bite them." He lifted his lips and let her see the teeth he couldn't convince to recede into his gums—he was just too damn hungry.

"Oh." Her expression remained professionally frozen, but Joe had the feeling she wanted to roll her eyes. She reached into her handbag and pulled out a silver cross, and then held it in front of him. "Do you get a burning sensation when you see this object?"

"No."

"Does this produce any sensation at all?" She touched his hand with it.

Air hissed between his teeth at the first touch of her hand. He was on fire. His hand curled beneath hers, curving into a fist.

Her eyebrows lifted and she quickly scribbled something else on his survey. "Do you believe in Satan?"

"Yeah, if he's the evil that lurks in a man's heart."

"Do you worship Satan?"

"Uh, no."

She reached into her purse again and pulled out a tiny bottle of water and a sharpened stick.

Joe stared at the items she stacked neatly in a row in front of him and his blood began to boil. Silver crosses, holy water, and a fucking stake. Shit! The woman had studied *Buffy 101*. She was a fraud. She didn't know the first thing about vampires—hell, she didn't believe they existed. "I don't suppose, Professor, that in all your research you've ever actually met a vampire?"

She blinked and pushed her glasses up her nose. "I'm the one asking the questions here."

"And I'm finished answering," Joe said, his eyes narrowing. "Have you ever met a real vampire?"

The little Professor sniffed and raised her chin. "No, I haven't."

Joe slumped in the booth. His last hope dashed.

"Are you all right?" she asked, eyeing him with suspicion.

"Just pissed and hungry." He let his gaze fall to her neck. "Want to know what it feels like?"

"What?" she asked, her eyes wide.

"To be sucked by a vampire."

The Professor's cheeks turned a fiery red. "Certainly not." But her words lacked true outrage.

Joe's mouth stretched into a smile. The lady had a dirty mind. Although, now that she had him thinking about it, the idea took root. She might not be able to give him the information he needed, but she could certainly share a little blood in exchange for the sweet release he'd give her.

"Can I come home with you?" He hadn't meant to blurt it out quite like that, but she was too delectable to pass up—and she owed him. He'd come halfway across the country just to speak to her.

Now, she looked truly alarmed. "I-I think that's all the questions. Thank you for coming."

Joe smiled and settled his back against the seat, stretching his arms across the top of the bench. He knew the action pulled his T-shirt taut across his chest—a well-developed chest, or so he'd been told.

Her next nervous sweep indicated she'd noticed.

"Don't you want to complete your research? Don't you want to know what it's like to feel a vampire's kiss?"

Her chin came up. "I think if there was truly any merit to the legends, I'd have discovered that by now," she said primly, her hands clenched on the table. "Stop playing with me."

He dropped his voice to a purr. "Don't you want it to be true?"

She stared at him, her face growing solemn and her gaze haunted. "I've wanted that more than you could ever know."

Joe tired of baiting her. He reached across the table and grabbed her hand.

She tugged it back, but he turned her hand and brought her wrist to his nose. He inhaled deeply. "Not perfume. You." He licked her delicate wrist, his breath deepening when he felt her heart rate increase.

"What are you doing? Unhand me!"

"I'm going to give you a kiss," he said, never letting his gaze leave hers. "Here." He slid his lips on her wrist. "I'll show you what a vampire can do without ever being inside you."

Her mouth fell open and her cheeks paled. She drew her hand back, again.

"Just a taste," he whispered, not letting go.

"You're going to bite me?" she asked, her tone incredulous. "What about shots? Blood tests? There's a pamphlet on the table that describes safe bloodletting techniques—*biting isn't one of them!* Christ, think of the bacteria!"

Joe's eyes narrowed and he sank his teeth into a vein that trembled just under her skin.

"Ow!" she gasped, her eyes rounding.

Then he sucked, and she gasped again, only this time her body fell back against the upholstered seat. Her eyes closed for a moment and her lips formed around an astonished 'O'. "That's...incredible!" she moaned, her back arching.

He mouthed her skin while he continued to feed, drawing her rich blood across his tongue, down his throat, pulling her scent into his nostrils—as overcome with sensation and rising passion as his shocked little host-ess.

"Please," she said, her voice quavering. "Please, stop."

Joe withdrew his teeth immediately, though it damn near killed him. His body was wound tight as a spring. Then he looked at her. Her eyes were wary and wide, like a doe's caught in the crosshairs. Wild color flooded her cheeks.

The poor Professor had enjoyed her lesson a little too much!

Satisfied he'd planted a seed of sensual curiosity, he dropped his gaze to her wrist and the blood dotting her pale skin. He licked her until the small wounds closed, and then he laid her hand on the table. "Do you see now?" he asked softly, feeling not the least ashamed he'd used his persuasive "powers" to excite her.

She drew a long shaky breath. "I see that my research needs to be expanded. I should make a point to appeal to the Sanguinarians for input. Of course," she said, looking at her wrist under the lamplight and frowning, "I should probably make sure my tetanus is up to date, first."

Joe stared at her, wondering what it was going to take to prove he was a vampire. Morphing wasn't an option—it tended to kill his victim's sexual interest. "Jesus, you still don't get it!"

Surprise at his outburst caused her face to pale. "What's to get? Other than you think you're a vampire?"

Joe stood, and then leaned over the table, crowding the professor into the corner of the booth. "Lady, you wouldn't know a vampire if he bit you in the ass!"

"I beg your pardon," she said, a frown drawing her eyebrows together.

"You don't know a damn thing about vampires. Hell, you can't even tell when one's fed off you!"

"Now look here, I've studied all the texts, from every country with vampire traditions—China to Transylvania." She folded her arms over her chest. "I've also read quite a bit about blood-drinking behavioral disorders and blood fetishists."

"Tell me you didn't feel it, too." His gaze fell to her tweed-covered chest. "Did your studies tell you that a vampire's bloodlust is linked to sexual lust?"

"Th-there is an erotic allure to vampirism," she said, reaching to tuck a strand of hair into her bun. "After all, blood is the source of life and passion—which is what I'm assuming you're experiencing now. The clinical term is haematodipsia—a sexual thirst for blood."

"You're babbling," Joe said, leaning close enough now that he could look into the cleavage at the top of her beige blouse and draw in her heated scent. "Tell me why your pulse is elevated and you're perspiring."

Her hand fluttered on her chest, and she closed the collar of her shirt. "There's no doubt a term. I just can't think—"

"Well, I'm not talking about sexual disorders. I'm talking about lust that grows in proportion to the amount of blood shared by a host."

She blinked. "That happens?"

"You don't know a lot of things, do you?" He drew back and glowered. "You don't know how fast a vampire can drain a human dry. And do you have any clue how dangerous this is?" He raised the survey and crushed it into a ball, unaccountably angry with her. "You could have drawn a bloodthirsty bastard with a nasty sense of humor. Someone who wouldn't have a qualm about taking your head off to get at your blood."

Her small pointed chin lifted. "I took precautions against being accosted by unhinged characters," she said, glaring pointedly at him. "I'm in a public place with people around me."

"Do you know a vampire's strength and speed is many times that of a man? You wouldn't stand a chance against one."

"I'll concede that—if—you were a vampire," she said her voice rising, "I might indeed be in trouble."

He leaned closer, his hands clutching the table and the top of the bench seat. "Don't you want to know for sure, Professor?"

"Short of you taking a bite out of my neck—yes! But biting me with capped teeth won't prove a thing. Hell, I have a mirror here somewhere—" she dug into her purse again, "we'll just check your reflection."

Joe shook his head. The woman watched way too much *Buffy*. "If I'm telling you the truth, will you take me home? Feed me?"

Her breath hitched, and she licked her lips. "If you're telling the truth, shouldn't I be afraid of you?"

"Lady, you haven't a thing to fear from me. I need you."

"To feed from?"

"No. To make me human."

## CHAPTER TWO

"Y-you want to be human?" Lily stammered. Again. Something about this obnoxious man made her witless. Something besides all the muscles and the dark, brooding looks—oh, and the delusional behavior.

"Yes," he said, the word clipped.

"Well, I'm not sure I can help you there." She had a hard time concentrating when he loomed so close. Her unfortunate *condition* made it impossible not to notice how masculine he was. How large his chest and thighs were. Or how well he filled out the front of his jeans...

Her pussy pulsed. *Damn! Not again.* "I've only ever seen it depicted on television—Dark Shadows re-runs, I think." Inwardly, she cringed at the nonsense spouting out of her mouth. But his testosterone-packed "package" was making it hard for her to concentrate. "Of course, Spike and Angel regained their souls, but no, I've never read anything about vampires transforming into humans. I think once you're 'awakened', you're st—"

"Doomed." His mouth thinned into a straight line.

Her gaze followed the unhappy curve of his lips, and she caught herself just before she leaned forward to drag his masculine scent into her nostrils.

Enough of his hovering. He made her so sexually aware she'd sunk to blathering. She scooted toward the end of her seat, forcing him to step back to let her stand. Unfortunately that didn't diminish his dangerous appeal. His size intimidated while at the same time sending her heart skipping. Even in her heels, the top of her head only reached his collarbone. His endless chest clothed in a tight, black T-shirt was lip-level. If she took one deep breath her boobs would graze those rock-hard abs. She cringed at the thought. Her nipples were so damn sensitive these days.

And caveman that he was, he didn't seem inclined to budge another inch. She heard him sniff. His nose was next to her hair.

*Oh, yeah! Now, I don't feel so intimidated.* She had to get rid of him. "Well, I'm sorry I couldn't be of more help...with your problem, that is. If you'll excuse me..." He didn't take the hint. Lily looked past his broad shoulder to Cissy and tilted her head toward Tall, Dark and Toothsome.

Cissy's warm brown eyes widened and she hurried over.

With reinforcements coming, Lily gave him a challenging stare.

The man took a deep breath and stepped aside, looking as though the weight of the world had settled on his shoulders. Poor man. He was just confused—damaged by the woman who had scorned him.

Lily felt a moment's compassion for him—until she realized he was staring at her neck again. And worse, this close proximity with the dark angel was playing havoc with *her* hormones. She moved away from the table then turned to face him. "Sir, you'll need to move along, now. I have work to do here."

A muscle in his jaw clenched and his intense, black stare pinned her to the spot. "Take me home with you."

Her body throbbed beneath his gaze. She shook her head, afraid to say anything. The only word in her one-word dictionary at the moment was *yes!*

"Professor, do you want help packin' up the materials?" Cissy's voice broke in.

Relief made her knees weak. Someone else stood between her and her wavering willpower. "Yes! I'm finished here tonight. Good evening, sir." Then she turned her back on him and walked away.

With Cissy's help, she quickly gathered the pamphlets remaining on the table and stacked them in a cardboard box to take home, carefully keeping her back to the man.

"He's still here!" Cissy hissed from the opposite side of the table, her gaze trained on a spot behind Lily's shoulder.

"You'd better call me a cab," Lily whispered.

"I'll make sure one of the guys walks you out. He seems kinda intense."

Lily shivered. That kind of intensity could be devastating when turned full force on a woman. Too bad he was deranged. "I'm sure he's harmless, but why take a chance? Go call me that cab."

\* \* \* \* \*

It had taken Joe half an hour and a quarter pint of blood to find her apartment in the long, white two-story stucco building in the center of the French Quarter. The super led him straight to the door, then walked off, his eyes glazed under the influence of Joe's suggestion he give his wife a tumble.

It took another half an hour to feed from the man who lived in the apartment next to the professor's until he slept, just so Joe could climb out on his ironwork balcony and make the leap to hers.

Finally, he stood hidden in the shadows while he watched her through lacy curtains, her French doors opened to the sultry night air. With only light from the streetlamp outside to chase away the darkness, Joe could discern every detail of her bedroom. She lay not five feet from him atop pale pink sheets. *Naked*. Her knees bent, her creamy thighs splayed. So close he could smell her ripening scent.

She was pleasuring herself.

Joe's cock stirred and unfurled, lengthening by the second as he watched her.

A fan pulsed from the ceiling above her, lifting the gold-brown hair curving over her breasts to tangle with the fingers tugging at her nipples. When her hands moved down her rounded belly, his gaze clung hungrily to the turgid points surrounded by their pale rose circles. His mouth watered, imagining the velvet-soft flesh surrendering to his kisses. Succulent morsels yielding the sweetest gift—her blood from the heart of her femininity.

She truly sealed her fate when one hand glided past the fur at her mons to cup her sex. Joe's cock pressed insistently against his jeans, tightening when her fingers stroked between her outer labia to caress the thin folds within. Moisture glistened as she rubbed it over her lips, long sliding strokes that dipped inside and swirled outward.

Then her other hand entered the play, and her fingers parted the swollen labia, pulling them back to expose her engorged clitoris. She touched the shiny nub once and shivered as though the spot were too sensitive, and then her fingers glided away.

She circled the mouth of her vagina, dipping her fingertips into the well and spreading her juice. Liquid seeped to coat her hand, and she brought her fingers to her mouth and licked the tips clean. Soft appreciative groans broke from her throat.

Joe sweated. He'd never seen a woman enjoy her own essence like this one. His body was gripped with the need to shove his cock deep inside her cream-filled channel.

Instead, he braced an arm against the window casing and his other hand went to the hard bulge at the front of his jeans. Desperate to take the edge off his need, he flicked open the button on his waistband and eased the zipper down, shoving his briefs beneath his balls, enjoying the way the elastic constricted. His hot flesh escaped its prison, filling his hand. He encircled his shaft and stroked it, letting urgency fill his loins as he watched her.

Her hand slid beneath her pillow and pulled out a long, flesh-tone object that she caressed like a man's cock. She sucked the head of the dildo, wetting it with her spit, closing her eyes. Did she imagine a man shafting into her mouth?

Joe did. His cock pulsed and a pearl of pre-cum beaded at the tiny opening atop the crown of his sex. He rubbed the moisture around the tip with his thumb.

She fingered the base of her symmetrical shaft and it hummed, just like his body, triggered by her sexy moan at the first touch of her vibrator to the tips of her breasts. Her mouth opened in a gasp.

Joe's breath drew in sharply, imagining her taking his cock into her mouth. He squeezed himself, gliding the skin stretched tight as a rubber band over his cock, back and forth, faster.

She circled the dildo on one tit while her free hand massaged the other, the nipple winking between her fingertips. Then she placed it between her generous breasts and squeezed them around the dildo as her body writhed on the bed, her hips lifting, pulsing in the air.



Joe's hips answered, pushing his cock through his clenched fist, faster now, building heat and friction. He dropped spit onto his shaft and worked it with his fist, gliding easily, imagining the woman's undulating body convulsing along his cock.

Abruptly, the woman rolled onto her stomach and came to her knees, planting them wide apart on the bed, letting her chest fall to the mattress. Reaching between her legs, she spread her lips and coaxed the vibrator into her pussy, working it inside her, inch by inch, twisting it in her cream to lubricate its length and push deeper.

Joe's grip nearly strangled his cock. The sight of her pale cheeks quivering in the air, the dildo clutched in her fist pumping in and out, pushed him over the edge. He felt the pressure build in his balls.

Her chest rubbed on the sheets and her hips circled on her hand-held cock, until she cried out and shoved the dildo deep, cramming it inside as far as it could reach with the flat of her palm. She moaned and bucked, her soft whimpers carried on the air. When the pulsing of her hips stopped, she sobbed and fell to the blanket, turning to her back, her legs askew, her hair a tangled cloud on her pillow.

Looking at her quivering belly and the dildo that peeked from inside her body, Joe groaned and spent his seed in a hot stream on the floor of her balcony.

Too late, he realized he'd cried aloud.

"Is someone there?"

Lily clutched the edge of the sheet and pulled it over her body. She'd heard a groan. A man's guttural moan.

Someone had watched while she masturbated. A shadow shifted on her balcony and a large figure stepped through her door. Ashamed and frightened out of her life, Lily knew she didn't have time to reach for the telephone. Besides, her throat was closing around her terror—making it impossible to scream for help.

She dropped the sheet and rolled off the bed, landing on her feet. The dildo dropped to the floor with a dull thud. She'd almost reached her bedroom door, when a weight slammed into her back and forced her forward. She expected pain, but at the last minute the man's hands steadied her and eased her to the wall, his weight pressing against her naked flesh.

"Remember me?" a deep, resonant voice drawled.

Lily shuddered and bit her lip. Did she remember? Tall, Dark, and Tawny as a cat? She'd come, fucking a dildo, while this man's voice purred inside her head.

Something stirred against her buttocks and she grew cold, realizing his naked cock poked at her. It was substantially larger than her dildo. Finding her voice at last, she asked, "Are you going to rape me?" She was proud her voice didn't tremble.

Suddenly, she was released. Afraid to turn, she hugged the wall for a moment and listened to the rustling behind her to determine what he was doing. She heard the rasp of a zipper and his footsteps walking toward her bed.

Just as she'd decided to make another go at the door, something warm and nubby was dropped around her shoulders. Her robe. She stuck her arms inside and quickly belted the waist before turning to face her intruder, glad for the flimsy protection of a garment.

Shadows mottled his face, but she saw enough to note the tension that made a muscle jump in his jaw and the ones in his shoulders bunch. His fists were clenched tightly at his sides.

Lily took heart in the fact that he appeared unarmed—and that he'd tucked his substantial cock away. Perhaps, she could talk him out of whatever he planned. She took a deep breath. "Do you mind if I turn on the light? I can't see your face."

She walked slowly toward her bed, keeping her eyes on him, and switched on the bedside lamp. Golden light spilled into the room, but didn't lessen her fear. Her heart leapt faster. He appeared even larger in the light. His shoulders seemed to fill the room, his height stretched toward the ceiling.

Maybe she just needed to get a grip.

"Why are you here?" She replayed what little she knew about him. *Appeal to his delusion.* "And weren't you supposed to wait for my invitation?"

The man shrugged. A smile tugged at the corners of his lips. "You refused mine. So I followed you home."

"I didn't think you guys could just come inside someone's home unless invited."

He shook his head. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"You. Vampires. You can't come inside without an invitation."

"Can it," he said, his mouth twisting. "You don't believe in that stuff. You're patronizing me. Trying out your psycho-bullshit to talk me out of what I have to do."

Lily lifted her chin and tightened her lips to keep them from trembling. "And what is that?"

The little half smile did nothing to soften his expression. His eyes grew heavy-lidded and he took a step closer. "First, I need to fuck you..."

He said it so matter-of-factly his meaning took a moment to sink in. Then Lily gasped and stepped back. "I'm not—you're not—" Even as her heart raced in alarm, liquid heat pooled between her thighs.

He took another step. "I need to feed from you..."

Her knees met the edge of the mattress. Another step and he'd be on top of her. Why that thought didn't make her scream mystified her. Instead, she held her ground, lifting her chin defiantly. She ignored the fact her belly shivered with excitement.

He leaned down, his lips hovering just above hers. "Then I'm going to get some questions answered."

She drew in a ragged little breath, drinking in his musky-male scent. "And after that?"

He stared at her mouth. "If you ask me real pretty, I'll fuck you again."

Her traitorous body responded, her knees growing wobbly, her pussy throbbing in time with her pounding heart. She lifted her hands to push him back, but they fluttered on his chest before settling there. "And after?" Her voice shook now, but not from fear.

His head lowered and he nuzzled her ear. "You think I'm going to kill you, don't you?" he whispered and kissed her neck. "I don't do that, lady. I'll leave you well satisfied."

Lily cursed her weakness, the heat that curled in her belly and perfumed the air with her arousal. She wanted to be stronger.

Her hands fisted in his black T-shirt and she glowered, cursing him silently for tempting her – then she shoved up his shirt.

His eyes widened and he held himself very still.

Lily looked up from beneath her lashes, knowing she blushed with mortification, but she couldn't help herself. She needed his nipples in her mouth, his cock inside her cunt. *Now*. Her arousal was full-blown and trickling down her thighs.

The bastard hadn't given her the space she needed to control her urges. Now the hormones waging war with her analytical mind ruled her. Her breath caught on a sob and she pushed his shirt higher, baring his flat, brown nipples. She nuzzled his chest, lapping at the fur dusting the wide expanse, until she found his tiny beaded nipple. Sobbing again, she drew a ragged breath and fluttered her tongue on the nub before latching onto it to suck.

His hands closed on either side of her cheeks and he pushed her away. He sighed. "Professor, wait. I didn't mean to frighten you."

She shoved him back, and this time he allowed it, his hands falling away from her face. "Lily, dammit!" she shouted. "If you're going to fuck me, at least call me by my name."

His face darkened. "Professor, I frightened you. And while I'm no Eagle Scout, I prefer my women crying *after* I've taken them. Not before." He held up his hands and retreated further away. "Stop crying. I won't touch you."

