

Immortal Games: Prey

Elisa Adams

All rights reserved.
Copyright ©2006 Elisa Adams

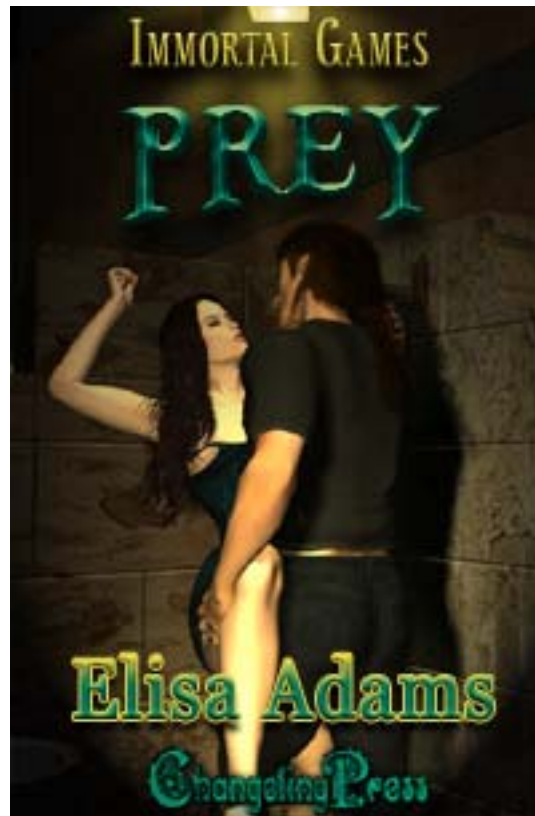
No part of this e-book may be reproduced or shared by any electronic or mechanical means, including but not limited to printing, file copying or sharing, and email, without prior written permission from Changeling Press LLC. Willful violation of this policy will result in suspension of account privileges and will lead to prosecution.

WARNING: Illegal files may contain viruses.

ISBN (10) 1-59596-592-0
ISBN (13) 978-1-59596-592-9
Formats Available:
HTML, Adobe PDF,
MobiPocket, Microsoft Reader

Publisher:
Changeling Press LLC
PO Box 1046
Martinsburg, WV 25402-1046
www.ChangelingPress.com

Editor: Connie Alberts
Cover Artist: Sahara Kelly



This e-book file contains sexually explicit scenes and adult language which some may find offensive and which is not appropriate for a young audience. Changeling Press E-Books are for sale to adults, only, as defined by the laws of the country in which you made your purchase. Please store your files wisely, where they cannot be accessed by under-aged readers.

Chapter 1

Selling one's soul to the devil rarely had good consequences.

Sophie stared across the table at the man who'd just taken a seat in the previously unoccupied chair. She hadn't invited him, at least not in words, but he didn't seem like a man who waited for an invitation. He was the type who took what he wanted, and his attitude would have turned her on had he not been there to kill her.

Maybe it did turn her on anyway, just a little. There was no rule saying she couldn't have fun with her prey.

"No, that seat isn't taken," she said, swirling the ice in her untouched glass of vodka. "Thanks for asking."

In answer, he raised his eyebrows. She hadn't really expected much more. From what she'd learned about him in the past few weeks of studying him, he was a man of few words. A man of action. Jonah Markham, head of security for William Almeda. Head of security in Jonah's case was a polite way of disguising what he really was. A well-paid assassin for a human more evil than most demons she knew. This man had most definitely sold his soul to the devil. He might not know it, but it was written on every plane and angle of his face. Written in the tension spanning his broad shoulders and the glint in his eyes. She didn't have to ask him to know he'd seen things other people wouldn't dream of in their worst nightmares. Yes, he'd sold his soul, and he was about to pay the ultimate price.

"Would you have invited me to sit if I'd asked?"

He'd asked her a question, spoken to her in that deep, rumbling voice like honey over gravel, but she didn't answer. Not yet. She was too busy appraising him. He stood a touch over six feet tall. His broad shoulders and lumbering stride hinting at the gym-tight body under his uniform of black T-shirt and matching jeans. Decent-looking in a

rough and ready sort of way. No, that was a lie. He wasn't just decent. The man was sexy as hell with all his dark hair pulled back into a ponytail at the base of his skull and the five o'clock shadow. Jade-colored eyes took in everything around him, periodically scanning the darkened interior of the barroom before moving back toward her.

There was something about him that fascinated her. She'd noticed it about the same time she'd noticed those sharp, green eyes turned her way for the first time. He'd been looking at her like he wanted to eat her alive and damned if that thought didn't send a shiver down her spine. He'd be more than willing to indulge in a little playtime. He'd let her know that often with a glance or a smile, and she intended to take him up on his unspoken offer.

Too bad she'd probably have to kill him come morning.

Once she got the information she needed out of him, his usefulness would run its course and he'd become a liability. Sophie didn't leave loose ends -- but unfortunately, she had a feeling the man sitting across from her didn't, either. She'd overheard enough of a telephone conversation in Almeda's office a few nights ago to know what he was all about. He'd come in here tonight, to the place where most of Almeda's evening staff came after work, to kill her. He wouldn't get the opportunity.

"Don't play games with me, sweetheart," he mumbled, his gaze locked with hers. "Don't invite me over here to sit with you and then ignore me."

A small, secret smile touched the corners of her lips. She had him hooked. Now all she had to do was reel him in. She'd studied him long enough to know what he wanted, to learn what he liked, and she planned to use it all against him tonight. After she had a little fun with the man.

Sophie lifted the glass to her lips and pretended to take a sip just to give herself something to do while she made him sweat it out a little longer. She didn't drink alcohol -- didn't drink anything but blood, but he didn't need to know that. Yet. "I didn't invite you anywhere."

"Yeah, you did." He leaned forward, his gaze boring into hers and his lips curled in a half smile, half sneer. "With your eyes. With that incredible body. Same as you've been doing every day at the office for almost two weeks."

"Have much of an ego, Markham?"

"This has nothing to do with my ego, and we both know it." He sat back, fingers tapping on the tabletop. "Tell me something. Why do I always see you here until closing? The rest of the data entry clerks all leave together, like a flock of chattering birds or something. Why not you?"

Because she wasn't like the other data entry clerks. In fact, she wasn't really a clerk of any kind. Her job at Almeda Industries was a temporary one, and would last right up until the second she slit her target's throat. She wasn't after Jonah Markham. He was just the easiest way she could find to get to William Almeda.

"I'm a night owl." If only he knew how much of one. The idea almost made her laugh. "I need to unwind before I go to bed."

"There's so much stress in your job. Especially working the late shift. Hardly any supervision. I know those women spend more time gabbing than anything else."

The sarcasm lacing his tone made her smile, though she had to admit he was right. The job was so mundane it would have put any normal vampire to sleep. The past two weeks she'd spent there had been pure hell on earth. Now she craved getting back to her real life, and she would be able to as soon as she got the information she'd been nosing around Almeda's office for. Her search had proved fruitless so far, hence the need to grill Jonah. "We work for the same man. You know what a hard-ass he can be."

"Who are you?" he asked, taking her by surprise.

"What are you talking about? You know exactly who I am."

He raised those dark eyebrows again. "I have a feeling I haven't even scratched the surface. Let me remind you, sweetheart, I don't like games. I don't know what you did to William to convince him to hire you, and I don't want to know. I'm there to

ensure his safety, and any threat to that needs to be taken care of swiftly. Now I'll ask you again. I know Angela Washington isn't your real name. Who are you, really?"

She swallowed hard. He was definitely on to her. She'd assumed, after the conversation she'd overheard, that the man was suspicious, and she'd been right. What did he know? *How* did he know? She'd always been so careful to cover her tracks. The man was good. Too good, as far as humans went. But Sophie was better. She could still salvage the situation. Alec hadn't sent her in because she was incompetent.

"Why don't we both lay our cards on the table," he continued. "And be honest with each other for a change?"

Like he'd really be honest with her. The man was slime. Sexy slime who could make her wet with a single look, but slime just the same. "Let me put it this way. I do my best work at night."

