



McIntyre and Coventry

Book 1 of the *Special Investigations* series

Lisa Andel

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Dedication

In memory of D. Even now, you are the drive behind every endeavor.
And, as always, to my editor Lynne.

Prologue

Akron, Ohio. Maybe not the center of the universe, but hey, how many cities can say their sewers blew up? Without any terrorist involvement. Or magic.

My family moved there the summer of that notorious event. Having never seen steam sewers, it took me a couple of years to realize the smoke coming from the manhole covers wasn't a result of the explosion, nor was it a portent of another such catastrophe. What can I say? I was only six.

My brothers, all five of them, started their own business, and my best friend Rand and I spent summers when we were teens helping out. It was a security/private investigations firm. A really good one. Especially since they had an edge, what with our family heritage and all. But nobody talks about the supernatural, not if they want to live.

Rand and I went to college together and graduated with two-year degrees in criminal justice, having taken courses in private investigation as well. We got our own licenses a year later. As well as licenses to carry concealed.

My brothers asked us to open up a branch office in the Montrose area, and Rand and I debated this, but finally decided to head out on our own and open up our office in the Medina area. Our ultimate goal was to handle mostly supernatural affairs. There weren't many agencies around the country set to deal with that sector of the population. My brothers' company was one. Don't get me wrong; it probably would have worked out great working for my brothers, as they had more business than they could handle and a reputation that was known across the country. But Rand and I preferred a quieter, less demanding lifestyle. So, six months after we'd been licensed, we hung our shingle out on a converted farmhouse on the eastern edge of Medina.

McIntyre and Coventry, Private Investigations.

The house was a huge L-shaped affair. The front half of the main floor we used for the business while the rest of the house was reserved as a private residence. The detached six-car garage had an in-law suite located over it, which suited us just fine, since Rand and I chose to live onsite to save additional money.

Rand took the in-law suite.

I'd like to say that Rand and I had a personal as well as a professional future together, but I can't. I've known him since I was six and he was eight. The first week I knew Rand we showed each other our privates. His idea. We even touched each other. Good thing my brothers never found out about it. The next time I saw Rand's cock, I was thirteen and he was fifteen. It looked a lot bigger that time. It was our first brief, embarrassing foray into the mysteries of sex. He knew, technically, what we were supposed to be doing. In reality, we fumbled around a lot, kissed, and put our clothes back on.

For the next few years, I never really thought much about Rand being a guy. I know that sounds funny, but Rand was my closest friend. We spent all of our free time together. Then, when I was sixteen, he suggested he take my virginity, because it's such an awkward situation for most girls, and he thought he could spare me that. It seemed like a sound idea. So he stole a bottle of vodka from his parents' cupboard and we snuck away to the field beside the school one night during a football game. I think we both had a lot

of fun. I know we laughed a lot. Unfortunately, we didn't use contraception. Fortunately, it didn't matter. Surprisingly, it didn't change our relationship one bit.

I'm older now; I've had plenty of my own lovers. Well, I've had a few of my own lovers. But I haven't yet run into Mr. Right.

What about Rand? He did grow up to be my ultimate ideal man. Tall, with broad shoulders and narrow hips, wavy dark brown hair, and brilliant green eyes. He could and did exude danger, protectiveness, possessiveness, compassion, and sex. He's half-werewolf, with the strength and power to prove it. He has a wicked sense of humor, and an almost photographic memory. He's also got the best ass I've ever seen on a man. He's got the biggest cock, too.

The only problem is, he's never even shown the tiniest bit of interest in me. Not since he took my virginity. Other women, yes. Too Goddamn many of them. But me? I'm not sure he even remembers that I'm female. At least I didn't think he remembered.

Anyway, we've been operating for about two years now, and we're already in the black. I suspect my brothers of sending business our way, but who am I to complain?

The only complaints I've got are in the man department. I don't seem to be very good at long-term relationships. Most guys don't like the risks I take with my job. I'm not really the one-night stand kind of girl, but I can't go without the sex. So I find myself in a vicious cycle of doomed relationships.

On this particular April morning, I was looking at two potential bed partners, and feeling very good about my life.

If I'd just known then...

Chapter One

“McIntyre and Coventry.” I answered the phone while I poured myself a cup of coffee.

“Of course, we handle missing persons.” I listened while I added a dash of cream to the mug and headed back into the office area.

“I have an opening at two o’clock this afternoon, if that’s convenient for you.” I prefer not to answer the phone. Rand is much better with people than I am. People tend to piss me off. Rand, however, had yet to make an appearance at the office.

Late night, no doubt.

“We’ll see you then.” I hung up the phone and glanced over at Rand’s desk. *Jerk.*

I opened the folder that was centered on my blotter. It was a case we’d gotten a few days ago. Suspected infidelity. The husband had come to us this time, and wanted us to check on his wife for him.

I found her work information, called and asked for her, then hung up when she answered. I checked to see when she’d be getting off of work, and what days her husband suspected her of playing around. Today would be a good day to follow her.

After gathering up the necessary equipment for a surveillance and piling it on my desk I checked the clock again. Nine a.m. and still no sign of my partner.

What was I getting so worked up for? So he was lolling in bed with some slut he’d picked up last night. He seemed to do that most every night. I swear, he must walk around with a perpetual hard-on.

Okay, I was pissed. I was pissed because he was late. I was pissed because he obviously didn’t take our business as seriously as I did. I was *not* pissed that he wasn’t lolling in bed with *me*.

Nine-thirty rolled around and he finally strolled in, hair wet from his shower. I was on the phone, again, so all I could do was give him the eye.

He grinned at me, looking like sin itself. *Asshole.*

I made a promise to myself to find some guy tonight and return the favor tomorrow morning.

I scheduled an appointment with the woman on the phone and hung up, then swiveled my chair around to face my partner. “Working late last night?” I knew he hadn’t been.

“You should try it sometime.” A slow grin curved the sides of his mouth. “Maybe you wouldn’t be in such a bitchy mood then.”

“Huh!” I grabbed our scheduling book, and rolled my chair over to his desk. I plopped the book down in front of him and pointed at the first entry. “Guess it escaped your mind that you have a meeting with Kender and Task at ten o’clock.”

I felt a small amount of satisfaction when he grimaced at the entry. He ran his hands through his hair, scrubbed his face, then heaved himself out of his chair.

“Shit.” He started for the door, turned around and came back to his desk. He glared at me while he grabbed his folder and cell phone, then turned again for the door.

“Anything else I should know about before I head out?” He paused with his hand on the doorknob.

“We’ve got a full day, so don’t entertain your ten o’clock too much.” I knew some of his meetings had gone well into the night as he “entertained” a new client.

“Great.” He slipped his sunglasses on and shot me a half-grin on his way out the door.

Killer grin.

I checked out his ass while he walked across the parking lot. I considered that one of the perks of my job, and I took advantage of it as often as I could. The man had the best ass I’d ever seen. I was pretty sure I would never see a finer one, even if I went looking for it.

The door opened again, and a woman entered, her attention focused on the lot. No doubt about it, she was checking out Rand’s ass too.

She finally turned my way, and I had a moment to study her while she got a grip on herself.

I figured she was in her mid-twenties, slender in that hereditary way, not the workout way. Her clothes were quality, but not designer. She moved with a grace that said she might have grown up with money, more money than she’d obviously been living with for a while now. Beyond that, there was the muted glow of magic. Not something preternatural outright, but someone on her family tree had been.

She shoved her straight blond hair behind her shoulders, and flashed a patently false smile at me. “I have a ten o’clock appointment?”

Do you?

“I’m assuming you’re Mrs. Franks?” I didn’t bother smiling. I’d seen what I looked like when I plastered a fake one on my face, and it was downright scary.

I motioned towards the chair opposite my desk. She examined it, then lowered herself onto the seat.

“Yes,” she answered.

“I believe you stated that you’re looking for your brother.” I held her folder open in front of me, scanning what little information I’d already gotten from her. “Tell me everything you can about him, Mrs. Franks.”

She crossed her legs at the ankle and placed her hands on top of her knees. Very proper. I wondered if there was something wrong with me that I didn’t have more class.

“I’m sorry, how far back do you want me to go?”

I hated clients that you had to prompt for everything.

“Why don’t we start with a description of your brother, and a picture of him, if you remembered to bring one.”

She nodded, opened a well-worn Prada bag, and withdrew a four-by-six print. I glanced at the picture. Wow. I perked up as she began to describe him.

“He’s twenty-six years old. He’s been working for a private security agency in Akron. He was a Navy Seal. He’s six foot, three inches tall. And, as you can see, has black hair and blue eyes.” She smiled wistfully. “He’s, well, very popular with women.”

I’d just bet he was.

“What agency did he work for?” It couldn’t be that simple.

“FandS.”

I’ll be damned. He’d worked for my brothers. “How long had he worked there?” I jotted down her answers while she spoke.

“About three years. He didn’t show up for work last Monday. His employer called

me when he'd failed to show up three days in a row, and they hadn't been able to get a hold of him at his apartment."

"Is your brother the type to take off like this?" A movement near the leg of my desk caught my eye. It was Jervis, Baxter and Mini's oldest boy. I motioned at him to stay out of sight.

"Not at all. Our parents died not long after I turned eighteen, and Nick was twenty. He blames himself for not being there for me at that time. He chose to leave the Seals when his four years were up, and came back here to—take care of me. I'd gotten married to Bill by then, though." She played with a loose thread on her cuff.

"Tell me what he's like, what does he do with his free time, where does he spend it, and who does he spend it with. Things like that." Jervis flew up to my lap and started tugging on my shirt for attention.

"He's confident, maybe a little on the aggressive side. Well, not aggressive, really, but he's got this—sense—of confidence about him, this sense of danger. He, oh hell, I guess he goes out a lot, I don't really know. I think he—enjoys—a woman's company, but he doesn't get involved with any single woman." She uncrossed her legs, shifted in her chair.

"As far as I know he rarely has anyone over to his apartment; he always goes to theirs. Whether they're male or female. He doesn't seem to have any close friends, but he knows a lot of people."

"Could you write me up a list of his usual hangouts? The names of any people he spends time with?" I handed her a pad of paper and a pen.

She took them from me and began writing.

"Do you remember who called you from FandS?" I snatched the pixie up in my hand, and closed my fingers tightly around him.

She blinked at me a minute. "Walt? I think that's what he said."

"Just keep working on that list for me; also add where he shopped for his groceries, clothes, got his hair cut, things like that. I'll be right back."

I went into the kitchen, set Jervis on the counter and got my cell phone out of my pocket. I hit the speed dial for my brother Walt. He answered on the third ring.

"Hey, Walt. I've got a Mrs. Franks here looking to hire Rand and me to find her brother Nick. Says he works for you, and that you're the one who called her when he didn't show up for work."

"Hey, cupcake. I'm fine. Your other brothers are fine also. When did you say you were inviting us over for dinner?"

"Never, unless you answer my questions. Then I'll think about it." I watched Jervis as he stomped around in a circle, his wings fluttering so fast they were an iridescent blur.

"Nick Demakis. Security specialist. Very good at his job. Can't tell you what he was working on. Can tell you I was the one who called Mrs. Franks. She let Dave and me into Nick's apartment to search it. Didn't find anything that pointed to where Nick might have gone. I do believe his turning up missing at this time is related to what he was working on. It's possible he just doesn't want to talk to us right now, but I really think something's happened to him. I don't want you getting involved."

Walt suddenly broke off and muffled his phone, but not before I heard him say something about me—undoubtedly to one of my other brothers.

"What don't you want me to do?" I asked when he came back on line.

“You heard that? Never mind, since you’re not going to be doing it anyway. Tell Mrs. Franks to save her money. FandS is looking into her brother’s disappearance.”

“Walt. I’m an adult now, I’m a licensed investigator, and I’m licensed to carry. Are you really looking into Nick’s disappearance?” Jervis was hopping up and down now, making faces at me, and I felt like swatting him.

“Yeah, sis. It’s connected with an active case of ours, so stay out of it.”

“Okay.” The wheels were turning in my head. I knew how my brothers worked; there just may be information I could pick up that they might overlook.

“You agreed too quickly. Next time, fight a little, I’ll believe you more.”

“Gotta run, Walt. Thanks for the info.” I flipped my phone shut before he could lecture me any more.

“Okay.” I frowned at the pixie. “What’s so important that you risked discovery to get to me?”

“I didn’t risk nothin’.” He braced his hands on his hips, scowling at me. “The lady out there sparkles.”

That “sparkle” was what pixies saw when they looked at preternaturals. My own talent was a little more refined.

“She might sparkle, but I doubt she even knows about it.” I pointed my finger at him, the digit looking like a battering ram in comparison to his three-inch frame.

“I was just bored.” He looked sullen now, which told me he was skipping out on a chore.

“You know the rule, Jervis. No coming into the office when there is anyone, and I mean anyone, here that Rand and I haven’t specifically introduced you to.”

“But T.J....”

“No, Jervis.” I cut him off. “Now do you want me to tell your father, or are you going to get busy with whatever task he’s asked you to do?”

He turned his big blue eyes up at me, his golden hair a waterfall of silk down his back to his waist, and he looked like an angel. I knew better, though.

“I’ll go. Just don’t tell dad, okay?”

“I won’t.” I watched as he jumped into the air and turned towards the doggie door I had installed for his family. “Unless you don’t do your chores,” I called as he zipped away.

When I returned to my desk, Mrs. Franks held out three lists. One list comprised everyday places he went, where he liked to pick up lunch, what grocery store he went to, and so on. The second was a list of the places he went at night for relaxation. The third, a list of names. She’d made notations next to each name to indicate if they were people he associated with, or women she knew had slept with her brother.

I imagined Rand’s list would be three or four times as long as Nick’s.

“Of course, there are quite a few women whose names I’ve never known.” Mrs. Franks grimaced at me and raised her hands.

“Naturally.” I looked at the picture of Nick again. *Oh my.* He’d sure give Rand a run for his money. Had that same—aura—about him, too.

“I don’t think you realize this, but FandS is run by my brothers.” I peeled my eyes off Nick’s photo. “I just talked to Walt, and he assured me that FandS is looking for him.”

She nodded her head, her gaze unfocused. “I figured they might look for him. I’d

still like to hire you to do the same.” Her expression cleared, and her jaw set in determination.

“I appreciate the business, but can I ask you why?”

“I’m not sure your brothers have the same interest in finding Nick that I do.” She twisted a strand of her honey-colored hair around her finger. “I’m not sure...” She looked at me bleakly.

“Mrs. Franks...” I encouraged her.

“Call me Sara.”

“Fine, Sara, whatever you say to me is confidential. I can guarantee that I won’t tell my brothers. You’re a little sister; imagine having five Nicks looking out for you.”

“I’ve thought a lot about it. Why did Nick miss work? He could be detained by someone he was investigating for FandS; then again, he could have found something that made him dangerous to FandS.”

I snorted. “I don’t think my brothers would kill him.”

“Maybe they’re only interested in getting whatever information Nick has, and don’t really care if Nick makes it home or not.”

I had to admit she might be right. Walt was going to be seriously pissed off at me when he found out I was working for Mrs. Franks. I just wondered how long I had before my brothers started interfering with my investigation.

“Walt said you let him and Dave into Nick’s apartment. I’d like to take a look there myself, but I’m going to have to be extremely careful so I don’t get caught by my brothers. Would it be all right if you gave me his key?”

Sara delved into her handbag and produced two keys for me.

We discussed my retainer, the fees I charged, and an estimate of how much the job might run her. I lowballed the numbers since my brothers were looking for Nick, too. Even at that, Rand and I stood to make a tidy sum off this job. She wrote a check for the retainer, and handed me a slip of paper that had both her address and phone numbers and Nick’s.

It was eleven-thirty when she left, and I decided to make myself a sandwich. No telling if Rand would make it back for his twelve-thirty appointment.

Jervis’s father Baxter was sitting on the edge of the kitchen counter when I entered the room.

“What’s up, Bax?” I dug the jar of peanut butter out of the cupboard.

“Jervis didn’t happen to show up here earlier, did he?” For a four-inch tall man, he looked tremendously imposing. His hair was golden like his son’s, but a couple of shades lighter. His chest was a ripped mass of muscle, his shoulders broad, his hips narrow. His skin shone with a fine coating of golden dust. Seems the stuff shed off their wings when they were flapping them, and tended to coat everything in their environment.

I caught myself checking out the package in the front of his pants. Man, did I need to get laid.

“Interesting question.” It was my standard response that meant, “I promised not to tell you, and I don’t want to lie to you.” Baxter knew me well enough not to press the issue.

“I’ve got some cousins traveling the pipe from Nebraska. I wanted to ask you, if they like it here, would you mind them carving out a home near my family’s?”

Traveling the pipe was a euphemism for a direct magic highway. Magic covered the

globe, and all of the dimensions. It generally followed in curvy lines, rather like weather patterns. Amongst all these different “fronts”, there were direct “pipes” between anyplace and any other place. Hey, it’s magic. And if you had enough command of the stuff yourself, you could jump one of these pipes, and almost instantly travel to the link at the other end.

“Don’t see why not, so long as they’ll abide by the rules.” I spread jelly on a slice of bread, and slapped the sides of the sandwich together.

“Thanks.” Baxter flew up and planted a kiss on my cheek. “If I weren’t married...”

I laughed. Not because he was smaller than a grown man’s penis, but because I’d have taken him up on his offer. You do know they can—transform—into human dimensions. Baxter as a human male would knock my socks off. “You’re sweet to say so.”

Armed with my peanut butter and jelly, I returned to my desk, and looked over the sheet that Sara had given me, showing Nick’s favorite night spots. I looked them up in the phone book and marked three that were within walking distance of each other. Even though it was only Thursday, I’d make Rand take me to those places tonight.

The man himself strolled in a little past noon. He swung my visitor chair around and straddled it. “We’ve got the Kender and Task account.” He rested his chin on the back of the chair, a wave of his hair falling across his eyes.

“We’ve got a missing persons job too.” I leaned back in my chair and put my feet on the desk.

“Tell me about it.”

So I told him about Nick Demakis.

“I’d like you to take me bar hopping tonight. That might throw my brothers off.”

“I don’t know about that. I think your brothers would have maimed me a long time ago if they ever thought I was fooling around with you.”