She scraped at the tears she hadn't even realized were there. His offer came too late. She'd die if she didn't have him, now. Her hands shook as they went to the belt at her waist and she untied it, letting the sides of her robe part.

Still, he resisted, shaking his head. But she could see the heat flare in his cheeks, see the rise and fall of his chest as his breaths grew shorter. He was as ensnared as she was by her need to mate.

A shrug of her shoulders, and the robe puddled at her feet. She stared at it, feeling as though another woman, a wanton woman, had stepped into her skin. Then she raised her head to eye him warily.

His beautiful dark eyes narrowed. Like a panther, his nostrils flared and he inhaled, his gaze sharpening when he caught her scent.

Lily raised the stakes and lifted her hair from one shoulder, baring the side of her neck. "Whatever kink you want to explore is fine with me," she said, not recognizing her husky voice, "so long as you fuck me, now." She dared another glance and saw his jaw clench. Stubborn man. "What were you doing out there on my balcony?" she goaded him. "Were you watching me? Did you like what you saw?"

"Yes," he replied, his voice tight and grating. "I jerked myself off watching you fuck yourself."

Her gaze fell to his groin. His cock bulged against the front of his jeans.

She lifted an eyebrow. "Doesn't look like it to me."

"I recover fast."

"So do I," she whispered. She raised her hands to her breasts and lifted them, offering them for his enjoyment.

"I'm trying real hard to do the right thing now." He planted his fists on his hips and glared. "You're not helping."

Lily liked that she'd turned the tables on him. She was the pursuer now. Her fingers closed on her nipples and she rolled them, plucking them to rigid attention.

His avid gaze fell to her chest, and his cock stirred in his pants.

"Fuck me, vampire," she said, caressing her breasts, letting him see her rising passion.

"Shit! Just remember. I offered you an out." He caught the hem of his T-shirt and drew it over his head, baring his wide, brown chest. "Well, which way do you want it?" he asked, his tone curt and driven.

She trembled beneath his heated stare. "Hmmm?" She shook her head. She hadn't understood a word he'd said. All that creamy, cocoa skin and the dark hair that marked him male turned her mind into mush. Her breasts strained against her hands.

"In your cunt, your mouth, or your ass?" He sounded angry, which excited her all the more. Most importantly, his hands unbuckled his belt, flicking open the button at his taut waist.

She licked her lips, staring at the widening gap that revealed the black arrow of hair disappearing beneath his briefs. "Do I have to choose?"

He cursed softly. "Do you want it standing or on the bed —"

"On the bed," she said quickly, relieved she knew one answer. Her knees were ready to collapse.

"Then get there. Now," his voice rasped. He shoved down his jeans, his stark white briefs with them, and toed off his shoes, leaving the last of his clothing in a pile on the floor.

Lily's gaze was glued to his cock. It sprouted like an oak from a nest of wiry black hair, thicker than her wrist, darker brown than the skin of his belly. It was huge and heavy, the tip a plump, purple spearhead. Her body shuddered at the thought of his enormous cock stabbing into her cunt. She sat on the edge of the bed and scooted back,

knowing she left a moist trail on the sheet and opened her legs to show him she was more than ready.

He approached, his cock waving between his thickly muscled thighs. "Is this how you want it?"

"What do you prefer?" she asked, anxious for him to get on with it.

His knees came down on the mattress between her legs and he planted his hands on either side of her shoulders. He leaned over her, his mouth hovering above her breast, and then he looked up at her face. "Me, inside you. Deep as I can get."

Lily swallowed, excitement making her mouth dry as the desert. "Do it."

"Jesus." He rested his forehead on her shoulder and released a short bark of laughter. He reared back and stared at her. "How old are you, Professor?"

Why was he pulling away? She needed his flesh against hers! "Twenty-eight, and dammit—it's Lily!"

"How many lovers have you had, *Lily*?"

Her cheeks burned with embarrassment. "A few."

"Did any of them jump on you and fuck you without any preliminaries?"

"No!"

"Then what makes you think I'll do that?"

Her hands reached for his cock and she wrapped them around his hot flesh, tugging him to her center. "Because I want you, now. You can do...preliminaries later," she said, her body rigid with need. "Fuck me! I'll suck you off, let you fuck every orifice I have—just *please* come inside me, now!"

His face hardened, and he leaned over her again, resting on his forearms. "Take me inside you, then. This has to be your choice."

Lily guided his cock into her pussy, groaning as he pressed past her swollen lips, his shaft sliding inside her like a knife into butter. He was even thicker than her Magna-Cock, but she didn't flinch. Her inner flesh clutched him, drawing him deeper. But he kept coming.

He groaned and flexed his hips, driving deeper. She lifted her legs to encircle his waist, not giving him any space to withdraw. Not letting her vagina adjust to his size. She reveled in the power of his immense cock, burying itself deep inside her body.

He flexed again, pushing deeper. His slow intrusion was killing her by inches. When he was fully seated, Lily shuddered so strongly she shook his body.

"Easy, baby," he whispered, holding himself rigid above her, sweat breaking out on his skin.

Lily shivered again and felt her vagina constrict along his shaft. Readying itself to milk his cock.

"Christ! Hold still," he said, desperation tinged his voice. "I don't want to lose it, now."

Lily's arms crept around his body, pulling his torso flush with hers. "It's okay," she said, looking up into his straining face. "Lose it. Take me." She pulsed her hips to encourage him to move.

His eyes closed and he withdrew partway, his thick shaft rubbing inside her tightly grasping vagina, and then he pushed forward, cramming himself back inside.

Her eyes widened, and she screamed. "Now! I'm coming now!"

## CHAPTER THREE

Joe felt the woman come apart in his arms, trembling like a leaf from head to foot while her tight cunt pulsed around him. She'd come faster than a freight train.

Still, he didn't surrender to the darkness inside him. He had to protect her from himself. He pumped gently within her, reveling in the sensation of the creamy flesh that clutched him like a hot glove while he drew out her orgasm.

She wasn't making it easy for him to restrain himself. Her nails scraped his back and her hips pumped wildly beneath him. And the aroma of her arousal wound around him like a natural aphrodisiac, tempting him to let his monster loose on her. *Not yet.*

When she quieted at last, Joe waited for her to come back to awareness. He needed to see what lurked in her gaze the moment she came to realization—to see the naked truth in her eyes. For whatever reason the woman had been out of her mind with passion, even before he'd entered her bedroom. However painful, he wouldn't allow himself to take his pleasure until he was sure of her knowing consent.

Lily moaned softly beneath him and he braced himself on his elbows to watch as her eyelids fluttered open.

Her cheeks flooded with rosy color as she stared up at him. "I'm afraid..." she began, and Joe's heart sank, "...that I don't know your name. My research has gone beyond anonymous, don't you think?"

He blew out a relieved breath. "It's Joe. Joe Garcia." Joe felt a little embarrassed introducing himself while buried in her cunt.

Her lips stretched into a shy grin. "Bet you've never had a first date quite like this one, huh?"

"This isn't a date," he said softly.

Her smile disappeared, and he was sorry he'd chased it away.

"I suppose you're wondering why I attacked you," she said, a little frown wrinkling her brow. "It's kind of embarrassing."

"More embarrassing than my leaving cum on your balcony?" he murmured.

She wrinkled her nose. "Put that way, maybe not." She bit the corner of her pink mouth and looked at him, reluctance in her gaze. "I suffer from a sexual disorder."

"You mean, something worse than haematodipsia?" he said with a grimace of a smile.

"You remembered?" She looked at him curiously. "Who are you?"

"No changing the subject. You were telling me about *your* sexual disorder." Despite his acute hard-on, he was enjoying this odd conversation. And she was relaxing beneath him, her body adjusting to his size. He needed her loose and cooperative before he fed.

She drew in a deep breath and her eyes filled. "I'm a sex addict."

He really tried not to laugh, but his belly shook, giving him away. "I'm sorry. You think that's a problem? From where I'm lying, it's a very nice affliction."

"But you see where it led me? To sex with a man whose name I didn't even know!"

For some reason, her confession rankled. "Do you do this often?"

"No! But only because I guard myself constantly. I never get too close to a man, your scent drives me nuts. It makes me want to rub myself all over you."

"Me, in particular?"

"No! Well, at the moment, yes!" He grew worried when she looked ready to cry. "The thing is, I want sex all the time. It's like, I walk past a barbershop pole and I wet my panties. And forget the produce section of a grocery store—cucumbers and carrots make me shake like an epileptic! And have you ever noticed the shape of a gearshift? I had to trade in my car for an automatic!"

Joe found himself smiling. "How did you get through high school with all the horny boys around you?"

"That's just it," she said, her brows drawing together in confusion. "I wasn't like that, then. I scarcely noticed boys. I was more into my studies. My *affliction* started last fall."

"Did you by chance suffer some sort of emotional trauma?" he echoed the words she'd asked him during his interview.

Her body grew still. She barely breathed. Then she nodded. "But I don't know why it would have manifested itself this way. Why after so many years?" she whispered.

Joe pushed her hair behind her ears, soothing her with little touches. "Tell me."

She shook her head. "No. It doesn't make sense. It's probably a hormonal imbalance."

Joe traced her lower lip with his thumb. Now was not the time to tell her that just the thought of her pink mouth closing around his cock had him gritting his teeth. "Have you seen a doctor?"

"I'm too embarrassed." She was growing tense beneath him, her body tightening around his shaft. "What would I say? I'm horny day and night? I have to change my underwear several times a day?"

"Yes. That would get his attention, all right." He shifted his lower body, stretching his legs on either side of hers, squeezing her thighs closed to bring her back to sensual awareness.

Her lips pouted like two plump pillows. "I'm not ready to consult with anyone, just yet."



"Then it looks like you need to stay in bed. Play this thing out." He lifted an eyebrow. "I can help." He circled his hips, enjoying the tug of her clamped thighs.

"You're a bastard," she said, spoiling the epithet with a sexy little moan and a roll of her hips.

"Yeah. But I have the equipment you need," he reminded her with a slide of his cock. He dropped his voice to a purr. "And I'm the one planted inside you."

Her breaths came faster. "Yeah, you are." Her face softened with reawakened passion, glowing golden in the lamplight. "Do you think you could kiss me?"

Never slow to help a woman in need, Joe's head came down. It wasn't a tentative kiss. Their tongues met before their lips touched, lapping, fluttering, until Joe grew impatient for a deeper penetration. He closed his lips over hers and slid his tongue inside, swirling over the roof of her mouth, reaching to stroke her tongue.

Lily's mouth suctioned, pulling him deeper, a moan rising in the back of her throat. Her fingers dug into his back, squeezing, massaging his spine. Then slipped lower to cup his buttocks.

Joe broke the kiss and drew a deep, jagged breath. His body trembled with the need to drive into her. "Are you sore?" he asked, desperation making his voice tight and graveled.

Lily shook her head, her eyes glittering with renewed excitement. Her arousal gushed, coating his cock with fresh lubricant.

The muscles of his thighs bunched, and the pressure building in his already rock-hard balls threatened to overtake him. He hadn't learned to fully leash the monster, still being too new at this vampire thing. "I need you on your knees."

"Yes!"

He held himself rigid, trying to still the tremors in his thighs and belly.

"You'll have to let me up," she reminded him.

*Christ!* That meant he had to withdraw, had to bear the rub of his cock against her inner walls.

He pulled away, gritting his teeth, trying to ignore her wide-eyed gaze and the eager way she shoved to get him to move faster.

Finally free, he knelt, his cock straight as a pole and glistening with her arousal, throbbing in time with his racing heart.

She didn't move fast enough to suit him. Her fascinated gaze clung to his penis and she licked her lips.

He couldn't wait a second longer. He reached for her, flipping her onto her stomach, only vaguely aware of her yelp of surprise. She scrambled to raise herself on her arms and knees, but his hands were already on her bottom, pulling her into position, centering her ass and cunt on his cock. His knees roughly shoved her legs apart and his hands spread her cheeks. Her sex was wide open — pink and quivering.

*Do I have to choose?*

Joe remembered how Lily had stood before him, a blush painting her face and delectable breasts bright rose, her face misty with confusion when he'd offered her the choice of how he would take her.

At that moment he wished he had two dicks he could plunge into her.

Joe slid his thumb down the sensitive crease of her ass, and Lily turned her head to look at him, alarm in her gaze.

He circled the tiny opening. "Have you ever been fucked in the ass, Lily?" he asked, softly.

"Yes," came her swift reply. "But never by someone of your...proportions."

Indeed, she didn't look so much worried as embarrassed. Her body quivered with excitement.

"Later," he said, and continued his exploration downward to the full, flushed lips of her pussy. He pressed his thumb into her deep, dark channel and was gratified to find her dripping with honey. Bringing his thumb to his mouth, he tasted her for the first time, his eyes closing, savoring the salty, slightly astringent glaze and the flavor of her unusual musk.

With his body screaming for him to plunge into her, he still took a moment to spit into his palm and rub it over the head of his dick. Control was all in the pacing. "This isn't going to be finessed," he warned. "I'm too far gone."

"I'm ready," she said, her voice quavering.

He sincerely doubted it, but he guided his cock to her cunt, circled her opening once, then spread her with his fingers and pushed himself inside. In one long, inexorable glide he crammed his cock into her, ignoring her cries, ignoring her body's natural resistance to his intrusion. He had to be inside—all the way inside. *Now!*

When his balls finally rubbed her bush, he gasped and lay over her, curving his belly to her back, pressing his face to her shoulder. Sucking air into his starved lungs, he reached deep inside himself for something to anchor him. He didn't want to hurt her, but feared he'd waited too long. He wrapped his arms around her and groped for her breasts, molding them in his palms.

Lily whimpered and her cunt clutched and pulsed around him. "Move," she pleaded. "God please, move! Fuck me, Joe."

Though he fought it, he could feel the change coming over him, filling him with thick, tensile strength, bulging his muscles outward. He turned his head and found himself staring at their reflection in the mirror above her bureau. "Shit!" Too late, he'd forgotten to protect her. "Keep your eyes closed," he said, panting.

Then all thought receded, supplanted by the monster reforming the bones in his face to a grisly mask of protruding bone across his forehead and brow. His gums tingled as his teeth slid down from the roof of his mouth. All his being was focused on the elemental need to conquer her with his sex, drink her life from her blood-filled body.

He flung back his head and roared. Then he unleashed the monster.

Lily was enthralled with Joe's rough mastery. When he'd flipped her over and arranged her body to his liking, she'd felt an odd moment of recognition – that this was what sex was supposed to be. Being mounted, being mastered by a male.

When he'd shoved inside her, pressing deeper, harder than any man had before, she'd thrilled at his power even as her body winced in protest to his harsh intrusion. When his hands had clumsily groped her breasts, she reveled in the fact she caused him to lose control.

Then he roared and all hell broke loose.

His body hardened around her, his cock growing impossibly thicker, until she thought a tree trunk filled her channel. Then he began to move and she whimpered, wondering if she was woman enough to take all of him. She squeezed her eyes tightly shut, concentrating on the glide and jerk of his powerful cock.

Then her inner tissues gave, moistening further, caressing his shaft. Her hips circled encouraging him to screw himself inside her, until he moved easily, stretching her to suit his massive cock.

He straightened away from her back and his hands sought her rump, a bruising grip that held her still while he pounded at her pussy.

Lily moaned and grunted harshly at the end of each of his powerful strokes, feeling the heavy, jackhammer thrusts pushing so deep inside her, she swore he stroked her heart.

His voice changed, no words uttered, just harsh, guttural groans that incited her to claw higher toward the peak. Then she was soaring, coming outside herself, splintering into a thousand shards of brittle glass. She screamed, and then screamed again when he hauled her up into his arms. He roughly nuzzled through the hair clinging to the perspiration on her neck until he found her skin.

The sharp sting of his bite pierced the sensual haze and her eyes flew open. She saw them in the mirror, kneeling on the bed, her knees spread open across his thighs, his hands working her hips up and down on his cock while he fed.

Thought, crisp coherence, was impossible at the cool rush of blood flowing out of her body, pulled from her head and extremities to feed his voracious hunger. She grew faint, pinpoints of black clouding her vision, and then she saw his face, bent over her flesh. Not Joe's face at all. A vampire's!

Her last thought as she was pulled into the void was she'd finally found one.

\* \* \* \* \*

The vampire savored the rich, hot blood that flowed over his tongue, quenching the thirst that raged in his soul. He crashed his hips upward, impaling the woman on his hard shaft, tunneling endlessly. Growling, his hands gripped her hips bouncing her buttocks on his lap, then sliding her forward and back as his fevered motions brought him to release.

His cock exploded and he disengaged his teeth from her neck to howl, his cum bursting from his loins in a raw, hot torrent. Jetting into the woman—*his woman*.

Finally, the wildness inside him quieted, and he let his head fall back on his shoulders to draw deep, cleansing breaths of air. As his body reformed, a niggling awareness grew that something wasn't right.

Joe opened his eyes. The sheen of perspiration dried on his skin, making him shiver beneath the oscillating blades above him. Lily lay inside his embrace, her head lolling on her neck, her body limp.

Horried, Joe pressed her head to the side and looked at the twin rivulets of blood that trickled down her neck onto her breast. Like obscene red scars. Had he taken too much? He'd been so out of control, he'd passed all human consciousness when he'd taken her. He couldn't be sure.

Sick at heart, he opened his lips around the wounds and licked her skin to close them, then turned her in his arms to lay her on the bed. Leaning over her, he cleansed away the trail of blood, stroking her flesh with his tongue.

She stirred and he leaned back, kneeling on the bed beside her. Her lids fluttered open and she smiled sleepily at him.

"Wow!" she said softly.

"How do you feel?" he asked, anxious to know whether he'd harmed her.

"Mmmm. Sore." She wrinkled her nose. "Deliciously so." She took a deep breath and closed her eyes.

"Lily." Joe didn't want her going to sleep, not if he needed to get her to a hospital.

Lily's eyes blinked. "Are we doing this, again?" she asked, a grin breaking across her face. "Because if we are, I'm afraid you're going to have to do all the work. I'm limp as a noodle."

"Are you sure you're all right? Are you feeling dizzy? Try sitting up." He lifted her shoulders off the bed.

Her arms snaked around his neck and she hugged him tightly, and then her lips brushed the edge of his jaw and slid down to nuzzle the corner of his neck. "Did I tell you how much I love your smell?" she murmured.

At that point, Joe figured Lily was just fine with no symptoms worse than a sore pussy and fatigue from his energetic attentions. He relaxed then felt a grin stretch his mouth. She'd been overcome with passion. His passion. *Hot damn!*

Joe closed his arms around her and carried her to the bed, rolling her beneath him. "Do you need to sleep?"

Her lips parted and her eyes widened. "Like I said, I'm a little sore there."

Joe gave her a heavy-lidded stare. "Care to make another choice?"

She winced, her face heating. "Do I have to say it?"

"Mmm-hmm." He liked her lady-like reticence. He liked it even better when she forgot her manners and screamed what she wanted.

"Why? You're a guy. Don't you just do what you want, anyway?"

"Last time I looked, there were two of us in this bed. I had mine. It's your turn to choose."

She huffed. "I suppose we'll just lay here like this all night unless I tell you, won't we?"

"Yup."

"I want..." Her gaze dropped to his chin. "I want you to...give it to me in the ass." She said the last in a rush, and then looked back into his eyes.

Joe pressed his lips together to smother a grin. Her embarrassment was adorable—pink chagrin and pearly white indecision biting her lips. "So do you want preliminaries this time?"

She scowled at him now. "You're making fun of me. I don't know if I like that."

"Let me make amends," he whispered. "Please? For being rough before."

"But I liked it," she said softly.

Joe searched her gaze until he was satisfied she told the truth. "I don't like to lose control like that. You don't have to be afraid. It won't happen again."

She opened her mouth to protest, but Joe pressed a finger to her lip. "You don't have to say it. I know I wasn't gentle. It was just..." He hated baring his soul, but she deserved the words. "You were so damn sexy. So hot. I couldn't keep it together."

"You mean, because I acted like a whore?"

"No!" If he hadn't seen the vulnerability beneath her steady stare he would have shaken her. "You were naked. Not just your body. Your desire. I've never been so turned on. It was beautiful. You're beautiful."

Her eyes filled and she turned her head. When she looked back at him, her gaze was curious. "So tell me more about these...preliminaries."

Joe felt uneasy, knocked off-center by the depth of passion he'd found with the professor. He'd loved Darcy—loved his old partner still, but the woman beneath him intrigued him from her sweetly rounded curves to her shy, inquisitive stare. If he weren't careful, she'd creep into his heart. It was a good thing he'd be out of there soon. In the meantime, he'd better keep things light.

"Well, I haven't tasted these little berries yet," he said, his gaze dipping to her chest. "And while I've probed the depths of your pretty pussy, I haven't tasted the well water...thoroughly."