If her admission surprised him, he didn't show it. He picked up the tumbler in front of him and took a long sip of the amber-colored liquid inside. "What kind of business are you in?"

"The recovery business." More specifically, damage control. Almeda had caused a lot of damage, and now she had to clean up the mess before things got worse. "What about you? What do you do for William? I mean what you really do?"

Her gaze dropped to his neck and her stomach clenched. She'd get a taste of him before the night was over. Alec would tell her she was playing with fire, and maybe she was, but she'd learned a long time ago the blood of sin tasted so much better than the blood of innocence, and this man had *sinned*. Tapping into his vein would be like knocking on the door of heaven. She shivered thinking about it.

"You know what I do. I run the security for Almeda." He spoke slowly, as if weighing each word before he said it.

She could only shake her head. Security. Such a simple term for a man who was essentially a hired gun for a man she'd learned was her family's biggest enemy. Jonah protected information, not people, and he protected that information with bullets to the head.

“Must be interesting.” She flashed him a seductive smile and ran her foot up the inside of his calf. Time to make things more interesting. *Time to turn on the charm, Sophie, and take the man down.*

He shifted in his seat and heat darkened his gaze. One shoulder lifted in a shrug. “It’s a job.”

No. It was a way of life. Sophie understood all too well. She was in security, too. The type of security that kept her family and others like them alive, and disposed of the threats before they became real problems. She and Jonah had a lot more in common than he realized.

* * *

Jonah stared at the woman in front of him, torn for the first time in recent memory. The job should have been a simple one. Get in, get rid of the woman poking her nose where it didn’t belong, and get out. The second his gaze had locked with hers across the office on the first night, he’d realized there was nothing simple about her. Just looking at her made him hard as a rock and that was the least of his problems. When he caught a whiff of her spicy perfume... Jesus. She was lucky he’d been able to keep his hands to himself.

Since he’d found her in the bar and approached her, her behavior had been nothing short of seductive, but not in an overt sense. She was subtle, this mystery woman. The way she looked at him beckoned him to her from across the room as effectively as if she’d crooked her finger. His body responded on the most primal level. Even now, he had to fight against the urge to drag her into the nearest dark corner and fuck her senseless. That urge threw a wrench into his plans. He wasn’t supposed to screw her. He was supposed to kill her, but how could he sleep with her tonight and take her out in the morning?

He couldn’t. He let out a sigh heavy with frustration and shifted again in his seat. Maybe he did have a heart, after all, if he’d suddenly lost his nerve. Wasn’t that a hell of a surprise?

“What’s the matter? You look conflicted,” she said as if reading his mind.

Jonah narrowed his eyes. Grabbed the damned foot she kept running up his leg and set it away from his body. As much as he enjoyed the riot of sensation her touch invoked, he couldn't concentrate. "I'm fine."

"Do you have a wife, maybe a couple of kids, waiting for you back home?"

He raised his eyebrows, fighting back a bitter laugh. "Do I look like someone who has a wife and kids?"

Did he look like someone a sane woman would get within twenty feet of? Most women learned the truth within seconds of meeting him. He was a cold bastard with no respect for anything but himself. This woman either hadn't noticed or didn't care. He'd assume the latter, since she apparently had her own agenda.

She only smiled the seductive, secretive smile that made him even harder. The woman had her own secrets. Secrets he should want nothing to do with, but for some reason, he had to get to know her better. He was drawn to her, and that was a shock in itself.

"No, you don't. But I had to at least ask." She laughed then, a low, throaty sound that did things to him no other woman had been able to manage. At least none had in as long as he could remember. He was on edge, ready to explode, and she'd barely touched him. He could blame it on the alcohol, but it would be a lie. He'd finished half the whiskey, and it was his first glass. It was the woman herself who intrigued him. Turned him on to the point he couldn't breathe, could barely control his urges. He'd never had control issues before.

"What about you?" he asked, trying to force his mind back to the task at hand. He had to get her out of the bar. Had to get her alone so he could take care of the problem. The longer he sat with her, the more he began to doubt his ability to do the job. "Are you married?"

She shook her head, and her answer didn't surprise him. The woman looked like pure sex and sin. She wasn't overly tall, maybe five-seven at most, but her frame was lean and willowy, making her look taller. With her dark, curly hair and mouth made for indulgence, she was drop dead gorgeous, but her eyes were what got to him. Such a

clear, icy blue, her gaze made him feel like she could strip him raw and see right into his soul.

Maybe she could have, if he'd had a soul, but he'd lost it a long time ago and it was way too late to get it back. Sleeping with her would be wrong, but it wouldn't make a difference in the end. A man couldn't sink any further than the fiery pits of hell, and Jonah had been residing among the flames for a good long time.

"What's your name?" he asked, needing to know more about the woman who sparked a curiosity he'd thought long dead. "Your real name. Not the fake one you used on the job application."

"Sophie."

No last name, and that was fine by him. The less personal this was, the easier it would be for him to do what needed to be done. "Well, Sophie. Why don't we get out of this dive and find something more interesting to do?"

The smile she sent him was nothing short of devastating and it set every nerve in his body on edge with a sharp, delicious sexual undercurrent that had him just about ready to beg for release. Fuck, he wanted her.

"Sounds like a plan, Mr. Markham."

"Jonah. Mr. Markham makes me feel like an old man." His life made him feel like an old man, even though he was barely forty. It was just about time to get out of the business. To retire and move somewhere warm and sunny. "It's bad enough you're probably twenty years younger than me."

She cocked her head to the side and smiled at him. "I'm not younger than you."

That should have been his first clue there was something drastically wrong with the situation, but he chose to ignore it.

When they were out the door, Sophie pulled him down for a quick, scorching kiss, her tongue snaking into his mouth and her body rubbing all over him. He was a goner. Forget getting the woman back to his place. He couldn't wait another second, and there was a dark corner of the parking lot or a quiet spot behind the building calling his name.

Chapter 2

Sophie caught the dark, dangerous look in Jonah's eyes a second before he grabbed her arm and pulled her down an alley around the side of the building. She half-stumbled, trying to keep up with the speed of his gait. The man moved with a grace belying his size, and it only served to turn her on more. Such a study in contradiction. Her pussy was soaked and her nipples beaded against the tight material of her tank top. The fact that he was a danger to her only served to heighten her arousal.

"Where are we going?" she asked even though she already knew the answer.

"Right here." He stopped and spun around, crowding her until she backed up against the wall. He followed, leaving no space between them.

The feel of him right up against her made her ache. Her hands came around his neck and she glanced around, noting the chatter of customers leaving the bar and the occasional headlights of cars pulling out of the parking lot. She shivered. A man after her own heart. "Out here? In public?"

"Is that a problem?"

Did he not notice how turned on she was? She shook her head. "No. Just making sure it isn't a problem for you."

"Don't worry about me. I'm a big boy. I know what I'm doing." He pushed her skirt up over her hips and his hot palms met her bare skin. "No panties."

She shook her head. Laughed. Kissed him hard when he looked at her.

"Why not?" he asked when she broke the kiss.

"I've seen you watching me. I knew you'd be here tonight. I was hopeful." She reached out and cupped his cock through the fabric of his jeans and gave him a squeeze. He thrust his hips toward her hand, groaning, and her pussy muscles fluttered. She

reached for his waistband, unbuttoned his jeans, and dragged the zipper down. "Very hopeful. I hope you're not planning to make me wait all night."

"Not a chance." He dipped his fingers down between her legs, stroking them across the lips of her pussy. When he brushed his thumb over her clit, she dropped her head back against the brick wall and moaned. The sounds of the people around them, knowing some of them might even be watching, sent her arousal spiraling so high she thought she might come right there.

Jonah seemed to sense how close she was, and he wasn't ready to let her come yet. Three strokes and he pulled his hand away, pushed her back against the old brick wall of the building, lifted her legs around his waist, and slammed his cock inside her. He didn't even pause, just began to move in a way that had her panting and writhing within seconds. She clutched at his shoulders, clinging to him and closing her eyes.