I raised my eyebrow at him. When he just looked at me blankly, my mouth dropped open.

“Forgetting something?” The question coming out harsher than I intended.

“Like what?”

“Asshole.” I kicked out of my chair and stomped off to the kitchen.

I was yanking drawers open, then slamming them closed, sure I’d come across the perfect implement to torture Rand with, when he came up behind me, wrapped his arms around my body, and trapped my arms to my sides. I went absolutely still as I felt the entire length of him settle against my back. He had an exquisitely hard body, and an energy that sizzled across my skin like electricity. He also sported a tremendous erection, proving my theory that he walked around with one all the time.

His lips brushed the side of my face. “Honey, I was pulling your leg. I could never forget.”

I relaxed against him, and he made a strange whooshing noise like his lungs had deflated.

“You can let me go. I’m not going to hurt you.” Not much anyway.

“I don’t trust you.” His hands wrapped around my forearms, holding tight while he stepped back from me. Then he let me go, and started running for the office area. I was hot on his heels, just about to tackle him, when the outside door opened and his twelve-thirty appointment walked in.

I pulled up short. "Oh." I hadn't meant to say that out loud, but the guy who had just walked in was a total fox.

He turned his stormy gaze my direction, and I stopped breathing.

"Connor Reilly." His voice was deep and rich, and stroked across my body like a caress.

"T.J. Coventry." I glided toward him, drawn by his magnetic pull.

"Rand McIntyre." Rand stepped in front of me and stuck his hand out at Reilly.

Reilly took a moment to size him up, then shook his hand. I came up on Rand's right side, and Reilly extended his hand to me. I grasped it, noticing how his dwarfed mine. His grip was firm, his palm rough from use, and radiated a heat that threatened to scorch me. The warmth was making its way to my groin when Rand elbowed me in the side and snapped me back to the present.

"If you'll just come over here," Rand told the man, shooting a look at me, and heading for his desk.

Reilly slid me a full body scan, the corner of his mouth turning up in a wicked grin. He nodded once, then followed my partner.

I watched the two men walk away and I would have been hard pressed to tell you which had the better ass. I think Rand had just met his match.

I was still ogling Reilly's backside when I realized that Rand was watching me. I grinned at him sheepishly, and he grimaced. So I quickly dove into the paperwork on my desk, shuffling through it, pretending to be busy.

I glanced up again when Rand disappeared into the kitchen. Reilly stood, and sauntered over to where I sat, with a long, loose stride. He leaned his hip on the edge of my desk and looked down at me, a definite hunger flickering in his eyes. My heart skipped a beat.

"Would you be free for dinner Friday night?" he asked, staring directly into my eyes.

"I'll have to check." I was trapped in those deep gray depths until he cocked an eyebrow at me, and I realized I had yet to answer him.

Fumbling my PDA out of my purse, I thumbed it on, and punched over to Friday. I knew I was smiling like an idiot when I looked back up at him, but I couldn't help myself.

"I'm free." His eyes flicked to my mouth when I spoke, his pupils dilating.

His voice rasped when he spoke. "I'll pick you up at seven."

My nipples hardened, and moisture gathered between my legs. I licked lips that were suddenly dry. "Come to the back door here. I live above the office."

His eyes followed the path of my tongue, and he shifted his legs. My gaze fell to his crotch, and the noticeable bulge pressing against the fabric there. I didn't mean to, but I licked my lips again as I stared at the bulge.

Reilly choked back a groan.

Just then, the door to the kitchen opened, and Rand paused in the doorway. His eyes narrowed as he took in the scene at my desk.

"I'll see you tomorrow night." I told Reilly's crotch, remembering at the last second to look up at his face. I felt my cheeks suffuse with blood.

Reilly grinned wickedly at me, winked, then turned back to Rand's desk.

My partner nearly growled at the man when they resumed talking. *Jesus*. He confused the hell out of me sometimes. It's not like he was interested in me himself.

Reilly stopped by my desk on his way out to get my phone number. Our fingers touched when I handed him the slip of paper, and a tingling sensation raced up my arm. His fingers tightened around mine, and he leaned closer. My breath caught in my throat.

He brushed his lips over mine, and whispered in my ear, "Until tomorrow night." I wanted to pull him closer, press his lips harder against my mouth. We stared at each other for a long moment instead.

"Until tomorrow," I agreed.

Then I swiveled my chair so I could watch Reilly as he left the building, all tight muscle and easy grace. I only turned away when I could no longer see him. Rand was standing inches away from me, a scowl on his face.

"What do you think you're doing?" His voice was too low and controlled, and I knew he was seething.

"I'm going to check the appointment book and see what's up next."

"You know what I'm talking about." He leaned over me, his anger radiating off of him in waves.

"What are you so worked up about?" I jumped up from my chair, nearly whacking him in the chin with my head. "The guy asked me out on a date. I accepted. What's wrong with that?"

"You don't know anything about the guy," Rand hissed at me.

"So? Do you do a background check on every woman you jump in the sack with?" I yelled at him, my arms flapping.

"I don't need to. I can take care of myself. That guy's a predator, T.J., and he's looking at you like you're lunch." Rand slammed his hand down on my desk.

I butted up against his chest, craned my head back to see his eyes, and lit into him.

"I'll have you know I can take care of myself just fine." I shoved against him. "So back off, Rand."

He grabbed the back of my head in one of his big hands, tangling his fingers in my hair.

"You're thinking about fucking him." Rand's eyes burned into mine.

"Your point being?" I was beginning to notice the way his body fit against me. The way the rigid length of his cock burned into the soft flesh of my stomach.

Suddenly his mouth was on mine. He consumed me with his lips, his tongue. Fire flared throughout my body, and I lost myself in the kiss. His free hand squeezed my ass, pulling me closer. He rocked his hips forward, rubbing his cock against me. I felt a flood of moisture at the juncture of my thighs.

"I don't want other men touching you," he gasped into my mouth.

"Rand." I moaned when he moved his hand to my breast and gently squeezed. Then he brushed his thumb over my nipple, causing me to shudder.

"Tell me you won't fuck him." Rand nipped a trail along my jaw. Flicking his tongue over the small bites.

I sighed. "I can't."

Rand tensed. His lips stopped moving on my skin. "Why?"

I felt his chest expanding and contracting with his heightened breathing.

"I have needs, Rand." I tried to put some space between us, but his grip on me was too tight.

"You seem to do all right." Rand hadn't moved his lips from my jaw.

“Not true.” I slumped in his embrace. “I’m slowly losing my mind with the want of it. You sure as hell don’t help matters by getting laid almost nightly. If I don’t find some steady sex soon, I think I might combust.”

Rand’s arms tightened further, nearly cutting off my oxygen. I squirmed.

“What am I going to do with you?” Rand brushed his lips down my neck.

“You’re going to go bar hopping with me tonight, and help me look for clues into Nick Demakis’s disappearance.”

The warmth of Rand’s breath washed over my neck as he sighed. He lifted his head and looked into my eyes. He looked defeated, and it cut right through my heart to see him look that way. I stroked my fingers through his hair and pulled him in for another kiss. I took his lips with a slow, lingering touch, then eased my way into his mouth with my tongue. I danced my tongue with his, savoring the unique taste that was Rand. It might have been years since we’d last kissed this way, but I will forever remember his taste.

We had been enjoying ourselves for several minutes, leisurely stroking our hands over each other, when someone cleared their throat behind us.

Rand kept me locked against him as he glanced over my head.

“Can I help you?” he asked in a totally professional tone.

“I have a two o’clock appointment. Name is Bestler.”

Rand nodded toward his desk. “If you’ll wait over there, I’ll be with you in just a moment.” He watched Mr. Bestler until the man was seated.

“We’ll talk about this later.” His voice was stern.

“I’ve got a surveillance to do. I should be back by six,” I told him, waiting for him to release me.

“Make sure you have your cell phone on, and charged.” His eyes searched mine, then he kissed me briefly and let me go.

I gathered up my equipment, stuffed it into a small duffel bag, and headed out of the office.

Chapter Two

I sat outside an ugly brick building waiting for the wife to leave for the day. I had plenty to think about. Too much, in fact.

What was I going to do about Rand?

I was thinking about having wild sex with him and almost missed the woman when she strolled out of the building and climbed into the passenger seat of a car that was parked at the curb.

I waited until another car had pulled behind them, then swung out onto the road to follow. They headed towards the north side of town where older businesses lined the highway, including several cheap hotels. At least that was where I was hoping they were going.

When they swung into the Come Back Inn, I thanked my luck. Parking behind a delivery van, I watched as the man went into the office. He came out moments later, and pulled his car around the side of the building. I just made it to the corner in time to see which room they entered. I'd snapped several shots of the two of them in the car, and the woman waiting in the car in front of the motel. Now all I had to get were some pictures of them together, doing something besides playing chess.

I gave them a few minutes to become—involved—then I snuck along the front of the rooms. The curtains didn't meet right in the window of their unit, giving me a clear view of the couple on the bed.

Shit. Even shooting pictures as evidence of her infidelity, I found myself getting ridiculously horny.

I'd had enough.

I grumbled to myself all the way back to the office.

Rand had left already, leaving a note on my desk telling me he'd pick me up at seven, and we could grab a bite to eat before we started hitting the bars. He left a post-script, telling me to dress like I was really going out on a date, and not in my usually crappy attire.

I made a face at the note, and headed for my living area.

A date, huh? Who knows, maybe I'd meet some potential male flesh this evening.

With that thought in mind, I gave myself the works. Nice long shower and a total shave job. I dried my hair in big, loose waves, and left it down. Applied a little makeup, and even a light touch of perfume. Smiling wickedly to myself, I skipped the underthings. I pulled on a pair of thigh-high stockings, slipped into my black leather miniskirt, and finished with a tight red sweater. A check of my cleavage showed it was looking good, even without the bra. I stepped into some black fuck-me pumps, and looked at the entire effect in the full-length mirror.

Worked for me.

Rand showed up just before seven, and found me in the kitchen. "Are you ready?" He stopped dead in the doorway as he caught sight of me.

My mouth went suddenly dry, my crotch having the opposite reaction. Faking a calm I wasn't feeling, I swayed my way over to his side. "Not too crappy for you?" I purred.

He just blinked at me.

I rolled my eyes, latched onto his arm and dragged him toward the door. "Where we going to eat?"

He snapped out of his daze. "Brennigan's."

He opened the door to his Jeep for me, and I caught him staring at my legs as I got in. "You've seen them before, Rand."

"Not like this." He leaned forward and ran his hand up my thigh.

"Oh for Pete's sake, get in the car." I slapped his hand away, suddenly too hot to breathe.

The ride to Brennigan's was pretty entertaining though, since Rand spent almost as much time looking at me as he did the road.

We were almost finished with our meal before Rand brought up the subject of Reilly.

"So, T.J., you're not really thinking of sleeping with that guy, are you?"

I know my mouth dropped open as I stared at him. "Is that really any of your business?"

He squinted at me. "Yeah," he said, like he believed it.

"Save it, Rand. I'll sleep with whoever I want."

Fortunately, for him, he shut up about the whole thing.

After that, the evening was really quite enjoyable. We went to the different bars, had a few drinks, talked to a number of people. Several men hit on me, and Rand started staying a lot closer, even draped his arm around me a few times. He caught me outside the bathroom, in the dimly lit hall of the last place we were checking out that night. He trapped me against the wall and leaned in for a kiss. Heat flashed through my body as his lips met mine. I melted against him, and creamed when I came into contact with his erection.

I desperately wanted to know what that cock would feel like inside of me after all these years.

His hand dropped to the hem of my skirt, and I held my breath as he slid his fingers under it, and up the inside of my thigh.

"Christ." His cock jerked against me when his fingers brushed against my pussy. "You're not wearing any panties." His voice was hoarse as he trailed his fingers along my vulva.

Brushing his lips down the side of my neck, he crowded closer to me as he found the opening to my vagina. Sinking his finger into me, he groaned. Then stroked me slowly, until my legs nearly gave out.

"Rand," I begged.

"Let's go." He hesitated, then withdrew his finger, his eyes blazing.

Grabbing my hand, he hauled me straight through the bar and to his car. Shoving me into the passenger seat, he floored it out of the parking lot.

He screeched into his garage, slammed the vehicle into park, and yanked me out of my seat almost before I had the buckle unlatched.

I stumbled along behind him as he dragged me up the stairs to his apartment. He was on me the minute we were inside, undressing me and himself, as he maneuvered me to his bedroom, where he tackled me onto his bed. His mouth crushed mine as we both sought to devour each other.

"I can't wait," he rasped, kneeling my thighs apart, planting himself between them.

I wrapped my legs around his back, my hands going to his ass, trying to drag him

inside of me.

He thrust, his cock only driving a couple of inches in. He eased himself back out a ways, then started working in again with short stabs of his dick, both of us groaning when he was finally buried to his balls.

"You are so fucking tight." He gritted his teeth, pulling his penis nearly out of me, then slamming it back in.

"Fuck me, Rand." I was dying, burning up, in danger of exploding.

He moved then, powering his cock in and out of me, cleaving his way between my inner muscles. I cried out, my vagina clenching his hard length, my body bucking against his. He kept driving into me, taking me through my first orgasm, and winding me up for another.

His hands went to my hips and tipped my pelvis, driving harder, deeper inside. His cock brushed over the bundle of nerves at the edge of my womb, and I blew apart again, screaming his name, my shudders so intense that I drove him over the edge.

"Goddamn!" His muscles froze, then his cock erupted, spewing hotly inside of me. He thrust a few hard times, then stilled, his balls depleted.

I looked up at him through eyes that had trouble focusing. "Shit, Rand, that was something else."

"You're telling me." He flexed his hips, and I felt his shaft, hot and hard, move within me.

"Jesus." I breathed.

He grinned that sexy half grin of his at me, and started thrusting again. The man had amazing stamina.

* * * *

I woke up feeling out of sorts, the sun beating down on my head, and my entire body aching. Then I felt the movement at my back and remembered where I was.

Rolling over, I looked at Rand. He quickly pinned me on my back, seated himself between my legs, and kissed me while he drove his cock inside.

"Good morning." He smiled lazily at me as he stroked.

"Uh, yeah." I was already lost in the feel of his thick shaft brushing along my well-used flesh. "God, you feel good." I arched up against him, the satisfying slap of flesh upon flesh fueling my desire.

"I agree." He lowered his head and brushed his lips along the side of my neck, pausing to suck on the sensitive spot where my neck met my shoulder.

A shudder passed through me, and he picked up his speed.

The muscles in my pelvis coiled tighter. My breath hitched, then the first hard spasm of my orgasm had me in its grip. He groaned as I vised around his penis, then I felt him throb as he spewed his seed.

I enjoyed the weight of his body for several minutes afterward, then reluctantly nudged him. "We should probably get to the office."

"I don't usually have to worry about that; you always show up early."

"Yeah, well." I absently stroked his leg with my foot.

"Let's play hooky and fuck all day." He pressed his hips forward, emphasizing his point.

My pussy twitched at the suggestion. Rand chuckled, having felt it.

“We can’t,” I told him, but since he didn’t move off of me, I didn’t have much choice.

He started stroking himself inside of me again. “Sure we can.”

I started moving against his thrusts. “Maybe,” I conceded.

A grin spread across his face, his eyes sparkling with excitement. He kissed me playfully, then deepened the kiss.

The phone rang.

He ignored it, increasing the pace and depth of his thrusts.

His answering machine picked up.

He kissed his way to my breast, and sucked my nipple into his mouth. Then he rolled it with his tongue, and nipped lightly with his teeth. He alternated between sucking and nipping until I was whimpering.

Angling his hips, he stroked the length of his cock across my clit as he drove back in.

I bore down on my inner muscles, and was rewarded with a long, low groan from him.

He pulled all the way out of me, rolled me over, and urged me onto my knees.

Resting on my elbows, he drove into me from behind.

I grasped the bedspread, bowed my back and thrust back at him. Within moments I felt my body tighten. I gasped, then was pulled under as an intense orgasm rolled through me. I felt my fluids drench over him and dribble down my thighs.

“Yes,” he breathed, then jerked as his own climax claimed him.

The phone rang again. Again he ignored it as he draped himself over my back.

“Jesus, you come hot.” He wrapped his arms around my waist, then splayed his hands across my stomach and held me.

The phone rang a third time.

“Sounds like someone really wants to get a hold of you.”

“The machine will pick it up.”

He backed out of me, then pulled me against his side, stroking his hands over me idly.

“T.J.?”

“Yeah?” I rubbed my own pattern across the muscles of his chest.

“Ever take it in the ass?”

“No.”

I moved my hand down to his stomach, tracing the line of hair that led me to his cock.

“I want to do that with you.” Excitement edged into his voice.

“Will I like it?” I was always up for a new adventure.

“Oh, yeah.” His grin turned wicked.

“Okay.”

“Really?”

“Sure.”

His penis sprang to attention. “How do you do that?” I asked, awed.

“It’s you. I can’t get enough of you.” He rummaged in his nightstand, and came up with a tube of lubricant.

“On your stomach, wench.” His grin was pure sin, and I felt my muscles ripple in anticipation.

He shoved a couple of pillows under my hips, then leaned over my shoulder and whispered into my ear. "Just relax. Do what I say, and you'll have the time of your life."

He ran his hand down my back, slid his fingers between my cheeks, then circled my anus. His hand went away while he squeezed a generous dollop of lube into it, then it returned. He spread the lube around the outside of my hole before sliding a well-greased finger inside.

He stroked me for a few minutes, then inserted a second finger.

"So tight." His voice vibrated with excitement.

He positioned a third finger at my anus, and told me to bear down while he slid it in next to the others.

My pussy flamed and began dripping, aching to be filled.

I pressed back against his hand, growing impatient for the feel of his dick. "Fuck me already," I groused.

Chuckling, he positioned himself between my legs, greased up, then rubbed the head of his cock against my anus.

"Bear down," he told me, and I did, while he jammed himself past the tight ring of muscle. I continued bearing down while he pushed his entire length into me, in one slow, relentless motion that burned my passage, and caused it to feel uncomfortably full.

Then he started to move, and sensations burst across my flesh.

I groaned, and shifted my weight so that I could rock back at him. He grabbed my hips, hard, gave a few strong thrusts, then began pounding into me. He reached around to tease my clit between his fingers, my inner muscles immediately clamping down.