Lily's breath gusted on a laugh. "What about me?" She circled her mouth with her tongue. "Although as large as you are, it may take me all night to explore every inch of your cock."

Joe felt his proud flesh respond to her compliment, growing to nudge her inner thigh. "So we're agreed? I get to order the breast pâté for the appetizer, followed by the soup—"

"Soup!" She slapped his shoulder. "Don't you dare say it!"

"Du Pussy."

She let out a shriek of laughter. "What do I get? The leg of mutton?"

He winced. "Doesn't quite have the same connotation. How about a spicy burrito!"

She wrinkled her nose. "Beans."

"A foot-long..."

She appeared to ponder it for a moment, and then shook her head. "Too obvious."

Joe waggled his eyebrows. "Filet of love muscle?"

She gave a very unladylike snort. "I can't believe we're talking like this."

Joe stroked her lower lip with his thumb. "Why? Because it's silly?"

"No, because I'm dying to ask you to do one thing for me," she said, her voice so soft he had to lean close to hear her.

"Baby, my body is yours to command," he whispered.

"Let me watch you while you change."

## CHAPTER FOUR

Lily held her breath as she waited for him to respond. How she'd kept it light since waking from her vampire's "kiss" she'd never figure out. She wanted to burst, to crow, to fling open her windows and scream it to the world, *Vampires do exist!*

Of course, her very first thought when she'd woken to find him hovering over her was whether he was going to drain her dry, but the guilty concern he'd shown as she'd tried to recover her wits had pretty much told her Joe wouldn't harm her.

The ominous stare he gave her now, however, had him inching back up the creepy scale.

"Talk to me," she said, nervously licking her lips. "Are you wondering what gave you away?"

One eyebrow lifted, but he didn't answer.

She took it as a cue to continue. "My first clue was when I touched you with the cross. You hissed like it burned." She gave him an impish grin. "Of course, every Dracula in any Psych ward would do the same, but you looked embarrassed."

Still, he didn't speak. But his incredulous expression had her wondering if he'd even noted he'd given her that little clue. She didn't have to remind herself a broody, unsmiling vampire lay draped across her body. Her nerves jumped and her mind raced on, her tongue following close behind. "Then of course there's the whole thing on my balcony. Not the shooting cum on the floor thing—the flying up to get there. Mind you, I had thought the bat-thing was pure Hollywood."

"And no one has a cock like yours, besides John Holmes—although I've never actually seen any of his films, so for all I know it's a really bad comparison. The fact is, I knew vampires had an odd erotic reputation, but I didn't know how they earned it."

"But the real clincher was the blood drinking. I've given blood before. Pints to the Red Cross, in fact. But never once did I nearly orgasm from my donation. If that was the normal affect, blood banks wouldn't have to hold drives." She finally ran out of nervous steam. "Talk to me. You're awfully quiet."

"You saw me in the mirror," he said flatly.

She nodded slowly, feeling his weight press her into the mattress. "Guess that whole mirror thing's a myth, huh?"

"You weren't freaked?"

"No!" she rushed to assure him. "It's incredible! I've been searching for evidence for years. If I'd known all I had to do was place an ad—"

"Stop it."

Lily's euphoria dissipated. Joe's expression was dark as a thundercloud. She made a note to tread lightly until she understood what put the kink in his underwear. Then she remembered, how vampires were made. If that piece of the lore was true, he'd likely nearly died to complete the transformation.

"All right," she said. "I'm sorry about my...enthusiasm. I've annoyed you and acted terribly rude." She caressed him from his shoulder to his fine, round buttocks, relieved when his muscles clenched in response to her shivery touch. "How did it happen?" she asked softly.

"Leave it. We're not talking about that," he said, his tone flat and remote. He shifted off her. "We've gotten off topic. I have questions I need answering."

Disturbed by his sudden change of mood, she rolled to follow him, not willing to lose the intimacy of their skin-to-skin connection. "Wait a second. You promised me preliminaries."

"I promised another go. *After* my questions are answered."

She spread her legs over his hips and snuggled her pussy onto his semi-erect cock. "Maybe I won't be in the mood."

He raised one dark eyebrow. "Lady, according to you, you're always in the mood."

He had her there. Lily felt a chill and resisted the urge to cover her body. If he wanted answers he'd just have to get them from her naked and pressed to the heart of his masculinity. If it was a quarter as difficult for him to think as it was for her while she oozed all over him, *then tough!*

"This has to do with what you told me at the coffee shop," she said, curving her back to rub her cleft along his length. "You want to be human again."

He inhaled sharply, flaring his nostrils. His heavy hand landed on her backside, halting her movements. "Have you ever read anything that says how this condition can be reversed?"

Lily slid her lips across his collarbone. "No. Like I said before, I've only seen it depicted on TV."

Joe pushed her off his body and turned to sit on the side of the bed, his back to her. "Give me something—a name, somewhere to look," he said, his voice ragged.

Lily reached to caress him, but her hand hovered in the air. The rigid set of his shoulders warned her away. "I can't think of anything. One of my sources, a woman who delves in voodoo and pagan spiritualism might know someone. I can't make any promises, but—"

"You'll take me to her." He glanced back at her.

She couldn't have said no if she'd wanted to. His look of desperation cut straight to her soul. "Yeah. I'll call her in the morning."

He nodded and exhaled. "So now that you know, how will you sleep? Won't you be afraid?"



Lily smiled. "I plan to keep you too busy to think of your stomach for the rest of the night. You guys do rest during the day, don't you?"

"Like the dead," he replied dryly.

"I'll make the call tomorrow. But it being a Saturday, I won't have to leave in the morning. I'll sleep with you." She knelt behind him and kissed his shoulder. "So we really do have the rest of the night to make love."

"Fuck. We're fucking, Professor."

"All right." She blushed at his blunt words, but he was right. She'd allowed a stranger to enter her bedroom—one she'd considered slightly deranged. And she'd begged him to take her. That fact didn't speak too highly for her moral fiber. If he thought she was a whore, it was only to be expected. Still it stung.

"I don't mean to embarrass you, but I don't want to give you false expectations about what's happening here," he said, drawing a deep breath. "I need information and to scratch an itch. When I get what I came for, I'm out of here."

Lily swallowed and nodded that she understood. She couldn't have gotten the words past her tongue to save her life. Her disappointment was too keen. Here was proof of her lifelong obsession and the most incredible lover she'd ever had. But their time together was limited.

She cleared her throat. "Well, since that clock is ticking, don't you think it's time you made good on your promise?"

Lily squealed when he twisted, his arms grasping her waist. He took her down to the bed. Lily found herself once more lying beneath his long, hard body. She told herself to remember every detail, every touch, every scent, and every whispered moan. Because she knew she'd never experience the likes of Joe Garcia again.

As his head lowered, she committed his handsome face to memory.

"You're thinking too much," he said, his mouth hovering centimeters from hers.

"Will I get a chance to ask questions, too?"

His mouth thinned for a moment, and then he nodded curtly. "I guess that's fair."

She raised her head to glide her lips over his, and then settled back on the pillow again. "So tell me..."

He groaned. "Now?"

She laughed softly and squeezed her thighs together to trap his cock. "Were you this big when you were human?"

Joe's mouth curved into a feral grin. "Not quite."

"Hmmm. So along with pointy teeth, I should be looking for gargantuan cocks. Guess I'll have to add a few more questions to my survey."

"Think any guy's going to tell the truth?"

She traced the outer shell of his ear with her fingertip and grinned. "Looks like I'll have to bring a ruler."

Joe's eyes narrowed, but Lily knew from his rapidly hardening flesh nudging her portal that he wasn't going to pull away this time. "What you're doing is dangerous, you know."

"Who's to say the next vamp who walks in won't be as 'honorable' as you?"

"Exactly my point."

She lifted her chin. "What will it matter? You won't be around."

"True. But I'd hate for anything to happen to you."

"Well, it won't be any of your business." Lily wriggled her hips so his thick head was glazed with her passion. "Are you trying to weasel out of our deal?"

"A promise is a promise." He scooted down the bed until his face was poised above one breast. "Preliminaries...mmmm." His tongue darted out to flicker at her nipple.

Lily arched her back to push her nipple into his mouth. His teeth closed over the tip and he bit it. Then he sucked it into his mouth, pulling hard, his tongue swirling around her areola.

"Oh God!" Her fingers clutched the back of his head and she held him close. No way was he going anywhere. Her thighs widened around his chest and she slid her calves along his sides, writhing under and around him while he tortured her breast.

Already she could feel the tension build deep within her belly, curling tightly, readying her vagina with a soft slow convulsion that spilled fluid from her pussy. The sharp scent of her arousal filled the air.

Joe released her breast and lapped at the tender underside. He pulled down one of her hands from where it had curled around his ears and pressed it to the breast he'd tormented. "Play with this, while I see to her twin."

Lily moaned and cupped herself, squeezing hard when he turned his attention to her other straining breast. The hard pebble beneath her palm and the nipple he suctioned shot electrical charges straight to her loins.

Her hips curved and she rubbed her slick pussy against his abdomen.

Joe lifted his head. His lips were blurred and rosy from his efforts.

"Please," she begged. "I need more."

Abruptly, he scooted lower until his shoulders pressed against her inner thighs. His hands curled under her knees and he lifted her legs, pressing them high and wide.

As his face hovered above her pussy, Lily's breath suspended. His dark, avid stare at her core had her squirming and self-conscious. She'd never seen herself down there... "Like what you see?"

Joe's gaze lifted to hers. Heat stained his cheeks and his eyes glittered darkly. "I like pretty, pink cunts."

More hot liquid gushed to bathe her channel. Lily's hands reached for his head, her fingers spearing into his hair to drag his mouth down to her aching mound. "Eat me."

Joe's tongue snaked out to lap at the center of her heat. "Mmmm. Honey."

Lily gasped and her thighs tensed. His tongue was hot and raspy, like fine sandpaper—like nothing she'd ever felt there before. His wicked mouth teased her, sucking on her swollen outer lips, then his tongue tunneled between in all too brief forays.

Before too long, Lily's hips bucked uncontrollably. "Joe. Please, my clit. Suck my clit," she begged.

"You said I should take it slow." He turned his head to nip her thigh.

"No! You're driving me insane." Her head thrashed on her pillow. "Pay attention! My clit!"

The wicked vamp spread her lips with his thumbs and lapped her tender entrance in wide circles, letting the scrape of his beard graze her, but he didn't approach the small, sensitive pearl.

Desperate, Lily reached between her legs, until her finger slid over the distended button at the top of her pussy.

Joe's hand clamped around her wrist. "No cheating."

"Then do something."

Joe fluttered his tongue once against the kernel and Lily's hips jerked.

She moaned. "It's too much!" she cried.

"And I don't want this over until I have my fill." He sucked both of her outer lips, rhythmically tugging. Then he licked lower, approaching her asshole.

She held her breath, embarrassed and painfully aroused at the same time. He wouldn't—

*Christ*, he did! His tongue swirled over her tender nether mouth, circling again and again, until Lily's body shuddered with delight. At the first stab of his tongue at her tight, hot center Lily keened loudly, her back arching off the bed.

"Make your choice."

What the hell was he talking about? "Choice?" Lily barely recognized her hoarse voice.

"Your ass or your cunt?"

The man was a sadist. "Don't make me say it, again."

His tongue speared into her ass and fluttered, then withdrew. "Say it, Professor." His teeth grazed her thigh.

"My ass! Fuck my ass—" Lily shrieked when she was flipped to her stomach.

"Give me your pillows," his voice grated.

Lily reached and tossed them over her shoulder. An arm encircled her waist and raised her, and the two pillows were stuffed beneath her hips. Suddenly, Lily discovered she was entirely at his mercy, her bottom in the air, unable to lever herself up on her knees due to the awkward position. Cool air from the fan bathed her moist, hot pussy, reminding her that her most intimate parts were exposed to his gaze.

His hands grasped a cheek each and he spread them. A heavy drop of moisture fell into the crease between her buttocks.

"Wait!" She wasn't at all sure she was ready for this. With her heart racing like a bunny on Viagra, she was sure she'd expire at the first probe of his thick cock.

"Too late. You're right where I want you."

A finger slid along the crease, smearing the moisture in its path until he reached her tight anus. He circled it once.

Lily shuddered, her body tensing in anticipation.

His finger pressed inside, twisting in, then pulling out.

She moaned and wadded the bedding in her fists.

Again, he pushed inside, deeper this time. And she felt his warm wet mouth slide over the globe of one cheek.

She forgot all about her modesty and opened her legs wider, inviting him to forge deeper into her body.

A second finger worked its way inside, stretching her uncomfortably.

"Relax, baby, we're taking this slowly. These are just my fingers. I need you to loosen up before I stuff my cock inside."

Lily thrilled to his coarse language. But she didn't want him to take it slow. Her ass was burning—the pain only intensifying the heat curling in her belly. "There's a tube of K-Y in my nightstand."

He nipped her ass and withdrew his fingers.

She pressed her hot face against the cool sheets while he rummaged through the drawer, knowing he saw her array of toys.

"Tsk. Tsk. *Professor*."

"Shut up, vamp. The gel's in the back."

"Got it."

The mattress dipped behind her again and a moment later his fingers were pressing inside again, this time well lubed. More fingers pressed past her sphincter. Three, she guessed, and her ass trembled with wicked delight.

"Better. Almost there. Christ, you're tight!" His fingers screwed in and out, stretching her further.

Lily's thighs strained to raise her buttocks higher, to force him deeper. "Joe. Please. More." She rubbed her beaded nipples on the fabric and wriggled her behind.

He pulled out entirely and pressed hot kisses to her cheeks. Long, interminable moments of silence followed. He was lubing himself, she guessed. God, she hoped so!

Then his hands were on her again, gripping her hips to raise her a little higher. A moment later, she felt his fingers pressing her opening, and suddenly, something large and blunt pushed against her tender asshole.

Pain—searing, yet impossibly arousing—forced a groan from her throat. “Oh please! Please, please—”

“I won’t stop now,” Joe said, his voice hoarse with strain. He pushed his hips forward, trying to be gentle, but her ass resisted his invasion, the rosy lips holding firm beneath his assault. He grasped her cheeks and spread them, pressing his thumbs around her nether mouth to ease it open while he kept up the pressure from his cock.

Gradually, her muscles relaxed and he dipped inside a fraction of an inch.

Lily’s back dipped and she groaned again, her knuckles turning white as they gripped the bedding.

Joe pumped with shallow pulses, adding a slight side-to-side motion to work his cock slowly past her tight muscles. His steady, unrelenting force finally allowed him to ease inside another inch.

With a kitten-like whimper, Lily rose on her elbows. “I don’t know if I can take it.”

Every muscle in Joe’s body grew rigid and he broke out in sweat. His buttocks trembled with the need to slam inside her. Her body clenched around his cock like a tight, hot glove. He couldn’t stop now.

Reaching beneath her he fondled her clit, relieved when Lily sank back to the bed at his touch. She moaned and twisted her upper torso, careful not to move her hips, but seemingly unable to resist his clever ministrations.

Joe held his cock still inside her and plied her dripping pussy with firm, deep strokes of his fingers, fucking her slowly at first then faster, rubbing, swirling, tunneling, until he felt an almost imperceptible wriggle of her hips.

He flexed his buttocks and drove a little deeper.

“Joe!”

He held his breath, wondering if he was strong enough to pull out before he caused her true pain, the urge to bury himself inside her so strong he gritted his teeth to fight it. She’d entrusted him with her body—and he never wanted to betray a trust with a woman again.

Lily groaned and widened her stance atop the pillows, her ass tilting higher, taking him deeper inside.

Relieved, Joe pulled partway out and stroked back inside, and then did it again, this time noting a slackening of her inner muscles. He began to pump, gradually stroking deeper with each inward glide, until finally his strokes were full, hard and coming faster.

Rising on her arms, she took it, jerking back to meet his strokes. His hand left her clit and he gripped her backside to hold her steady, moving faster and harder until he pounded into her ass, driving the breath from her lungs in harsh gasps.

She keened, a thin sound from between clenched teeth, pitched higher, longer, until she sobbed loudly, wildly. “Don’t stop. Oh God, oh God!”

Joe felt the change take him, so fast his back arched – his body thickening from one moment to the next.

Lily shrieked, a jarring sound ripped from her throat and she bucked, her ass shuddering as she convulsed, the ring of her opening clamping around his shaft like a cock ring, further building the blood and pressure in his dick.

His hands forced her buttocks sharply forward and back to increase the violence of his strokes. He pummeled her soft buttocks, his cock shafting deep inside her, his balls slapping her juicy cunt.

Yet even as his intellect faded, he recognized one important fact. She took it. She took every goddamned inch of his monster cock.

Though he fought it, his teeth slid past his gums and his face stretched. Then a powerful shudder wracked his own body, stiffening his thighs, compressing his balls until they exploded, shooting cum into her ass.

When the constrictions of her inner passage milked the last of his cum, he collapsed onto her back, forcing Lily to the mattress, his body shuddering and pulsing to expend every last drop of his passion.

Lily quieted, her breaths softening, pale whimpers turning to sighs. With his cock still impaling her sweet ass, Joe swept his hands along her arms, reaching to entwine his fingers with hers. She gripped him tightly.

“So, Joe,” Lily said, sounding breathless, “it looks like I’m running out of choices.”

## CHAPTER FIVE

Lily listened to the sound of running water as Joe availed himself of the bathroom. She made a mental note – *Vampires pee like anyone else.*

She knew she ought to move. Her bottom after all was still high in the air, but she didn't have a bone left in her body. The ache in her nether region was a delicious throb. No doubt, she'd be sitting sideways in the morning.

The water stopped, and the pad of Joe's footsteps as he neared her bed revved the throb to full throttle. *Sheesh!* She'd been righteously fucked, but her body already hummed with anticipation of his touch.

Something warm and wet glided between her legs and she moaned. He didn't say a word as he washed streaks of drying cum from between her legs. The nubby fabric of the washcloth at the same time soothed and excited her. While he cleansed her intimate parts, she relaxed, feeling the ache ease beneath the heat and his tender care.

He left her again, but soon returned and the mattress dipped beside her. His large, rough hands slid over her rump and gently massaged. "If you stay like that much longer, I'm going to take it as an invitation."

"Can't move," she said, groaning when his fingers trailed between her legs to stroke her inflamed labia.

He stretched across the mattress, lying on his side, his head supported on one hand as he continued to pet her with the other.

Lily snuggled her cheek on top of her folded hands and stared at him. "This is just an interlude, right?"

His fingers prodded her vagina and she drew in a deep hissing breath. She doubted she could take another round of his lovemaking right now—even for the sake of science.

"You can't take any more tonight, Lily."

She stifled a yawn. "You didn't drink this last time," she said. "And you weren't as rough or out of control."

"That's because I'd fed. I was desperate before."

"Well, you still owe me." This time a yawn caught her by surprise, stretching her jaw wide.

"How's that? Because we haven't explored your third choice?"

"Uh-huh. Because I didn't get to watch you change."

"There's still tomorrow night," he reminded her, his voice a sexy rumble.

"Hmmm."

From one moment to the next, Lily fell sound asleep. Joe smiled. Her hands were curled beneath her cheek like a child's, but her ass was still hiked on the stack of pillows. Innocence and carnal temptation all rolled in one delectable little package. Lily was quite a woman. If he were looking for a mate...

Joe tugged a pillow from beneath her hips and tucked it under his head. He rolled to his back and stared at the ceiling, trying to block out the aroma of sex, which hung like a pungent cloud above his head. Already his cock stirred on his thigh, unfurling inch by inch.

The memory of her tight ass claspings his flesh aroused and unsettled him, reminding him of the last time he'd loved Darcy. Only it hadn't been love—he'd touched her, taken her with only thoughts of revenge fueling his actions. He'd tunneled into his partner's ass, his mouth sipping from her neck, while she'd burrowed into the comfort of Quentin's arms. Quentin—his sire.

Darcy hadn't looked at Joe once. Her choice clearly written in the way she'd taken comfort from her vampire lover. When Joe had finished, he'd left the bed and her house—and he hadn't been back since.

He'd blown any chance he'd ever had with Darcy, when he'd blasted her for asking Quentin to turn him. And worse, when he'd nearly raped her.

It didn't really matter that she was responsible for his current state—he had no excuse for how he'd behaved after he was turned. Her only thought had been to preserve his life after he'd been shot. Instead of understanding, he'd taken her like an animal.

His anger had exploded, fed by his newborn vampire's hunger. Yet Darcy had bravely faced him, accepting his abuse, even offering her own blood for his first meal. However, the deal he'd entered with her vampire lover, Quentin, ensured he would never know her heat again.