His thrusts were frenzied, and she arched her hips toward him, meeting every stroke of that big cock inside her. He leaned in, pressing his lips to her throat and putting his own neck near her mouth. It had been a while since she'd last fed. She was hungry, hurtling toward what promised to be an amazing orgasm, and the temptation proved too much to resist. Just a little taste would do. Hoping he was too lost in sensation to notice, she let her fangs elongate and sank them into the side of his neck. He groaned, but showed no other signs that he'd felt her bite him.

After a few quick laps of her tongue against the wound, she pulled away, but the taste of the man was enough to send her over the edge. Her lips parted on a silent scream as the orgasm raced through her, wave after wave of pure pleasure rushing through her bloodstream. Her inner muscles contracted, milking Jonah's cock while he still pumped into her. Her fingers dug into his shoulders and he stiffened, whispering her name in her ear before he followed her into release.

There was something different about him from the other humans she'd tasted -- and there had been more than a few. Something that made her want a lot more, for a very long time.

Shit. She knew what that something was, even if she wasn't quite ready to admit it. Alec had always warned her she'd know who the man was when the moment was right. Why him? Why now, of all times?

"Are you okay?" he asked, setting her on her feet and straightening her short skirt.

"Mmmm."

He laughed. "My place or yours?"

"Yours. Mine's a mess." He was no threat to her, now that she knew exactly how to disarm him. Most men were weakest during sex. Jonah was no exception. Unfortunately, sex with him seemed to make her as weak as a human as well. She still needed to pump the man for information, but the idea of getting rid of him afterward had lost its appeal.

"What's the matter?" he asked once he'd straightened himself up. "You're pouting."

"Am I? I didn't realize." She shook off the disappointment. So her plan had changed a little. So what? That didn't mean she couldn't still get the needed information out of the man. She smiled at the thought. There were plenty of other ways to get information, and they were a lot more fun than her original plan. "It's not you. It's just... cold outside. Let's get out of here."

"If you say so," he said, but gave her a strange look.

"I do."

He led her to his car, opened the door for her, and within a few minutes they were speeding off toward his apartment.

By the time they'd reached his place, Sophie was ready to tear his clothes off and have her way with Jonah all over again. Sitting with him in an enclosed space, his scent filling the air around her, made it hard for her to keep her hands to herself. Her whole body thrummed with the delicious remnants of her orgasm. Her pussy was slick, coated with his come and hers, and more than ready for anything he had in mind. The fact that he'd lost control like that and taken her right beside the building thrilled her more than

anything had in too long to remember. Given the lack of... interesting men in her life, she'd become restless.

She turned her gaze out the window and let out a breath. Something in her chest clenched at the thought of having to dispose of such a fine specimen of human male, but how was she supposed to convince Alec of the truth? Jonah was a danger to her family. He'd set out to kill her and would probably still try before the night was through. It was a testament to how twisted she'd become that regret formed a lump in her throat. She didn't want to kill him, hadn't since they'd first locked gazes, and now she knew she would never be able to. She wanted to save him instead, and that was something she didn't understand. Sophie had no interest in saving anyone.

Except him.

Try as she might to deny it, it had become impossible.

"Having second thoughts?" he asked, his deep voice breaking into her regrets and yanking her back to the present with a force that left her head spinning.

She threw a smile his way and shook her head. "Think you can last a little longer the second time around?"

His rich chuckle filled the interior of the car and washed over her like a caress. "I can if you can."

"It's a deal."

Ten minutes later, he pulled his car behind a darkened three-story building and shut off the engine. He opened the door, flooding the interior with harsh yellow light, and offered her a smile that was nothing short of devastating. "We're here. You wanna run, I'd suggest doing it now."

She shivered, getting the feeling he'd enjoy chasing her if she ran. Though the idea tempted her sorely, she shook her head. "I'm not interested in running."

Sophie followed him out of the car and through the back door of the building. Once inside, he stabbed the elevator button with his index finger and the doors slid open. He walked her inside, his hand on the small of her back prodding her to move toward the back of the car.

The doors whooshed open again on the second floor and, his hand still on her back, he led her into a dark-paneled hallway lit only by the occasional bronze wall sconce. The place seemed half-finished, as if in the middle of renovation.

"You live here?" she asked, hoping there wouldn't be any other tenants in the building to hear his screams. Whether they were screams of pleasure or screams of pain... well, that would depend on whether she needed to defend herself or not.

"Yeah, I own the whole building."

"Does anyone else live here?"

He stopped and turned to her, his expression dark. His hand went around to her hip and tightened. "Why do you ask?"

So that was a sticking point for the guy. She almost smiled. "I was just curious. It seems so dark and quiet everywhere. Like there's no one else around for miles."

"No one else lives in the building, if that's what you mean. I just bought it not long ago. Most of the apartments aren't ready for tenants." A flash of anxiety passed across his expression, but it was gone before she could call him on it. Maybe the man was having second thoughts about trying to kill her. She hoped he was. She was wearing her favorite shirt and the thought of getting blood on it made her cringe. He didn't know it yet, but nothing he could do would cause her any great harm. In fact, she was more of a danger to him than he was to her.

He unlocked the first door on the left and ushered her inside the dark apartment. Given what he did for Almeda -- and the money he made doing it -- she expected opulence. Instead, the stark, Spartan look of the place surprised her. Everything was white, beige, and gray, and with the furniture kept to a minimum, the clack of her heels on the entryway tile seemed to echo through the vast open space.

"Not much for decorating, are you?" she asked, turning to face him as he locked the door behind them.

One shoulder lifted in a sexy shrug. "Never saw much need."

He shifted and she caught a glimpse of a holster and then the butt of a gun under his jacket. So the man was carrying. Why was she not surprised? The thought brought a smile to her face. It confirmed what she'd first assumed. He thought she was a human.

The man was in for the surprise of his life.

"Nice gun." She wagged her eyebrows.

"Does it make you nervous?"

"Why do I think it would turn you on if it did?"

Jonah smiled. He grabbed her hand and pulled her close, sealing his lips over hers for a crushing kiss. When he broke the kiss, he released her so fast she almost lost her balance.

"Maybe it would," he told her. "Most women run from me the second they get a good look at who I really am."

She laughed on the inside. *Most men run from me for the same reasons, buddy.* "I'm not like most women."

"Yeah, I'm getting that idea." He grabbed her hand again, this time pulling her down a darkened hallway. A door stood open at the end, revealing a huge bed draped with a black comforter. "I like that about you."

"If I said I wanted to leave right now, would you let me?"

He stopped and turned, facing her with a secretive smile on his face. "No. Do you want to leave?"

She returned the smile. Her pussy was drenched, and if she'd been wearing panties they would have been useless. She licked her lips. It had been so long since she'd found a man she wanted to play with, and God help her, she wanted to play with Jonah. What surprised her even more was that she wanted *him* to play with *her*. "Maybe. What would you do to stop me?"

"Why don't you run? You'll find out."

Not needing any more encouragement, Sophie turned and ran in the opposite direction. Her heart pounded, her pulse raced and her mouth went dry. Her life had been sorely lacking in excitement right up until she'd left the bar with Jonah earlier that

night. For a little while, she could forget the fact that she was supposed to kill him -- and he more than likely was going to try to kill her -- and enjoy the pleasure the man could give her. Humans didn't usually interest her unless she had her teeth in their veins, but Jonah was different. He was the one. Funny, she'd always assumed her mate would be a vampire. She should have known better when Alec found his mate in a frail human.

She raced through the kitchen, down the hall on the opposite side of the apartment, and into a small spare bedroom. Sneaking behind the door, she smiled, hoping he'd find her soon. The heavy fall of his boots from somewhere nearby told her he was close, but then the footsteps stopped.

Sophie tensed and peeked around the door, ready to run again, when someone grabbed her from behind. Jonah. How had he managed to move so quietly? His scent wrapped around her and heightened her arousal even more. Yeah, he was definitely the one. No way was she going to be able to kill him now, knowing what she did. No way in hell would she let *anyone* lay a hand on him.