I screamed, and came so hard I nearly passed out.

"God, yes!" he shouted and fucked me with a frenzied, erratic stroke that had me spiraling toward another climax. We came together, our bodies jerking and spasming, while thick jets of his cum shot into my rectum.

He collapsed on top of me, his shaft still buried in my ass.

"Wow." It was all that I could say.

"I second that," he breathed.

"Are you fucking my sister in the ass?!"

I didn't react at first, not believing I had heard that.

Then legs appeared in my vision, at the side of the bed.

I scanned up the legs and found myself looking into the very irate face of my brother Walt.

Rand tensed against my back. "You want to give us a moment to get decent, Walt?" he said, calmly.

Walt narrowed his eyes, opened his mouth, then huffed and stormed out of the room.

"Oh God." I buried my face in the bed.

"It's not that bad, Teej."

"My brother just watched you fuck me in the ass and it's not that bad?" I screeched.

"Come on." He urged me out of the bed, and dragged me into the shower. I didn't want to take the time, knowing my brother was pissed and waiting in the other room. Rand made his point though, when he told me I was covered with his cum, and my brother might frown on that.

We showered quickly, and it wasn't until I was standing next to the bed that I realized all my clothes were in the other room with Walt. Rand handed me a T-shirt that

hung to my knees. I grabbed a pair of his sweat socks, feeling somewhat more dressed when I had those on as well.

Reluctantly I trailed behind him into the living room.

Walt took one look at Rand and punched him in the jaw. Rand went down like a ton of bricks.

I punched Walt, hurting my hand, and pissing him off further. He picked me up and started carrying me toward the door.

“Put me down!” I wriggled in his arms, accidentally elbowing him in the groin.

That got his attention, and he set me on my feet.

“What is wrong with you?!” I yelled at him.

“I tried to get hold of you this morning, at all your numbers. I tried to get a hold of Rand, and had no luck there either. I was worried out of my mind. I came over to find out what had happened to you, and I find him,” he thrust a finger in Rand’s direction, “the man that is a walking hard-on, fucking my kid sister in the ass. How would you expect me to react?”

“I’m an adult, Walt. I’m not a kid, and I will not tolerate being treated like one. As for what Rand and I do with each other? That’s our business.”

“T.J., he fucks anything that moves!”

I butted up against my brother in my anger. Anger that I knew I really felt towards Rand.

“What’s your point, Walt?” My voice came out barely above a whisper.

I felt Rand move to stand behind me, not touching me, but there for support all the same.

“I don’t want to see you get hurt.” Walt’s anger washed out of him as he looked into my eyes and saw the truth. I was in love with Rand, had been as long as I could remember. I’d never admitted it to anyone, though.

Rand’s arms came around my waist and he pulled me back against his chest.

Walt took a long look at the two of us. Then, shaking his head, he turned to go.

“Just wanted to tell you that we’ve got a line on Demakis. I’ll keep you posted.”

Then he let himself out of the apartment, without looking back.

I sagged against Rand, and he kissed the top of my head. “That went pretty well,” he told me, and I had to laugh.

Turning in his arms, I looked up at him. “Why don’t you head over to the office, while I get some clothes?”

He kissed me, thoroughly. “Will you go out with me tonight?”

I blinked at him, my mind racing. I hadn’t really thought about this going anywhere with Rand. The man really did fuck everything. He wasn’t someone that settled down.

“Uh...” *Shit*. “I’ve got a date tonight already.”

“Not anymore.”

“What? Since when did you become my keeper?”

“Since I took you into my bed last night.” He clenched his jaw.

“Oh please, Rand, Walt’s right. You fuck everything that comes along; it doesn’t mean anything to you.”

“Now, there you’re wrong. I’ve been trying like hell not to fuck you. I knew it would only lead to trouble.”

“Rand...”

“No. Oh, hell, I don’t know. All I know is when I think about you with another man I nearly lose my mind.”

“When would you even have the time to notice?” I groused.

“I’m sounding pretty unreasonable, huh?” He raked a hand through his hair.

“You could say that.” I wasn’t appeased.

He led me over to the couch, sat down, and pulled me into his lap. “I don’t know what to do about you. I’ve been in love with you most of my life.”

I stared at him, thinking he had a pretty fucked up way of showing his emotions.

“You’re my best friend and my business partner. I just always figured we’d end up married one day.” He absently stroked my thigh while he spoke.

“You sure have a funny way of going about getting there,” I said, without heat.

“Remember Scott?” His hand tensed, the only indication that he was upset.

How could I forget? I’d dated him in college. I didn’t remember Rand getting bent out of shape about it at the time. He was even pissed when the guy insisted I get into another line of work. It was the first of my relationships to nowhere.

“Yeah, what about him?”

“You and I were planning on opening up this business. I had ideas of moving into the house with you. Then you shocked the hell out of me by going out on a date with some other guy. I mean, I thought we were both feeling the same way about each other, but I was wrong.”

“Actually, I wanted desperately for you to notice me as a female, and not just as your friend. I got to feeling pretty low about myself, because you never tried to get into my pants. I wondered if maybe there wasn’t something wrong with me.”

“Shit. I went nuts when you started dating other guys.”

I leaned against his chest, wondering if we’d fucked the situation up too much to salvage it. “So what do we do now? You’re too important to me, Rand. I can’t lose you.”

“So we take it slow.” His breath ruffled the hair on the top of my head.

“I’m going to have to think about this.” He was offering me everything I had ever wanted, just a few years too late.

“Tell me this, was being with me the best you’ve ever had?”

I couldn’t help but grin. The man who could, and did, have any woman he wanted was feeling insecure where I was concerned.

“Yeah, you’re beyond the best I’ve ever had.”

“For me too.” He tipped my chin up and smiled down at me.

“We’d better get to work.” I cupped the side of his face, suddenly feeling tender towards him.

“You going out with that Irish guy tonight?” His eyes searched mine.

I didn’t even have to think about it now. “No.”

He smiled, then raised an eyebrow. “You going out with me tonight?”

“Sure.”

“Okay then, we can go to work.”

Chapter Three

I sprinted across the yard to the back of the house while Rand went to the office.

I called Reilly. His voice set a fire in me, and I almost didn't cancel. I sort of fibbed and told him something had come up at work and I was going to be tied up for the night.

Then I walked into the office and found a woman draped over Rand. He didn't seem to be minding her attention. Fuming inside, I casually strolled over to his desk, picked up his phone and started dialing Reilly back.

"Who are you calling?" Rand asked.

"Reilly. Seems I'm going to be free this evening after all," I told him, coolly.

"No, you're not." Rand narrowed his eyes at me.

I flicked my gaze at the blonde leaning against his shoulder. "Yes, I believe I am."

Rand barely glanced at the woman. "You're going out with me tonight." His voice took on the harsh edge of anger.

"Looks to me like you have other plans," I snarked.

"That's right, Rand is taking me to McMurdock's. Isn't that right, honey?" The blonde fairly bubbled.

Honey. Puke.

"Reilly? Glad I caught you. If the invitation is still open..." I kept my eyes on Rand's, seething inside.

"See you at seven." I hung up, glaring at my partner. "Since you've got things—in hand—here, I'm taking the rest of the day off. I'll see you tomorrow."

I walked through the back of the office and didn't stop until I was in my bedroom. Flopping down on my bed, I couldn't decide exactly what I was feeling, so I thought about taking a nap. Maybe I'd fuck Reilly tonight. If I did, I'd need my energy for that.

*

Rand slouched down in his chair and tuned the woman out. What was up with T.J.? He thought they had it all worked out. She was going to be his. She had to know this woman didn't mean anything to him.

He glanced at the blonde leaning against his side. He hadn't even been aware she was touching him. *Shit.* He'd gotten so used to women draping themselves over him, he didn't even notice anymore. Too used to it. *Guess I do need to work on that.*

"Look, I've got some business to take care of, I'll see you later." He shook her off, locked up the office, and went to his apartment.

A glance at the clock told him that T.J.'s date would be arriving in less than four hours. He spent the time pacing, thinking, pacing some more. He came to a decision half an hour before her date was to arrive. He changed into a snug pair of black jeans and a lightweight gray sweater that he knew he looked good in, then went to the house.

He found T.J. putting on her makeup in her bathroom, dressed in nothing but her bra and panties. His dick hardened at the sight. Leaning against the door frame, he watched her, waiting for her to acknowledge his presence.

She ignored him.

"T.J." He winced slightly at the growl in his voice.

She slanted her eyes in his direction, the look as hostile as he had ever seen from her.

“You misunderstood that situation in the office,” he stated, taking half a step towards her.

He watched as she drew in a deep breath, his eyes dropping to watch her breasts. His cock throbbed painfully, and he shifted his position to relieve some of the pressure.

T.J. glanced at his crotch, which only served to make him harder.

“No, Rand. I don’t think I did.” Her voice cool, she finished with her mascara and turned to him. “I think you’ve been so free and easy with women that you don’t know how to stop. I’m not asking you to. Your friendship means more to me. But I can’t be just another of your casual lovers, Rand.”

“Damn it, T.J. I want more than just a casual relationship with you.”

T.J. studied him for a long moment. “Then you’re going to have to show me that’s what you really want. Until then, let’s just go about our business as we did before last night.”

Rand couldn’t help himself. He wrapped his arms around her and gripped her tightly to his body. She didn’t fight him, but she didn’t respond to his touch, either. He stared into her eyes, looking for that spark that would tell him he had a chance. Before he knew it, he was kissing her. He deepened the kiss, and she moaned.

“I hope you have a lousy time on your date, and that you come home early in disgust.”

“Thanks, Rand. I hope you spend a quiet evening at home and make it in to the office on time in the morning.”

Feeling better, he let go of her. He’d intended to watch her dress, but she told him to get his ass out of there. Instead, he hung around outside, waiting for her date to show.

*

I was fighting a case of nerves. I was sorry I’d ever slept with Rand. The man couldn’t help himself.

I didn’t know where Reilly was taking me, so I picked out a soft denim skirt that came to mid-thigh and a fuzzy white sweater that hugged my figure.

Reilly arrived exactly at seven, sexier than I remembered, in a pair of black jeans and a beige cable knit sweater. A jolt of pure arousal slugged me in the gut when those stormy gray eyes of his met mine. He slipped an arm around me, and drew me into a kiss. My nipples hardened as a rush of liquid dampened my panties.

His eyes were glittering when he released me. “You look lovely.” That deep voice of his alone nearly made me come.

I grabbed my purse, nudged him out of the door, and locked it behind us. I didn’t think it would be a good idea to attack the man before we’d even gone out on our first date, and I was rapidly losing control of myself.

He placed a large, warm hand low on my back and guided me to his vehicle. A Ford Explorer, which both surprised me, and seemed somehow fitting. He helped me into the passenger seat, his hand lingering on my thigh. A flush of warmth spread over my body. He grinned this sexy half grin at me, then shut my door. As he backed out of the parking space, I happened to see Rand standing next to the garage.

He did not look happy.

Reilly took me to a quiet little restaurant that I hadn’t even known existed. It had dim, romantic lighting, and a selection of dishes that ranged from Italian to Chinese.

“So how long have you been a private investigator?” Connor absently brushed my

arm while he spoke.

"Pretty much since I was a teenager. My brothers run FandS in Akron, and I helped out summers. What do you do?"

"I run a construction company."

He was so easy to talk to that I found the night racing away from me. Between that and the wine, when he led me outside to his car, I didn't want the evening to end. He braced me against the side of the Explorer, leaned his hips into mine, and kissed me slowly. His tongue seduced mine.

"I would like to take you to my house. Will you come with me?" His eyes were heavy-lidded with desire, while my own body ached to know his better.

"I'd like that," I breathed.

The grin he shot me nearly melted my knees.

*

Rand switched from beer to whiskey. She'd only been gone a couple of hours, but it was killing him. He didn't know what he was going to do if she didn't come home that night. He flipped through the channels on his TV and just kept flipping. He didn't want to watch anything because he couldn't get his mind to settle down.

Not hearing the flap of the cat door, he jumped when a couple of pixies darted past him. He straightened up, scanning the room, to find them standing on his bar.

He wandered over there, curious.

Three more pixies arrived and settled down next to the ones that were already there. He didn't recognize any of them.

"Do I know you?" He reached behind the bar for the whiskey.

Another pixie zoomed up, almost dropping into Rand's glass. It was Baxter, their resident pix.

"Hey Rand, thought you might need a little cheering up." Baxter planted his fists on his tiny hips, grinning madly at him.

"What makes you think I need cheering up?" Rand filled his glass, then dug around behind the bar for the plastic caps he kept there to serve the little people.

He placed a few drops of whiskey in several of them and set them out on the bar.

"Hey, thanks," one of the new pixies called out as he snatched up the cap, and took a healthy swallow.

"We saw T.J. all dressed up getting into an SUV with some good-looking dude," Baxter said.

Rand narrowed his eyes at the man. "How, exactly, did you know that T.J.'s and my relationship had changed?"

"Get real, Rand. She spent the night here last night, and Walt came storming out of here this morning looking like he wanted to kill something," Baxter replied.

"Okay, I'll give you that." Rand took a drink. "So tell me, where did all these other pixies come from?"

"Didn't T.J. tell you? They're cousins of mine from Nebraska." Baxter tipped his own cap. "Now put your glass on the bar so we can dust it for you."

"That really works?" Rand eyed the little guy, wondering if he was just being played.

"Yes, it really works." Baxter glared at him. "I wouldn't stomp on a guy who's already down, you know that."

Rand slapped his glass down on the bar, and filled it nearly to the brim. "Fire away."

Baxter gestured to the other men, and one by one they hovered over his drink, fanning their wings. Brilliant specks of dust, in a rainbow of hues, wafted down into the amber liquid. Rand watched in fascination as the dust continued to sparkle throughout the glass.

Raising his drink to the pixies, he nodded his head. "Thanks, men." Then he tipped the concoction to his lips, and took a sip.

Magic bloomed across his taste buds, the liquid burning a delicious path over his tongue, then down his throat. He took several more sips, the tingle of energy increasing. Then a good, solid warmth flooded his insides. He grew light-headed, and was seized by the urge to giggle.

"Oh, yeah." He smiled at them. "Thanks. It's just what I needed."

"Good luck, Rand. She'll come around, just you wait and see." Baxter jumped off the bar, and fluttered in front of his face.

"I hope you're right," Rand said, then thanked the pixies again, just before they darted out of his apartment.

He sank back onto the couch, his body finally giving up the urge to track down his woman, wrestle her from the Irishman, then beat the man to a pulp. Cursing his mother's legacy, he gulped his whiskey, letting the magic numb his senses, and soothe his aching heart.

*

Reilly lived in a beautiful ranch house on a wooded acreage in Bath Township. I'd been through the area before, but I'd never known anyone who actually lived there, though my resident pixies said there were several clans that thrived in these softly rolling hills.

He showed me to his family room, and I stood next to the bar while he poured me a glass of wine, and himself a scotch.

"Would you like a tour?" His eyelids lowered over his dark gray eyes, letting me know that the "tour" would probably lead only as far as the bedroom.

"Maybe," I said, grinning at him.

His eyes crinkled with amusement. Then he moved closer to me. I took a big swallow of my wine. He removed the glass from my hand, and set both of our drinks on top of the bar.

My heart rate kicked up as he drew me into his embrace. His lips covered mine while he pulled my body tightly against his. His tongue swept into my mouth, the hunger building. He rubbed his erection against my stomach, and deepened the kiss.

I could feel the wetness gathering between my legs, my clit throbbing for his attention.

His hands stroked over my back, landing on my ass, his fingers digging into my flesh. "I have wanted you since I first laid eyes on you at your office," he breathed into my ear.

I shivered, unable to control the growing need I had to feel this man inside of me. "Connor." I wanted him to throw me down to the floor and mount me. Now.

"Come on." He took me by the hand, and led me through his house to his bedroom. I had a moment's hesitation when I realized I was about to sleep with a man I'd just met. A novel experience for me.

Then he swept me into his arms, and my hesitation vanished. He was all over me, his

hands roaming my body as he rid me of my clothes, his lips caressing, his tongue trailing wetly. He nipped and sucked on me until I was ready to scream.

We tumbled onto his bed, and devoured each other. I was mindless in my arousal by the time his mouth claimed my pussy.

My body jerked, and he groaned as he slid his tongue between my folds, dipped into my vagina, then traced his way back to my clit. He suckled hard and fast on the nub, flicking it with the tip of his tongue and an orgasm tore through me. He kept on torturing that bundle of nerves until a second orgasm claimed me and a rush of fluids washed out of my vagina.

"I love the way you taste," he said as he kissed his way up my body, moving between my thighs. I could taste myself on his lips when he captured my mouth and thrust his tongue inside.

"Tell me you want this," he gasped out as he continued to kiss me, his eyes half open, focused on mine.

"God, yes." I wrapped my legs around his hips and pulled.

He reached between us and stroked the head of his cock in the wetness flowing from my core. Then he positioned himself at my opening. "Please tell me I don't need to use a condom."

"I'm safe," I managed to gasp.

With short, controlled thrusts, he worked his way into my sex. I rolled my hips, encouraging him to fill me, take me. When he was fully seated within me, he ground his pelvis against mine, and groaned.

Then he started driving into me. Long, hard strokes with a twist of his hips at the end of each inward thrust. It drove me wild, and I slapped my hips back at him, incredible sensations radiating outward from my center.

"Jesus," he groaned, his thrusts coming faster, more erratic.

My body coiled, tightened. I was staring into his eyes, mesmerized by their smoky depths, wound so tight I was thinking I would detonate. Then his cock brushed over the bundle of nerves near my womb and I blew apart beneath him. Screaming his name, lights flashing in my brain, I was consumed by a pleasure so intense I nearly cried.

Connor locked me tightly in his arms, slammed himself against my womb, and erupted inside of me. He continued thrusting, the hot wash of his cum warming my insides, as he gave me every drop.

He collapsed on top of me, the weight of his body pressing me into the mattress.

I stroked his back, letting my hands come to rest on his waist. He flexed his hips, and I felt his cock swelling again. Levering himself up on his elbows, he looked at me with dark eyes. "Christ, T.J. You blew me away."

I grinned and let him roll us over so that I got a chance on top.