Now he faced an eternity of loneliness. An eternity of guilt.

Separated from the rest of the Special Unit by his new "status", Joe was determined to find a way to reverse the transformation that had made him a monster. He'd seen how much pain and destruction vampires left in their wake—understood the dark hungers that ruled his body. He wanted to be human again to protect the world from himself.

Lily murmured sleepily beside him and rolled away from the pillow, settling on her back with a sigh. Joe reached for the lamp and flicked the switch to extinguish the light. He'd let her sleep despite the urgency building between his thighs. Perhaps he could appease another appetite with a little early morning snack. He rose from the bed and searched for his clothing on the floor.

All dressed, he slipped from the bedroom. Her keys lay on the kitchen counter and he shoved them in his pocket. The next time he entered her apartment it would be through the front door.



Outside, he turned to the right and headed back down the narrow street, his ears and nose alert to the scent of a meal. It had rained. Just enough so the glare of the streetlamps reflected off the pavement and the faint stench of sewage clung to the moist air.

A movement in the alley next to the apartment building drew his attention. A rustling, too loud for a dog or cat, was followed by the sound of a low, menacing growl. Joe's predatory instinct raised the hair on the back of his neck like hackles. Then he caught a scent he didn't recognize.

A heavy musk—like a man's, but also like the smell of wet dog—drifted from the alleyway. Every vamp-born instinct screamed for caution. Joe hastened the descent of his canines with a grinding of his teeth.

A blur of motion seen from the corner of his eye was all the warning Joe got before something heavy slammed into his chest, taking him down. Its heavy body weighted Joe's limbs, pinning him to the cement. He had a glimpse of a wolf-like face with flat, reflective gold disks for eyes, thick fur, and a long, dark snout. The black nose poised above Joe's face and the creature inhaled deeply. Sentient intelligence gleamed darkly in its gaze, then it lifted its head and howled—a sound unlike any canine howl he'd ever heard.

For a long moment, Joe lay beneath it, unresisting and unbelieving. The beast was another kind of monster—one he'd thought a figment of folk tales and Hollywood. Kind of like vampires, before he'd learned different during his years on the force. If what his gut told him was true, werewolves did exist! And this one looked pissed.

It sniffed Joe like a dog savoring the smell of its next meal. The animal's hackles rose, and the longer it scented, the louder its rumbling growl grew, until it reverberated within its chest.

The werewolf opened its mouth and long, serrated teeth sank into Joe's shoulder. The creature straddling his body shook its head, tearing at his flesh.

Joe roared, his lips drawing back in a feral snarl. Adrenaline screamed through his veins, pumping into his muscles, firing the rage in his inner beast. His arms strained against the creature's weight until the change slammed through his body, adding strength to his human frame.

With a powerful surge, he lifted the beast and rolled with it, smashing the back of its head to the pavement. Then thought became impossible. Rage, and the struggle to live, supplanted his growing horror. The beast within him warred with the werewolf, their primal cries a din of growls and grunts and fierce bellows.

Joe's hands pried the wolf's mouth from his shoulder and he pushed its neck back until bones crackled and the creature made a strangling sound. The wolf's haunches strained, forcing Joe to roll again, but this time he raised his knee, slamming between the creature's legs. It screamed and drew back. Joe planted his foot into the beast's belly, shoving it farther away, and then he scrambled to his feet.

On all fours the werewolf hunched its shoulders, its head low to ground as it circled Joe. Beneath the thick pelt, muscle rippled as it poised to attack. The wolf's unblinking gaze locked with Joe's.

"What the hell?" A voice from the end of the alley shouted. "You there, need help?"

Joe raised his arm and turned his face away from a bright light that blinded him momentarily. He heard the patter of feet and realized the beast had run to the opposite end of the alley. Forcing his face to reform, he drew in a deep breath and reined in his inner monster.

"Mister!" The voice was closer now. "Looks like you need an ambulance."

Joe made out the shiny badge and the blue uniform of an NOPD cop.

The large, barrel-chested officer continued to flash his light in Joe's face. "What the hell kind of dog was that? Animal Control's gonna need one big mother-fuckin' cage."

As the man drew closer, Joe's human perception sharpened. He realized the last thing he needed was a cop nosing around this little mystery. "It wasn't like any Rottweiler I ever saw," Joe murmured.

The officer shined his flashlight on his shoulder, then up again at Joe's face. "Do you mind me askin' what you were doin' in this alley?"

Joe shrugged. A few months ago he would just have whipped out his badge and traded cop talk. Instead, he said, "I heard a sound."

The officer snorted. "Do you make it a habit to investigate odd sounds in dark alleys? It's a wonder you're still breathin'. Looks like he took a chunk out of you—you're bleedin'. If you'll come with me, we'll get that seen to." He reached for the radio strapped to his shoulder.

With a twinge of regret, Joe lunged, his arm snaking around the cop's shoulders to draw him close to his body.

The officer struggled, his foot stomping on Joe's instep, his elbow slamming back into his ribcage. Joe opened his mouth and bit into the man's neck.

The officer continued his fight for a moment, and then his body grew slack.

Joe fed for several minutes then lifted his head to whisper in the officer's ear. "You heard a noise in the alley and investigated, but you found nothing. Spoke to no one. Now go back to your squad car." He let the man go and shoved him toward the street.

Without looking back, the officer walked away, shaking his head. "Just a damn dog."

Joe watched until he turned the corner, and then walked to the opposite end of the alley where he'd seen the werewolf escape. He sniffed the air, but only faint traces of the creature's scent remained. He retraced his steps, wondering what it had been doing in the alley in the first place. Near the entrance were large trash bins, which served the apartment building. The side door of one was open and a shredded bag of trash laid half-in-half-out of the bin.

As Joe stepped closer, he saw a piece of paper flutter to the ground. It was a phone bill with the name "Lily Carlson" printed at the top. Heedless of the acrid smell from the bin, he reached for the remnants of the one demolished bag and dumped its contents. Tissues and feminine articles littered the ground. Lily's fragrant musk permeated the items.

What interest would a werewolf have in scenting on Lily's trash? Joe's instincts, his cop instincts, knew this wasn't a random act. The wolf had targeted Lily's bag among all the others in the bin.

He hurried back to the apartment building. Until he knew what all this meant, Lily wasn't going anywhere without him.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You snore."

Lily lifted one eyelid and glowered at Joe. Only the light from the open bathroom door shone on his features; he'd covered the French door with a blanket. He was lying on his side, his head propped on his elbow – watching her.

She hoped she hadn't also been drooling.

"I do not snore," she enunciated.

A grin turned up the corners of his mouth. "How do you know?"

"I've never heard it."

"Ahhh...so you only believe what you see or hear for yourself?"

She twisted to look at the digital display of her alarm clock. It was 3:30 in the morning! What right did he have to look this good and expect her to engage in an intelligent conversation? She drew a deep breath and lowered her eyebrows to show her displeasure.

His gaze went straight to her breasts and she realized she was still naked as a newborn while he was fully dressed. She pretended unconcern with the disparity and tilted her chin. "Any good scientist bases her conclusions on empirical evidence."

"Yet you believe I fly only because I entered your room from your balcony."

"Are you telling me I came to an erroneous conclusion?"

"No, I'm telling you that you jump to conclusions like the rest of us. Sometimes, you trust a kernel of evidence and believe what you want to believe."

Lily opened her mouth to give him a rebuttal, but he pressed his finger over her lips.

"Sometimes, you have to forget about the survey data, or even what your own eyes tell you, and just trust your gut."

Lily knew he was talking about more than her snoring. "I can trust," she grumbled.

"Is there anyone you trust fully now? If he said, 'I've seen the Loch Ness monster in Lake Ponchartrain', would you trust it was true?"

Lily thought hard. The Loch Ness Monster?

"Is there anyone you'd believe?"

Lily felt her frown deepen and didn't care her forehead probably looked as wrinkly as a Shar-pei's. "So I snore."

"That's better," he said, his expression too intent for this conversation to be over.

She wasn't ready to hear what he had to say, especially if he was going to say he was leaving. "It's not very gentlemanly of you to mention it."

"I thought you'd like to know. And I never said I was a gentleman."

A yawn caught her unawares and her jaw stretched wide. She wished he'd stop staring. She knew her hair was likely squashed on all sides so that she looked like her head was really, really long and that her face looked like a roadmap from all the pink sleep creases. While he looked so damn unrumpled she knew he'd never slept.

But he had showered. She sniffed. He smelled powder fresh while she was as ripe as the inside of a gym bag. "I must have fallen asleep. Do you have this effect on all your women?"

"Would you trust me, Lily?"

She wanted to—she really did. Instead of a direct answer, she demurred. "Did you wake me for a reason?"

She'd disappointed him. It was as if a veil swept over his face, wiping the intensity from his expression, leaving a pinched, wary look in gaze. "What can you tell me about werewolves?"

"That they have hairier chests than yours?"

He didn't appear to appreciate her attempt at wit. "Besides that."

"You're serious, right?" At his curt nod, she sat up and reached for her robe. She didn't know how he could concentrate with her naked beside him—she couldn't concentrate while one part of her brain wanted him to caress her breast or glide his lips over hers.

When she'd arranged the fabric to cover her, she sat cross-legged on the mattress. "Well, there's pretty much an international tradition of folk tales describing shape-shifters. Of humans who could transform into animals—often into animals people considered their foes like wolves, bears, and lions. Of course, there's the Hollywood version of werewolves—they can only be killed with silver bullets, they change to wolves during the full moon—"

"Is it?"

"Is it what?"

"A full moon?"

"I can check my calendar. Why?" Lily realized something was wrong. His change of clothing, the difference in his mood since she'd fallen asleep... "You've been out. What happened?"

Joe's face darkened and his gaze swung back to nail her, accusation in his dark eyes. "Why would a werewolf be nosing around you, Lily? What aren't you telling me?"

Lily shook her head. Werewolves? It was as unlikely as having a vampire in her bedroom. "Are you sure?"

Joe shoved up the sleeve of his fresh T-shirt to expose his shoulder. Long, angry red gashes, already scabbing over, marred his skin.

She gasped and her gaze returned to his face. "A...wolf did this? You couldn't have mistaken a German shepherd or some other large dog for a wolf?"

"It smelled like a human," he said, his voice flat and hard. His gaze was so intent she feared he could read every thought that flashed through her jumbled brain.

Then her mind slowed to embrace a single clarifying thought. He wanted her trust. No, he needed it. Whatever had happened to him before, he'd lost trust somewhere.

Without a single shred of proof, she relaxed and accepted that she wanted to love him. She'd give him her trust, even if that was the only thing he ever wanted from her. Without wavering, she looked into his eyes. "All right, you met a werewolf tonight. Have you ever seen one before?"

He drew in a deep breath. "I didn't know they existed."

"You're sure he targeted me?"

"Yes. And I think it has something to do with your scent."

She grimaced. "I'll take a bath."

"No, your woman's musk is very distinctive. I noted it right away."

Not sure that was a flattering remark or not, she said, "What brought you to the conclusion he was interested in my...musk."

"He pulled your trash bag out of the bin—the one with your feminine items."

Lily blushed and toyed with the belt of her robe. "You mean, my panty liners, right? I told you I have...a problem."

Joe's hand settled over hers, and he squeezed. "I don't mean to embarrass you, but I think your problem is more significant than just a hormonal imbalance."

Lily nodded, but she did not want to discuss her feminine hygiene any further. "Those scabs look like they're over a week old."

"Vampires heal fast."

"I should be taking notes."

"You know you won't be believed if you publish your findings."

Lily gave him a lopsided smile. "My colleagues already think I'm a bit wacky because of my area of specialization." She wrinkled her nose. "They only tolerate me because I'm multi-published."

"So why *did* you choose vampires?"

Lily looked away. He didn't know it, but she'd promised him her trust. Trust bled both ways. "I never knew my mother, but my father was my whole world. We moved a lot when I was growing up. I didn't know why. One night we came home and someone was in our house." Lily took a deep breath, trying not to let the horror of that night get to her like it always did.

Joe's palm cupped her cheek.

She leaned her face into it for a moment and then straightened. "My father attacked him. Killed him. Afterward, Daddy didn't call the police, even though he was hurt. We didn't pack our things—we just left." She blinked to dry tears filling her eyes. "I didn't know how bad he was hurt. Before he died, he said I should be wary. That the man was a vampire." She looked into Joe's troubled gaze. "He said vampires are my mortal enemies."

"So why would you seek other vampires?"

Lily shrugged and felt the tears spill onto her cheeks. "I had to know he wasn't crazy. That he hadn't died for nothing." She sniffed. "That he hadn't murdered for nothing."

His thumbs rubbed her tears away. "You saw him kill the vampire?" Joe asked softly.

She nodded and blinked again. "He fell behind the couch in our living room—so I never saw his body."

"If I'm your mortal enemy, why aren't you afraid of me?"

"I was."

"What changed your mind?"

His directness made her squirm. He deserved no less from her. "The fact you offered me an out, when it was obvious you were dying...to fuck me."

His eyes glinted dangerously.

She recognized that look now and her body responded, her nipples constricting into hard, erect points. Lily nodded toward her French door. "You covered the glass."

"It'll be daylight soon."

"Oh." Worried for him, and yet morbidly curious, she asked, "Will you disintegrate in the sunlight?"

His lips pursed around a smile. "I'll melt into a puddle of goo."

Lily suppressed a smile at his teasing and licked her lips. "I can so relate to that."

"Take off your robe," his voice purred.

She shook her head and clutched the collar of her robe. "You first."

His eyes narrowed, but he reached for the hem of his T-shirt and drew it over his head. Then he reached for the button at the waist of his jeans.

Lily's gaze ate up every inch of flesh revealed. Despite the angry wound on his shoulder, his broad frame gleamed with masculine power. His happy trail of black hair drew her gaze downward. Her mouth watered.

Joe shucked off his jeans and his sex sprang from its dark nest of curly hair, alert and potent.

Instant, intense arousal pulsed deep within her pussy. She shrugged out of her robe and lay down, opening her arms.

Before his body covered hers, his fingers went straight for her moist cleft, sliding between her pouty lips, his thumbnail flicking the hood covering her clitoris.

Lily moaned and widened her legs, making room for him to settle between them. Her hands drew his shoulders down, scraping his back, urging him to take her with her sighs and eager caresses.

Joe's breath, already shorter, fell hot upon her cheeks, and then his mouth closed over hers and she was lost. Their tongues warred, their chests met, his fingers rubbed moisture around her opening, and then he was pressing his cock inside, crowding the tender tissues, groaning into her mouth.

Lily slid her calves around his thighs and higher, pressing his hips closer, pleading with her body for him to tunnel deeper.

Joe's thrusts were shallow, just deep enough to excite her inner walls into releasing more cream to coat his thick cock. He rocked inside the cradle of her thighs, ending each thrust with a little jerk.

With her legs closing around his buttocks, she lifted her hips off the mattress, squeezing, forcing him to drive deeper.

Then she was shattering, climaxing so strongly, she moaned and writhed beneath him.

His mouth ate at hers, sucking on her tongue, biting her lips, nuzzling under her chin—drinking her moans and giving them back with his own deep, rumbling groans.

Then he planted his hands on the bed and pushed up. His eyes glittered in the dim light, the skin tautening over his flushed cheeks. Beneath her heels she felt the flex of muscles in his buttocks as he rocked forward, gliding his cock inside her so deep he rammed her cervix. Another flex and he pulled out, then in, and out...

Lily's fingernails dug into his back, as she strained upward, trying to meet each thrust—but he was too fast, too hard.

And his face was changing. She watched in fascinated horror as the bones of his forehead pushed outward, stretching his skin into a frightening mask. His lips curled up to bare his teeth, which slid downward. They gleamed white and menacing in the dark.

Impossibly, she felt a second dark wave wash over her and she held up her wrist to his mouth. "Drink! I want it all."

He bit into her wrist and her breath hissed on an indrawn breath. He mouthed her flesh and sucked, his buttocks turning to steel, his body and cock thickening. His powerful thrusts pushed her up the bed until her head banged against the headboard. She reached with her free hand to brace herself against it, and then all thought stopped.

Only sensation registered in her brain—flames licked at her loins, curling inside her belly, drawing breath and blood to her core like a cold-hot ball of tension that curved her toes, pulled her legs higher, and arched her back off the bed.

As if from a distance, she heard a long, thready scream and color burst like a fireball behind her closed lids.

She came back to herself slowly, hearing her jagged breaths loud inside her ears. Sweat cooled on her face beneath the strokes of the blades above her, and a large weight pressed her body deep into the mattress.

Lily raised a shaking hand to stroke the short, wet curls at the back of Joe's head. His face nuzzled her breast and his hot mouth latched onto her nipple. Lily's heart squeezed. In the most elemental way, he sought comfort from her body.

He stirred, but she held him within the circle of her thighs, reluctant to let him leave her. He plied her breast with glides of his tongue then kissed the crest of her nipple and raised his head. "You make me forget why I came here in the first place."

Lily smiled, feeling tired and a little sad. She didn't need reminding he was here only because he sought a "cure" for his condition.

"You'll call your voodoo priestess, today?" he asked.

She nodded.

"We have two questions for her, now."

Lily was suddenly too sleepy to ask him what the second question was.

"Lily?"

"Yes?" she murmured sleepily.

"Don't go out alone today."



## CHAPTER SIX

Lily woke with a start. Sunlight winked from the edges of the blanket covering the door on her balcony. She reached out and felt along the surface of her nightstand for her alarm clock and held it in front of her face, waiting for her eyes to adjust to the bright readout. It was mid-afternoon.

Turning on her side she found Joe, lying on his back, his chest barely moving. Alarmed, she leaned over him and pressed her ear to his chest. His heart beat—albeit slowly. He hadn't been kidding when he said he slept like the dead.

Lily brushed his chest with a kiss and cuddled close to his side, her arm stretched over his belly. It had been such a long time since she'd woken up with a man in her bed. She drew in a deep breath and closed her eyes to savor his man-smell—the tangy fragrance of sweat, a trace of spicy aftershave, the lingering aroma of sex.

His face, softened by sleep, was beautiful. Something she hadn't really noticed when his dark, sensual gaze burned away all other observations. His eyelashes, thick and curly, were dark crescents, his nose a sharp blade, his mouth a wicked curve, even in his sleep.

Her gaze drifted down, across his latte-colored chest and belly. A light furring of black hair led her gaze downward to the edge of the sheet. It dipped between his legs and molded the hummock of his sex.

She wondered whether he dreamed—and whether she figured in his dreams.

Her hand idly caressed his chest, traced the quickly healing wounds on his shoulder, and drifted downward to circle his taut belly. She had maybe one or two more nights with her vampire—not nearly enough time to pump him for information she needed to feed her research. Not nearly enough time for all the loving she wanted.

Her fingers nudged the sheet draping his hips.

*Stick to the research!* She wondered how vulnerable this deep sleep left a vampire and whether he would respond to external stimuli. She rose up on her knees. “Joe,” she whispered.

No response. Not a flutter of an eyelash. No change to his breathing pattern.

Lily extended a finger and tickled his ribs.

Again, no response.

Feeling bolder, she poked him hard with her finger. Still he didn't move.

“Hmmm...” Lily slowly peeled down the sheet to expose his penis. It lay curved along his thigh. Sleeping, it hardly appeared the fearsome sword he'd wielded the night before.

She bit her lip and pondered the ethics of examining a man's private parts while he slept. She traced his length with her fingernail and glanced up guiltily to see whether he'd moved.

Nothing.

She reached for her glasses in the top drawer of her nightstand and slid them over her nose.

Then she reached for his cock and straightened it along his thigh to measure it with her palm and fingertips. It was one hand plus the length of just her fingertips long when relaxed. She laid it gently on his belly and cupped his balls. They were heavy, about the size and weight of a couple of tangerines.

She gently squeezed and tugged his sac noting his cock expanded and lengthened. Could he be fully aroused in his present hibernating state? She wanted to know, although she didn't have a clue where she could publish such a finding.

Stripping the sheet away to bare his legs and toes, she came to a quick decision. She had a duty to explore every attribute of her subject—in the name of science, of course.

On her knees, she stepped over his leg and gently pushed his thighs wider to make room for herself. She knelt between them and bent to take his balls into her mouth.

Joe fought his way through layers of dreams where monsters with golden eyes and savage fangs chased him through damp, dark, cobblestone streets. He ran on, the sound of his heart beating and the searing breaths squeezing from his lungs, louder than the impact of his booted heels.

His limbs grew more leaden the farther he ran. He'd been here before, knew what the outcome of this encounter would be, and knew he was powerless to change his course. The sounds from his pursuers were closer now. He didn't dare take his gaze from the uneven road in front of him to look over his shoulder, but he could hear the scrape of their claws just behind his heels and smell their foul breath as they closed in on him.