Instead of giving in, she struggled against him, pulling out of his grasp. She took off down the hall, all the way across the apartment, almost making it to the master bedroom before Jonah caught up with her. He pressed her to the wall, holding her in place with his big body, and looked down at her, shaking his head. "You're a very bad girl."

No way could she deny that. She wriggled against him, silently begging for his touch. He seemed to know what she wanted, since he held back, staring at her with that gaze that made her whole body shake. "What are you going to do to me?"

"I'm not going to let you go again. That's for sure." He leaned down and ran his tongue over the shell of her ear, sending a chill through her body. "I'm going to fuck you."

He started to hike up her skirt, but she wriggled again and made a sound of protest. "Not here. In a bed this time."

"Suit yourself." He lifted her over his shoulder and carried her the rest of the way down the hall, dumping her on his bed. She bounced a little on the mattress a few times before she came to rest on her back, propped on her elbows. Watching him watch her, that intent look in his eyes, made breathing nearly impossible. Her fangs fought to elongate, but she held them back, not ready to show that card yet. He'd find out the truth about what she was soon enough, and odds were he wouldn't be happy about it. No sense ruining a night's fun because she couldn't control herself for a little while.

"Spread your legs," Jonah said in his deep voice that was almost enough to make her come. "Let me see your pussy."

Oh, God. Swallowing hard, she did as told.

"You're wet for me," he said, and he sounded a little surprised. "Do you like being chased?"

"I like you."

"You shouldn't."

"Why not?"

"I'm not a nice person, Sophie."

"Neither am I." She reached for him, but he shook his head.

"Stand up. Get undressed. Women don't get in my bed with clothes on."

If he was trying to scare her away, he wasn't doing a very good job of it. Words wouldn't get rid of her. Not tonight. She stood on legs shaky with arousal, and lifted her tank top over her head. Her skirt and boots followed, and soon she stood before him wearing nothing at all. She didn't move, allowing him to look his fill. And look he did. Her skin flushed under the scrutiny. For a human, the man was *intense*. She loved that about him. It was what had drawn her to him in the first place. That, and the whole mate-for-life thing, but she hadn't known what he was to her at the time. It had taken a taste of his blood in the alley next to the bar for her to even begin to realize *that*. Even now she was having trouble wrapping her mind around the idea.

"What about you?" she asked him. "You're wearing too many clothes."

He didn't say anything, but he started to strip off his shirt. Once he'd dropped the black T-shirt to the ground, he sat on the edge of the bed and unlaced his boots, one at a time, removing them and lining them up by the foot of the bed. The socks followed. Sophie shifted from foot to foot, so hot she couldn't stand still any longer. Goose bumps pebbled her skin. For a man who'd been ready to fuck her against the wall outside the bedroom, he sure was taking his time now.

He stood again, sliding off his jeans and boxers, and when he was finally naked, it was all she could do not to tackle him to the bed and ride him until they both came. Instead she waited, studying him. Learning the man she'd been wanting for weeks to uncover. Tattoos covered much of his chest and his right shoulder, and the tail of a dragon trailed down his left hip to wrap around his thigh. She swallowed hard. As a vampire, the pain of a single tattoo would have been unbearable. As many as he had would have nearly killed all but the toughest vamps.

Given that fact, she'd always found a man with tattoos unbearably sexy. Jonah, with all his art, was definitely not an exception.

"Keep looking at me like that and it's going to be a lot harder and faster than you want," he said on a growl.

"I like it hard. Like it fast, too." She licked her lips. If he so much as blew on her clit right now, she'd come. She whimpered at the thought. Would it always be this intense with him? Would the need always be so explosive?

The look in his eyes told her he felt it too, but still something held him back. "I don't want to hurt you."

"Hurt me." She shoved him hard in the chest and he fell back onto the mattress. When she moved to climb on top of him, he flipped her over and fitted himself between her thighs.

"What's the matter?" she taunted. "Don't want to be on the bottom?"

"I'm always on top."

She fought the urge to roll her eyes. Just her luck. The mate she'd been searching for all her life was a chauvinist. She'd have to change that way of thinking real quick.

But not tonight. If he wanted to be on top, whatever. She just wanted to come, and come hard.

He knelt in front of her, grabbed her hips, and pulled her to him, thrusting his cock inside. True to his promise, his strokes were hard and demanding, slapping his skin against hers and making her hips ache where he held her tight. Her fingers moved to her nipples and she pinched the nubs, rolling them and closing her eyes in ecstasy. Her lips parted and she moaned, the sensations almost too much to bear.

"That's so fucking hot," Jonah ground out. His strokes grew even harsher and more erratic. "Open your eyes. I want you watching me when you come."

He released one of her hips and pressed his thumb down hard on her clit. That was all it took to send her over the edge into orgasm. It wasn't as strong as the one in the alley, but it seemed to last longer, making her buck and thrash against him. The sensations went on and on and she felt like she was floating outside her body.

She'd barely come back to earth when Jonah cried out, her name a harsh whisper on his lips, and came inside her. He collapsed on top of her and sucked her earlobe into the hot cavern of his mouth, sending another round of tremors through her and making her sigh. She stroked her hands up and down his back, relishing the feel of strong muscle under soft skin. She raked her nails lightly over his back and he shivered.

"That was amazing," she whispered, not able to manage much more than that.

"Yeah." He pulled out and rolled away, and her body cried out at the loss of his heat and weight. So not a good thing. She knew better than to get attached too quickly. Especially when the man should still be considered an enemy.

She shifted on the mattress and glanced his way, but with his back to her, she couldn't tell what he was doing. "Do you want me to go now?"

"I don't think so." He turned to face her, pressed a cloth to her lips, and everything went black.

Chapter 3

Jonah watched Sophie through slitted eyes, lighting up another cigarette. Cigarette number six, and his nerves had yet to calm. He'd quit smoking several months ago, but had apparently taken it back up again tonight. Something about this situation felt bad -- very bad. He'd known the woman was trouble. Had known she wasn't what she seemed, but now, he realized he might be in over his head with this job. There was no way he was going to be able to kill her, even if she tried to take him out first. Something about her had him mesmerized.

And another something about her scared him nearly to death.

Once she was out cold and he'd tied her hands to the headboard, he'd gone into the bathroom for a quick shower, and that was when he noticed them. The twin puncture wounds on his neck, not far below his earlobe. In the alley he'd felt her bite him, but he hadn't realized it had been about more than sex. She'd *fed* from him.

The woman was a freakin' vampire.

It wasn't really any surprise to him that he hadn't noticed earlier. Common vampire lore said they didn't breathe, didn't have heartbeats, and were cold to the touch. The undead. There was nothing dead at all about Sophie. His fingers flew to his neck. The legends must have been wrong about some things, but not others.

Vampires, with their inhuman strength and their need for blood, made him uneasy. Knowing he'd slept with one -- twice -- didn't help matters.

Sophie stirred on the mattress, rolling over to her back and drawing his attention back to her. Despite knowing she'd hate him when she woke up and he wasn't very fond of her at the moment, his cock hardened anyway at the sight of all that pale skin. And those curves. His mouth watered. The woman was something else.

He turned away, unable to look at her any more. He should have gotten rid of her when he'd had the chance, and now it wouldn't be happening. He was in too deep. Had gotten too involved.

Now he was just as dead as she would be if William caught up with them.

He got up from the chair he'd been sitting in and walked outside, leaning against the balcony railing. So what the hell was he supposed to do now? He couldn't let her go. He had to go into hiding for a while, and he doubted she'd want to go with him.

A hand landed on his back a second before he heard Sophie's voice in his ear. "I should push you."

He tensed. It was only a two-story drop. The fall probably wouldn't kill him. "Go ahead."

"You don't want to live?"

Pretty soon, it wouldn't even be a consideration. William was a powerful man, made even more powerful by the pure vampire blood he'd been giving himself. If he didn't take care of Sophie like he'd been paid to do, he wouldn't live to see the end of the week anyway.

"Why didn't you tell me you're a vampire?" he asked, his breath catching in his throat even as he said the words.

"How can you tell?"

"Earlier. I saw your fang marks on my neck."