It was several hours later that we finally fell into an exhausted sleep, with his arm around my waist, cradling me against his body.

*

Rand stalked into the office.

T.J. hadn't come home the night before and his mood was beyond black. He slammed around the kitchen, started a pot of coffee, then he stormed back to his desk. He cursed the pixies that had dusted his drink. He ran his hands through his hair, scrubbed them over his face.

She'd slept with the fucking Irishman.

He ground his way through some of the files on his desk, glancing often at the clock that was advancing at an excruciatingly slow rate. Grabbing a mug of coffee, he slammed some kitchen drawers for the hell of it, then headed back to his desk.

Another look at the clock showed him it was ten a.m. and there was still no sign of T.J. He stomped over to the door and stared out at the parking lot.

His eyes narrowed as the dark blue Explorer pulled into a parking space. The Irishman got out and opened the door for T.J., pulled her into his embrace and kissed her.

She fucking glowed.

He growled as he watched Reilly walk her toward the back door. When he lost sight of them, he forced himself over to his desk. He sat there, fuming, waiting for T.J. to come into the office.

She didn't. He waited half an hour, then couldn't take another minute of it. Jumping up from his desk, he went in search of her, finding her in the shower.

At least she was alone. He yanked open the shower door, and was pleased when she jumped and let out a scream.

"What the hell are you doing, Rand?"

He grabbed her by the arm and pulled her up against him. His anger abruptly settled down once he had her in his arms.

"You fucked him." He was losing his mind. He knew it, and yet he couldn't stop himself.

T.J. sighed, took him by the hand and led him to her bed. She climbed onto the mattress and tugged his arm for him to follow her. He did so, moving automatically to position himself between her legs.

She wrapped her arms around his neck, and pulled him down for a kiss.

Confused, he let her kiss him, his lips warming against hers, her tongue licking into his mouth.

"I don't understand," he said between kisses.

"I want you, Rand. I want you more than I want to take my next breath. But you've had so many women, *have* so many women in your life, that I would go insane with jealousy if I tried to be with you.

"Yeah, I slept with Connor. But the most amazing thing is that it's given me the freedom to sleep with you."

Rand wasn't sure that made any sense, but his cock had heard the magic words, and he wasn't going to let the opportunity pass him by. He stripped his clothes off, and returned to his place between her thighs.

Grasping the cheeks of her ass, he speared himself into her core before she had a chance to change her mind. Losing himself in the feel of her tight, hot flesh, and the little sounds she made as he pleased her, he forgot about everything else.

She was so responsive to his touch; it drove him wild. He thundered into her, slanting his stroke to capture that one spot deep inside he knew would take her over the edge. Her muscles tightened around his cock, and he shuddered. She groaned his name, her fingers digging into the muscles in his back.

Sinking his fingers deeper into her flesh, he angled his stroke again, driving his shaft harder, faster. She vised down on him, her cries of pleasure sharpening, then she was jerking under him, convulsing around him, her hot release driving him to his own. He

buried himself to the balls as his semen ripped from his cock. He pulled back and buried himself again as he continued to spew.

Drained, he dropped himself on top of her. Certain that he would keep her trapped beneath him forever, if that was what it took. He only moved aside when the thought crossed his mind to wonder how he compared to the Irishman.

He swore he wouldn't ask. Then found himself doing just that. "Does your Irishman make you come like that?" *Shit.*

"My Irishman, *McIntyre*?" She rolled her head to the side and smiled sweetly at him. "Nobody makes me feel the way you do, Rand."

Well, okay then.

Chapter Four

Feeling great, I dressed and followed Rand back to the office. We'd been neglecting our work the past couple of days, and with the caseload we were handling right now, we couldn't afford to do that. The last thing I wanted to do was give up my one day off a week to catch up. Sitting at my desk, I came across Nick Demakis's address. I grabbed the phone and dialed FandS. My brother James answered and I asked him where they were with the case. He put me on hold! I tapped my pen against the desk while I listened to an oldie.

"So you finally got yourself out from under McIntyre?"

"Fuck you, Walt. What have you got on Demakis?"

"Didn't pan out, we're still looking for him. And I mean it when I say stay out of it," he said sternly. But then he always sounded stern.

"Sure, sure. Gotta go." I was just about to hang up when I heard Walt boom something at me.

"What?" I knew I sounded exasperated.

"I said, don't get stupid about McIntyre."

"Oh, I thought you had something important to say." I hung up. *Ass.*

I fingered the piece of paper, then picked up the keys that would let me into Demakis's apartment. I figured if I went over right away, I might catch my brothers off guard.

Grabbing my purse, I yelled to Rand, "I'm going for a look at Demakis's apartment. Keep your cell phone on in case my brothers catch me."

He grunted at me that he'd heard. So I headed out.

Parking a couple of blocks away from the apartment, I locked my car, then made my way through the neighbors' yards until I was behind his building.

I watched the back of the place for a while, and when I didn't see any activity, I made my way to the service entrance. The door had been propped open with a wedge, so I let myself in.

Then I made my way quickly up to the third floor, and trotted down the hall to where Nick's apartment was. I didn't encounter anyone else. Leaning into his door, I listened for any sound, any indication that someone else was in there. Satisfied that I was alone, I let myself in.

The place was a little dusty, but it didn't look like anyone had searched it. I made a quick tour, just to be sure there were no hidden surprises, then I settled in for a more thorough search.

Starting in the bedroom—this being the room that most people hid their secrets—I headed straight for his closet. He had a large walk-in one. I entered it, shutting the door behind me, so that I could turn on my flashlight. I walked to the back of the closet to begin my search.

Someone grabbed me from behind. Arms like steel wrapped around my body, crushing me against a wall of muscle. An electric wave of *otherness* surrounded me, and sent a thrill through me.

A deep voice whispered in my ear. "What are you doing here?"

My nipples hardened. Here I was, trapped by a man that might intend to kill me, and I was turned on.

"Looking for you." I just prayed that it was Demakis behind me, and that he wasn't planning on violence.

He turned me in his arms, keeping me locked against his body. I had to crane my neck to look into his face. Arousal slammed through me when I saw the black hair and blue eyes in the dim light of the flashlight, which now lay on the floor. The shadows thrown across his face gave him a mysterious, extremely dangerous appearance.

"Holy shit," I breathed, as my vagina spasmed.

I noticed he was breathing hard, too, and hoped it was because of me.

"Who are you?" He brought his face closer to mine, searching my eyes, sniffing.

"Your sister hired me to find you." I didn't think "*I'm the next woman you're going to fuck*" would be the right thing to say.

"Your name?"

"T.J." I didn't want to give my last name, since it was the same as my brothers'. I couldn't help myself, I swear, as I pressed my groin against his thigh.

His eyes flared. His hands contracted reflexively on my back.

I was having trouble breathing, and I groaned when I felt his cock twitch against my stomach.

"Shit," he said, right before he lowered his lips to mine.

I'm turning into Rand, I thought as I threw myself into the kiss. My arms went around his neck, my fingers tangling in his hair. He picked me up and I wrapped my legs around him, rocking my pussy against his erection as he knelt and laid me on the closet floor.

He came down on top of me, grinding his shaft against my sex. He kissed me savagely, his hands on my breasts, squeezing. I tore at his shirt, desperate to get my hands on his skin.

He shrugged it off, relieved me of my shirt and bra, then crushed his chest against mine. I traced the muscles in his back while his lips brushed fire down my neck to my breasts. He sucked a nipple into his mouth and tugged it with his teeth as his hands worked on the fastening to my jeans.

I arched my back, pressing my breast harder against his mouth. He moved to my other nipple and laved a circle around it before he sucked it between his lips. I cried out, locking my fingers around his head, and holding him in place.

He quickly unzipped my pants, then tugged them down my legs, as I raised my hips. He tossed them and my underpants aside, then knelt away from me as he unfastened his own jeans, only shoving them down his thighs before lowering himself over me again.

He had the bluest eyes I'd ever seen, and they burned into mine as he aimed his cock and penetrated me. I anchored my legs around his waist, thrusting back against his hips until the crisp hairs at the base of his shaft ground into my clit.

"Nick," I breathed, stretched tight by his shaft. My pussy throbbed, causing him to jerk. With a roll of his hips, he started moving, eyes locked with mine, fluid gushing out of me, drenching him.

"Jesus." He picked up the pace and the intensity of his thrusts.

I was flying. My vagina rippled around the hardened steel of his penis. He kissed me, plundering my mouth with his tongue as his hips powered his cock against my womb.

My orgasm broke over me without warning and I screamed his name, as I shuddered and convulsed around him. His jaw clenched, his body went rigid, then he cursed, just as hot jets of cum burst into my depths.

He dropped on top of me, his heart hammering in his chest. Mine was beating at about the same rate.

I let my legs slide to the floor as my breathing slowed. He rolled to the side, taking me with him, gently kissing my lips. He groaned, deepened the kiss, then invaded my mouth with hard swipes of his tongue.

I felt his cock throb and begin to lengthen inside of me.

“Christ, woman, what are you doing to me?” His eyes glittered with amusement.

“It’s some form of sex, I believe.” I brushed a lock of hair out of his face.

The side of his mouth turned up in a grin. “You’re the first piece of heaven I have known in quite a while.”

That must be especially hard on him, considering he was probably a were. As I studied his face, I’d have had to say panther, but I could see wolf, as well. “Is there anything I can do to help you?”

His grin turned wicked. “You could take top.”

I laughed, then eagerly did as he requested.

We were still in the closet. He’d eventually removed his boots and pants, and we were now covered in sweat and each other’s fluids. I felt great.

“I’ve stayed here too long. I really need to get going,” Nick told me as he stroked my back.

“Really, is there anything I can do to help?” I wondered if I should mention that I knew what he was.

“Not unless you can get my employers off my back.” He continued running his hands in a loose pattern over me.

“Can you tell me why they’re after you?”

He kissed my forehead, and pulled me closer. “I wish I could. I was working for them on a rather special case. I came into some information that turned out to be hazardous to my health.”

“Is the threat from your employers?” I’d fry my brothers if this were the case.

“No. They want me to come forward with the information. But that would expose me to some—men—who want to kill me.”

“So what are you going to do?”

“I’m looking for some concrete evidence that can be presented without my name coming into it.”

“Are you close?”

“Close enough.” He smiled, but it was a little grim.

I snuggled against him, rubbed my hand over his stomach.

“I’d like to see you again,” he said.

“I’d like that. But there’s something you should know.”

He stilled. “Christ, don’t tell me you’re going to kill me now.”

“No, I’m not going to kill you, and I have no intention of saying anything to your employer about you, either. But you’re going to find out that the Coventry’s are my brothers. I just wanted to be the one to tell you.”

He stiffened, and I could feel him drawing away from me.

“Don’t you dare,” I said, looking into his eyes. “I am not my brothers. And I can guarantee I’m not going to do anything that will risk your life.”

He studied me for a long moment, then that smile curved the corner of his mouth again. “I wouldn’t be in the closet fucking you if you were one of your brothers.”

“You do it very well. Maybe sometime we can try doing it on a piece of furniture?”

He laughed, the tension easing out of his body.

“I just happen to know where you live, Coventry. Perhaps we can find a piece of furniture to your liking there?”

“You’re free to drop in on me, but my brothers have the bad habit of walking in unannounced. We’d better find that furniture someplace else.”

“That’s probably a good idea.”

“Nick?” I wasn’t sure if I was about to do the right thing or not. “There’s more to my brothers than meets the eye.”

“What do you mean?” His arms had tightened around me, and I was sure he wasn’t aware of it.

“Since I just met you, I’ll tell you this much. I know you’re a were of some kind. Cat or wolf, if I had to guess.”

He laughed, blowing off my statement. “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“I know better. My gift is the ability to *see* people and things as they really are. You know, I can see you’re a were, just not exactly what kind. I’d be able to tell if you were a vampire, or just a human. My brothers’ gifts are more along the defensive and offensive lines.”

“That would explain why you didn’t insist on a condom,” he said, almost to himself.

That was another perk of having the gift. No unwanted pregnancies, no risk of disease.

“True. I also wanted you to know if there were anything—special—you needed, you could ask me for it.”

“Do your brothers know what I am?”

“Probably not, unless you told them. They don’t have heightened senses for magic, and none of them are psychic, or empathic.”

“I appreciate your telling me. But I’ve got to say, I liked having you under me better.”

I grinned at him, then felt the need to kiss him. I was just getting rolling when Nick broke the kiss. “We’ll never get out of here if you keep that up.”

“You’re right.” I grimaced at the thought of Walt catching me in the closet with Nick.

“Give me your number. I’ll be in touch.”

With that, we gathered our clothes and dressed. I was feeling kind of down at his leaving.

“I wish I could spend the night with you,” he said, brushing his hand through my hair, “but it just isn’t safe. For either one of us.”

“I know. As it is, we may have trouble getting out of here without my brothers catching us.”

He took me in his arms. “Don’t worry about me.” Then he kissed me thoroughly.

I opened the closet door to slip out, and he whispered behind me, “I can shift into either, my dad’s a wolf, my mother’s a panther.”

I didn't run into anyone on my way out, but I just knew that I didn't leave unobserved.

My cell phone rang when I was still a mile from the office. I answered it and wasn't at all surprised to hear my brother Walt.

"Hi Walt, I'm fine, Rand's fine, too."

"Tell me what you were doing in Demakis's apartment for over four hours," he demanded.

"I ran into Nick and we fucked for most of that time," I replied flippantly.

"Cute, T.J. You've got sex on the brain. Now what were you doing there when I told you to stay out of this case?"

"You knew I wouldn't, so what are you so pissed about?"

"You're risking your life," he snarled.

"What?" I nearly ran the car up onto a curb.

"If certain people hear that you're nosing around in this business, they will want to talk to you. And they're the kind that are willing to do anything to get the information."

"Thanks for telling me this before." My voice reflected exactly how I felt.

"So what did you find?"

"I'll think about letting you know. Gotta go now."

"T.J.!"

I hung up on him as I pulled into the lot. I swung out of my car, and headed for the back door. Rand was waiting for me in the kitchen. *Shit*. He took one look at me, moved close and sniffed. "For the love of God, T.J.! Who the hell have you been fucking now?"

I gulped, and peeked at him from beneath my lashes. I didn't feel guilty. Actually, I was feeling kind of turned on. What the hell was wrong with me?

"Come on," I told him and headed for my bathroom.

I turned the shower on and shed my clothes with Rand watching every move. I stepped in, and began removing Nick from my skin, when Rand slipped in behind me.

I turned to look at him, my gaze stopping at his cock. He was rock hard. I flicked my eyes to his face. He was pissed off.

Heat flared through me. My breathing deepened, and became erratic. I grabbed him and tried to wrap my leg around his waist as I crushed his lips with mine,

"What am I going to do about you?" His voice rasped in my ear as he lifted me, backed me up against the wall and impaled me.

"You're going to spend the night with me."

He fucked me hard and fast against the tile. We came together, and nearly fell to the floor.

Then he set me on my feet, and we finished washing up.

We didn't bother dressing.

* * * *

Rand woke me the next morning telling me what he wanted to do to my ass. I didn't have any lube, but my pussy was wet enough to compensate.

For all the sex I'd been having lately, Rand was still the only one to take me this way. I loved it.

Afterward, we cleaned up and dressed, and I realized I felt closer to Rand than I ever had. Go figure.

We worked together in the kitchen, gathering food, making coffee. He touched me, a lot. Kissed me a few times. It felt natural. We ate our breakfast, did the dishes, and wandered out into the office before business hours. Amazing.

I flipped through the files on my desk, finalized the infidelity case and prepared it for delivery. Then I wondered what I was going to say to Nick's sister.

The phone rang and Rand answered it. He hollered over for me to pick up.

"Hello?"

"Hey T.J., are you free tonight?" It was Connor. A thrill raced through me at the idea of spending another night with him. "Hang on, I've got to ask Rand."

I put my hand over the phone and yelled at my partner. "We doing anything tonight?" I almost burst into laughter at the glare he gave me. I knew he knew the Irishman was on the phone.

"Yes." Rand bit the answer out at me.

"Sorry, Connor, I'm tied up tonight."

Connor suggested another night, and I said I'd let him know. I intended to get back to him when Rand wasn't eyeing daggers at me. I hung up and went back to what I was working on, aware that Rand was headed for my desk.

He parked his ass on the edge. "So what'd you tell the Irishman?"

"I told him I was busy tonight." I watched him fidget.

"Fuck." He went back to his desk.

I ran across the picture of Nick, and realized I should probably get a picture of Connor, too. I stared at Nick's picture, remembering the look in his eyes as he rose over me. My crotch twinged, and wetness pooled between my legs.

"Who's that?" Rand asked from over my shoulder.

"Missing person. Nick Demakis."

"That's the place you ... shit, T.J., tell me it wasn't Demakis you were fucking yesterday."

I kept my mouth shut.

He spun my chair around and knelt before me.

"T.J., your brothers are looking for that guy. He could be dangerous. If not, there are definitely dangerous people looking for him."

"He's not dangerous," I said.

"Shit." Rand shook his head.

"And you can't tell my brothers."

"Like I'm going to tell your brothers you were fucking a guy they're looking for."

"I'm serious, Rand. My brothers are pressuring him to give evidence against someone who would rather see him dead. He's close to getting something concrete that he can give my brothers so that his name stays out of it, and he stays alive."

"It's a good story, but who's to say it's true?"

"My brothers hired him. They do a thorough check on their employees, as you well know."

"You've got a point." He was still frowning at me. "Tell me you're not planning on seeing him again."

"I have no idea. He took my number."

Rand sighed heavily and stood. "You are going to drive me insane." He shook his head as he walked away.

Chapter Five

Jervis shot like a rocket to the edge of my desk. “Hey, T.J.” He was the most energetic little bundle of fae I’d ever seen. “Did you hear the news?” He bounced from foot to foot, his wings a blur of motion behind his back. “The cousins are going to stay.”

Just then the door opened, and a blond god walked into the office. I quickly opened my drawer, scooped the pixie into it, and slammed it shut.

Then I allowed myself to ogle the god’s body for a minute. He was definitely tasty to look at, but he just didn’t do it for me. Unfortunately, I seemed to do it for him. Without even looking at Rand, he made a beeline for my visitor’s chair. He leaned over the desk, offered me his hand, and flashed me a brilliant smile. “Roger Barstow.”