*This is a dream! No more.* And yet he knew he'd lived these minutes. Every detail was too clear, the scents and sights too crisp for imagination.

With dread weighing down his shoulders he waited for them to pounce and tear at his flesh. He almost wished they'd go ahead and end it. For then he'd awaken—as he always did.

Instead, this time the sounds of the wolves grew faint and the damp, dark street faded. His sluggish heart beat faster. He was waking this time before they killed him.

Joe felt the pleasant tug of something warm and lusciously wet on his balls. His eyes opened only a slit to peer down at the woman mouthing his sac. *Lily!* She'd chased his nightmare away.

A shaft of light reflecting off the mirror above her bureau struck her hair, igniting the golden strands in her hair like a halo and glinting off the wire surrounding her

glasses. The odd sight of her naked body bobbing above his groin and her glasses slowly fogging had him suppressing a smile.

She tugged again, her tongue swirling over first one ball then the other, and he noted that one hand rested lightly on the end of his dick. He wished for a stronger grip, but guessed she was gauging his growth by the way her hand squeezed first one side, then the other, and then her finger measured the distance from the tip of his dick to his belly button.

His professor certainly took her research seriously.

So did his cock. He felt the blood rushing to his loins, filling his staff with steely ardor.

Regrettably, she released his balls. "Oh my!" Lily slid her glasses down her nose to peer at him above her misty lenses.

Joe carefully regulated the rise and fall of his chest and kept his eyes slitted to see what she'd do next.

Lily measured him from root to tip, using both hands, palm to fingertip, palm to fingertip. When she finished, her lips pursed around a silent whistle.

"I suppose you'll want to slip a scale beneath him next," he murmured.

Lily screeched and rested her hand on her heaving chest. Color flooded her stricken cheeks. "You could have told me you were awake."

"And cut short the investigation? I did promise to answer your questions."

She scowled at him above her glasses. "Shouldn't you be asleep?"

"Shouldn't you be up and about?"

"I-I will be. I have plenty to keep me busy today – notes to take, *measurements* to document."

Joe's eyes narrowed. "You aren't really thinking of measuring more vampires' cocks, are you?"

"A single measurement does not a finding make," she said with a haughty tilt of her chin.

"You know the only way you'll get more statistics will be by bringing them here, to your bedroom. Would you really take that kind of risk?"

"I did with you."

Joe shook his head, fighting fatigue. They needed to get a few points straight. Lily was heading down a road for disaster. "What if they want to take more than a bite from you? What if they kill you?"

She shrugged. "Then I'd be resurrected as a vampire and continue my research."

"You don't really want that, Lily. Besides, your vamp may not be interested in turning you. He could just leave you looking like hamburger."

Lily grimaced, but her chin tilted higher. "Shouldn't you be sleeping?"

"You woke me up – how do you expect me to go back to sleep with this hard-on?"

Lily licked her lips. "Since I'm responsible, I should take care of it." Her nonchalant tone didn't fool him for a minute. A vein at the base of her throat pulsed. "What would you like?" she asked as casually as she might ask him how he liked his steak.

Every red corpuscle roared toward his cock. He lifted his hand toward her, palm up. "Climb aboard."

A shiver shook her breasts and her face tightened. Lily laid her hand inside his and crawled over his hips, her slick cleft leaving a trail of moisture along his rigid shaft.

"Are you sore?"

She blushed a fiery red. "I wish you'd quit asking me that."

He ignored her embarrassment and reached down to slip a finger inside her, noting the heat of her swollen lips and inner tissues—and the liquid that drenched her channel. Lily had worked herself into a state of high arousal as she'd conducted her "investigation".

He swirled his finger around, watching her face for signs of pain, but Lily closed her eyes and sighed. Her areolas dimpled. Her nipples constricted and elongated. Joe's mouth watered. "I think you can take me," he whispered.

"Damn right." She rose on her knees and grasped his cock in her fist.

With his thumbs pressing her lips apart, Joe did his part to ensure her comfort, reducing the friction between his cock and her plump labia.

Lily centered her entrance over his fleshy head. Then she sank, taking him inches inside her. Her indrawn breath expanded her chest and his gaze zeroed in on her luscious, pouting nipples. She rose and sank deeper.

Her breath quickened and Lily leaned forward to brace her hands against his chest. With a determined cant of her chin, she lowered herself, taking nearly half his length inside.

His jaw hard as granite, he bit out, "Faster." He released the folds of her cunt and glided his hands up to her breasts, squeezing them in his palms. "Faster, baby."

Lily's face was mottled red, her lips trembling— inches from her orgasm. She snuggled her knees closer to his hips and bounced tentatively on his cock, a moan breaking from throat.

The lenses of her glasses misted over and he pulled them from her nose, setting them on the nightstand. He leaned up to kiss her shoulder, and her back arched, bringing her breast to his lips. He latched onto one tight nipple and sucked hard.

She cried out, gliding her hot cunt all the way down his cock. Joe's head nearly exploded. His hands circled her back and reached for her buttocks, gripping her hard, shoving her hips down, then sliding them forward and back to grind his short hairs against her clit.

"Joe! I can't move. Can't—" Her voice broke on a groan.

He bit her nipple gently, sucking the tender tip between his teeth then swirling his rough tongue to increase the pleasure.

Lily's hips jerked and her thighs shuddered over his hips. He could sense her orgasm building sweet tension in her body. With his hands gripping her round bottom he raised her, then slammed her down as he thrust his hips upward, stabbing deep into her core.

She screamed. Her fingernails dug crescents into his shoulders. Her eyes closed and a wash of fiery color spread over her breasts and cheeks.

Joe felt his own climax rising from his thighs, slamming though his balls and dick to shoot a geyser of cum inside her body.

He held her hips flush to his for several long moments, circling her body on his cock, prolonging her orgasm until the convulsions milking his sex grew fainter. Finally, Lily collapsed over his chest, nuzzling her face into the corner of his shoulder.

Joe caressed her back, soothing her while her jagged breaths grew even and her racing heart calmed. Finally, his own heart slowed and he receded below the layers of his dreams. This time he watched through misted glass as a girl with whiskey-colored hair pleased herself.

Lily sang while she showered, confident the vamp wouldn't wake again to hear her off-key warbling. Her fingers itched to start putting some of what she'd learned into her computer, but first things first.

She had to make an appointment with Madame Leveque and shop for a dinner suitable for a vampire. He'd asked her not to go out alone, but it was still daylight. Weren't werewolves nocturnal creatures as well?

As she stood before her mirror, she suffered long moments of indecision. Hair, up or down? Makeup, her usual careless swipe of pale pink lipstick or a full face?

She wrinkled her nose at her reflection and decided not to take special pains with her appearance. Who was she kidding? Femme fatale, she wasn't. She quickly wound her hair into a knot and secured it with pins, but she glazed her lips with a deep rose.

Hurrying to the kitchen counter, she found her planner and flipped to the address section. She punched the numbers into her cordless handset and tucked it between her shoulder and ear while she gathered her planner and keys and dropped them in her purse. She was quickly running out of daylight.

"Madame Leveque's."

"Cissy? This is Lily Carlson."

"Professor, you manage to slip past that weirdo last night?" Cissy asked, wry humor in her tone.

Lily felt a blush rise all the way from her toes. "Not exactly."

"He give you any trouble?"

"Ah no." She quickly steered the conversation back. "Look, I'm calling because I need to see your grandmother tonight."

"Oooh, I don't know. Grandmere's been here since early this mornin'.. She may be too tired. Can you come this afternoon?"

"No. That wouldn't be possible." Lily hated imposing on her friendship, but this might be her only shot at finding an answer to Joe's dilemma. "Would you ask her? It's very important I see her tonight."

"Sure." Cissy's voice reflected curiosity, but she didn't press for a reason. "I be right back."

Lily didn't have long to wait. "Professor, Grandmere says she's been expectin' your call. Come after dark, she said."

"Tell Madame, I'll be bringing a friend."

Relieved she'd accomplished one thing on her list, she let herself out of her apartment. At the front steps she met Mimi Comeaux, the superintendent's wife. She wielded a deck brush, applying it vigorously to the concrete steps—and she was humming, an unusual occurrence for the normally pinch-faced woman.

"Good afternoon, Mimi," Lily said as she passed her.

"Mornin'," the woman trilled.

Lily gave her a second glance. "You seem chipper this morning."

The woman actually blushed. "It's a pretty day."

Lily eyed the overcast sky and raised an eyebrow. "Do you mind my asking what you are doing?"

"Some poor dog left bloody paw prints all over the front steps. I'm tryin' to bleach them out."

Lily looked at the smeared prints the woman hadn't yet reached with her brush. They were enormous. "You're sure those belong to a dog?"

"Sure. A very big dog. He must have cut a foot."

Lily remembered Joe's account of the werewolf and wondered if the woman was washing away paw prints from a primordial creature. Despite the heat, she felt a shiver creep up her spine. *Joe would have my ass if he found out I left the house.* But werewolves were said to be nocturnal creatures, she repeated to herself. Lily shrugged, bid Madame Comeaux *adieu*, and headed for her car.

As she unlocked the door, she heard an engine fire and glanced down the street. Nothing out the usual. She was just jumpy. Nevertheless, she locked the doors as soon as she slipped inside.

The local grocer was only a block away. She parked next to the door and quickly made her way inside the store. Heading straight for the meat section, she wondered how she'd word her request. Bluntly: Do you carry pig's blood? What else could a vampire consume? All she knew was what she'd gleaned from TV and movies—human blood and flesh as the main entrée, rats and pig blood in a pinch.

The butcher smiled as she approached.

"How are you, professor? Would you like shrimp fresh from the Gulf this morning?"

"Um, by chance do you carry pig's blood? I'm thinking of making...an old family recipe...for uh...gravy."

The portly butcher eyed her quizzically. "I'm sorry. If you would like to special order—"

Never comfortable telling a lie, Lily demurred. "No that's okay. Do you have something especially...juicy?" She knew her cheeks burned a fiery red.

Both eyebrows rose, like black beetles perched on his brow. "I have inch and half steaks—plenty fresh and dripping with blood, if that's what you really want."

Why hadn't she thought to go to another shop? He knew her preference for white meats and seafood. Her sudden taste for blood-soaked red meat had to be raising a question in his mind.

"Professor," he grinned broadly. "Are you by chance *enceinte*?"

That was one plausible explanation she hadn't considered. Lily felt her already hot face burn. "The steaks will be fine. Two of them please."

"Two?" His beetle-eyebrows wagged. "I won't be a moment," he said, and disappeared into a back room.

Lily took a deep breath and looked around, ticking off the other items she would need when she noted a tall, broadly built man just down the aisle from her. He was turned away, but she had the sneaking suspicion he had been watching her. Somehow, he looked out of place standing in front of a rack full of baby diapers.

Any other day and she would have given him a second and third considering look. He was handsome—his features spare, harshly etched. Manly. If Joe hadn't already awakened her appreciation for dangerously sensual men, she might have lingered to discover whether he really had been checking her out.

Instead, a shiver of unease raised the hair on the back of her neck. His build radiated power. His dark slacks molded thickly muscled thighs. His loosely fitted cotton shirt didn't disguise the sinew of his back and shoulders. How easily he could overpower a woman if that were his intent.

He reached for a package from the row of diapers and she noted a white bandage wrapped around his palm. He looked over his shoulder and his gaze met hers. The intensity in his light-colored eyes and the hard, chiseled features caused her heart to trip. Some instinct she would have said she didn't possess told her that yes, he had been watching her.

"Professor, your steaks?"

Lily blinked and turned to the butcher, smiling her thanks automatically. She was done shopping. She needed to get home quickly.

Lily paid for her package and walked swiftly to her car.

"Miss! Your change!"

He'd followed her out of the store. She didn't dare pause to answer. She opened her door with the remote, tossed the package on the passenger seat, and slid the key into the ignition with a shaking hand.

A shadow fell across her and she knew he stood outside her door. She shifted into reverse and hit the gas. As she pulled away, she finally looked at him. A feral smile stretched the man's hard mouth.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

Joe heard the scrape of a key turning in the lock, then the clank of keys dropping to the tiled floor, followed by a mumbled oath. He let go of the worry he'd experienced over the past hour when he'd risen beyond his dreams to find Lily had gone.

Now anger swept through him, fast and blinding. He opened the door ready to tear into Lily for her carelessness, but the look on her face pulled him up short.

"Oh my God!" She launched herself into his arms.

All his anger and worry disappeared in an instant as he held her trembling body. He glanced up and down the hallway. Seeing no menace lurking in the shadows, he pulled her into the apartment and shut the door, turning the bolt to lock them inside. He leaned back against it, pulling her body flush with his and waited for Lily's explanation.

"Oh my God!" she repeated. "He followed me. In the store." Her breaths were as choppy as her words.

Joe's body tightened with outrage. A man stalked her? That Lily, normally so guileless and oblivious to her appeal, had noticed the man's actions gave immediate credence to her claim. He fought his resurfacing anger to rub soothing circles on her back. "Take a deep breath," he said from between clenched teeth, "and tell me."

Lily leaned away and looked into his face. The fear in her gaze and her trembling mouth had him wishing the man were here now so he could take his head off. "His hand—" she gasped, "he was standing by the diapers—but I knew!"

He pressed her face against his chest. By her jittery, incoherent explanation, he knew it might be a while before he pieced together the story. His rage boiled like an ulcer in his belly—but she didn't need his anger. She needed his comfort now. "Shhh. Take it easy, baby. I've got you now."

A shudder shook her frame and her arms tightened around him. "There was a car down the street. I was nervous." She sniffed against his chest.

Joe smiled, wondering if she realized she'd just wiped her nose on his T-shirt.

"Then the butcher thought I was pregnant."

He shook his head at that last thought. She was so rattled she wasn't making any sense. He smoothed the hair from her forehead and she raised her face. Grabbing her chin, he lowered his mouth to kiss her—something he'd wanted to do the moment he'd seen her again.

She drew back again. "But—"

His hand grabbed a fist of her hair and tilted her head. He sealed his lips over hers.

She murmured a protest, her hands pushing at his shoulders.

He kept kissing her, sucking on her lower lip, enticing her to open her mouth and let him in.

Finally she relaxed, her arms creeping up to encircle his neck.

By the time he pulled away, his heart galloped and his body had grown hard as a rock. He was a bastard, but all he could think of doing was taking her – right here. *Now!*

He pulled her blouse from her slacks and reached beneath to palm her breasts through her lacy bra.

Lily's lips, blurred and reddened by his kisses, formed a passionate moue. Then she blinked. "No! You have to listen."

Joe let his head fall back to the door with a bang and dragged air into his lungs. She was driving him nuts.

"I th—think your werewolf followed me," Lily said breathlessly. "I went to the grocery store down the block. Had to get something for dinner—for you."

He rubbed her back again, the motion soothing his own racing heartbeat. "How do you know it was him?"

The little frown that wrinkled her brow indicated she'd switched to analytic mode. "There was blood on the sidewalk. Bloody paw prints from a very large dog—*your wolf*."

The way her mind leapt from one disjointed thought to the next left him dizzy. "Why did the paw prints make you think the man was the wolf?"

"He followed me. I heard a car start as I was getting into mine." At his dubious frown, she scowled. "I know it was him, and he was watching me in the store. He had a bandage on his hand. I left my change at the register and he followed me out."

"He couldn't have just been a good Samaritan?"

"No! It was his eyes. His stare was so intent." She looked at him, apology in her expression. "Just like yours. He was *smelling* me!"

Joe quirked an eyebrow. "You don't think any man would love the way you smell?"

"He looked like he wanted to eat me!"

A rueful smile lifted the corner of his lips. "So do I."

Lily shoved at his chest. "You don't believe me."

All humor fled. "I didn't say that. I think we should be very cautious. What I want to know is why you went out alone, after I specifically told you not to."

She huffed. "You are not the boss of me." Her arms came up between them and she struggled against his hard embrace. "Besides, there's no vampire food in the fridge."

"Vampire food?" His head was starting to hurt. Her leaps from subject to subject were hard to follow when his brain had fled so far south.

"Well, I wasn't sure what your diet consists of besides human blood, but somehow I didn't think chicken breasts and Rocky Road ice cream would appease you."

He sighed. "So what did you get?"

"Well, I asked for pig's blood, but the butcher said I'd have to special order it. So I bought steaks."

"Steak will do. I woke up hungry as hell." He gave her a heavy-lidded once-over. "You worked up my appetite."

"Oh." She blushed and smoothed a strand of hair behind her ear. "Oh!" Her eyes widened. "I left the steaks in the car – and my purse. I have to go get them."

"No you don't! It's dusk, give it a few minutes and I'll get them."

Lily took a deep breath and bit her lower lip.

Her telltale clue said she wanted to ask him another question. He caressed her buttocks and pulled her against his arousal. "Out with it."

Her glasses had slid toward the end of her nose and she glanced up at him from beneath her golden lashes. "What's so special about the way I smell?"

Joe felt the throb in his cock begin a slow drum roll. "You smell horny – all woman-spice and musk, and a little wild."

"I smell gamey?" She looked appalled.

"No. Primitive. Feminine. Your scent grabs a man by the balls."

"Yuck! I should have bought strawberry douche!"

The look on her face made Joe's shoulders shake with laughter. "Baby, you can't improve on nature. It's the first thing I noticed – even before I met you. I just followed your scent."

Color leached from her face. "So did the werewolf," she whispered.

He leaned down and kissed her lips. "Yeah, he did." He took a deep breath. As much as he'd prefer to take her straight to bed, Lily's safety was at risk. "When do we see your voodoo queen?"

"She's not a voodoo queen – she's a spiritualist." Lily snuggled her hips against his. "She'll see us just after dark." She looked over her shoulder at the shrouded window. "Now."

Joe pulled her into his arms and gave her one last hard kiss. "Let's go. I'll eat in the car."

\* \* \* \* \*

Madame Leveque's shop was just off Bourbon Street. An orange neon sign advertising "Tarot/Voodoo" gleamed brightly above the small doorway of a narrow, white stucco building that adjoined a row of shops. A bell tinkled above the door as Joe hustled Lily through the entrance with a hand to the small of her back. He gave a final look up and down the street before following her inside.

The narrow shop was small and dark; the shelves filled with cheesy Voodoo amulets and dolls, T-shirts with skeletal jazz bands, New Orleans key chains, and stuffed toy alligators.

Lily headed straight to the back of the shop, past the counter where the girl with the corkscrew curls nodded to a curtained doorway. Her eyes widened at the sight of him and Joe grinned evilly. As he passed, her eyes narrowed in a warning he couldn't miss.

Lily pulled back the drapery and he followed her into a cozy little sitting area with a sofa along the wall and a small wooden table in the center flanked by two chairs. The air smelled like cooking spices and Joe spotted incense burning from a small brass bowl.

A door opened from beyond the table and a short, wizened black woman stepped through. "Miss Lily."

"Madam Leveque," Lily said, shaking the old woman's hand. "I hope you don't mind that I've brought a friend."

Large, dark eyes gazed up at him for a long moment, and then a slow smile brightened her face. "Vampire," she said softly, and raised her hand.

Shaken by her immediate recognition and acceptance, Joe reached for her hand and turned it, bringing it to his lips to press a kiss to the crepe-paper skin. "Madame, I'm Joe Garcia."

She smiled with delight and motioned toward the table. "One of you may sit on the sofa. As you can see, I am accustomed to seein' only one person at a time," she said, her voice low and melodic. "Lily, you must have a very interestin' tale to explain how you come to be in the company of dis handsome man."

Joe pulled out one of the chairs for the old woman and she slowly sat down, smiling her thanks.

"Madame," Joe interrupted. "We have questions."

She held up her hand, "Don' tell me now." She softened the command with a smile and pointed toward a cupboard in the corner. "Bring me the candle and my cards, please."

Fighting his impatience, Joe found a stubby candle in a wax-encrusted dish, matches, and a worn deck of cards bound with a rubber band.

Madame reached for the matches and lit the candle. "Miss Lily, would you turn off the light? The switch is beside the door." She smiled at Joe conspiratorially. "I work best in the dark. As I imagine you do, too."

When the overhead lamp flickered off, the glow from the candle cast the old woman's face into relief, lending her a look of ageless wisdom. "I would like you to shuffle the deck for me, please."

Joe glanced at Lily, feeling a frown settle between his eyes, but she only nodded her encouragement and motioned him toward the chair.

As the old woman lit the candle and set it to her left, Joe removed the rubber band and carefully shuffled the age-softened cards. The design on the backs of the cards was

of some celestial body. The faces were unlike any deck of cards he'd ever played poker with. He knew he was about to have his fortune read.

He sighed, resigning himself to the fact he would have to humor the woman in hopes she'd let him ask his questions in good time. When he'd finished, he handed her the deck.