"That was nothing," she whispered, pressing her lips to his shoulder. "You should see my fangs now."

"No, thanks. Not interested."

In answer, she bit down. A sharp pain ran from his shoulder blade to his neck and he hissed out a breath, pulling away from her and spinning around to face her. "Stop."

"You don't like to play rough?"

"Not your kind of rough."

"If you'd planned to keep me tied up to your bed, you should have used something stronger than ropes."

"No shit. If I'd known what you were, I would have. I didn't realize it until after I'd already tied you up, and then I figured there was no point. I don't have anything strong enough in the house to hold you."

She moved back toward the doorway and propped her shoulder against the doorframe, blocking his only exit. "What did you think I was?"

"A nosey human, working for the police, or maybe a government agency."

In answer, she threw her head back and laughed. "It would have been so much easier for you if that was the case. Instead, you kidnapped a vampire."

Jonah shivered inside at the thought. "Why do you breathe?"

"Excuse me?"

He caught a faint hint of amusement in her voice. "You breathe. Vampires aren't supposed to breathe. They aren't supposed to be alive. I always heard that once a human is bitten by a vampire, they become undead."

She raised her eyebrows and shook her head in a way that said "stupid idiot" better than words could. "That's not really the case. We're not dead. We're very much alive. We breathe the same way you do. Our hearts beat, and blood flows through our veins. We just have the benefit of immortality. Some vampires are humans who've been turned, others were born vampires."

"And which are you?" He braced himself, dreading the answer to the question.

"I was born a vampire almost sixty years ago. You know," she said, taking a few steps closer, "it's been said that pureblood vampires are much more vicious than human-born. Something about not having the same instincts as humans have. If you buy into legends, you might even believe that one."

"Sweetheart, I have bigger problems than that right now." If she really wanted to hurt him, she would have done it already. She was toying with him instead.

"Yes, you do." She smiled, revealing fangs that gleamed in the moonlight. "I'm hungry."

Seeing those fangs shouldn't turn him on, but it did. She walked over to him and put her hands on his shoulders. Damn it, he started shaking at the thought of her wanting to feed from him. He tried to break out of her hold, but she was a lot stronger than he was.

"Don't struggle. It'll be much easier if you stand there and enjoy it."

How the hell did she expect him to do that? "You fed earlier. I've seen the marks on my neck."

"I didn't feed. I tasted. Now I need to eat. You see," she continued as if he wasn't frantically searching for an escape route, "I won't drain you, so you really have nothing to be worried about. I realized something about you earlier. You're of no use to me dead. I kinda need you alive."

He narrowed his eyes. "Why?"

"I just do." She leaned in, running her tongue down the center of his chest. She veered off, swirling the hot, wet tip of it over first one nipple, and then the other. His cock went rigid and his mind threatened to shut down. A shiver ran down his spine.

"Sophie, stop. I'll let you go."

"You want me." She glanced up at him and smiled, cupping the hard length of his cock in the palm of her hand. "I want you, too. But this time we're going to do it my way."

"Sophie..."

"I know you like to play, Jonah. You proved that to me earlier tonight. Wore me out, too." She giggled, and the sound only served to make him more nervous. "You'll like this, but if you don't relax, it's going to hurt."

He closed his eyes and dropped his head back, half-hoping the balcony would give way and he'd topple over the edge before she could get that mouth anywhere near him again. The other half of him -- the half being slowly driven insane by the way she was rubbing his cock -- was willing to give her freedom to do whatever she wanted to his body.

Just the thought had his hips surging forward, seeking more of her touch. Was he losing his mind to think anything about this situation was okay?

"Patience, Jonah. We have a few hours yet before the sun comes up."

She hooked her fingers in the waistband of his boxers and pulled them down, freeing his cock. After he stepped out of the boxers and kicked them out of the way, she got down on her knees in front of him and pressed a kiss to the tip of his erection. That was all it took for him to forget to panic as she opened her mouth and slid him inside.

The feel of her warm, moist mouth enveloping him was almost too much to bear. Adrenaline left over from his few moments of panic still surged through his bloodstream, heightening the intensity of the moment. She felt so good, so right, sucking on him. Vampire or human, it didn't matter. The woman knew what she was doing. She wanted him, even now, and that was something that hadn't happened too often in the past.

She pulled him out of her mouth, kissed the skin at the base of his cock, and sank her fangs into the spot she'd just kissed. He groaned, threading his hands through her hair and yanking her upward.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing? Trying to cripple me for life?"

Sophie's eyes flashed fire. "It's just a little cut. I told you, it'll hurt a lot less if you just stand there and enjoy it. Actually, this will bring a lot more pleasure for both of us."

She extricated herself from his hold, dropped back to her knees, and licked at the blood trickling from the wound she'd created. On his cock. What she'd done shouldn't turn him on, but for some reason, it did. More than anything ever had.

He was a lot sicker than he'd first thought.

She sucked him back into her mouth, working her lips up and down the length of him, taking him all the way in until the head of his cock bumped the back of her throat. Oh, Jesus. Soon all his inhibitions fled and he closed his eyes again, threading his fingers through her hair to help her get into a rhythm.

A loud moan from Sophie made him open his eyes and glance down. Her legs were spread wide and she was stroking her pussy, thrusting her fingers in and out of

that incredible, tight sheath. She bucked and writhed, still moaning as she sucked his dick, and when she came he felt the vibrations all the way through his body. It was an odd but amazing sensation, like they were connected on some deep level that made him feel her orgasm. It made him shake, his balls drawing up tight against his body and arousal spiraling through his gut.

She'd been right. The pleasure was unbelievable. So intense he felt like the top of his head might come off. And when he came, he had to grab the wrought iron railing behind him to keep from sinking to his knees. Stars danced in front of his eyes and he was afraid he might black out. She released him and he did sink down then, pulling her close and kissing her forehead.

"Wow."

"I told you."

Those were the last words he heard before he passed out.

* * *

Sophie turned the key in the ignition of Jonah's car and smiled when the engine purred to life. A twinge of guilt hit her for leaving him the way she had, but she hadn't had a choice. He'd be fine. She hoped. And once she took care of William Almeda, she could find Jonah again and see if he'd really meant it when he'd said he would let her go. They had unfinished business, she and her human, but first she had to do what she'd been sent in to do and kill Almeda before he destroyed her brother.

Now she just had to remember to keep her mind on the current task at hand. A task that, as of a few hours ago, no longer involved Jonah Markham. She might not have the highest moral fiber, but she couldn't kill her mate.

Who would have thought she was destined to spend her life with a human?

She put the car in reverse and backed out of the parking spot, switching her focus from Jonah and back to Almeda. The faster she got to him, the faster she could deal with the rest of the things she had on her mind. She hadn't been able to get any information out of Jonah, since he was apparently a lightweight when it came to bloodletting, so she'd snagged his office keys instead. She'd be able to search the office

and Almeda's lab, find out exactly what he'd been doing with the vampire blood he'd stolen, and then go in search of the man himself. With any luck, she'd be able to get back before Sleeping Beauty even woke up.

She pulled out of the parking lot so fast she didn't see the car pull into the spot she'd just vacated, or the two big men who got out and headed toward Jonah's building.

Chapter 4

Jonah's head lolled to the side, his lips parted and his eyes half closed. He ached everywhere. Wouldn't be surprised if a couple of his ribs and maybe his jaw were broken. William's men had really laid into him when they'd burst into his apartment, but they hadn't killed him. Jonah knew why without having to ask. William wanted him alive. William liked to make the important kills himself.

Jonah was sitting on a hard wooden chair, one of the ones from the rear conference room if he could judge by the squeaking noises it made every time he shifted. He opened his eyes and glanced around, squinting through the semi-darkness. Definitely the conference room -- or *interrogation* room, as William liked to put it.

There wasn't a lot of talking that happened in this place.

"It's about time you woke up. I was afraid you were going to die before I even got a chance to start *working* on you." William spoke from the doorway, a couple of the security staff flanking him, glaring at Jonah. Up until yesterday, when Jonah had failed to take out Sophie before she caused any serious trouble, the men had been his underlings. Now Jonah was *persona non grata* in William's organization.