I took his hand and shook it briefly. Nothing sparked. Maybe I wasn’t as bad as Rand, after all. “T.J. Coventry. What can we do for you, Mr. Barstow?”

He removed his hand slowly, brushing over my palm with the tips of his fingers. I couldn’t stop myself from flicking a glance at his groin, to see just how much I affected him.

He was very happy to meet me.

“I’m not sure that you can.” He sat in the chair, adjusting himself discreetly. Of course, since I was staring at his crotch, I caught the action. “I haven’t been able to get a hold of my sister for almost a week. She doesn’t answer either phone, and she hasn’t answered the door when I’ve gone over to her place.”

Why wasn’t I getting turned on by this guy? He was obviously interested.

“What makes you think something’s happened to her?” I managed to move my eyes to his face.

The grin he gave me let me know he’d caught me checking out his lap. I could even see the victory in his eyes. Knew that he was certain I was a sure thing.

“I don’t, really.” He moved his chair forward, and rested his forearms on the edge of my desk. “The kind of work she’s in often leads to—complications. But because of that, we decided she would contact me every other day.” The smile faded from his face. “I haven’t heard from her in six days.”

“What is it that your sister does?”

“Well.” He clasped his hands together, lowering his face to stare at them, his white-blond hair falling over his forehead. “She’s a hooker.”

“Street, or call?” He was nervous enough; I didn’t need to add to that. Though I wished he was talking to Rand.

His head jerked up, his eyes searching my face. “Call.”

I just nodded and jotted a note. “Does she go to them? Have a place she takes them to? Or does she see them at home?”

His shoulders relaxed, and a shy smile worked its way back onto his face. “She has an apartment in the valley she works out of.”

“Where’s she live?” Real estate wasn’t cheap in the valley. If she made enough to rent a place there and live somewhere else...

“Off Hametown Road.”

“Sounds like she’s doing well for herself.” In her type of profession, though, any

number of things could happen. “Did she have a way to screen clients?”

“Once she’d established a reliable customer base, she basically only took on new clients that were referred to her by the current ones.”

“I have to ask you, did you call the hospitals?” *The morgue?*

“No one fitting her description has been admitted to the ones I called. I also checked the morgue, and filed a report with the police.”

He’d covered all the preliminary work.

I gave him the usual spiel about what information would help us, access to her homes, her numbers, a picture of her. He stepped out of the office to retrieve a picture he had in his car.

Rand strolled over to my desk, easing a hip against it. “Teej?”

Belatedly, I remembered Jervis. I opened the drawer, and he buzzed out, cursed at me, then shot out through the kitchen door. I leaned back in my chair so I could look up at Rand without craning my neck. He was staring after the pixie.

“Yeah?” I prompted, then jerked when he swooped down, snatched me out of the chair, and locked his mouth to mine. I relaxed into his body, and felt the length of his arousal pushing insistently into my belly. He angled his lips, and stroked his way into my mouth. Something flared low in my stomach, waking up in a way that never would for Mr. Barstow. I was slightly dazed when he released me from the kiss. I swayed a little before slumping into my chair.

“Mine.” I heard Rand say, and I tried to focus on him, but found myself looking at Barstow’s surprised expression.

“Guess he told us.” I hadn’t meant to say that out loud. But I was glad I had when it brought a smile to Barstow’s face.

“Here’s the picture.” He handed me an eight by ten glossy of a Nordic goddess.

Rand grunted next to me, and I rolled my eyes up to see why.

The way he was staring at the photo told me two things. He’d slept with her, and he hadn’t known she was a professional.

I handed Barstow a notepad. “If you could make up those lists for me, I need to see my partner in private.”

I grabbed a handful of Rand’s shirt as I headed for the kitchen, hauling him along behind me through the door.

“Our client might not appreciate knowing you had sex with his sister,” I said, rounding on him.

“I never said I did.” Rand tried to look innocent, and failed.

I just glared at him.

“Okay.” He raked his fingers through his hair. “So I slept with her, so what? It was more than a year ago.”

God. I was never going to get over all these women. “Is there anyone you haven’t slept with?” I knew I was getting loud, and I almost didn’t care.

He reached for me, and I danced away from him, going for the drawers. If I just looked hard enough I was sure I’d find something I could use on him.

He trapped me from behind in a bear hug. Lowered his face to my neck. Then he warmed my skin with his breath before he pressed his lips against me.

“Why are you so mad?” His lips brushed my neck as he spoke.

Why was I so mad? “I think it’s because I spent the past five years trying to convince

myself that it didn't matter. That it didn't hurt every time you slept with another woman. That I didn't feel any pain that you'd sleep with anyone, anyone at all, but not with me."

All the breath left my body, and I just felt tired.

"I walk around with a hard-on most of the time, because of you. It's been that way all these years." He pressed kisses to my neck between words. "Now that I've got my foot in the door, I'm not letting you get away."

"I don't know how to get over all these women," I admitted.

He stilled. His lips remained pressed to my flesh, but not moving.

"I love you, T.J." He turned me around. "What's more, I'm in love with you."

Then he was kissing me, and all my thoughts, all my hang-ups went out of my head.

I felt a lot better when Rand and I returned to the office. Good enough that I wasn't going to have a problem looking for the slut whore that Rand had fucked. So sue me. Just because I was okay enough to look for the woman didn't mean I wasn't going to trash her in my head.

Barstow held out his lists for me, sliding an odd glance between me and Rand. I let it pass, intent on looking over the information.

"When would you like to see her house, and the apartment?" he asked.

Rand checked our schedule book. "You can go now. I can handle the last two appointments."

"Does that work for you?" I started gathering my stuff together, jamming it into my purse.

"Yes." Barstow rose from his chair, then stood beside it with one hand resting on the back.

"I'll check in with you when I get back." I turned for the door, but Rand's hand on my arm stopped me.

He pulled me into his embrace, and kissed me thoroughly. When he let me go, he didn't say anything, just looked at me real hard. *Huh*. Probably trying to send me a telepathic message. No matter that neither one of us were telepaths.

I made a face at him, then spun around and sashayed my way out of the office, with the Nordic god at my side.

* * * *

Rand tuned back to his client, and found he didn't have any idea what the man was talking about. Distracted by his anger at T.J., he asked the guy to repeat himself.

The man frowned at him, then took a breath. "I was saying that Connor Reilly recommended your company for our background checks. Personally, I've seen nothing to impress me."

Rand felt his eyes narrow, and had to force himself to keep from saying the first thing that came into his head. What he ended up saying wasn't much better. "Mr. Ruppel, it's your choice. Hire us or don't."

He watched as a series of emotions passed over the man's face. "That's all you're going to say?" Disbelief was rife in his voice.

"I could say anything that you like. Personally, I let my work speak for itself."

Rand figured the man would walk out about now. It would serve him right. He felt his anger flare towards T.J.

The phone rang, and since Mr. Ruppel just sat there, thinking, he answered it.

“Rand?” It was T.J. and she sounded—disturbed.

His anger dissolved in a moment of panic. “Are you all right?”

“I’m fine, but I think you should come over here and take a look. We’re at the apartment in the valley.”

“I’m just about done here. I’ll head over as soon as I can.” He got the address from her, then squared his shoulders and concentrated his gaze on his client. “What will it be, Mr. Ruppel? I’ve got work to do.”

“Won’t hurt to give you a try,” the man admitted gruffly.

“Fine. We use our own sources, but still require the same information that your other researchers use. You can messenger the information to us, or fax it.”

He quoted a retainer, waited while the man wrote a check, then hustled him out the door.

Flipping off the majority of the lights, he grabbed his cell phone, and locked the door on his way out.

* * * *

I stood in the corner of the living room, staring out the window, praying that Rand would make it soon. The view outside was of the building next door, a psychologist’s office, I think. Beyond that, further in the distance, there were trees. Not a great view, not even a good one.

Looking back over my shoulder, I could see Barstow leaning on the doorjamb between the living room and the kitchen. He grinned at me. Oh, I wasn’t *that* uncomfortable with him, though it was strangely awkward being alone with the man and all the paraphernalia his sister had scattered about the place.

I suppose it didn’t help matters any that I still got vibes off the guy that he’d be interested in trying out some of the equipment. With me.

There was a knock on the door, and I let out a breath I hadn’t known I was holding. Barstow went to answer it, and Rand entered, looking for all the world to me like a knight come to my rescue.

I couldn’t help the smile that blossomed across my face at the sight of him. It stopped him in his tracks for a moment, then he was striding across the room to gather me into his arms.

“What’s wrong?” he asked, sounding worried.

Nothing, absolutely nothing. Now that he was here. “I’d like you to take a look at her bedroom. Give me your assessment.”

Knowing that Rand didn’t bring any women to his apartment, I had wondered, when I first walked into the bedroom, if that was where he’d slept with Trisha Barstow. Reining in my jealousy, I tagged along behind Rand as he followed the brother.

I stopped in the doorway, prodding Barstow to move aside enough so I could watch Rand as he searched the room.

He was staring at the floor on the far side of the bed when he started questioning our client.

“Does your sister do the rough stuff?”

I felt Roger stiffen beside me, heard his breath catch. “Not that I’m aware of.”

“Any idea what type of birth control she uses?”

“No.” He shifted from foot to foot, uncomfortable with the questions.

“I checked the drawers in the bedroom, and searched the bathroom, and didn’t run across anything,” I told him.

Rand flicked his glance at me. “Any toys that would be used for rough play?”

Some pretty big dildos, but I knew what he meant. “A pair of fur-lined handcuffs, but nothing else.”

He nodded, then continued around the room. I didn’t follow when he went into the bathroom. When he was finished, he brushed past us, heading back to the living room.

“Did you find a hamper?” He moved to one end of the couch, and lowered himself onto it.

“Yeah. There are a few towels, a couple of washcloths. One of the towels has blood on it.”

He nodded. “My guess is she entertained someone during—that time of the month.”

That was pretty much the conclusion I’d come to. There was one last thing I needed for him to look at though, and if I was right, our conclusion could change, dramatically.

“There’s just one more thing I want you to see.” I motioned for him to follow me as I headed for the kitchen.

I entered first, then leaned against the door, keeping Barstow from joining us.

“Check the freezer.”

Rand gave me a curious look, but opened the freezer door, and started rifling through the packages. “Fuck,” he muttered, and I knew he’d found what I had. “Are you picking anything up off the brother?”

“Not even a whisper.”

“Any other surprises?” He shuffled the packages in the freezer, then shut the door.

“Not that I found.”

He crossed the room, frowning. “Let’s thank Mr. Barstow for his time, and head back to the office.”

“Do you think this has any bearing on her disappearance?” It’s why I’d asked him to come here. I knew what the packages in the freezer meant. Formed into blocks that would look like raw meat at a glance, they were actually full of blood. Trisha, the ultimate skank, apparently entertained vampires. Now what I needed for Rand to do was use his supernatural senses and tell me if any of the creatures of the night had been in the apartment in the last week.

Of course, since Rand had yet to admit to me he had supernatural abilities, I had to come at the question sideways.

“Let’s just say that I have a feeling it’s likely,” he said.

I felt like shaking him. Why he had a problem being half werewolf, I couldn’t understand. He didn’t have any problem with my family.

I led the way back into the living room. “That’s all for now, Roger. I’ll give you a call tomorrow, with an update.”

The blond god flicked a glance at Rand, then focused on me. “Could I speak to you alone, for a moment?”

“Sure.” I crossed my arms, and waited for Rand to step outside.

Roger caught me off guard, closing in from behind me, placing his hands on my waist. He bent his head down, and brushed his lips along the rim of my ear.

“Have dinner with me tonight.” His hands started traveling lower.

I twisted away from him. “You’re a very attractive man, Roger, but Rand frowns on

my dating other men.”

“I didn’t think he was serious.” Barstow blinked at me.

“Very.” I assured him.

“Ah, well, he is a lucky man.”

I almost bought the self-deprecating smile that he plastered to his face.

Chapter Six

Rand was in the kitchen, drinking a beer, when I got back to the office. I poured myself a glass of wine, and felt my heart kick into higher gear when Rand came up behind me. He took a deep breath as he leaned into my back.

"You're off your game, T.J." He licked me, sending shivers up my spine. "I figured you'd have scored with Barstow by now."

"Funny, but the guy didn't turn me on."

He pressed himself to my back, while he nibbled his way down to my shoulder.

"Rand." I didn't mean for it to come out on a moan, I'd meant to be stern. Clearing my throat, I tried again. "Rand ... oh!"

He bit me, and my nipples snapped to attention. My groin warmed, and wept.

"Come on, Rand, we really need to get back to work." Most of me wanted him to ignore what I was saying, especially since his hand had wandered into my pants.

Sighing, he straightened from my neck. "You're right. Though it's probably too late for Barstow's sister." Still, he dipped his fingers between my legs and rubbed my sex.

"You are such an ass." I grabbed his arm, trying to pry him away from me.

He pulled me tighter to his body, and rocked his erection against my back. "You love it," he laughed.

"Christ. Don't the two of you ever stop?"

We both swung our heads towards the back door. "Hey, Walt. Dave. What are you guys doing here?" Walt's eyes were glued to my crotch and Dave's face was turning red from his trying not to laugh.

I slapped at Rand's arm until he removed it from my jeans.

Walt huffed at me, glared at Rand, then stomped over to the fridge and got himself and Dave a beer. They parked their asses at the table, giving us the eye, until we joined them.

Once we were seated, Walt dug into his pocket and brought out a long, thin box, wrapped in gold foil. From another pocket he produced an envelope, which he set on the table next to the box.

"These were delivered to our office last night." He opened the top of the box and removed a leather necklace, with a long greenish-yellow pendant in the shape of a spike. "I'm told that the pendant is peridot, it's thought to break evil spells, and illuminate the mysteries of darkness."

There were less than twenty companies nationwide that handled supernatural affairs. FandS held the number one slot. Rand and I were working our way in that direction. It was a touchy business; those of us who were gifted were extremely private about the matter. It was what kept us alive. No lie. Our politically correct society viewed us in about the same way it had once viewed witches in Salem. So Walt had established himself by word of mouth alone, the trust factor developing over the years. Most of FandS's own employees didn't know they handled that kind of work. They had a separate, highly secret team, in a different location. One thing that Rand and I would have to learn to deal with was the fact that no police could become involved if anything got dicey. Walt and Art had reluctantly taught us how to dispose of any bodies we might end

up with. Rather disturbing, if you thought about it too much.

I turned my attention back to the table as he removed a handful of pages from the envelope, along with several pictures. Laying the pages face up in front of us, he continued. "These are photocopies of a scroll that is housed at Marshall. It describes the steps necessary for the damned to walk in sunlight."

"Kin Coshee," Rand interjected. "I thought that was a fable."

I'd heard of Kin Coshee. He was a legendary vampire who had found a way to go abroad during the day without bursting into flame. He wrote down his formula for success on a parchment, which was then hidden in the portals of time. Over the centuries, the term "Kin Coshee" came to mean both the man and the parchment. How the museum in Marshall had gotten a hold of the thing was anybody's guess.

Walt started dropping pictures on top of the papers. "Not a fable."

I bent for a closer look. The pictures were taken with a long-range lens. There was a large house in the background, but the focus was on several men who were occupied in various activities about the grounds. Four of the pictures showed three of the men engaged, in sex and feeding, from the same woman. A woman whose photo I'd seen earlier today.

"Fuck." I went back through all the photos, counting the number of men. "There's got to be fifteen or sixteen different guys in these pictures."

"Which indicates at least three times that number that we're not seeing," Dave said.

I studied my brothers for a minute. "Why are you showing us this information?"

Walt's expression hardened. "Because these are the men who are after Nick Demakis."

"Shit." That was just great.

Rand squeezed my leg under the table. I looked at him, and he raised an eyebrow in question. I made a face, but nodded.

"A man named Roger Barstow came into our office today. He asked us to look for his sister, who had been missing for nearly a week." Rand flipped through the photos, turning the ones around that had her in them. "We've just found her."

Walt and Dave each took a picture. "What's she doing with a bunch of vampires?" Dave asked.

"She's a professional," I replied. "I found bags of blood in her freezer, so she's entertained them enough to keep a supply on hand."

"Any idea where this is?" Rand inquired.

"We're working on that." Walt started gathering everything up. I snatched the papers and skimmed them quickly.

"Christ," I hissed. "This is too easy. What's the catch?"

"That's the thing," Walt stated, his voice flat. "There is no catch."

"Just how easy?" Rand reached for the pages, which Walt snatched out of my hand.

"All a vampire has to do to become a daywalker is drink from a mortal's vein that has been opened with peridot. They don't even have to drain the mortal."

"They do have to refrain from using their fangs." Dave added, as though that would make a difference.

"Big deal," I snapped. Of course, a vamp would never think of getting blood out of a body with a tool. "Say, Walt, why are you looking into a bunch of vamps?"

"Isn't it obvious?" He waved the pictures at me.

“No.” I shot a glance at Dave when he squirmed in his seat. “Not if all they’re doing is enabling themselves to tolerate sunlight.”

“Tell them,” Dave said.

Walt glowered at him, but relented. “They either didn’t know, or weren’t taking any chances, in the beginning. FandS was practically swamped with missing persons requests. A few of their bodies turned up. The ones we saw didn’t show any bites, nothing that would connect them, or their deaths, to the vampires. Investigating them, Demakis kept running into links between those reported missing and the vampires. He’d started a more in-depth investigation in that direction when he disappeared.”

“Now would be a good time to tell me where he is, T.J.,” he snarled at me.

“I don’t know where he is.” I really didn’t.

Walt jumped to his feet, his fists smacking down on the top of the table. “Don’t lie to me, little girl, I know, now, that you were telling me the truth the other day. You really did spend four hours fucking one of my employees. One that you knew I was looking for, and had specifically told you to avoid.”

I leaned into his fury, knowing full well he’d never hurt me. “You know damn well why he isn’t coming to you himself. So don’t give me any righteous shit about it.”

Walt took a deep breath, then stalked around the table, grabbing me by my upper arms, and shaking me. “Where—is—he?”

“I—don’t—know.” We were face-to-face and screaming at each other. Walt’s fingers were digging into my flesh so tightly that my bones hurt.