"This won't take long," she said, humor crinkling the corners of her eyes.

Joe felt heat creep across his cheeks and gave her his attention while she laid three cards facedown on the table.

"Let's see what the cards can tell me about you, boy. Dis is called the 'Holy Trinity'—only three cards," she assured him with a wink. Her gnarled fingers turned over the first card. A grin creased her face and she looked from Joe to Lily, a wicked gleam in her eyes.

Joe looked down at the card and saw the figure of a man, wearing a robe of fiery colors and holding a beautiful golden wand.

"The King of Wands," she said, tapping the card. "This card tells me you're a man of passion. Handsome, conscientious, noble, and strong..." she looked up at him with a coquettish tilt of her head, "...and a good lover." She laughed at Lily's telltale blush.

Her hand hovered over the next card. She flipped it over and gave a small gasp. When she looked up, all humor was wiped from her face. Joe squirmed beneath her look of pity. "The Ten of Swords," she whispered.

This card depicted a body covered in blood. Ten swords pierced the torso. Despite his cynicism of the whole ritual, a chill crept up Joe's spine.

The old woman closed her eyes for a long moment. "Misfortune, ruin, loss, failure, desolation beyond tears. You have suffered." She was still so long, Joe thought she might have nodded off, then she sighed. "Ah..." When her eyes opened her gaze held warmth. "But all is not lost. The evil is nearly over."

Joe heard the distant sound of a bell tinkling and the curtain stirred. The candlelight wavered, nearly extinguishing, then fluttered and burned brighter. Madame turned the last card. "The Blessed Virgin sends a message." She raised her gaze to him.

The third card drew a gasp from Lily and sent a chill through Joe. It depicted the classic symbol of death—a tall, gaunt figure, his face hidden within the folds of a cowl. He held a scythe. A white rose in full blossom graced the corner. The macabre card was surprisingly beautiful.

The old woman patted Joe's hand. "Death is not the horrible card you think," she said. "Isn't death merely the stepping through from one life to the next? Dis could be a foretelling of the end of pain and a reminder of your mortality. I think a great and good change is comin' to you. With courage, evil may be overcome."

Joe blew out a breath and glanced back at Lily. She smiled thinly.

"Now, Miss Lily. I would read your cards." Madame Leveque slid the deck across the table toward her.

Joe slid from the chair and held it out for Lily. Lily sat and carefully shuffled the deck, before handing it back to the old woman. Joe placed his hands on Lily's shoulders and he felt some of her tension ease.

Again, Madame drew three cards. As soon as the first was turned, all three people leaning over the table laughed.

"The Queen of Wands! Appropriate, *non*? A woman of passion and energy. You are fond of nature — *wild things*, yet you are practical."

The second card brought the tension back. A man dangled by his foot from a rope that hung in the air.

"The Hanged Man. Dis indicates you'll experience suspense and change. There may be sacrifice for great gain, or a search for inner truth. A change in point of view may be needed."

"But what does that mean?" Lily asked.

Madame settled back in her chair and folded her hands on her stomach. "Your choices have brought you to dis point. Now it is up to you to gain wisdom from your search for truth."

Lily shook her head, but Joe squeezed her shoulders. He wanted to see the next card.

Madame's hands remained on her belly and she smiled at Lily. "Turn the next one, my dear."

Lily reached a tentative hand to the card, and Joe had to smile. For all her professions of belief in empirical proof, she was enthralled. She flipped the card.

A beautiful woman blended two bowls of water into a single stream.

"It is called 'The Star' and represents the blending of the past and present. An awareness and acceptance of two worlds." Madame glanced pointedly between Lily and Joe.

Feeling a little mesmerized, Joe murmured, "Thanks, Madame."

She nodded her acceptance, and then swept her hand toward the sofa. "Please, take a seat and we'll talk. "

Joe held his hope in check and sat down. Dragging a hand through his hair, he tried to figure out a place to begin.

"Joe wants to be human again."

Joe smiled ruefully. Lily's eagerness eclipsed his.

Madame's dark gaze seemed to look straight through him. "What about your new existence can't you accept?"

"I'm a damn parasite!" Frustration made his reply angrier than he'd intended. "I feed off humans."

"Do you take more than they can give?"

His hands dug into his thighs. "Sometimes, I want to. It's hard to fight the hunger."

"God gives us all tests."

"I don't think God has anything to do with my current state." *Darcy and her bloodsucking boyfriend do!*

Madame nodded. "I think you will find your mortality."

He stared, hope rising. He leaned forward. "How? What do I have to do?"

"You must face your past. Go home."

Not what he wanted to hear. He shook his head and looked at Lily. Her bleak expression reflected his heart's dismay. "I don't understand."

"I can't tell you anythin' more."

His head dipped. He'd come all this way only to hear that he had to go home. Something he already knew.

"Madame," Lily's voice broke through his disappointment, reminding him of the other danger lurking. "There's one other problem I need your advice concerning."

The old woman reached across the table and took Lily's hand. She turned the palm upward. "You haven't figure it out yet, have you child?"

"What?"

"Tell me first. What disturbs you?"

"There are so many things. I have intense...cravings. And then there's this ...thing following me."

Madame tilted her head toward Joe. "Does this man satisfy your...cravings?"

Lily nodded her head, blushing.

"Then isn't your problem solved?"

"What I feel isn't normal." Lily gripped the edge of the table. "I want too much. Besides, he's leaving." She shrugged her shoulders and bit her lip. "And then there's the other...thing."

"The wolves? Do wolves follow you now?"

Lily exchanged a shocked glance with Joe before dragging her gaze back to the woman. "Yes. Or at least one does."

Madame turned to Joe. "The only way to keep them from her is to take her with you."

Joe nodded. "Why do they follow her?"

"For the same reason you do." Her little smile told him he wouldn't like what she said next. "To mate."

His body tightened. "Is it because of her increased sex drive?" he asked. "Do they smell her constant need?"

Lily's eyes darkened and Joe recognized the signs of her growing arousal. Just the mention of sex and she was primed. And like Pavlov's dog, her arousal kicked his into high gear.

"It is dat. And something more," the old woman said, her expression growing amused. She hadn't missed the exchange between Joe and Lily.

Frustrated with her cryptic comments, Joe blurted, "Why do they follow *her*?"

"Because she leaves her scent all over the city. She's in heat."



## CHAPTER EIGHT

Lily slid the strap of her handbag over her shoulder and shivered despite the balmy night air. Still reeling from shock, she wrapped her arms around her middle and stumbled toward Bourbon Street. "I'm one of them?"

"You heard what she said." His words were clipped, his face hard as stone. "Not yet." His hand pressed the small of her back, hurrying her along. "Although, I'm wondering why you'd fight the change! The wolves don't mean you any harm. They just want to fuck you. Something you want."

Anger burned away the chill. "So I should just give into my nature? I should let any Duke or Fido take me because my body is ready to breed? That's so hypocritical coming from you! Why do you fight what you are?"

"I wasn't born to be a vampire. You were born to be a werewolf."

"Well, I don't accept that."

"Now you know how I feel. Neither do I."

He sounded so angry she felt like crying. Didn't he care strange werewolves wanted to mate with her? "I don't want them. Besides, I won't just get pregnant—I'll whelp! I could have a whole litter of puppies." That thought led to another more horrifying. "Oh God, does that mean I'll grow a row of breasts?"

They reached the corner and turned right onto the busy thoroughfare, blending with the strolling crowd.

"You think that's a problem?" Joe asked, his voice purring close to her ear.

Cream trickled down to soak another panty liner. That's all it took. One sexy rumble from this man and she was ready to shuck her pants in the nearest alley and have a go. She was insatiable. No. She was in heat!

"Shouldn't you be eager to get home and start taking notes?" he asked. "You've obviously been studying the wrong breed."

She dug in her heels. "Stop it!" She rounded on him, her hands clenched. "There's no need to be snide."

The hard set of Joe's jaw indicated he wasn't ready to let go of his anger.

Lily wondered if he even knew why he was angry. "You can't just give me over to them."

Joe stepped close, crowding her against a wall. "Course not," he said. His head lowered until his face was inches from hers. His eyes glittered dangerously. "I thought you'd bake them up a bunch of doggie treats and invite them over."

Ignoring the amused stares from passersby, she grabbed a fistful of his shirt and pulled him closer. "I don't want them. I want you."

He planted his hands against the wall on either side of her shoulders, trapping her inside his embrace. "Well, that's too bad. I told you, I'm not staying."

Lily licked her lips, enjoying a little thrill of power when his smoldering gaze followed the motion. "You could take me with you."

A muscle in his jaw rippled. "Not possible."

Her hands swept up to caress the hills of his chest. "You didn't seem so averse to that thought when Madame Leveque first mentioned it."

"That was before I knew my interest was chemically induced. You're not any more human than I am."

Lily flinched as though he'd slapped her. "What? You think this thing we have going is all about werewolf pheromones?"

"Isn't it?" The muscle along his jaw rippled again and his nostrils flared. He ground his crotch against her belly. "Baby, it makes me as crazy as it does you. You wouldn't care if I dry-humped you right here, would you?" He slid his knee between her legs and raised it to grind against her pussy. "Would I have followed you to your apartment if I hadn't already been snared by your scent?"

"Silly me," Lily said around a gasp, her body already climbing the peak. "I actually thought my irresistible personality might have had something to do with it." The tips of her breasts swelled and she rubbed herself shamelessly against his chest while she rode his thigh.

His mouth slammed down on hers, his tongue stabbing between her lips.

Lily kissed him back with all the love she had. He thought this was just chemistry – an artificially induced arousal. She knew better. She'd fought her urges for months until this man presented himself on her balcony.

Joe groaned into her mouth and lifted his knee higher.

It was just enough to send her over the edge. Her whole body stiffened. Wide-eyed with shock, her body convulsed—her thighs clamping around his leg as waves of shuddering contractions gripped her empty vagina.

Slowly, the tight coil of desire in her belly unraveled. Spent, her body and mouth slackened. If not for Joe's knee still rammed between her legs, she would have melted to the ground.

Joe gave her a final sliding kiss and lowered his knee. His gaze smoldered darkly. "See what I mean? You'd let me take you anywhere."

Suddenly tired and near tears, Lily let go of his shirt and leaned back against the wall. "Why don't you just go now? You're wasting nighttime."

He stepped back a pace so their bodies no longer touched. "I'll see you home, first."

"You don't need to do that. I'm not in any danger, remember? They just want to fuck me. Something I want, right?"

"I'll see you home."

Lily felt like screaming. Any moment now she was going to break into a million pieces. "Joe, they won't harm me, but they'll kill you."

"They'll try."

"Only because you stand between them and me. I don't want you hurt because of me. You should just go."

"For all we know, there's only the one wolf. Even odds. What are the chances of a pack existing here in New Orleans?" His face tilted and suspicion twisted his mouth. "Or would you like that? A half dozen wolves nosing around your pussy?"

Lily stared, her heart breaking. He hadn't a clue how she felt—and he wouldn't care if he did. She turned on her heels and walked away from him.

"You're going the wrong way," he called after her.

She ignored him and walked faster.

"Dammit! Lily stop!"

She was running now, blinded by the tears streaming down her face.

Heavy hands landed on her shoulders, bringing her to a screeching halt. Lily didn't bother to turn. Instead, she drew ragged breaths and fought against more tears that burned the back of her throat.

"Baby, I'm sorry," Joe said. "I was out of line." His body pressed against her back.

Lily blinked rapidly. This was too humiliating. She'd thrown herself at him and been turned down cold. His pity was the last thing she wanted now.

"You sure don't run like a wolf," he said, next to her ear.

"I'm not," she said, hating that her voice sounded clogged with tears. "Not yet."

"That's right." His hands slid down her arms and encircled her middle.

Lily accepted his embrace, letting her head fall back against his chest. "But I'm a breeder. That's what she called it, right? I'm just a bite away from being canine. Sooner or later they'll find me—just like you did. By scenting me."

His hands closed around her shoulders and he shook her once. "You can fight it. You aren't turned yet."

"What am I supposed to do? Lock myself in my apartment every time I come into heat? Avoid anyone whose nose twitches when they draw near me?"

"Yes."

"What good will that do? I have to survive—I have to work. I'll meet some good-looking guy squeezing Charmin in the grocery store and my desire will overpower me. I'll let him take me home." She sniffed and rolled her head on his chest. "I won't be able to help it. One bite and it'll be finished."

Joe nuzzled her neck. "You're sure you don't want that? It might be easier to just go with the flow."

"You're not the one who's going four-legged." She scraped tears from her face. "I have no desire to run on all fours and smell other dog's butts. And think of the expense of all that waxing!"

Joe's shoulders shook. He turned her around, but she stubbornly kept her gaze on his oversized feet. He put a finger under her chin and brought her face up. By his crooked grin, she could tell he was exasperated.

Lily shrugged. "Think about it. No Remington razor will do the trick."

Joe drew his T-shirt over his head and used it to mop her face, ignoring the whistles from several grinning women as they walked by.

Lily scowled at every one of them.

"Let's get back to the car. We've got plans to make."

"Plans?"

"Like flight plans. And you need to pack."

Lily brought her gaze slowly up, hoping her heart wasn't shining in her eyes. She was so pathetic. "Don't say that unless you really want me with you."

Joe's eyes burned her like a four-alarm blaze. "Don't want you?" He pulled her hand down and forced her palm to follow the curve of his erection. His face was still hard. Still angry. But the remorse in his expression said the anger was for himself.

"Let's get back to my place quick," she said, her heart thrumming.

He grabbed her hand and pulled her back down Bourbon Street.

"Wait, put your shirt back on!"

He laughed and pulled her faster behind him.

She'd parked on another side street, but as soon as she turned the corner she knew something was wrong. She didn't need to have all her werewolf powers to know eyes followed her progress. "Joe?"

He slowed his pace and his head lifted. He sniffed at the air. "Yes. I know. They're here."

"What do we do now?" Her hand clutched at his like a lifeline.

"Make your choice, Lily."

*What choice?* A blood-drinking vampire or a pack of horny dogs? "I'm afraid."

"You can be what you were born to be, or you can come with me. But choose now."

"Damn, they followed my scent, didn't they? I should have bought that strawberry douche."

"What's it going to be?" he repeated.

"I think—" A low growl sounded from the far side of the street. "Run!"

Joe didn't need to hear her say it twice, he ducked down and his shoulder hit her belly. She draped over him like a rucksack, and he took off in the direction they'd just come.

Lily was glad for his strength and his speed. His feet ate up the pavement. She'd never have kept up. She leaned up and caught sight of a man straightening from his hiding place beside her car. The man from the diaper aisle! He leapt to the sidewalk and ran after them, tearing away his T-shirt and ripping open his pants.

What the hell was he doing?

He stopped for a second and pushed his jeans down his legs, and then he was running after them, again. Lily had a glimpse of his powerful, nude body as his legs stretched to increase their pace. Then he was changing, morphing, his face growing longer, fur sprouting all over his body. He lunged and he was running on all fours, his transformation complete. A werewolf!

She would have told Joe, but she hadn't the wind to scream with her body bobbing on his shoulder. Faster! Run faster, she wanted to say. The wolf was closing in on them.

Then there was a second wolf, loping into view from another side street—and another. They drew closer—so close she could see their eyes glowing like flat, gold disks in the light from the street lamps, their tongues lolling from the sides of their mouths.

At that moment, she was sure she didn't want to be a werewolf. A lolling tongue was not something she ever wanted to aspire to. *Faster, Joe!*

Joe turned onto Bourbon Street, but didn't slow his pace. She heard screams and lifted her head again to see the wolves loping around the corner. Exposure to the crowds didn't seem to be a deterrent. Her pheromones must indeed be a powerful thing.

Lily heard the squeal of brakes and a loud horn.

"Mister! This way! Get in the car!"

Lily found herself tossed onto the vinyl back seat of a taxi. Joe jumped on top of her. Heedless of the fact they were only half inside the car, the driver hit the gas.

Joe hauled her the rest of the way inside and slammed the door. Lily pushed Joe to the floor of the cab and scrambled on the seat to look out the rear window. The taxi was pulling away from the wolves. One by one, they stopped, their heads low to the ground, chests billowing, as they watched the taxi leave them in the dust.

Lily turned to Joe and for the first time realized the screams she'd heard could just as well have been for him. His wore his monster face.

He'd collapsed against the back of the seat, dragging lungfuls of air into his chest.

"Joe!" she hissed.

His eyes shone like the wolves in the dim light when he turned toward her.

"Your face!" She tilted her head toward the driver.

Joe took several deep breaths and his face reformed into the handsome one she preferred.

"Holy shit! Did you see that?" the taxi driver said, excitement in his voice. "What did you two do to piss those dogs off? Steal their bone?"

\* \* \* \* \*

They booked a redeye flight from New Orleans to Orlando. From there they would rent a car. They'd be in Vero Beach by early morning.

The tickets would just about clean out Joe's account. He slid the card across the counter.

Lily put her hand over it and presented the ticket agent her American Express card. Joe's face burned.

"Don't be mad," Lily said. She chewed her bottom lip. "This is my fight. You wouldn't be going back there now if I weren't in danger. Let me do this."

Joe let go of his pride. He'd been on unpaid leave of absence since January. He didn't even know if he still had a job. His stuff was in storage. The suitcase he'd retrieved from his hotel room with all his clothing was still behind Lily's couch. What the hell did he have to be proud about?

As they headed to the gate, her small hand slipped inside his, and he gave it a squeeze, reassuring her he wasn't angry.

Even while he dreaded returning to the place where life as he'd known it had ended, he was glad he wasn't going there alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Can I get something for you sir?" the pretty flight attendant asked.

"A blanket?" Joe asked, smiling at the woman. "My girlfriend's cold."

"I'm not cold," Lily said flatly.

Joe dropped his gaze to the flight attendant's chest and raised an eyebrow. "She's cold."

The woman gave him a grin and opened an overhead bin. The blanket was thin, but would be enough of a screen for what he intended. He raised the armrest that separated their seats and spread the blanket over them both.

"Oh," Lily grumbled. "You're just too macho to admit you're the one who's cold."

"Vamps don't hold the heat very well," he replied, with glib amusement.

"I wonder if that's how you got your cold-blooded reputation."

Under the blanket, he slid his hand over her thigh.

Lily's eyes widened. "You're not thinking —"

"Open your pants," he whispered.

"You're not going to —"

The rasp of his zipper alarmed her and she stared at his movements beneath the blanket.

"There's no one around us—the plane's nearly empty." He reached for her hand and brought it to his aching cock. "Let's play."

Lily gave her fellow passengers, most of who were already settling down to sleep, a guilty glance, and then Joe heard the slow slide of her zipper. When she looked back, she leaned back against her seat, her eyes begging him to take her.

Joe reached for her tummy, pulled her blouse out of the way, and tunneled his hand into her underwear. Sliding past her belly, he raked his fingers through the soft curls covering her sex. Lily's eyes scrunched closed and her face turned bright pink. If anyone looked their way they'd know exactly what he was doing.

That was just fine with him. It had been too many hours since he's last been inside her. He didn't care who watched. His fingers parted her folds and speared inside her juicy cunt.

Lily's hand gripped his cock like a gearshift.

"Lily," he whispered.

Her eyes fluttered open. "Yes?" she asked, her voice high and thin.

"Move your hand."

She took her hand away from his cock.

"No. Jerk me off."

"Oh!" Her hand encircled him, but she moved with excruciating slowness up and down his shaft.

"You're killing me, baby. Faster."

"They'll see us," she hissed.

"If you don't do it faster, I'll turn you over the seat and fuck you now."

Shock widened her eyes, but her cunt gushed around his fingers.

Sitting side by side, their hands in each other's pants, Joe couldn't care less who saw the frantic rustling beneath the blanket.

"It's not enough," Lily panted.

"Speak for yourself," he mumbled, enjoying the friction from the coarse blanket and her hand pumping on his sex.

"There has to be a better way."

He gave her a sideways glance. "Meet me in the restroom?"

"Are you crazy? We can't both go in there. Someone will see us."

"Who'll notice? Everyone else is sleeping."

"There's no room—"

"I promise I'll make it fit," he purred.

Lily pulled her hand away. He swirled his finger inside her sex once and drew a wet trail up her belly, before he took his hand away. They both struggled with clothing and zippers, grinning at each other like children filching cookies from the cookie jar.

He leaned across her and gave her a smacking kiss. "Take the stall on the left, but don't lock the door. I'll be right behind you."

Lily hurried down the aisle, sure that anyone looking at her flushed face and mussed appearance would guess what she'd been doing—but she didn't care. Her pussy ached to glove Joe's cock again. With a quick glance to assure herself no one followed her progress, she entered the small restroom and quickly stepped out of her shoes, pushed her slacks and panties down her legs, then looked around for somewhere to hang them. The small overhead cabinet would have to do.