Jonah narrowed his eyes, refusing to do what William expected. He wouldn't beg for his life. He wouldn't give his former employer the satisfaction. He'd be killed in the end, anyway. William valued loyalty above all else, and in his mind, Jonah had sided with the enemy.

"Where is she?" William asked, arms crossed over his chest. He took a few steps into the room. His flunkies mimicked the movement.

"I don't know," Jonah ground out, his voice not much above a whisper. He coughed and blood dotted his pants. "I have no idea."

He wasn't lying. Sophie had been gone when he'd woken up. Still groggy, he hadn't even had a chance to fight back against the two goons who'd broken into his house. She'd rolled over on him. There was no other explanation that fit.

"Why don't you tell me?" he continued, even knowing it would earn him an extra special punishment. "You've been in contact with her more recently than I have."

Pure rage passed across William's face. He turned to his goons. "Leave us, please."

"Are you sure?" Terry, the taller of the two, asked, his expression bordering on concerned.

"Yes. Go." William turned his attention back to Jonah as the two others left the room, shutting the door behind them. "It isn't smart of you to talk that way to me, especially around them. I demand your respect."

"Then untie me." Jonah rolled his head from side to side, wincing at the pain shooting to his shoulders and up to the top of his skull.

"You and I both know that isn't going to happen. Not now, after you *let her go*."

He walked out of Jonah's line of vision. When he came back to stand in front of Jonah again, he held a long, thin knife in his hand. The blade was coated with dried blood. "You know how it goes, Jonah. You've watched me enough times to know what's going to happen. Now try not to scream."

* * *

Sophie crouched low to the ground, her fingers digging into the wooden windowsill. A harsh cry filled the air, filtering through the thin pane of glass. *Jonah*. She swallowed hard, standing to get a glimpse of what was going on inside. Almeda had just moved away, and Jonah's head hung limp, his chin to his chest. Almeda kicked at Jonah's legs, and there was no response.

Her heartbeat kicked into overdrive. This was her fault. She'd left him to fend for himself, knowing what would happen if Almeda's thugs found him. He hadn't done his job, and now he was suffering the consequences. She should have at least tried to

protect him. The thugs wouldn't have gotten past her. They were gnats. Nothing more than a slight annoyance.

She was still in the middle of formulating a rescue plan when a heavy hand came down on her shoulder. She spun, hands in guard position in front of her face, and found a couple of those gnats standing there with killer expressions on their faces. Terry and Bryce, a couple of big, mostly brainless goons. Nothing she couldn't handle with her eyes closed and one hand tied behind her back.

They didn't need to know that just yet.

"Can I help you, gentlemen?"

"It was a stupid move coming back here," Bryce said, his thin lips taut. "He's going to enjoy killing you even more than he's enjoying Markham."

"He's not going to get the chance to do either." Before the thugs could even blink, she lashed out with her hand, striking Bryce across the neck with her sharp fingernails and all the power she could throw into the blow. He dropped like a sack of potatoes at Terry's feet.

"What the hell?" Terry reached for her, but she ducked away. "How did you do that?"

She flashed her fangs at him before she took him out, too.

Removing them from the situation had been quick, but the speed had taken a lot out of her. Out of breath from the exertion, it took her longer to reach Jonah than she'd first hoped. By the time she'd managed to pick the lock and get inside the room, Almeda was long gone and Jonah was barely breathing.

She took her knife out of her pocket, flipped it open, and cut the ties holding his arms behind the chair back. He slumped forward so hard he almost knocked her off balance.

"Jonah?" He groaned in response. "Jonah, can you stand at all?"

By some miracle, she managed to get him to his feet. She was strong, but he was big and would have been dead weight had she needed to carry him all the way to her car. Luckily, he stumbled along and she was able to get him into the back seat before he

passed out cold. No amount of poking or prodding could rouse him. Now she was really starting to get worried. He didn't look very good. He was bleeding from so many places she couldn't count them all, and one of his cheekbones looked crushed. Blood smeared his face and trickled out of both corners of his mouth. Unless she did something drastic to help him, there was no way he was even going to survive the night.

Odds were he'd hate her come morning, but then again, he would have hated her anyway.

"Hang on, Jonah," she said, getting behind the wheel and starting the engine. "I'm about to change your life."

* * *

Sophie opened the front door of the mansion so hard it slammed against the wall, shaking the whole house and sending a large mirror crashing to the floor. The glass shattered, spilling across the hardwood entryway floor, and her brother, Alec, came barreling down the stairs.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" He fixed her with a glare so dark it would have had her shaking in her shoes if she hadn't been in the middle of an emergency.

"I'm sorry. I'll clean it up and pay to have the glass fixed later. Right now I really need your help." Without waiting for a response, she rushed down the steps to where she'd left her car.

Tendrils of white mist swirled and dipped, rising toward the open rear passenger door and covering Jonah like a blanket. *Damn it.* She'd forgotten about the protection spells Alec had on his house to keep outsiders away. "Alec, call off your guards. The man is obviously with me."

"Away," Alec commanded, and the mist dissipated. He rushed toward the car and stopped short, his hand on Sophie's arm. "What's going on, Soph?"

"He's dying, and it's all my fault." She started pulling Jonah out of the car, but with the dead weight and her fatigue, she couldn't handle it. "Help me out a little bit, would you? He's a lot heavier than he looks."

With Alec's help, she was able to get Jonah out of the car and into the house before the mists came back -- or before something worse found out there was a stranger on the property. Once inside, Jonah would be safe, but outside in his condition, it was anyone's guess. Most of Alec's protections were illusions, but some were far more dangerous than that.

"Is he alive?" Alec asked, and all the breath left Sophie's lungs in a whoosh. Jonah wasn't breathing. At all. She hadn't noticed until just that moment.

"I don't know," she answered softly. "Damn it, I don't know. I need to lay him down. He'll have to be there for a while. Where can I put him?"

"The bedroom down the hall is probably the most private."

"Good."

They laid Jonah on the bed before Alec said anything else. "Tell me what happened."

"I don't have much time."

"You've brought a dead human into my house and endangered my mate. He's not going anywhere. I think you have a few minutes for an explanation."

She rolled her eyes, but she did owe him something. "He was supposed to kill me."

"So you killed him instead."

"No. William Almeda tortured him. He's not dead yet."

"He has no heartbeat, Sophie."

"I know." She rolled Jonah onto his back and used her nails to shred the front of his T-shirt, needing to assess the damage. Alec was right. His heart wasn't beating. He wasn't breathing. Jonah was dead. She had only seconds to bring him back. "Please, Alec. I'll explain all of this later. I'm out of time."

He was silent for a beat before his voice floated across the silence of the room.
“Okay. But later, you owe me a full explanation. Do you need any help?”

“No.”

“Does he want this?”

She snorted. “Somehow I doubt it.”

“Then I hope you know what you’re doing.” With that final warning, he closed the door, leaving Sophie to her work.

Chapter 5

Jonah woke by degrees, struggling against the bonds that held him in place. Ropes? No. They were cold. Heavy. Chains. A red haze took over his mind. He thrashed on the bed, pulling and yanking at the bonds, but it was no use. A cry of fury rushed past his lips.

What was the matter with him? He felt strange. Different. Almost... animalistic.

"It will be easier if you don't struggle."

He stilled and shifted his narrow-eyed gaze to the doorway. A small, brunette woman stood there, glancing with raised eyebrows and a serene expression. Just the sight of her made his gut clench. She wasn't Sophie, but she smelled amazing. He struggled even harder.

"Trust me on this one, Jonah. You really don't want to struggle. You'll end up in a lot of pain if you do."

She walked into the room, sitting on the edge of the bed, and he stilled. Swallowed hard. "What happened?"

"You died." Her hand came up to stroke his cheek, and he leaned into the touch, striking out at her with his teeth. A warm, coppery taste filled his mouth and he nearly groaned in ecstasy. Blood. It was blood, for God's sake, and for some reason he couldn't begin to fathom, he wanted more.