“Fine,” he snapped, and I could see the effort it took him to get himself under control. “If I find out you’re lying...” He shook his head, and started for the back door.

Dave came up to me and gave me a hug. “Sorry about that.”

“You’re not his mother.” I hugged him back.

“What he needs is a keeper.” Dave grinned, then he slid a look at Rand. “Though we’d all be happier if you could stay out from under the wonder-dick.”

I punched him in the shoulder. “Get out of here.”

I didn’t move until the door had shut behind them. “How are we going to find her now?” Walt was never going to tell me where this group was located.

“Let’s go over to my apartment, have a drink,” Rand said, slinging his arm around my back and steering me towards the door, “and take a look at this picture, and see if we can’t figure out where these guys are.”

He showed me one of the pictures that Walt had brought, but snatched it out of my reach when I went to grab it.

“Rand.” I gave him a warning growl.

He laughed, and took off across the back yard.

I gave chase, but he made it into his apartment, and was pouring drinks when I bounded in.

“One for you.” Rand handed me a glass half filled with amber liquid. “And one for me.” He picked up his tumbler and gestured towards the couch.

Once we were seated, he brought the picture out and we both stared at it. He’d managed to get one that showed a lot of the surrounding area. There was the large house in the background that might provide us with some information. There were a couple of outbuildings to the left of the house. There was a large area on that same side that was paved, and numerous vehicles were parked along its outer edge. A large detached garage

stood behind the vehicles, with a smaller outbuilding to the left of that, and slightly behind.

The entire plot of land was composed of softly rolling hills, small dense groupings of trees, then further out a solid line of forest. The house and buildings stood on the highest part of the parcel, the yard and drive gently descending away from them. Landscaping around the house and throughout the front of the property was pretty typical of the Midwest. I had several of the same plants around the main house here.

I kept searching, but nothing in the picture was really standing out to me. The house could be a couple miles from where I sat, or it could be in Pennsylvania.

"I'm not seeing anything useful here," I grumped.

"We can tell it's in Ohio," Rand said, still studying the image.

"How can we tell that?" I leaned closer, trying to figure out what he saw.

"License plates. Ohio has that red stripe on top, and white below."

"So what does Pennsylvania have?"

"Blue stripe on top, yellow stripe on the bottom, and white between."

Huh.

"I'll do a search on the internet tomorrow for the house." He sat back, his eyes drifting down the side of my body.

"Did you pick up anything else at the apartment today?" I scooted away from him, trying to keep the conversation on track.

"Barstow wants to fuck you." He ran a finger down my arm, raising goose bumps.

"Besides that." I rolled my eyes.

"Nothing you didn't pick up on." He moved his hand to my side, and started tracing his way up to my breast.

I trapped his hand to my side with my elbow. "Rand. I've waited for you to bring it up, but I think, since we're facing a bunch of vampires, we should talk about it now."

"Talk about what?" he asked, his jaw clenching.

"About what abilities you have. How much did you get from your mom?"

His expression hardened. "It's really none of your business."

I gaped at him. "You're my partner, we're trying to add more preternatural clients, and you're the one who's trying to prove to me you're interested in a more permanent relationship. How is this none of my business?" My voice had gotten embarrassingly high as I spoke.

I watched as several emotions flitted across his face. Anger finally settled in place, carving his cheekbones in harsh relief, color flushing across them.

"You're right." He tugged on the hand I was still holding to my side. I let him have it. "Mom's a werewolf, but then you already know that." He stopped talking, and when he didn't start up again, I prompted him.

Glaring at me, he continued. "I didn't get the ability to shift fully, but twice I did this half shift that scared the hell out of the women I was fucking at the time." I flinched, and he smirked. "Fortunately the one had some Xanax in her purse and the other one was too tanked to remember the incident. Anyway, I'm stronger, faster, and I'll live longer than a normal mortal. I've got heightened senses, especially when it comes to smelling a woman's arousal." He leered at me. "More stamina. A bigger, better cock. A longer tongue, and both the ability to stay hard all night and to come repeatedly without having to wait for a recharge.

"I heal faster, I'm harder to hurt, I can move silently, if I try, and I go out at night sometimes to catch and eat rabbits." He bared his teeth at me. "Are you happy with this information, or would you like me to continue?"

"Frankly," I said as I slammed my glass down on the coffee table and stood. "You can take your bigger, better cock and stuff it right up your ass." I stalked off towards the door. Hell if I was putting up with his pissy attitude.

He tackled me from behind, and I ended up face down on the floor, his weight on my back pinning me there. "I'd rather stuff it up yours," he growled, digging his erection into my butt.

I struggled. Wiggled my hips and shoulders, trying to worm my way out from under him. He jumped up, snagged me off the floor, and carried me into his bedroom, where he threw me onto the bed. He stripped his clothes off. "You're the one who wanted to know all about my wolf." His voice rumbled in his chest, deeper than normal.

He crawled across the bed to me with a sinuous ripple of muscle. His hair stuck out about his head, looking longer, wilder. His eyes glowed an eerie yellow-green, and when he smiled at me, a wicked smile, his teeth were noticeably longer, sharper.

"You're about to learn more than you ever wanted to know." He raised his hands to the front of my shirt, and tore it in half. Fur flowed down the sides of his neck, over his shoulders, and down his torso as I watched. He shredded my jeans with claws that had formed on the ends of his fingers.

Catching me watching his hands, he wiggled his claws in the air. "Finger fucking takes on a whole new meaning."

When I was completely naked, he rose over me, taking his cock in his hand. "Did I mention that *all* of me gets larger with the change?"

I tried to roll for the edge of the bed, but he dropped on top of me, capturing my wrists, forcing them to the bed on either side of my head.

His face, beyond the changes I'd already noticed, looked surprisingly normal, except for the fact that it was covered in a dusting of short dark brown fur.

"I want to eat you up," he groaned. Staring into my eyes with those strange yellow eyes of his, he forced my legs up around his hips. Then he crushed his mouth to mine, as the blunt head of his cock started stretching my opening.

His lips were still his own, soft and mobile, eating hungrily against mine. He breached my sex, and I gasped at the sheer size of him. He plunged his tongue into my mouth, licking frantically at the insides of my cheeks.

His hips flexed in a constant rhythm, his penis inexorably forging its way forward. By the time he was fully buried, my sheath was unbelievably full.

He arched his head back, drew himself most of the way out, then groaned as he powered his way back in again. Dropping his head beside mine, he continued to thrust, slowly, until a wash of moisture coated my vagina.

"Ahhhh." He started shafting me with hard, angry thrusts of his hips. "How do you like my wolf, T.J.? Are you getting enough?"

"Umph." That was the best I could manage, unbelievably aroused by his aggressiveness.

"I can smell you," he rasped, hitching himself higher, driving into me harder yet.

My orgasm exploded from my core, ripping through me with sharp streaks of pleasure. I writhed helplessly around his cock while he continued hammering into me.

“Rand,” I sobbed, as the walls of my vagina continued to ripple with aftershocks.

He cursed, his dick pulsed, then I felt the heat of his seed as thick jets of cum shot into me. He jerked, then slammed into me again, as more cum erupted from his shaft. Wrapping his arms around my shoulders, he held me tight while he continued to stroke out his release.

I melted into the mattress, thoroughly sated and ready for sleep.

“You asked for this, love, now you’re going to have to stay awake for it,” he rumbled.

He backed out of me, and muscled me over onto my stomach. He lifted my hips and held me up until I’d braced myself. Dragging the pads of his fingers through the fluids seeping from my sex, he coated my anus.

When the head of his cock pressed against that opening, I tensed.

“That’s not going to fit.” My heart rabbited in my chest at the idea.

He placed a hand low on my back and shoved down. “Open up, baby.” Then he started to push.

I was panting, bearing down, swearing. The burn of his entry was incredible, and I would have begged him to stop if I’d thought he would have. Finally, he was all the way in. He withdrew, and I cried out at the amazing bite of pleasure that shot through me.

He buried himself again, then bent over my back. “How many men have taken you here?”

“Only you,” I sobbed.

He pulled out, then rammed his way back in. “Tell me the truth, T.J. How many men have fucked this ass of yours?”

“I told you, Rand. You’re the only one who’s ever done this.”

He idly stroked for a minute, then started to pick up his pace. “Keep it that way.”

I flew into climax as he forced his way into me faster and faster. I came again when he reached his own completion, howling as his cum filled my passage and leaked down my thighs.

He took me two more times before I simply lost consciousness. If he took me after that, I’d rather not know.

* * * *

I was sore, swollen, and uncertain, when I woke up the next morning. I was on my back, with Rand sprawled across me. He was back to human form, at least. His wolf form was quite a bit heavier.

I started working my way out from under him, when his arm tightened around me, holding me in place. “Where do you think you’re going?” The yellow had left his eyes, but they were still too bright a green.

“Bathroom?” I let my annoyance color my voice.

“Later,” he said as he jammed his hips between my legs.

I gasped when he entered, my flesh tender. “God, Rand, why are you so mad?”

He pumped for a while before answering. “Did it ever occur to you that I didn’t talk about my heritage for a reason?”

“No.” Why should it?

“I’m a freak, T.J. Without the full shift, I’m not accepted by my mother’s people. They banned her from the pack because of me.” He gave me a couple of particularly

vicious stabs with his cock.

“Do you think I’m a freak too? Or that my entire family is?” I asked him.

He stopped moving. “No, I envy you and your family.” His eyes met mine, and they were finally back to his normal green.

“I think you’re wonderful.” I cupped his face with my hands, and placed a tender kiss on his lips. “I think you’ve got terrific gifts that I’ve longed to ask you to use, but have always held back because you’d never brought the subject up.” I kissed him again, and he rolled his hips.

“God, I love you.” He trapped my mouth in a possessive kiss, my body flaring in response to his heat, his passion.

We rocked and ground against each other, our flesh slapping as we drove each other higher. Looking deeply into each other’s eyes, we both reached culmination at the same time.

“Rand,” I whispered, my back arching, my sheath milking him as waves of pleasure rolled over me.

“T.J.” he groaned as he held himself deep, and filled me with his seed.

* * * *

Two hours later, I was grinding my way through a background check, my enthusiasm level for the tedious work at a record low.

Grouching under my breath, I started a credit check on the list of potential employees. The phone rang, and I let Rand pick it up.

“Pick up the phone, Teej.”

He sounded irritated, so I figured the caller had to be male.

“Hello?” I grabbed my mug, and headed for the kitchen for a refill.

“T.J., would you be free for dinner tonight?” Connor’s smooth lilt sent a shiver down my spine, even over the phone.

Returning to my desk, I thought about his question. I glanced at Rand, and found him staring, not even pretending to work.

“Hang on, I’ll ask.” Smiling sweetly, I turned to Rand. “Connor wants to know if I’m free tonight.”

Rand burst out of his chair, and stormed over to my side. He wrenched the phone out of my hand, then barked at the man I’d been talking to.

“Look, you bloody Irishman, T.J. is mine, so fuck off.” Then he slammed the phone down onto the desk. “You’re going out with me tonight.”

I didn’t even get to say a word before he’d stalked out of the room.

The rest of the day proved to be uneventful. Rand hadn’t said anything else to me, and left around five, locking the front door behind him.

I went back to my room to get ready for our date. I should have asked him where he was taking me.

Flipping through my dresses, I decided on a dark blue number with a sweetheart neckline. I also chose to forgo the under things again. Rand had enjoyed that so, the last time.

I was ready and still had some time to kill so I went to the kitchen and got myself a glass of wine.

Mini popped in for a quick visit, thanking me for allowing her husband’s relatives to

move into my yard.

Time dragged, and I finished my wine, then checked the clock again. It was seven-fifteen. Grabbing my purse, I headed over to Rand's.

His door was locked, so I knocked. I was starting to get pissed off at him as I stood outside his door. I knocked again, harder. He finally opened the door, his hair mussed, wearing nothing but his jockey shorts. I raised my eyebrow at him. He looked at me, then looked harder.

"We had a date," he said, and stepped back into his apartment.

"You really know how to make a girl feel special," I snarked.

He grimaced, then noticed I wasn't following him into his apartment. "It'll only take me a couple of minutes to get ready." He motioned for me to come in.

"Don't trouble yourself." I turned on my heel and stomped down the stairs.

He caught me at the bottom. Wrapping his fingers around my wrist, he tugged me back up to his apartment. He dragged me inside, then planted me on the couch.

"Look, I haven't been getting much sleep lately, with you running around so much, and everything else. I wanted to get some in before I took you out tonight; because I wasn't planning on letting you get any sleep later. Now just sit there, and I'll be with you in a minute."

Rand came out fifteen minutes later, and my mouth went dry. He was wearing gray slacks, a dark blue cashmere sweater, and looked good enough to eat.

He pulled me from the couch and kissed me with a hunger that threatened to ignite me.

I was dazed when he released me, following stupidly behind him as he led me out the door and to his Jeep.

I was idly staring at his crotch when his words finally reached my brain.

"Are you carrying?" he asked, when I failed to respond.

"Uh, yeah." I didn't usually, but with the vampires indirectly involved, I felt safer that way.

He glanced at me, raked my body with his eyes and smiled. "Good, because we're being followed, and they just might be Demakis's friends."

He drove us to a popular restaurant, and let the valet park the Jeep.

"They still with us?" I asked Rand, as he guided me into the establishment.

"Far edge of the lot," he replied, without having to look.

We were seated promptly and served drinks within moments. Nice place.

Rand and I managed to talk companionably during the meal. Then he surprised me by asking me to dance. I couldn't remember the last time I'd danced.

I certainly didn't remember it the way Rand danced with me. He held my body close, and virtually made love to me on the dance floor. I found myself kissing him as the song ended.

"Christ. Walk in front of me, my dick is about to bust out of my pants."

I ran my hand along the length of him and, judging from his reaction, could tell he almost came.

He paid the bill, then hustled me to the door. While we waited for the valet to bring the car around, he leaned over and whispered in my ear. "I hope he hurries. I'm ready to take you right here in the parking lot."

I shivered, then had to force myself to keep from attacking him. "We still being

followed?" I asked as he pulled out of the lot and into traffic.

"Fuck." He slammed his hand on the steering wheel.

"I'll take that as a yes." I tried to peek over the back of the seat.

"Don't look." He jerked the steering wheel to the left, taking the corner hard.

I slammed up against the flimsy door, and thanked God when I didn't go flying through it.

He made several more sharp turns, then pulled into a hotel parking lot, sliding into a space between a minivan and a SUV, and cut his lights.

We waited, silently, for ten minutes, then he opened his door, gesturing for me to follow him. We went into the hotel, and up to the front desk. "I'd like a room," he told the clerk.

He paid for the room with a credit card, then herded me into the elevator. As soon as the doors closed, he was on me. I swear he would have fucked me right there, and I'd have let him, if an elderly couple hadn't entered on the third floor.

"Have you been to the Sauterne?" the sweet, white-haired old woman asked Rand, failing to notice his state of arousal.

"We just arrived," I informed her, slightly breathless.

"It's got a view of the entire city, we're told." Though in his eighties, the older man had a definite gleam in his eye.

"Uh ... maybe we'll get a chance later," I offered.

The old guy smiled at me, and I felt my face redden.

He whispered something to his wife, then practically yelled "newlyweds," when she couldn't hear him.

She blushed attractively, and I swear she batted her eyelashes at Rand.

The doors opened on the fifth floor, and Rand hauled me out.

"Have fun," the little old couple told our retreating backs, their laughter following us to the room.

"Jeez." I leaned against the wall while Rand carded the door open. "Aren't you glad to know we have the geriatric set rooting for us?"

Rand pulled me unceremoniously into the room. "The geriatric set almost got to observe us having fun."

He tossed me onto the bed, and followed me down, his eyes blazing with desire.

Clothes went flying as we raced to get to each other. Then he was in me. Big and hard and hot, and filling me like no other man ever could. I forgot about everything else while he brought me to release, repeatedly.

Finally exhausted, we fell asleep in a tangle of arms and legs.

* * * *

I was jarred awake with a hand clamped over my mouth as I was forcefully dragged out of bed and onto the balcony. I breathed easier when I saw it was Rand that pinned me to the wall with his hard body.

"Wha..." He clamped his hand quickly over my mouth again to shut me up. Leaning close, he whispered into my ear. "Someone's trying to get into the room."

He shoved my purse at me and I dug out my nine millimeter while he pulled on his jeans. He snagged the gun out of his back pocket, flipped off the safety, and held it pointing up near the side of his head, while he peeked back into our room. He looked

around us then, taking a closer look at the wall to one side of our balcony.

Leaning into me again, he whispered, “You want to see what these guys want, or you want to try to get out of here?”

I figured I knew what these guys wanted, so I voted for the second option. I glanced around for something to wear, tugging him down next to me when I didn’t see anything.

“Where are my clothes?”

“No time.” He shrugged, then moved to the wall.

I shoved my gun back into my purse, slung the strap over my head, and joined him. We were five stories up, but thankfully I couldn’t see how far I’d fall at this time of night.

Rand helped me onto the railing, keeping a firm hold on me while I swung around to the other side. When I was sure of my grip, I shook him off, then dropped onto the neighboring balcony.

Rand was quick to follow me. He tried the door, and finding it locked, we repeated the process. We were lucky on our sixth try. Even luckier when we found the room to be free of any occupants.

“You’ll have to stay here while I check out the situation,” he said.

I couldn’t very well wander around in a sheet or a towel, so I flopped down on the bed while he slipped out of the room.

Chapter Seven

I woke when Rand blanketed my body with his and entered me with a hard thrust. Wrapping my legs around his waist, I met his strokes with my own. He groaned, and I felt a wash of fluid sweep through my vagina.

He increased his pace, his hands moving to my ass, tilting my hips, and holding them in place. He drove harder, deeper into me, and soon I felt the familiar tension building. As my muscles tightened in preparation, his thrusts grew wild. I shot over the edge, waves of pleasure wracking my body.

“Rand!”

He grunted, cursed, his body tensing as he slammed himself into me, then he burst. Hot jets of cum blasted into my depths, bathing my womb. He thrust once, twice more, emptying himself. Then he collapsed on top of me.

As I came to my senses I started to realize that something was wrong. The magic felt wrong.

“Rand?” An edge of panic was creeping into my voice.

“I’m sorry,” he said, raising himself up onto his elbows, “are you talking to me?”