Just as she draped her clothing over the corner of the cabinet, the door swung open and Joe stepped inside, crowding her back against the toilet. "Glad to see you didn't waste any time." His hands were already unbuttoning his jeans. He slid them just past his hips. His cock bounded out of confinement, poking her in the belly.

She couldn't resist its invitation and sat on the cold metal toilet to take his thick cock inside her mouth.

"Christ! You catch on fast." His fingers tugged bobby pins from her bun and speared through her hair, encouraging her to take him deeper into her mouth.

Lily rocked back and forth, sliding her lips over his cock, sucking hard, and reveling in his gasps and the jerk of his hips as he glided in and out of her mouth. She cupped his balls and tugged gently.

"Baby, stop!" He pulled her hair.

With a last swirl of her tongue along his shaft and around his plump head, Lily lifted her face. "Fuck me?"

"Climb up on the toilet."

His hands steadied her as she climbed up and turned to face him. He opened his arms and she clasped his shoulders. Wrapping her legs one at a time around his narrow waist, she lowered her body onto his cock.

She was so ready and wet her vagina rippled as she slid all the way down his shaft.

He held her in his arms for a long moment. Then bracing his feet as wide as he could in the narrow stall, he rocked his hips. The gentle motion wasn't enough.

"Harder!" she begged.

His hands gripped her ass to lift her, and then he shoved her down on his cock at the same time as he rocked forward.

"That's it! Faster!"

His breath gusted out on a laugh. "Shhh. Bellow like that again and you'll wake the whole plane."

Lily didn't care. "Don't stop!"

"I couldn't if my life depended on it," he gritted out, sealing his mouth over hers to muffle her moans.



Up and down, he slammed into her. His cock thickening as his body changed. He flung back his head and Lily watched, helpless with arousal, as he transformed into her sexy, ravaging monster, his movements growing sharper, harder, faster.

“Yes! Please, more!”

Then her body exploded, warm honey gushing from her cunt, making the slap of their flesh sound wet and sticky. Lily bit his shoulder to keep from screaming out loud as her body stiffened and shuddered.

With a last deep thrust, Joe’s cock released a stream of hot cum that bathed her womb in warmth like super-heated lava.

Slowly, he morphed and braced his hand against the wall. She felt his legs tremble, but refused to let him go. She kissed the deep grooves she’d left on his shoulder, then his chin, and finally his mouth.

When she pulled away, she looked into his reddened face, still tight with strain. “Do you think anyone heard us?”

## CHAPTER NINE

Snuggled under the blanket once more, Lily fought the urge to sleep. Her body was as relaxed as a soggy noodle, but she hated wasting a moment of her time with Joe.

She turned her head, which rested on his shoulder, to look into his face. "Now that I've had a chance to catch my breath, do you mind telling me why we're going to Florida? I know Madame told you to go home, but how do you expect to find our answers there?"

Joe glanced away. "There's one person left who might know something. Although I hate like hell asking him for a damn thing."

"Why?"

He looked back, his anger barely banked behind his rigid face. "He made me what I am."

"Your sire?"

"Yeah." He must have seen the interested light in her eyes. "Don't go there. We're not talking about that—or him."

"All right. I'll change the subject. So what do you do? Besides...vampire things?"

"I'm a cop. Or was."

She nodded, not the least surprised.

"What? Not going to list the clues that gave me away?"

She frowned. "I don't think I like it when you tease me."

"Why?" His finger smoothed the lines furrowing her forehead.

"Because I wonder how you read me so well. Do I have a teleprompter on my forehead that repeats my every thought?"

He groaned. "I know you're dying to tell me. Go ahead."

She chewed on her lip. He was going to laugh at her. She just knew it. "Well, you have short hair and a well-conditioned body."

"I could have been military."

"True, but you knew how to break into my apartment."

"You didn't think that was just part of Intro to Vampire? Or I could have been military with a criminal past."

"Well, then there's the way you walk."

He raised one dark eyebrow. "The way I walk?"

"Come on. Tell me you've never been pulled over for a speeding ticket and seen that little strut cops do when something makes their day."

"I've never seen it."

"And you don't believe it just because you've never seen it?" This time she raised an eyebrow. "And I'm supposed to believe I snore just because you said so? Sometimes you've just got to trust." She grinned. She had him.

His eyes narrowed. "Okay. So I strut."

Satisfied for now, Lily yawned and snuggled closer. "Wake me when we get there." She fell asleep with the sound of Joe's soft laughter and his hand rubbing her breast.

\* \* \* \* \*

Joe *strutted* into the Special Unit's station house, dreading the coming confrontation.

It was early morning, just before sunrise. The time the guys usually returned from patrol and gave their outbriefs to the Captain.

With Lily following behind him, he walked past the long row of empty desks, past the dispatcher's booth, straight to the conference room. He didn't bother knocking on the closed door.

A dozen faces, most belonging to teammates he'd known better than his own family, turned toward him. His old buddy Max Weir muttered, "Just another fucking vampire."

Joe's back stiffened.

Captain Springer looked over his shoulder, his eyes widening, a smile wreathing his broad face. Then it slipped and he darted a glance down the table.

Joe followed that glance to find Darcy in her usual place, Quentin at her side.

Darcy's face blanched white and she gripped the edge of the table. Quentin's arm encircled her shoulder and he leaned toward her to whisper something in her ear. Then he straightened and glared at Joe.

"I think, we'll talk in a little while," the Captain said, sending a meaningful look around the table.

The room cleared quickly, except for Darcy, Quentin, and two people Joe didn't recognize—one a dark-haired male and the other a busty blonde. Some deeply buried instinct told them these two were kin—vampires.

His teammates nodded their greetings as they passed, their faces betraying wariness. Max jostled him, giving him a deliberate shove as he left the room. Joe didn't care. His eyes were on his sire.

Suddenly, Quentin's nostrils flared and his eyes narrowed. He lunged to his feet. "Why the hell did you bring *that* here?" he bellowed, staring past Joe's shoulder.

Lily gasped and slipped her hand inside his. Quentin was staring at her like she was some kind of monster.

Joe stiffened and gave Lily's hand a reassuring squeeze. "She's the reason I'm here."

"Well, this is a pretty pickle. Do you even know what you have, cub?" The glib murmur pulled Joe's attention to the brown-haired man sitting on the opposite side of the table. The pointed glance he shared with Quentin marked him as the blond vamp's friend.

Joe lifted his chin with defiance. "A breeder, or so I'm told."

"She doesn't belong here," Quentin said, looking mad enough to tear his head off. "We don't mix."

Darcy, still seated, reached for Quentin's arm. "Why don't we sit down and talk? And what exactly is a breeder?"

"The enemy."

Lily clutched Joe's hand, trying to still her trembling. The way the tall, blond man stared had her cowering behind Joe. She should just leave. She tugged her hand, but Joe wouldn't let go. She tugged again, but he simply drew her to his side and put his arm around her shoulders, anchoring her there.

She glared daggers at him, but he never noticed. His gaze remained on the blond one. Then Lily saw the woman seated beside the menacing man. She was slender, with wide-set brown eyes and shoulder-length brown hair. Her face was devoid of makeup, but she was lovely. Her skin glowed with health—at least it would have if she didn't look like she was about to pass out.

In an instant, Lily guessed this was the woman who'd scorned Joe and stopped feeling sorry for her. The woman's gaze met hers for a moment and she gave Lily a tight-lipped smile.

"I think I better go, Joe," Lily said softly.

The man with the chestnut hair gave her a pitying look. "You don't even know, do you?"

"That you're vampires? I guessed that. I also know werewolves are on my ass," she said, lifting her chin.

"You're too valuable for them to let you go. You can give them the next generation of—"

"Vermin!" the blond man spat.

"—cubs. My name's Dylan O'Hara by the way," the chestnut-haired man said with a crooked smile. "That's my wife, Emmy."

He nodded toward a plump, blonde woman Lily hadn't seen because she was tucked in the corner next to a box of chocolate-covered donuts. She waved one and giggled, "Sorry, sympathy cravings." Her eyes widened and her glance darted to the dark-haired woman.

Lily was starting to feel dizzy. There was so much anger and intrigue going on inside the room, all she wanted to do was leave. "Really Joe. I want to go," she repeated.

A glance at his face and she knew he hadn't even heard her. He stared at Emmy for a long moment, and then his gaze flew to the brown-haired woman.

"That's Darcy Henry," Emmy said, drawing Lily's attention away. "Quentin won't ever get around to the rest of the introductions. He and Joe have a history."

Lily felt sick at knowing the source of the competition was wrapped in one willowy-slim woman.

"So do Darcy and I," Joe ground out, dropping Lily's hand. His jaw set like granite, he circled the table stalking toward Darcy.

"They are *so* competitive," Emmy said.

Quentin stepped in front of her, but again, Darcy reached up to stroke his arm. "It's okay, Quent." Darcy rose and Lily suddenly understood the tension. Darcy's belly was round. Obviously, she wasn't a vampire.

She was pregnant.

Joe stood in front of her, his hands clenched at his sides. "Mine?"

Quentin's arm slipped around the woman's shoulders, clearly stamping his possession.

"Your child, yes," Darcy whispered.

Lily reached for the edge of the table, something to hold onto because her legs suddenly felt like rubber.

"I wouldn't have left you if I'd known," Joe said angrily, his words stabbing at Lily's heart. He still loved her.

"I know," Darcy said, reaching up to place her hand on his cheek. "But it was for the best, don't you see?"

Joe shook his head. "Not really. You're pregnant. I'm responsible. Christ, I was stupid."

"Water under the bridge—and I am happy, Joe."

"With *him*? Is he treating you well?"

"We're married." Her smile reassured Lily that at least she wasn't in love with Joe. "I love him."

Joe closed his eyes and let out a deep breath. "What about the baby?"

"He's yours and ours. I'd like you to be part of his life."

"I will be."

Darcy nodded, and then she looked at Quentin. "Right?"

The blonde vampire glared at Joe, but he nodded, too. "I don't have to like it."

"I'm glad you don't," Joe murmured.

Lily almost rolled her eyes at the posturing from the two males. You'd think it was high noon at the OK Corral.

"I've just got one question for you, *Garcia*."

Joe's eyes narrowed and Lily hoped they weren't about to draw.

"Have you fucked her?" Quentin asked, nodding at Lily.

Lily felt the wind squeeze out of her lungs as she gasped.

Darcy looked just as shocked. "Quentin!"

"It's important," Quentin said, his jaw tight.

"What my eloquent friend is trying to ask is whether you've been in her bed?" Dylan repeated, his gaze also turning to Lily.

Feeling naked beneath their stares and knowing her face was as red as a tomato, Lily blurted, "My name's Lily!"

"It's none of your business," Joe said, rage making his voice gravelly.

"I'm afraid it is," Quentin said softly.

"Why?" Lily whispered.

"She's a breeder," Quentin said, his hard gaze unwavering.

"So?" Joe's stance widened, and he looked about ready to swing. "She hasn't been with any werewolves."

"But she's been with you, hasn't she?"

Joe nodded once, curtly.

"Well, shit!" Quentin took a deep breath and shared a look with Dylan.

"Quentin!" Darcy pulled on his arm. "Why is that important?"

"Werewolves will kill her and her get," he said, looking suddenly tired.

Lily felt like ice water ran through her veins. Quentin's anger was one thing—his defeated expression made her tremble.

"Then we'll protect her," Emmy said cheerily.

"It's not that simple, love," Dylan said, his voice devoid of emotion. "Vampires will want her dead, too."

"But why?" Her wide blue eyes stared back with innocence. "I'm a vampire, and I don't want her dead. Besides, he's not a werewolf. She can't bear the next generation of puppies if she's been with him."

"Because she's likely carrying an abomination in her belly, even now."

This from Dylan, the kind one, made Lily swallow nervously. *A baby? An abomination?* That wasn't possible. She'd never read of a hybrid child in all her research.

"But she can't be pregnant," Joe said, his face darkening. He turned back to stare at her, too. "Vampires can't impregnate humans." His glance dropped to her belly.

"But she's not *entirely* human, is she?"

Lily heard Quentin's smug comment as if from a distance. The room had started spinning. *I can't be pregnant!*

"Now see what you've done!" Emmy glared up at the three men who hovered around the sofa in the lounge. "And babies are never abominations!"

"What is it with you?" Quentin shoved Joe. "Are you single-handedly trying to populate the world?"

"Leave off, Quent!" Dylan said. "We've got bigger problems than your jealousy."

"So, tell me how this is possible?" Joe asked, raking a hand through his hair, trying to gather his wits. The last few minutes had scrambled what was left of his brains. Finding out he was a father—and might be again soon—had him feeling like a low-down, dirty bastard. Then watching Lily drop like a brick to the floor had scared years off his life—if he'd had one.

"We're not spermless," Dylan replied, "it's a temperature thing that keeps us from impregnating humans, or even our own kind. This woman" he said, nodding toward Lily, "emits a chemical that excites werewolves and vampires. Our temperatures rise—just enough."

"Oh yeah," Joe shook his head. She'd certainly made him hot the moment she'd parted her sweet thighs to pleasure herself. The one woman on the planet he should never have taken...

"I've only experienced it once or twice myself, but then I'd had proper mentoring," Dylan said, glaring at Quentin. "I knew we didn't mix."

"But why is it such a terrible thing if she's pregnant?" Darcy asked, wringing out a wet cloth above the station's coffee pot. She laid it on Lily's forehead.

"We survive because we keep a balance in nature," Dylan said, "vampire to human, werewolf to human. Even among us. The consequences of this union, vampire and werewolf, will upset that balance."

"Would you speak English for fucksake!" Emmy grumbled. "Get to the point. Has anyone else noticed how pompous he's gotten since we married?"

Dylan reached down and pulled her hair. "The point, my dear, is that any child of such a union may have extraordinary powers. Werewolves and vampires will want it destroyed before it can realize its full potential."

"But she's not a werewolf, yet," Joe protested.

"She carries their DNA. She can pass it to her child."

Feeling sick to his stomach, Joe said, "Maybe she's not pregnant. Hell, she's still in heat."

"She's capable of conceiving throughout her heat—it doesn't end until she stops ovulating. That doesn't happen in a day. It begins when she conceives her first cub, but can last a week."

"What are you saying? She might be having a litter?"

"Just how many times did you fuck her?" Quentin bellowed.

"Oh God! I *am* going to have a dozen tits!"

Lily sat up, her head still spinning. Quentin reached to steady her.

"Get away from her," Joe said, shoving the other vampire away. He knelt beside Lily. "Are you feeling better?"

"I want to leave," she said quietly.

"All right, we'll leave."

"No. By myself." She looked into his face and saw something that looked like pain. But that couldn't be. She was just someone he'd been attracted to because of the chemical she emitted.

"You should let her leave, Joe." Quentin said. "She's a danger to everyone around her."

"She's not going anywhere by herself," Joe said, with the menacing look that always managed to turn her knees to jelly.

"They'll have to move into The Compound with us," Darcy said.

"The hell they will!" Quentin bit out.

"What compound?" Joe asked.

"Nicky's old place," Darcy explained. "The SU confiscated it along with the rest of his property. They deeded it to us to set up The Council."

"Council?"

"You've a lot to catch up on," Dylan said.

"Look, I'm not going to any compound. I'm going home." Lily struggled to stand, but her legs didn't seem to have any strength and she crumpled back onto the sofa.

"Stay put," Joe said, placing his hand on her thigh to keep her there. "Why don't you want me to come with you?"

"Because I'm just a problem," she said, through a veil of tears. "You don't really want me."

He raised both eyebrows. "Don't want you?"

"If she moves in, she'll have to stay put until she has the baby," Dylan said, as though Lily hadn't spoken a word. "Otherwise she'll leave scent everywhere she goes. We can't have her drawing every wolf and vamp in the region."

"What about after the baby's born?" Quentin asked.

"We'll see," Dylan replied. "The baby may not show any signs of its nature until it reaches adolescence."

"But *she'll* have to be turned," Quentin said, staring at Lily.

"No!" Joe said, rounding on the two men.

The three males faced off, hands clenched.



Lily put a hand to her forehead and stripped away the cloth. Her head hurt just trying to keep up with the volleys the men shot at each other, she wasn't sticking around to see them beat each other bloody.

Emmy sat down beside her and patted her knee. "You just have to let them get it all out. It's a man thing. They can't just agree; it's always a contest."

"If you don't turn her," Dylan said, "she'll continue to come into season."

"But how will she raise a child—or children," Joe said, "when she'll be damned to the night for half her life?"

"Auntie Darcy can babysit," Darcy said, waving her hand to get their attention.

"Absolutely not!" Quentin said. "If the child were discovered there could be a bloodbath. I won't risk your safety, Darcy."

"Will he be furry?" Lily asked.

This drew the first smiles from Dylan and Quentin. Lily began to understand their attraction. Or maybe it was just her pheromones going into overdrive.

"No," Dylan said. "He'll appear human. Of course, there's every chance he may be human."

"She may be a girl," Joe said.

"Not likely. Why do you think Lily here's so valuable?" Dylan said, his gaze sweeping over her.

Lily blushed as all three males threw her interested stares.

"They mostly whelp males."

"I may not even be pregnant," she said doubtfully.

"And you make it a habit to swoon?" Dylan raised an eyebrow.

"Never!"

Three male heads nodded sagely.

Lily huffed. "I'm not staying. Joe isn't going to want me once my heat ends—it's just the pheromones. Hell, I might not want him."

"Oh, you'll want me," he said, stalking toward her. "I'll make sure of that."

Lily held her breath as he squatted next to her. He lifted her hand and pressed a kiss to her palm. "You're staying. Period. End of story." The firm set of his mouth told her he'd sit on her if she tried to leave.

She just wished he wanted her to stay because he loved her—not because she might be carrying his child. "I never cry," she said, with a sniff.

Dylan and Quentin grinned.

"They're counting off clues," Joe said.

"Clues?" she asked stupidly.

"Fainting, crying—"

"She's preggers all right," Quentin said.

"You don't like me," Lily wailed, hating she sounded like a child.

Quentin rolled his eyes. "I have to like you. Darcy won't let me sleep with her, if I don't."

"Got that right."

"How will we protect her during the day?" Joe asked, glancing back at the two men.

"Dylan's loaded," Emmy said, her eyes dancing with amusement. "He can hire security to guard The Compound."

Dylan nodded. "Most of Nicky's surveillance equipment is still in place. Won't take much to get it up to snuff."

"What do you say, Lily?" Joe asked. "Will you go peacefully, or do I have to cuff you and drag you there?"

"You mean I have choices?" Lily felt like an idiot. All he had to do was give her that intensely sexy stare and she melted like goo.

The corners of his lips turned up, forming a smug smile.

She narrowed her eyes. "That's not fair. You're using my own nature against me."

"If it's the only way I can get you to be reasonable —"

"All right," she scowled. "I'll stay until the baby's born. I know I'll need protection until then. After...we'll see."

Joe nodded. "Good enough." He leaned forward and kissed her, sliding his tongue into her mouth.

Lily melted against him, her arms circling his neck.

"And we thought it got loud when the Albermarles moved in," Emmy murmured. "Sweetie, these two are gonna rattle the roof."

## CHAPTER TEN

"So do you know what you're having?" Lily asked Darcy.

The women had gathered in the kitchen at The Compound for an early morning snack before they all headed to bed.

She was getting used to a vampires' hours. Looking down at the remnants of her rare steak, she realized more than just her sleep patterns were adjusting. The final transformation once the baby was born would be a cinch.

"I'm having a boy," Darcy said, around a mouthful of Cookies 'n Cream. The woman had already put away a pint and was starting on her second. How she maintained her slim figure was a marvel to Lily.

Lily had made a study of her two companions over the past couple of days. She now understood Joe's attraction to the reed-thin, muscular woman. Emmy on the other hand was lush and everything feminine, with her golden hair and plump curves. Between the two of them, Lily felt like a plain, brown wren.

"Joe will be thrilled," Emmy said. She'd claimed she wasn't hungry at all, but had picked at both their dishes. She glanced up at Lily's face. "Oops. Sorry."

Lily gave her a small, tight smile. "It's okay. I'll have to get used to all this togetherness. At least until my baby comes."

"Why are you so set on leaving?" Darcy asked, concern shadowing her eyes.

Lily shrugged. "I couldn't bear for Joe to stay with me because of the baby, when he's in love with you."

Darcy shook her head. "He's not in love with me. We're just friends. He wanted me because Quentin wanted me. If anything, Joe has a thing for Quentin."