"Ouch! Damn it, what the hell did you do that for?"

Sophie stepped into the room and the other woman turned toward her. "Your mate needs to feed."

"He just fed a few hours ago."

She held up her bleeding hand. "Apparently he doesn't realize it. I think he's still hungry."

Sophie's heavy sigh filled the room. "I should have known he'd be greedy. He's just the type. Would you mind giving us a few minutes alone, Elena?"

The other woman got off the bed, patted his cheek, and pressed her bleeding palm to his lips. Some new instinct urged him to lick the wound, and he did, earning a small moan from the woman.

"He's sexy, Sophie."

"Knock it off, Elena," Sophie said, a hint of warning in her voice. "Go find your own man and leave mine alone."

Jonah would have taken issue at being called someone's man, especially a woman who'd betrayed him, but he couldn't think of anything at the moment except satisfying the bone-deep hunger slowly driving him insane.

Once the other woman had left the room, Sophie turned to him, her hands on her hips. "You don't feed from someone who's mated unless you have permission of her mate. Ignoring that rule will get you killed pretty quickly."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"You and Elena... Trust me. You don't want to mess with Ian. He's a lot older than you, and he could rough you up pretty quickly. He's also a little on the possessive side. I'd really prefer to keep you in one piece." She sat on the edge of the bed, in the same spot Elena had just vacated, brushing a strand of hair off his forehead. "How do you feel?"

"Hungry." Hungry and horny. Being this close to her made him rock hard. He swallowed past the sudden lump in his throat. He couldn't want her and be angry at her at the same time.

"You need to take it easy for a few more days. You're still healing. Do you remember anything?"

"Not too much."

"You'll be lucky if you remember much at all. When you... die, and are brought back like this, a lot of times the memories of what happened just aren't there anymore."

At least that's what I've heard. I guess that's a good thing, given the shape you were in when I found you."

Little bits of memory flashed through his mind, too fast for him to make sense of any of them. Instead he pushed them away. "What happened?"

"Your boss tried to kill you. Actually, he managed that pretty well. I brought you here and saved you."

Deep down, he knew what she'd done to save him, but he pushed the thoughts aside. He had plenty to think about already, and his arms were starting to ache. "Let me out of these chains."

"Do you promise to behave yourself if I do?"

"I'll try."

She grabbed a key off the bedside table and a few seconds later removed the chains holding his arms to the bed. Jonah sat up, rubbing his wrists. "Why did you have me chained?"

"So you didn't accidentally hurt someone." Because he had more strength now than he used to. She didn't have to say the words. He already knew. Knew, and yet, refused to believe. This was all a crazy dream, and soon he'd wake up and realize he was still on his balcony, and Sophie had managed to knock him out cold with a blow job.

"Where are we?"

"My brother's house. Listen, Jonah, we have plenty of time to talk later. Now I think Elena is right. You need to feed. You're starting to look a little rough around the edges."

He nodded, his stomach growling at just the thought. Sophie brought her wrist to her lips and sliced her teeth across. When she put her wrist in front of him, blood dripped from a small wound she'd made.

That was all it took for him to go wild.

* * *

Sophie had expected Jonah to be hungry after what he'd done to Elena, but she hadn't expected him to be famished. He acted like a man who hadn't fed in a week rather than one who'd just suckled at her wrist a few hours earlier. He hadn't taken much then, but he'd been unconscious, so she hadn't expected him to. Given the amount he'd taken the day before, when she'd helped him make the transition, he should still be full. He wasn't going to have much control. She sighed. She'd have to watch him every second with a woman like Elena in the house. No need for him to start a war his first week as a vampire.

He lunged at her, knocking her backward. She hit the mattress with a soft thump and then he was on top of her, his lips on the spot where her neck met her shoulder. He ignored the cut she'd made for him at her wrist, instead choosing to bite into her skin right at the most tender spot on her body. She shivered, loving the feel of his hard body above her and his newly-created fangs on her neck. Her pussy went wet.

She arched her hips against him, bringing his cock in contact with her cunt. Even through her clothes and the sheet wrapped around his waist, his heat made her squirm. She wanted him inside her. For a vampire, sex and feeding went hand in hand. During the last two feedings she'd been left needy and wanting. Tonight, a little satisfaction was in order for both of them.

He pulled away long enough to kick away the sheet that had been covering him and help her out of her clothes. Then he was back on top of her, the tip of his cock probing her pussy. She lifted her hips and he slid inside.

A feral growl rumbled in his chest and echoed somewhere inside her. Soon the haze of the transition would wear off and he'd have questions. Lots of them. She'd have to answer them, and odds were good that he wouldn't want to talk to her for a long time afterward, so she needed to take what she could while she could get it. For now, she'd just enjoy, and worry about the rest later. She was already living with enough guilt to last a lifetime.

Jonah stroked inside her, suckling at her neck with an intensity only a brand-new vampire could use, and it was all she could do to keep from coming right that second

from the force of it all. She held back, wanting to prolong the pleasure, but after a few minutes without Jonah letting up on her vein, she started to feel faint.

She pushed at his shoulders until he lifted up over her, his expression confused. His lips parted. "What?"

"That's too much. I need some blood in me, you know."

She rolled him onto his back and rode his cock, her hands on his shoulders to keep him in place. A smudge of blood coated his upper lip and she leaned in to lick it away with a delicate swipe of her tongue. She tasted her own blood mingled with the blood of the human she'd fed from earlier in the day, and it made her moan. Soon, she would be able to share humans with Jonah -- if he ever forgave her for what she'd done to him.

Jonah lifted up and sucked one of her nipples into his mouth. After a few minutes, he moved on to the other one. By then she was writhing over him, slamming herself down on his cock, and she came with a fierce growl, collapsing on top of him as she did. Not long after, he followed her into release, his fingers digging into her hips so hard she knew she'd have the bruises to prove it. Luckily they would heal in a couple of hours.

Sometime later, Jonah stirred beneath her. "This isn't some sort of twisted dream, is it?"

Sophie sighed. "No. It's not."

He stiffened. "What the hell did you do to me?" He narrowed his eyes when she said nothing. "You'd better get off me and start explaining."

Chapter 6

Sophie sat across from Jonah at Alec's big mahogany dining room table, her knees pulled up to her chest and her chin resting on them. It had been four hours since she'd told Jonah the truth about what she'd done, and he had yet to utter a single word in her direction. She hadn't expected him to be happy she'd had to change him, but he could at least try to understand. She'd saved the man's life. Wasn't he even a little bit grateful?

"You understand it'll be hard for me to trust you," Alec was saying to Jonah. "You worked for William Almeda."

"You have no idea what he did to me before your sister found me and I've only remembered small bits of it so far. I have no loyalty to him. And I never did anything to hurt you or your family personally." Jonah leaned forward in his seat, eyebrows raised in challenge. "I protected Almeda and his business. That was my job. I didn't know where he got the vampire blood, and I had no desire to know."

Alec was silent for a moment, gazing heavenward, before he glanced to Sophie. "You okay?"

At her nod, he turned his attention back to Jonah. "Even so, you knew he was dabbling in things better left alone. You should have done something to stop him."

"Like what? Go to the police?" Jonah sneered. "I'm sure they would have checked into it. After they'd finished laughing me out of the station."

Alec sighed. Sophie glanced at her brother, silently willing him to just shut up. He wouldn't get anywhere with Jonah. Alec could pretend to be a bad-ass all he wanted, but Jonah was the real thing. He didn't answer to anybody who wasn't giving him a paycheck.

"Even if I'd had the inclination to -- which I didn't," Jonah continued into the tension-thick silence. "I wouldn't have known where to find you. The original blood is long gone, anyway. He's been engineering a sort of copy for years using the sample."

Alec's eyes went wide. "What was he doing that for? A few drops at a time would be plenty to strengthen his immune system and make him nearly invincible. Too much of it, and he'd turn himself into a vampire."

When Jonah said nothing, Alec leaned forward, propping his elbows on the table. "He didn't..."