“Uh ... you’re not Rand, are you?” My voice was getting higher.

The lights flashed on, and I found myself staring up into the face of a stranger. Thankfully, a good-looking one, but still someone I’d never seen before.

“T.J., I can’t believe you found someone to fuck without even leaving the room.” Rand stood at the foot of the bed, fury radiating from him.

I couldn’t blame him.

“Hey, I thought he was you.” I squirmed under the man who had yet to move off of me.

He glanced over his shoulder at Rand. “You must be Rand.”

My partner glared at him. “Would you mind getting off my woman?”

“Would you mind telling me what she was doing naked on my bed?” the man replied. The stranger swung his gaze in my direction, and I fought to glare at him. It was difficult, what with his cock inside of me and this sexy smile playing around his lips.

He sighed, then withdrew from me, rolled off the bed, and snagged his pants off the floor. Rand threw me a dress, not the one I’d come in, and I raised an eyebrow at him.

“Why don’t you clean up?” He stared at me, his face set, until I disappeared into the bathroom.

*

Rand turned to the man standing next to the bed. The guy held himself in a loose stance, a fighter’s stance.

“Rand McIntyre.” Rand extended his hand, and the other man took it in a firm handshake.

“Trevor Night.”

“Nightwind Security?” Rand raised his eyebrow at him.

“You’ve heard of it?” Night gave him a closer once over.

“From the Coventrys.” Rand suddenly smiled. “By the way, that’s their little sister you just fucked.”

Night blinked at him. “No.”

Rand nodded, relaxing. Trevor walked over to the minibar and fixed the two of them a drink. “Tell me you’re not McIntyre of McIntyre and Coventry Investigations?” he asked.

“Yep.” Rand took a long swallow of his drink.

“Oh, hell.” Night sat heavily on one of the chairs.

Rand sat on the loveseat, enjoying the man’s discomfort.

“What was she doing naked in my bed?” Night asked.

“Well, T.J.’s brothers are working on a case that she sort of stepped into. She came to the attention of some men who would probably like to see her dead. After they get what information from her they can, of course. We were tailed tonight, so I got us a room. A couple of hours ago, someone broke in. We made it out, but I was only able to grab my pants, her purse, and her.

“Your balcony had the only unlocked door, the room was empty, so I left her here while I went to check on things and find her something to wear.” Rand didn’t bother to ask Night why he’d fucked a strange woman he found naked on his bed. Not when that woman looked like T.J.

“I’d tell you I was sorry I fucked her, but I’m not.” Night grinned.

T.J. had taken that moment to show back up in the room. Rand caught her trying to hide her smile at Night’s words. He caught her wrist and pulled her down next to him on the loveseat. Night got up and fixed her a drink, his eyes lingering on hers too long for Rand’s comfort.

When Night sprawled back in his chair, his attention focused on T.J.

“So, you’re Walt’s kid sister.” His lips quirked in a wicked smile that had Rand steaming.

T.J.’s eyes widened. “You know Walt?”

“I know all your brothers. I’m Trevor Night,” he said.

“Nightwind,” T.J. said reverently. “I can’t believe I didn’t recognize you. I’ve seen you at FandS. Did you recognize him, Rand?” she asked, without taking her eyes off Night.

“I’d be happy to help with this investigation,” Night said.

“And step on the Coventrys’ toes?” Rand rather hoped the man *would* cross the Coventrys.

His grin widened and he winked at T.J. “Already have.”

T.J. blushed. Rand thought he might be sick. Setting his empty glass down on the coffee table, he stood. “Come on, Teej, let’s get our stuff and go home.”

T.J. rose, Night standing as she did, then followed them to the door. Rand stepped out into the hall, only then noticing that T.J. wasn’t right behind him.

*

Night touched my arm as Rand opened the door. I turned back to see what he wanted, and he pulled me into his embrace. He kissed me thoroughly, and I nearly came. I still couldn’t believe I’d fucked the legendary Trevor Night.

“Expect to hear from me,” he told me when he broke the kiss.

“Sure.” I smiled at him, my heart beating way too fast in my chest.

Rand stomped back into the room, latched onto my arm, and dragged me out the door.

“Bye,” I yelped.

Night just laughed, and watched us move off down the hall.

Rand glared at me all the way to the room. No bad guys lurked there, but my dress was toast. Someone had shredded it, as well as my shoes. Guess they were sending me a message.

He hauled me out of the room and into the elevator, altering his glare with a look of disdain as we descended to the ground floor. At least he remembered to check for bad guys when we reached the lobby.

Deciding to leave his Jeep where it was, he called a cab, requesting that it pick us up off the employee entrance.

The cab dropped us off on the street behind the garage. Rand and I made our way through people’s back yards until we had the buildings in sight. We watched the place for fifteen minutes, and didn’t see any sign of anyone else watching it.

I split off from Rand, but he quickly latched onto me again, dragging me to the garage, and upstairs to his apartment.

“I just want to change into my own clothes.” I didn’t want to talk about what happened.

Rand grabbed the front of the dress I was wearing, and shocked the hell out of me when he ripped it right down the front. “You don’t need any clothes,” he growled.

I should have been paying more attention to him. He was all hard angles and planes. He looked larger to me, and a hell of a lot more dangerous. I thought at first he might be starting to change, but his eyes had darkened to nearly black, his jaw was clenched, and his muscles bulged in his arms like he was about to punch someone.

“Uh ... uh...” I stammered. I stared warily at the man I’d known most of my life, and a thrill of fear shot through me. Fear I hadn’t even felt with his wolf. Suddenly I was too warm. I felt lightheaded.

He narrowed his eyes at me, threw me over his shoulder, and carried me off to his bedroom.

* * * *

Rand woke me with a thrust of his hips the next morning. A look at his narrowed eyes and clenched jaw told me his mood had not improved. He kissed me, savagely. Then hooked my ankles over his shoulders and drove his cock deeply, ruthlessly into me.

I loved it. I blasted through my first orgasm and was well into my second when Rand finally joined me.

He dropped my legs, then lowered himself to my body, allowing his weight to press me into the mattress. “Goddamn. I don’t know what to do about you.” He sounded pissed, but he also sounded frustrated.

“What’s the big problem?” I knew, but in a way it didn’t make any sense to me.

He tensed, then levered himself up on his elbows so that he could glare into my face. “This thing you have for fucking every guy that comes along.”

That did it. Anger flashed through me as he spoke.

“For your information, I’d spent five years wondering what was wrong with me. What was so lacking about me as a woman that you didn’t want anything to do with me. Frankly, the day I accepted Connor’s invitation, I’d had my fill of you and your activities. I was going to get something for myself. I’d decided to stop trying to have meaningful

relationships with all the wrong men, and start having meaningless sex with all the right ones.

“Then you go and get all possessive of me?” I was screaming by now, and couldn’t stop myself. “Where the hell do you have the right to be possessive of me? You fuck everything that moves BUT me, then when I decide to get something for myself, you get possessive?” I knew I wasn’t making any sense—at least the thought crossed my mind that I might not be—but I’d ceased caring.

“Well, here’s a news flash for you. I’ve been in love with you since I was sixteen. You’ve done nothing but stomp on my heart since then. You’ll get me when I’m damned well over being so fucking pissed off at you.”

“Here’s a news flash for you, princess. I’ve been in love with you since you were sixteen. Maybe even before that. Your loving brothers found out I’d relieved you of your virginity and threatened to neuter me if I ever touched you again.”

I snorted. “Like you ever listen to what they say.”

“You remember that broken arm I had? I told you I got it when a bungee cord came loose on the back of Buddy’s pickup?”

I stilled, dreading what he was about to say next.

“It was big brother Walt, sweetheart. He had a little trouble with anger management when he had his talk with me. Not sure if he meant to break it, but he wasn’t sorry he did. After that, I kind of believed their other threats.”

I’d calmed down, but I was still pissed at him. “Okay, I’ll give you a point for the brother factor, but you should have told me, Rand. Talked to me. Instead you let me think that I was the most undesirable woman on the planet. I wondered if you fucked me when I was sixteen on some kind of dare. That you’d had a good laugh about it with your buddies. All those women, Rand. I just can’t get past all those women.”

Rand wrapped himself around me. Holding me in a vise grip, the side of his face pressed against the side of mine. “God, I fucked up. I know I did. I didn’t realize how badly until I saw the look in your eyes when you looked at that Irishman.” He gazed back at me then, his eyes bright with moisture. “I don’t want to lose you.”

I studied him for a minute, saw he really meant what he said, saw the fear in his eyes as well. “Then you’re just going to have to let me get this out of my system. If you really love me, you’ll be there for me when it’s over.”

“I’m afraid of losing you to someone else.” His voice cracked.

I hated to say it, but the truth was the only thing I had to give him. “Then you should have thought about that five years ago.”

* * * *

Rand was a total pain in the ass the next morning. In more ways than one.

After we opened the office, he slammed things around in the kitchen, then slammed things around at his desk, muttering to himself.

I’d had enough of him, and was just about to tell him so, when he gathered up some surveillance equipment, told me he’d be back later, and stomped out the door.

The peace was refreshing. I managed to get the paperwork on several files completed, and had just headed into the kitchen to make lunch when the phone rang.

“H’lo.” I grabbed the peanut butter out of the cupboard.

“Is this McIntyre and Coventry?”

I knew that gravelly male voice, but couldn't place a name on it.

"Yes." I set the peanut butter on the table next to the bread.

"I'd like to speak with T.J."

I sat down at the table, curiosity killing me as I tried to figure out who it was.

"Speaking."

"T.J., it's Night. Are you free for dinner tonight?"

Was I? Oh, who was I kidding. "As a matter of fact, I just happen to have the evening open."

"I'll pick you up at six."

"Okay." I'd barely gotten the words out when I realized he'd already hung up.

I sat there for a minute thinking about Trevor Night. I'd had fantasies about the man since I'd first seen him at my brothers' company when I was eighteen. Yeah, I'd wanted Rand back then, but Rand wasn't having anything to do with me at the time; then I see Night.

Six feet four inches of solid, lean muscle. Dark brown hair, chocolate brown eyes. Chiseled features, hell, chiseled body. He looked like he'd been carved from marble. Golden marble. He had this animal magnetism that drew women to him like flies. And the defining feature, at least to my immature mind, was that he had a certain discrimination when it came to the women he paid attention to.

I'd never seen him with one, and I'd watched. I'd seen a lot of women paying attention to him; he'd sometimes flirt a little, but nothing more. I had no doubt the man got plenty of sex, but you never would know who he was having it with. My brothers never even joked about the guy being a wolf or anything.

He'd worked quite a bit with my brothers between the time I was eighteen and twenty. I'd never gotten to work closely with him, and rarely saw him close up, since his company provided a specialized service that I just wasn't trained for. So, he remained a mystery to me, and that mystery made me want him all the more.

Now I was going out on a date with him. I felt myself get lightheaded just thinking about it.

Baxter and a couple of his cousins shot through the doggie door.

"Hey, T.J." He settled on the counter behind me.

"Hi, Baxter." I grabbed the jelly out of the fridge, retrieved the fixings from the table, and made a sandwich.

The other two pixies dropped down on either side of him. "Thought you should know that someone's watching your house." He climbed up onto my plate, and tilted his head, looking at my food.

"What kind of someone?" I asked him, pouring myself a big glass of milk, and carrying my lunch over to the table.

The three men flew to the table, the cousins sprawling on their sides, while Baxter once again moved close to my lunch. Rolling my eyes, I cut three tiny wedges out of my sandwich and handed one to each of the pixies.

"Thanks." Baxter took a bite, and sat down on the edge of the table while he chewed. "Humans," he said, and it took me a moment to figure out why.

"Is it my brothers?" I asked him.

"I said humans, T.J. Those brothers of yours are definitely not that."

I had to agree. "Think they work for my brothers?"

“That’d be my guess.” He’d finished his food, and was staring at my sandwich again. A glance told me his cousins were done eating, too.

I cut three more chunks and passed them out. “Let me know if they do anything interesting,” I told him as I cleared the table. “I’ve got to get back to work.”

I left them, munching happily away on their sandwiches, and returned to the office.

Thankfully, the afternoon passed quickly, and I was able to lock the door at five. I ran into my half of the house to get ready. Rand hadn’t shown back up, and I was grateful for that.

I showered and shaved. Dried and poofed my hair. Picked out a sexy outfit and completed my makeup with ten minutes to spare. I used that time to drink a glass of wine, hoping to settle my nerves before Night arrived. *Jesus. Trevor Night!* I still couldn’t believe it.

A knock came at my back door just before six. Taking a deep breath, I opened the door, and there he was.

He was wearing dark jeans and a dark sweater, topped with a leather jacket, and he looked good enough to eat.

His eyes tracked slowly down my body, then back up again. When his gaze reached mine, he smiled this sexy half smile, desire evident in his eyes.

I grabbed my jacket, which he helped me put on, letting his hand linger on my shoulder. He waited while I closed and locked my door, then he placed his hand on the small of my back and guided me to his car.

“You look lovely,” he murmured into my ear, as he helped me into the passenger seat.

“Thanks.” I blushed.

He slid in behind the steering wheel, and I couldn’t help but notice the bulge in the front of his pants.

“Fasten your seatbelt.” I heard the amusement in his voice and realized I’d been staring.

I hurried to comply, then made myself look out the windshield. I was working so hard on not ogling him that I jumped when he touched my arm.

He chuckled. “Is everything all right?”

I turned to him, my heart skipping a beat at the look in his eyes. “Fine,” I squeaked. I’d never make it through this night. I just knew I was going to make a total idiot out of myself.

Before long we were cruising down a long tree-lined drive. He reached up to his visor and pressed a button, causing the garage door to rise as we neared. He pulled inside while I gawked at the other four vehicles already parked there.

He came around to my door, gave me a hand out of his car, then ushered me into the house.

We passed through a large, modern kitchen to an intimate dining area surrounded on three sides with a steeply curved bay window. He lit the candles that were already standing on the table, then dimmed the room lights to a warm glow.

“Welcome to my home.” He circled me with his arms, and pulled me against his muscular frame. I felt the hard steel of his erection pressed into my stomach as he bent for a kiss.

His lips teased over mine, then settled more firmly. With one hand on my ass, the

other at the back of my head, he slipped inside my mouth. His tongue was aggressive, demanding, his hands holding me tight to him while he devoured me. His magic danced along my skin, bringing all my nerve endings to life. I nearly passed out, and had to rely on his arms for a moment to keep me upright when he broke the kiss.

"Oh my," I breathed.

He settled me into a chair. The lids drooping over his eyes, his hair mussed from my hands, a satisfied male smile turning up the corners of his mouth.

"Dinner first." His husky voice wrapped around me.

I ogled his ass as he headed into the kitchen. He returned shortly with a cart, loaded down with plates. He removed the lids that had been placed over them to keep them warm, and revealed thick filets, baked potatoes, some kind of soup, and a crusty bread.

My stomach lurched, and I prayed I could eat at least some of the food he'd spent so much time preparing.

He placed a bowl of soup in front of me, and I tasted it. Flavor burst across my tongue, the sweet taste of onion, in a beefy broth, with a slightly salty cheese.

He was grinning at me as I ate.

"What?" I pinched the cheese off on the side of the bowl as I scooped up another spoonful of soup.

"I love the sounds you make when you eat," he said.

Oh God. I was making sounds. "Sounds?" I was blushing again.

"Yes," he replied, eyes darkening, "very much like the sounds you make in bed."

A rush of moisture dampened my crotch. I dropped my eyes to my bowl, and spent several minutes studying my soup, as I tried to finish it without making any more sounds.

He replaced my soup bowl with the filet and potato. I knew there was no way I could eat them, so I concentrated on the meat, slicing a thin section, then popping it into my mouth.

And caught myself groaning at the richness of the beef. *Damn.*

I heard Night chuckle.

I managed to finish about half the steak. I didn't bother with the potato.

"You're not finished, are you?" he asked. Night had eaten everything on his plate, and half the bread.

"It was delicious, but I couldn't eat another bite."

He reached over and took my plate, placing it on top of his empty one. Then I watched in fascination while he finished off the rest of my dinner too.

I grew uncomfortably aware of him as I finished my wine, knowing that soon we'd be engaging in other activities. As soon as I'd set my glass down, he rose and came to my side of the table. He extended his hand to me, and I took it.

Without saying a word, he led me from the room, and down a long hallway to the end. He opened the door, and moved his hand to my back as he guided me into his bedroom.

I balked at the sight of the bed. "Aren't we supposed to wait a half hour before diving in?" *Shit.* I sounded like an idiot.

He looked down at me, a thoughtful expression on his face. Then he grabbed me, strode across the room, and rolled onto the bed. When he had me pinned beneath him, he grinned.

"The last time I had you under me, you had fewer clothes on."

Heat rushed upward from my nipples. "If you remember, I thought you were someone else."

"I just had to rectify that situation. I want you to know *I'm* the one fucking you," he growled.

I'm not sure what I would have said in response, as he chose that moment to kiss me senseless. He went wild, his hands eagerly shedding me of my clothes, then caressing every inch of my body, while I tugged on his sweater, trying to get it off.

He finally crawled to the edge of the bed, undressed, then prowled back to where I lay.

Resting partially over me, he pressed his chest to mine. His legs straddled one of my thighs, his hot, hard, erection flush against my hip. His lips worked their magic on my mouth, my jaw, my neck. His hand burned a path to the juncture of my thighs, and I groaned when he finally parted my labia and explored my slit. He dipped a finger inside of me, and the jolt of pleasure nearly sent me over the edge. Then he worked his finger deeper, adding a second one to it, twisting and curling them until I was teetering on the brink.

I whimpered when he moved his hand away, while he repositioned himself between my thighs. Then I felt the head of his cock as he dragged it up and down my slit a few times, before seating himself at the opening of my vagina.

"T.J." He brushed my lips with his, his eyes dark with intent.

"Mmmm?"

He smiled when I looked at him, and pressed his cock into me in one long smooth stroke.

My eyes widened at the feeling, the sensations blasting across my nerve endings.

"Night." I raised my legs on either side of his hips, grinding my clit against the hair at the base of his shaft.

He began to move then, long, slow strokes, followed by hard, fast ones. He continued altering his pace, and I struggled to follow his lead. He held me on the verge of orgasm, bringing me painfully close, then slowing down, and letting me fall away.