"Not a man on man thing, mind you," Emmy piped in. "Like I said, everything's a competition. Who's the meanest, toughest—"

"The best lover." Darcy shivered. "That was pretty irresistible, when they were trying to one up each other."

"I bet it was," Emmy said dryly. She waggled her eyebrows with wicked amusement. "So how was it? With both of them?"

"You had Joe and Quentin in bed with you—at the same time?" Lily asked, feeling a little queasy.

Darcy winced. "It's not like it sounds. I mean, it was the ultimate thrill, but Joe needed me. It was just after Quentin turned him. He needed blood—and sex."

"And you just had to be the one to give it to him?" Emmy asked. "Sure."

"Yeah," Darcy said, a lovely pink tingeing her cheeks. "Something like that."

"So who's the biggest?" Emmy asked slyly.

"Is size really a characteristic of vampire males?" Lily asked. "I mean, I'd guessed that, but sometimes I think Joe's just teasing me."

Emmy's eyes gleamed with amusement. "Yup. At least, I've seen Dylan and Quentin's man-things. They're both pretty impressive."

Emmy and Lily turned to Darcy, who blushed brighter.

"I didn't exactly see his...thing, after he was turned. He was behind me."

"I knew it!" Emmy crowed. "You had a man-wich!"

"Emmy, Christ!" Darcy's lips twisted into a wicked grin. "Actually, yeah. So you see, I can't attest to the fact that one or the other is larger, but Joe was certainly..."

"Substantial?" Lily couldn't resist asking.

Darcy nodded and the three shared embarrassed glances before bursting into laughter.

"Let's go back to what you said before," Darcy said. "Lily, you just have to stay. It would tear Joe apart not to see his child grow up."

"And there's so much work for us to do here," Emmy said, spearing the last chunk of Lily's steak. "What with The Council starting up and the work with the Special Unit."

"Joe tells me you're a professor, an expert in vampire traditions." Darcy's expression reflected true interest.

Lily snorted. "I don't think my research has taught me all that much. Look how I was blind-sided with this werewolf thing."

"But you could continue your research here," Darcy insisted. "You'll have plenty of subjects to study."

"Joe's not very supportive of some aspects of my research," Lily grumbled. "He'd have a cow if I pulled out a ruler." Lily brightened. "But I haven't seen everything yet, have I? I mean, I've never seen a vampire fly."

"Fly?" Emmy asked around a mouthful of steak.

At the two women's amused expressions, Lily's shoulders slumped. "Tell me he wasn't teasing me about that."

"Don't you see?" Emmy said. "You just can't trust what they tell you. These guys are jokers. You have to stick around to see for yourself what they can do."

"They really can't fly?"

"Nope. But they are wickedly agile and fast. Maybe you could set up some kind of physical trials to make some comparisons—human to vampire."

"They're fast tongued, you mean. It looks like I'll need to pull together a whole new survey."

Darcy's expression grew solemn. "Why don't you think Joe loves you?"

Lily sighed. "Because he's never said it. And because all he ever said was that he wasn't staying."

"I think you're wrong," Emmy said. "You should have seen his face when you fainted."

"Maybe," Darcy said, tapping the side of her cheek with a finger, "you have to make him say it."

"How would I make him say anything?"

"Darc is right. They may be big, bad vampires, but they're vulnerable too. Our guys are especially so. They're macho men. They think they have to keep those emotions deep inside—hidden. They don't like being weak."

Darcy nodded sagely. "Yeah, they think love makes them weak. Until you do something to really shake them up."

"Like what?"

"Well, there's this little thing I tried on Quentin. He'll do anything I say if I use it on him."

"Anything?" Emmy leaned closer.

"What do you do?" Lily asked.

"They are macho men, and very nervous about anything that they can't control."

"Are we talking about a sexual act?" Lily's body alerted. Good Lord, just the thought of sex had her wet!

"Come on, Darc! Out with it." Emmy squirmed with excitement.

"Well," Darcy glanced nervously over her shoulder then leaned across the table. "I put my finger inside him. He says he hates it, but when I do it he shivers all over."

Emmy screeched with laughter. "You finger-fuck him—in the ass? Oooh, Dylan would never let me—"

"Exactly."

Emmy and Darcy turned to Lily. She realized her mouth was still hanging open and shut it. "No way he'll let me do that." She bit her lower lip. "So how did you work your way around to doing that?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Dylan and Joe turned from the monitor to stare at Quentin whose face had blushed a fiery red.

"Ballocks!"

Joe enjoyed the other vamp's discomfort immensely.

"So that's what all the bellowing is about." Dylan grinned with delight. "Quentin, I've known you for a hundred years, I don't think I've ever seen you turn quite that shade of red."

Quentin's eyes narrowed dangerously. "You are never to mention it again."

"What do you think, Joe? Will Lily get up the nerve to give you a poke? Will you let her?"

"Fuck no!" He shuddered at the thought.

"Dylan, are you going to tell the women about the surveillance cameras in the kitchen?" Quentin asked, a very unsubtle change of topic.

"Nope. How will we ever know what they're plotting?"

"Have to keep a few steps ahead of those three," Joe agreed.

"Looks like you still have some work ahead of you to convince your little lovebird to hang around," Quentin said.

"Yeah, it does." Joe took a deep breath. "And now's as good a time as any."

"Let's get the women to bed before they hatch any more plots," Dylan murmured.

\* \* \* \* \*

The door to the kitchen slammed open and Joe stalked inside. By the look on his face, he had a bone to chew. Lily stood and circled to far side of the table.

"Hi Joe," Emmy chimed. "He looks mad—or horny as hell, doesn't he, Darcy?"

"I'd say he looks mostly pissed," she said grinning. Her smile slipped when the other two vamps entered the room. "He's not the only one."

"Why don't you join us?" Emmy asked innocently. "We were just talking about...things."

Lily didn't like the way Joe's eyes narrowed, nor did she like the grim smile curving his lips. She fainted right, intending to make a getaway through the kitchen door, but Joe was on her in a second. With an effortless heave, he lifted her over his shoulder.

"Joe, put me down!"

He headed for the door.

"Remember the finger thing!" Emmy called after her.

Joe swatted her bottom. "Forget the finger thing."

"Emmy I think they knooooow!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Once again, Lily felt the raspy stroke of her vampire's tongue against her most intimate flesh.

She held her breath, trying to decide whether she should let him know she was awake. But his tongue took the choice from her, stabbing deep within her pussy to circle

her inner walls, a delicious scraping against tissue already super-heated and swollen from hours of lovemaking.

She moaned and pressed her mound closer to his wicked mouth. She opened her eyes and stared down her body, shocked to discover her thighs draped over his shoulders, his arms wrapped around them. His hands burrowed between her legs to hold her lips apart. He lowered his head and his mouth ate at her delicate folds.

He'd tilted the lampshade to direct light in a long halo across their bed. Lamplight bathed their bodies. The sight of his dark hair and latte-colored face between her white thighs triggered a primal response. His male animal appealed to the wanton core at her soul.

The intimacy of his act, with her legs spread wide and his mouth sucking where few men had ever wandered, shook her. A wave of tender longing caused her a moment's panic. *Keep it light!*

"Do you always raid the leftovers in the middle of the night?" she asked.

Joe caressed her outer lips and looked up into her eyes. The hard edge to his features frightened her, reminding her she was tweaking a tiger's tail.

"Not much for sweet-talk, are you?"

"Do you really want to talk?" he asked, and drove two fingers inside her vagina.

Lily bit her lip to keep from crying out. His fingers had unerringly found her G-spot. She couldn't move more than an inch or two up or down, yet the urge to pump her hips was so strong her belly trembled and her thighs quivered within his arms. "Later," she moaned. "We'll talk later."

She sank her fingers into the short, dark curls on his head, tugging him down to encourage him to stroke her with his tongue—which he did.

"Joe..." Her head thrashed on her pillow as a wave of heat swept over her breasts, tightening her nipples into exquisitely tuned points. She lifted a hand to caress one turgid tip and squeezed her breast, shooting more heat to her melting core. "Come inside me!"

Joe didn't let up, didn't give any indication he even heard her plea. He sucked the hood of flesh that covered her swelling clitoris and let it pop noisily out of his mouth, then he sucked it again, and again at the same time shoving his fingers deep.

Lily's belly spasmed and her shoulders lifted off the mattress. Her fingers tugged her nipples, pinching, twirling them between her thumb and forefinger. Her other hand scraped his scalp, digging in to push him closer.

But he resisted and smoothed his whisker-rough cheek against her open cunt. The friction, so acute it was painful, caused a shudder to wrack her body and her vagina convulsed, opening and closing, clutching his fingers, squeezing her passion-milk from her inner walls.

His tongue lapped at her cream, a low moan rising from his chest to vibrate against her. Still, he didn't stop.

Lily mewled, her throat tightening around an incoherent litany of moans and pleas. "Please, please, pleeease!"

He pressed back the hood guarding her clitoris and closed his lips around the glossy, engorged button, his tongue rubbing in delicious circles, wringing a second wave of dark ecstasy from her loins.

As the last deep shudders shook her body, her hands fell to the bed and she stared at the ceiling.

Now his strokes soothed, and her mind wandered to the coming months when she would leave him.

She'd found her proof of vampires' existence in his living, breathing form. A lifelong quest satisfied. Her victory however, was hollow. Despite the fact she'd known him less than a week, she knew her heart would be irrevocably torn when she left.

She loved him without knowing a damn thing about how he really felt. She did know the dimensions, textures, and colors of his body. And she knew that something in his relentless pursuit of her surrender, the harshly, etched pain that clung to his broad shoulders and handsome face, and his barely leashed power called to something equally primitive and pain-filled in her soul.

Joe's face lifted from between her legs and he shifted first one thigh, then the other, from his shoulders. A predatory gleam glinted in his eyes and Lily's breath hitched. He wasn't finished with her yet.

He rose on his hands and knees and "walked" up her body until his knees prodded the back of her bent thighs and his face was directly above hers.

Her gaze swept down his taut belly to his heavily engorged sex and she reached for him, curving her palm around him, drawing a hiss of breath from between his teeth.

Reaching lower, she cupped his balls, rolling them in her palm, and watched with growing satisfaction the expressions that crossed his face—dark need, taut restraint.

"Now, can we get back to what we were discussing previously?"

Joe lifted an eyebrow. "Oh, were we talking?"

"I was thinking about my last choice."

He quirked an eyebrow. "You want me to use my cuffs? The Captain gave them back to me when I resumed my job."

"No, I still want to finish exploring the last of my *previous* choices." Lily smiled at his hungry, alert expression. "Are you ready to be at my mercy?"

Joe's heavy-lidded glance burned her. "I can't wait to see those pink lips stretched around my cock."

Lily's pussy tightened and her cheeks and breasts flushed with heat. "Do I get to finish you this time?"

"Baby, I'm not making promises I can't keep."

She tilted her chin. "Then I'm not going down on you."



"Do you play poker?"

She looked him straight in the eye and lied. "Never."

"Damn!" He climbed off her, a frown creasing his forehead. Slowly, he stretched out on the mattress, his body rigid, his hands clenched at his sides.

Lily grinned. He looked as though he awaited his execution. "Put your hands behind your head."

He glared at her, but he clasped his hands, and slipped them beneath his head.

"Now, you can't interfere, understand? If you do, I'll stop. And I won't let you have me."

"Do you really think you can tell me no?"

She shook her head and gave him her meanest look. "I know you can make me want you, but I think you'd rather I didn't hold a grudge."

He took a deep breath that stretched his skin over his rib cage. "I won't interfere. And I won't take over..." He shot her a furious glance. "...unless you beg me."

Lily bit her lip. The way he said that had her worried. What did he know that she didn't? Of course, she'd never had a man's body totally at her mercy. "Well, fine. That will never happen."

He raised a single eyebrow and his expression turned smug.

Her blood boiled and her gaze narrowed. He'd thrown down the gauntlet. Opening her legs wide, Lily straddled his waist, knowing her moist center slid across his skin. His eyes glittered dangerously, but Lily felt powerful. In control. It was about time she greeted the monster on her terms.

She raised her hands to her breasts and cupped them. "I need a little encouragement. Give it to me." She leaned down and pressed one nipple to his lower lip, tracing the curve with her tip.

His lips remained a firm line.

She leaned back and narrowed her eyes. "So that's how it's gonna be, huh? We'll see about that."

She scooted a little lower on his belly and felt his sex nudge her buttocks. "Oooh! Look who wants to play."

Rubbing her breasts in the whorls of hair on his chest, she continued to work her way down his torso, licking his nipples, then biting them, all the while rubbing her body on his hard cock.

She lifted her hips and let his engorged shaft fall between them. A slide of her moist cleft down his length drew a hiss from between his tightly clenched lips.

Lower she went, until her knees settled between his legs. She raised herself on her arms and looked up into his face. "What was it you said you wanted? To see my pink lips around your cock?"

She circled her mouth with her tongue, and then grinned when he groaned and closed his eyes. "Poor baby. Don't be such a coward."

Joe's eyes slammed open, but then they narrowed with sexy menace.

Lily's heart tripped as she stuck out her tongue and lapped a drop of dew from the head of his cock. She spread it around her lips, painting it on like lipstick. "Mmmm."

"Lily?" His tone held a warning.

She opened her jaws wide and sank over his cock, loving the way his thick shaft filled her mouth, loving the taste of his satiny skin as it glided over her tongue. The plump head butted the back of her throat and she relaxed to take him deeper.

"Baby!" His fingers that were supposed to be clasped behind his head combed through her hair, caressing her scalp as she raised and lowered her head, suctioning hard on every rise, relaxing on every downward glide.

Slowly at first, she worked over his throbbing flesh, noting how his thighs quivered and his breath became labored with his growing arousal.

She scraped his shaft with her teeth and Joe groaned, his hands fisting in her hair now. Her hands wrapped around the base of his cock and worked the moisture from her mouth up and down his shaft. She squeezed her fists, twisting in opposing directions.

Then the telltale pulse of his hips, shallow, circling, encouraged her to move faster, until she bobbed noisily on his cock, faster.

His body strained, his thighs, balls and belly turning hard as stone, shuddering with delight.

Lily held on, working his flesh, all the while her own pussy grew drenched until her arousal dripped down her thighs and her vagina spasmed audibly, releasing moist sighs.

Suddenly, she halted and withdrew her mouth, shaking with her own need. When she raised her gaze to his, she found him waiting.

"Please," she begged. "I need your cock. Inside me."

In a blur of motion, she found herself on her knees, her buttocks high in the air, his large, hard hands holding her still as he rammed his cock inside.

"Yes! Yes! Oh please, more!" she begged in endless supplication as Joe slammed his hips against her buttocks, driving his cock deep, again and again, his thrusts driving the air from her lungs. She grunted loudly, clutching the bedding in her fists, her eyes closed tight to shut out sight while she concentrated on the feel of his body, filling hers, pounding at her cunt.

Then it was happening, that miracle of escalating power that transformed his body and elevated his loving to the next plane. His cock expanded, his thrusts, supercharged with his vampire strength, rocked her body.

Her thighs clenched as her orgasm built, layer by layer, until she lost herself, lost her mind in an explosion of fiery colors.

Lily collapsed to the bed, panting, crying. How could she give this up?

Joe's arms closed around her and he pressed kisses on her shoulders and neck. He kept the connection, his waning erection still planted deep inside her body.

"Why are you crying?" His gravelly, deep voice surrounded her.

Lily shook her head. She wasn't going to say it. He didn't want the words.

He sighed and withdrew from her body and turned her in his arms.

Lily kept her gaze averted. She didn't want him to see her tears, or see the love in her eyes.

A finger lifted her chin. Joe's expression was...satisfied. "Why are you crying?" he repeated.

Her face crumpled. "You don't love me."

"Why do you think that?"

"Because this is just lust." She sniffed. "Artificial lust. You're just reacting to my heat."

"You humans have no nose."

"What?"

"Your heat is past, love."

"You're wrong. We did it four times tonight. That's not normal."

"It must be for us." He pressed his loins against hers. His erection was already recovering.

"I don't think I can keep doing this," she whispered.

"Course you can. Want me to prove it?"

She shoved at his chest, but he didn't budge. "You're such a man! You don't get it."

"What don't I get? That you're in love with me?" His eyes studied her face.

"It's not fair for me to feel so much."

"You think I don't?"

She shook her head slowly. "No. You can't. You're just trying to do the noble thing. You want to take care of me because I may be carrying your child."

"You are carrying my child. And you're right. I want to take care of you."

Lily's heart squeezed. "But it's not enough. For me. I know I need help because I don't know a lot of things about what I am and what my child or children will become. But I need more."

Joe rubbed his thumb on her lower lip. "Do you know I died in this house?"

Lily blinked, shocked. "How could you bear to come back?"

"Because you need to be here. And somehow, the end of my human life isn't as important now. I've found my humanity." His hand slid down her belly. "My children are my humanity. Maybe yours will be something a little more than human, but I'm still man enough to feel pride and love for what we made."

Lily took a chance. With her heart in her eyes, she said, "I love you Joe. I love you human, I love you monster. You thrill me."

Joe closed his eyes. When he opened them, he brought her hand to his lips and kissed her. "There's only one way I can say this." He pressed her to her back and entered her with a single, strong thrust. "I love you, Lily. You make me strong. You make me crazy – and I don't think eternity will be long enough for all the loving I want to give you."

Tears streamed from her eyes as he gently rode her. Their mouths mated as their bodies blended, pouring together.

When at last they lay spent in each other's arms, Lily turned to Joe and smiled slyly. "You said the words and I didn't even have to use the finger thing."

His eyes narrowed. "Don't you even consider it."

She wrinkled her nose. "Why do you guys get so uptight about an itsy-bitsy little finger? You've shoved a much larger –"

"Lily!"

"I'm just saying –"

"Don't you ever."

She sighed and snuggled into his arms. "Will our loving always be this..." She shrugged. Words couldn't express how happy she was.

"Hot?" He kissed her forehead. "Sexy?" He nuzzled her face until she lifted it to receive his next kiss on her lips.

"Wonderful." She closed her eyes, reveling in the slide of his mouth along her chin.

"I don't see why not, and it's not like we won't have years to practice." He drew her earlobe into his mouth and bit.

She shivered. "Decades."

He lifted his head and stared into her eyes. "Centuries?"

"Boggles the mind, huh? Just think of all the time I'll have to complete a thorough study of vampire behaviors."

Joe winced. "About some of your conclusions..."

"Don't!" She placed a finger over his lips. "I want to discover everything for myself."

"But..."

"I know you want to help, but I'll need to conduct my own interviews—get a sampling of the population."

"So long as your *sampling* doesn't require a ruler."

She grinned and tweaked his nipple. "Maybe Emmy could help me with my research."

Joe shuddered and rolled his hips, nudging her sex with his. "God helps us. I'll have to have a little talk with Dylan."

"Don't worry. That's still a long way off." She grimaced. "I have to deliver this litter first."

"They'll likely keep you too busy for mischief for many years to come."

"Don't look so hopeful." She raised her legs, encircling his waist and pulling his hips into hers. "It's all your fault anyway."

"Mmmm. What's my fault?" By his smoky, half-lidded stare she could tell the topic was losing his interest.

"If you'd cooperated in the first place, I wouldn't have to look to other vamps for outside verification."

"I'll cooperate!" He screwed his cock in ever smaller concentric circles deeper inside her.

"Nope. Too late. My objectivity is compromised."

"Baby, more than your objectivity's been compromised."

"Too true. But I just can't trust you'll give me the straight skinny."

His sexy movements halted. "Are you saying I'm a liar?"

She raised an eyebrow. "I don't ever think I'll forgive you for letting me think you could fly!"

"Who says I don't?" He pulled out and slammed back inside her. "Don't we?" he growled.

Lily's mouth opened on a gasp. "Emmy told me the truth."

"Maybe Dylan's doing it wrong." His buttocks flexing beneath her heels, Joe's powerful thrusts drove Lily higher with each stroke. "Fly with me, baby."

Lily soared.

### **About the author:**

Delilah Devlin dated a Samoan, a Venezuelan, a Turk, a Cuban, and was engaged to a Greek before marrying her Irishman. She's lived in Saudi Arabia, Germany, and Ireland, but calls Texas home for now. Ever a risk taker, she lived in the Saudi Peninsula during the Gulf War, thwarted an attempted abduction by white slave traders, and survived her children's juvenile delinquency.

Creating alter egos for herself in the pages of her books enables her to live new adventures. Since discovering the sinful pleasure of erotica, she writes to satisfy her need for variety--it keeps her from running away with the Indian working in the cubicle beside her!

In addition to writing erotica, she enjoys creating romantic comedies and suspense novels.

Delilah welcomes mail from readers. You can write to her c/o Ellora's Cave Publishing at P.O. Box 787, Hudson, Ohio 44236-0787.

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