"No. He's too afraid of vampires to become one. He just wants to live forever. As for the blood he engineered, he's been selling it on the black market. The stuff is like gold. Everybody wants it. Foreign countries pay a fortune for gallons of the stuff at a time so they can strengthen their armies."

Sophie went cold at the thought. For so long, vampires had remained outside of human society for exactly this reason. They hadn't wanted to be exploited. "The man has to be stopped," she said softly, surprised when Jonah nodded in agreement.

"Yeah, he does," he said.

Alec leaned back in his chair, nodding once as he made his decision. "I'll send someone to take care of it."

Jonah shook his head. "No. I want to do it myself."

"How can I trust you'll actually do it?"

"You might not trust me, but you trust your sister. I'll take her with me. She can help."

A ghost of a smile tickled the corners of Sophie's lips. Maybe he wasn't so angry with her, after all. "You want me to help you?"

"Yeah. Why do you find that so hard to believe?"

"I thought you were angry with me."

"I'm pissed. I will be for a little while. But you saved my life, even if you did change it. Besides, I know how much you'd enjoy it. You said that up until you met me, your life had been lacking excitement."

She licked her lips. He was right. And she had a feeling her life was about to get a whole lot more fun.

"I don't think this is a good situation," Alec said, cutting into Sophie's joy. "The two of you aren't a good match."

"What are you talking about?" Sophie asked, narrowing her eyes at her brother. As if she had a choice. The soul chose the mate, not the mind, and she couldn't undo what had already been done.

"You need someone who will keep you in line," Alec said, shaking his head. "Not a partner in crime."

Sophie couldn't help but smile. A partner in crime was exactly what she needed. She'd had enough of boring, stodgy men who wanted to "tame" her. "I'm not that bad."

Alec rolled his eyes. "You're a regular angel, Soph." He focused on Jonah again, cutting off any chance Sophie had for a reply. "Sophie's already broken a rule with you. A vampire can't turn a human without permission."

"She had my permission," Jonah said without pause.

Alec cocked his head to the side and frowned. He glanced from Jonah to Sophie and back to Jonah again. "Are you sure?"

"Yes. She didn't do anything wrong."

"Okay, if that's your story, I guess I have to accept it." He shot Sophie a glare before he stood and stretched his arms over his head. "We'll talk more about this later. Right now, I have a mate waiting upstairs for me, and she doesn't like it when I'm late."

"Why did you stick up for me?" Sophie asked Jonah as Alec headed toward the exit.

"Because I have a feeling we're going to make quite a team."

"Yeah, just like Bonnie and Clyde," Alec chimed in from the doorway.

* * *

William Almeda let himself into his luxury condo and dropped his keys onto the table next to the door. What a long and hellish week it had been. His right hand man had defected to the dark side, as it were, and the body was still missing. With Terry and

Bryce dead, William had no idea what had happened to Jonah Markham's body. The man was dead. He had to be. No one could have survived what William had done to him.

The fact that the police hadn't knocked on his door yet had to mean something. William had his private investigators looking into the matter. He didn't think anyone could tie him to Markham's murder, but it never hurt to be careful.

He flicked on the light and walked into the kitchen, intent on finding something for dinner before he settled in for what promised to be yet another sleepless night, but when he turned the corner and saw the man leaning against the counter next to the fridge, his heart lurched into his throat.

"You're dead," he told Jonah Markham. "I killed you myself."

Jonah laughed, and the sound was menacing. "I had someone to bring me back. I guess you didn't think about backup plans."

"No. You're a figment of my imagination."

Jonah smiled, baring a set of gleaming white fangs, and everything suddenly made sense. The woman Jonah had been sent to kill was a vampire. William had known there was something... off about her, but he hadn't known what. He should have killed her himself during their first meeting rather than hiring her to keep her close until he could find out what she was all about.

"What do you want from me?" he asked, not above begging for his life. Jonah hadn't begged for his own. Jonah was a better man than William.

"Isn't it obvious?" He stepped toward William, walking closer until he was only a few inches away. "Your blood, William. I want your blood. All of it."

William's heart stopped beating for a few terrifying seconds before it started up again, pounding against his ribcage with such force he worried it would break out of his chest. He backed up, away from the creature his most trusted employee had become, and bumped into something behind him.

"Surprise," a soft voice said.

"Angela?" He turned slowly, his back to the counter so he could watch both of them at once.

"Actually, it's not Angela," she said. "It's Sophie Masterson. Alec's sister."

Oh, shit. "Alec who?"

"The vampire whose blood you stole. The blood you've been injecting yourself with." Jonah shook his head. "Did you really think you'd get away with it?"

"You can't kill me," William reminded him. "I'm invincible."

"The blood doesn't make you invincible." Sophie stroked her hand down his cheek in what would have been a tender gesture from any other woman. From her -- a killer, as he now understood -- it made him sick to his stomach. His knees went weak.

"Your lab has been destroyed," Jonah told him, a little too much satisfaction in his voice. "No more engineering vampire blood. No more selling it. Once you're dead, the loose ends will all be tied up. Nice and neat, just how you like it."

William put his hands up in front of him in a gesture of surrender. He shook his head and swallowed hard. "No. You don't need to kill me."

"You're right. I don't." Jonah's haunting laugh filled the room. "But I want to. I'm a little new at this vampire thing. I find I'm hungry all the time. Little meals don't cut it right now. I'd rather drain you."

"Jonah," Sophie said, eyebrows raised and a slight smile on her face. "Don't forget. You promised to share."

Epilogue

Alec glanced up from the book he'd been reading as a knock sounded on the door. "Come on in, Sophie. What can I do for you?"

"I just wanted to make sure you're okay. You've been so scarce lately." She settled into a chair across from him, crossing one leg over the other. "How is Adriana's transition going?"

He sighed at the mention of his mate, a woman who had resisted his offers to turn her, despite an illness that was slowly sapping the life out of her body. A week ago, she'd asked him to turn her, but things hadn't gone as smoothly as he'd hoped. "She's doing better. Finally."

Much better. For a few days, they'd all been worried she wouldn't make it, but now the transition was complete and she'd nearly drained him during her first real feeding a few hours earlier. He had yet to recover his energy. "She didn't take to it as quickly as Jonah, but given how sick she was, I'm not surprised."

Sophie smiled and nodded her head, glancing toward the window where a sliver of blue moonlight shone inside.

"Did I ever thank you?" he asked her after a small stretch of silence.

She swung her gaze back to his, frowning. "For what?"

"If Almeda had continued with what he'd been doing, we might have all been in serious danger. Especially Adriana, who wouldn't have been able to defend herself."

"It's no big deal." She lifted one shoulder in a shrug. "I didn't do anything you wouldn't have done for me, if the roles had been reversed."

"I appreciate it anyway. Will you and Jonah be staying around?"

"For now. It's been so long since I've been around family for any decent length of time. I'm not ready to leave yet."

"Alec, can I talk to you for a minute?" Adriana asked from the doorway.

Alec turned his attention to his mate and his breath caught in his throat. Damn, she was beautiful. "Sure. Are you feeling okay?"

"I feel incredible," she said, and his cock tightened at the sensual promise in her voice and her smile.

Sophie pushed up from the chair, walked over to him, and leaned down to give him a quick hug. "Don't do anything I wouldn't do."

Alec laughed. There were a lot of things his sister would do that he would never even think of on his own. "I won't. Promise."

Once his sister had left the room, Adriana came in and shut the door. Alec said a silent word of thanks to Adriana's father, the man who'd betrayed Alec and set the events with Almeda in motion. If it hadn't been for Frank, Adriana would never have come back into Alec's life. Though she'd only been with him a short time, he already didn't know how he'd lived without her.

"What are you thinking about?" Adriana asked him, her head cocked to the side and her expression curious.

"Nothing but you." He stood and walked over to her, pulling her into his arms. "It's always been for you."

Elisa Adams

Born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, Elisa Adams has lived most of her life on the East Coast. Formerly a nursing assistant and phlebotomist, writing has been a longtime hobby. Now a full time writer, she lives on the New Hampshire border with her three children. Visit Elisa's website at <http://www.elisaadams.com>.