I was flushed and panting, dying for him to finish me off, when he finally locked his arms around my shoulders, his lips to mine and began hammering into me. He broke the kiss, his hips pistoning faster, his magic racing over me, into me, driving me higher.

"Now, T.J.," he rumbled. A wash of his power shot straight through my core.

I looked into his eyes, and shattered. "Night!" I screamed, the intensity of my orgasm causing lights to flash behind my eyes. I heard my body slap against his, then felt him tense. He cursed loudly while continuing to thrust powerfully into me. Then the hot wash of his cum spread across my womb. He pumped a few more times, then eased himself to my chest, breathing heavily.

An aftershock rippled through me, and I felt his cock jerk in response. Levering himself up on his elbows, he looked at me, and laughed, as his dick came to full attention.

He withdrew from me, and I grimaced at the loss.

"On your knees," he commanded.

I eagerly complied, dropping to my forearms with my ass in the air, wagging it at him.

"Christ, T.J. You take my breath away," he said, just before he slammed his way home.

He fucked me hard and fast this time, his hands splayed around my hips. When I felt myself tightening, he dropped a hand to my crotch, and thrummed a finger over my clit. I exploded, screaming, and kept on screaming as he emptied himself into me on a roar.

We collapsed to the bed, his cock still embedded in me, his arms tight around me.

Sometime later, he withdrew, adjusted his arms and my body, so that I fit snugly against his chest. I wiggled my ass against his groin for good measure.

He laughed, and promised to wake me in an hour or so for more.

He kept his promise, too.

*

It was still dark out when Night woke me, again.

“Fuck me, Night, you’ve got some stamina,” I groaned.

“You inspire me.” He wedged himself between my legs, and made short work of it for both of us.

After he’d rested on top of me for a few minutes, he moaned. “As much as I’d like to spend the day in bed with you, duty calls.” He rolled out of bed, then dragged me out behind him.

We took a shower together, touched a lot, but managed to keep from fucking. I really was amazed with his staying power, since I figured he had to be at least thirty-five, and that seemed pretty old to me for the number of times he’d taken me during the night. No wonder he was a legend.

He cooked me breakfast, then bundled me into his car. When we reached my place, he put his car in park and shut off the engine. He placed a hand on my arm to keep me from getting out.

“As much as I enjoy spending time with you, I’ve got to tell you up front, T.J., that I’m not at a point in my life where I’m interested in anything serious.”

I stared at him, wondering what the hell had brought this up. “Did I scream something out when we were fucking that I’m unaware of?”

He chuckled. “No. But women tend to equate great sex with deeper feelings.”

“Really?” I’d have to think about that. Was there something wrong with me? I equated great sex with more great sex.

He kissed me then, with tongue, and fondled my breast for good measure. “You are unique,” he said when he let me go.

I got out of the car, and he came around from his side, placing his hand on my back. He accompanied me to my door, surreptitiously scanning our surroundings as we walked. He pinned me to the door when we got there, kissed me thoroughly, one thigh between my legs, and tight against my mound.

I knew I was flushed, and felt wonderful as I looked up at him when he broke the kiss.

“Expect to hear from me,” he said, then waited until I was safely inside before he left.

Chapter Eight

I took another quick shower, and was doing my hair when the phone rang.

"Hello?" I dug through my closet for a sweater, the phone trapped between my shoulder and my ear.

"Night? You slept with Night?" My brother bellowed at me.

"I think the weather is going to be lovely today too, Walt. I was just trying to decide if it would get warm enough to wear a shirt instead of a sweater."

"Have you lost your fucking mind?" he continued to yell.

"Ah, here's a lightweight sweater that should just do the trick."

I dropped the phone on the bed while I pulled the sweater over my head. I could hear Walt's voice booming from the handset, and thought about leaving it there.

Heaving a sigh, I picked up the phone. "Are you spying on me, Walt?"

"Of course I am. You've gotten yourself involved in something way over your head, and I'm not talking about Night, though he'd probably qualify, too."

"Let me remind you, Walt, I'm an adult. If I want to sleep with Night, you really don't have any say over the matter. That's between Night and me."

Walt fumed for a few more minutes. "So why weren't you fucking McIntyre last night?"

"What?" I nearly shrieked.

"If I get any say in this at all, I'd vote for the boy wonder."

"Really?" Walt had punched Rand when he found out we were sleeping together.

"Night's one dangerous man."

He didn't know women very well if he was trying to discourage me by saying that.

"Was there any reason for this call? Besides yelling at me about Night?"

"Have you seen McIntyre yet?" His tone had gone cautious.

"No." Why would Walt care?

"He didn't come home last night either," he said.

"Since when is that news?" I bristled. So, okay I'd spent the night with Night, but what was Rand doing fucking someone else? Sure wasn't the way to prove he'd changed his ways.

"Since he started sleeping with you," Walt spit out.

"Well, I don't think there's any need for alarm yet." I pulled on my jeans, then sat on the edge of the bed to put on my socks and shoes. "Look, Walt, I've got to get to the office, I'll talk to you later."

"Just keep an eye open," he said with more seriousness than I'd heard from him before.

"Will do," I promised, then hung up the phone, finished my hair and makeup and headed downstairs.

It had been the day from hell. Rand, the ass, had never bothered to show up for work and the phone wouldn't stop ringing. I was juggling three clients, seated at three different spots around the office, and I'd just about had enough.

The one time I'd managed to race into the kitchen for a cup of coffee, there had been pixies everywhere, making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I didn't know what the

hell that was about, and I didn't have time to find out.

I managed to get the clients on their way, if not satisfied, at least appeased for the moment. It was finally five o'clock, and I didn't care that the phone was ringing yet again. I locked the office door, turned out the lights, and headed for the kitchen. I hadn't had a chance to eat breakfast or lunch, and I was starving.

The weather had turned and the sky was quickly becoming a dark gray, seething mass that I watched through the window while I ate my spaghetti. Two helpings.

Nightfall came early, and I was loading the dishwasher when the weather broke with a loud clap of thunder and a blinding flash of light. The electricity went out, and I cursed as I felt my way along the counter, looking for the drawer that held the flashlight.

Suddenly I was pinned from behind, and a hand slapped across my mouth. I was getting ready to stomp on the person's foot when he whispered in my ear.

"Shh, it's just me, Nick." He removed his hand from my mouth, and allowed me to turn around, though he kept his arms draped around my body.

"Nick, are you crazy? Walt has this place under surveillance," I hissed.

He laughed, a deep throaty sound that went straight to my crotch. "I'm better than they are. But I need you to come with me. We've got a situation, and I don't trust your brothers not to have planted listening devices."

"So how do you want to work this?" I asked.

"Just follow my lead." He went to the door, opened it soundlessly, and slipped out.

I tried to be as silent as he was, as I followed him like a shadow. Keeping my hand in his, he led me across the lawn, then through the neighboring yards.

Rain was coming down in torrents. The night so dark that I had to trust Nick to know where he was going. It was easier, knowing he had super night vision. The only way I could tell how far we'd traveled was by how long we'd walked.

Then Nick was shoving me into a car through the driver's side. The interior lights had been disconnected, so I had to feel my way across the seat. He slid in behind me, started the car, and began rolling down the street without turning the headlights on.

Driving a circuitous route for over half an hour, we ended up in the back of a small frame house on a heavily wooded lot. He led me inside, lit a Coleman lantern, and guided me into the main room.

Setting the lantern down on a coffee table, he went to the bar and asked me what I'd like to drink. I asked for brandy, sat down on the couch, and watched him while he worked. Especially the muscles in his back as they visibly flexed under his wet shirt. He handed me my drink, set his down on the table, then went to the fireplace and started a fire.

When he returned to the couch, he sat close to me, close enough that our thighs were pressed together. Images from our time together in the closet popped into my mind, and I felt myself flush. I turned to say something to him, he turned at the same time, and before I knew it, his mouth was covering mine, his hands stroking my body.

I went up like a torch, and protested when he pulled away. His eyes were dark with his arousal, his hair wild from my hands. I thought about tackling him and having my way with him until he spoke.

"I have reason to believe they have Rand McIntyre."

"What? Why the hell didn't you tell me that before?" My heart cramped in my chest.

"You really don't know, do you?" He shook his head. "Your brothers are only

concerned with stopping the vampires from killing. While it looks like they've already done that, Walt isn't convinced. He's almost talked the others into exterminating them, regardless of the consequences. A source of mine informed me that the vampires have someone in their possession. The description matches McIntyre's. I'll know more tomorrow afternoon. Do you really want your brothers going in after Rand with the attitude they've currently got?"

I knew my brothers well enough and had to agree with Nick, I wasn't sure they'd be terribly bothered if Rand came to harm while they did what they thought necessary. "What are we going to do?"

"Did you tell McIntyre anything about running into me?" He shifted farther away from me on the couch.

I slumped. "I told him everything. He even knows we fucked."

Nick was quiet a minute. "They'll think he knows more than he's telling them. That can't be good." The latter he said more to himself.

"Where is he? How do we get him back?" My voice rose half an octave as I spoke.

"I've got someone working on the *where*; they'll contact me tomorrow afternoon at the earliest with that information. The *how* I won't be able to work out until I know more about where he is, and how many men he has around him."

"Shit." I slumped further in my seat. "This is all my fault."

"Don't even think that," he said.

I did, though, and it was going to drive me insane until we got Rand back. "Oh fuck." I almost dropped my drink. "You're certain they're vampires?" My eyes flashed to his face, breath held while I waited for his answer.

"Yeah, I'm sure. Who do you think sent the packet of information to Walt?" He smiled. "Now, finish your drink."

I raised an eyebrow at him, knowing I couldn't do anything about the situation at the moment, but feeling for Rand anyway, since I knew he had a—distaste—for the blood-drinkers.

His grin turned to pure sin. "I have this piece of furniture I'm just dying to show you."

Even under the circumstances, I felt myself smiling at his words, and downed my brandy.

*

Rand tried to force his eyes open. He heard the murmur of his captors' voices, and would rather see what they were up to than rely on sound and scent alone to try to figure it out.

He had no idea how long he had been here. Or if he was even in the same place he'd been from the start. The scent was the same, but it was so heavily laden with vampire, he couldn't be sure.

The only thing he was sure of was the pain. The agony these men continually inflicted on him for answers he just didn't have. Wounds that burned with the taint of silver, and failed to heal quickly.

Hunched up with a wall at his back, he tried to shift himself into a more comfortable position. With his hands bound behind him and his ankles strapped together, he didn't have many options.

Just then, a hard boot crashed into his already aching ribs.

"I said," the harsh voice rasped at him, "we're done questioning you, pretty boy. You ready for some fun?"

Rand's arm was nearly jerked out of the socket when he was wrenched to his feet. He stumbled as he was dragged across the room, one eye breaking open a slit, enough to see a section of the floor. He was shoved down onto his face on top of a bare mattress. He tasted blood as the split in his lip reopened.

His wrists were released, only to be secured above his head to the iron bars that made up the headboard. Grateful to be lying on a soft surface, he relaxed, only to tense again when his shirt was cut from his body. Fingers brushed the side of his neck.

"You've got a great vein, boy. I'm going to get me some of that hot were blood of yours." The man raked a nail across his shoulder, where it met his neck. "We're all going to get us some of this fine were blood." He chuckled, sending chills up Rand's spine.

*

Nick woke me the next morning. We didn't actually make it out of bed until nearly noon, though. Then I helped him make lunch, which we ate off the coffee table in the main room.

I was starting to get itchy, wondering about Rand, and worrying that something might happen to him before he was rescued. Nick's informant finally called, and Nick walked outside to talk to him.

He was gone a long time.

I washed up the lunch things, and put them away. Then thought about finding Nick, whether he was still on the phone or not. He chose that moment to return. He came through the back door with no expression whatever on his face. My stomach clenched, and I thought I might throw up.

"He's still alive." Guess Nick could tell what I'd been thinking.

"Where is he?" I wanted to shake the information out of him.

He made me sit down at the table, then stared at me, hard, before he started talking. "He's being held at a property that is moderately guarded. I'm going to need help getting him out of there. I just haven't thought yet on who I can trust for that help."

"What aren't you saying?" I leaned against the table for support.

I watched as his jaw clenched, and his gaze narrowed. "He's been tortured, with silver."

It felt like a lead ball had been dropped into my stomach. I didn't get sick; instead, all feeling left me except for one. Anger. I was totally pissed, and I wanted in on whatever Nick came up with to get Rand back.

"What about Trevor Night? He's got units that are trained to do stuff like this. And he's *other*."

"Night works for your brothers," Nick said.

"Night has been hired for some jobs by my brothers. He doesn't answer to them."

Nick rolled his eyes. It reminded me strongly of the looks I'd often get from Rand. "You fucked him, too. Didn't you?" Nick asked.

I gaped at him, but his eyes shone with such amusement that I couldn't hold my irritation over his question. "Yeah." I was blushing, again.

"It might work. Think you can set up a meet, not here, and make sure your brothers won't get wind of it?"

"I can give him a call and see."

Night answered on the third ring.

"Night? It's T.J."

"Can you talk?" he asked.

"Yes, can you?" I responded. Kind of like being a spy. I liked it.

"Your brothers have been all over me since you disappeared. Seems I'm the last one that saw you. As far as they know," Night said.

"Do you know about Rand?" I asked.

"Not what you know, obviously. Last I heard there was interest in talking to him, but he was out catting around somewhere."

"I'd like to ask for your help, but I've got to know that you can keep my brothers out of this." I wasn't sure if I'd be able to tell if he lied to me.

"If you ask me not to talk to your brothers, I promise I won't." He sounded like he meant it.

"Then I'm asking, don't talk to my brothers. I've got a friend here that I'm going to put on the phone. I trust him, Night."

I could hear Night laughing at me as I handed the phone to Nick, then tried to figure out what was going on from Nick's side of the conversation.

Nick gave Night directions to the place where we would meet with him in a few hours, then passed the phone back to me.

"Hi." I smiled, even though he couldn't see me.

"Sweetheart, you're gonna owe me for this one," Night growled.

"Is that a bad thing?" I asked, flirting.

"Never. I'll see you in a few." He disconnected.

I looked at Nick. "What do you think?" I wasn't sure I liked the look in Nick's eyes.

"I think we've got some time to kill." He grinned, then pounced on me. He swept me off my chair and carried me into the bedroom.

Chapter Nine

It was just before six o'clock when Nick turned his car into the asphalt drive and stopped at the gate. He pressed a button on the intercom that sat off to one side. No one spoke, but shortly the gate slid back and Nick pulled beyond it and down the long, curving drive. He stopped before another set of gates, this time in sight of the big building beyond.

I studied the structure, thinking more "experimental lab" than "home." All Nick had told me was that it was a buddy's place. That gate, too, swung open, and Nick drove through. Then he pulled onto a paved apron, and put his vehicle in park.

Sliding out of the car, he came around to my side. "Stay behind me," he said, then turned and started for the building. I tagged along, wondering about his buddy, that Nick thought I might need protection from him.

A door on the long end of the structure opened, and a man stepped out. I almost tripped when I got a good look at him. He had to be six and a half feet tall, with black hair that brushed his shoulders. He had dark eyes set in a striking face. High cheekbones, a strong jaw and chin. His body looked like granite. Lean chiseled muscles corded his arms and chest. His T-shirt stretched tight over them, snug over his flat stomach. The darkness of its color highlighted the coppery sheen of his skin. He was wearing black jeans that fit him like a second skin. They showcased strong thighs, with an intimidating bulge between them.

I was so caught up ogling the guy that I failed to notice Nick had stopped walking. I plowed into his back with an "oof."

Nick grinned back at me, his eyes glittering with awareness. Wrapping an arm around my back, he dragged me around in front of him.

"Ice, this is T.J. T.J., say hi to Ice."

"Uh." I couldn't get my brain to work this close to the man.

Ice just smiled at me, a predatory baring of teeth with a promise in his eyes that he'd be happy to eat me. I nearly fainted. He extended his hand, which I looked at suspiciously for a moment. Then I steeled my nerve, and placed my hand in his. With a quick jerk, he had me pinned against the steel length of his body, my mouth trapped by his.

His lips moved exquisitely over mine, and I lost myself in the feeling. He swept his tongue inside, then stroked mine erotically while he canted my head for a deeper exploration. He finally released me, but kept a hand on my shoulder to keep me upright until Nick retrieved me. I latched onto Nick, afraid he'd move away from me and leave me at his friend's mercy.

Both men laughed, Ice ducking back inside, Nick strolling after him.

Ice went into a room at the right of the entry door. He slouched into a chair in front of a panel of monitors, and pulled a keyboard into his lap. Neither man talked as they waited, the quiet not bothering either of them. I felt like an open electric circuit. Especially since Ice kept looking over at me, giving me a slow body scan.

I scooted closer to Nick.

"T.J." Ice's voice was deep, as he tapped a few keys on the keyboard. "Is this your man?"

I looked at Nick, and he motioned me to the monitors. I finally found the one that showed a vehicle pulled up to the outer gate. "That's Night," I said.

Ice grunted, tapped several more keys, then the gate swung open to admit Night.

I was drawn closer, trying to figure out what was being displayed on the other monitors. One I thought might be infrared, another looked much like x-ray. Some just had data scrolling over them.

Something brushed against my crotch. I blinked, glanced down, then followed the arm to the man sitting in the chair next to me. He cupped me again, an evil grin on his face.

I yelped, and ran away. "Is he always like this?" I whispered to Nick.

"Depends." I wasn't sure I wanted to know what it depended on. Oh, hell. I had to ask. "Do I want to know what it depends on?"

Nick grinned wickedly. "Probably not."

I watched from Nick's side while Night passed through the second gate. Then another monitor showed him parking and getting out of his truck.

Ice gestured with his head for Nick to go retrieve him. I tagged along with Nick so that I wouldn't be alone with his buddy. I never wanted to be alone with his buddy. His buddy scared the hell out of me.

The two men exchanged a greeting, then Night strode right up to me and pulled me in for a kiss. I let him. Hell, I'd let Ice.

"You've got a pattern going here, babe." Night said to me when he broke the kiss.

"What do you mean by that?"

Night took a step away from me, and stood next to Nick. The two men looked at each other, then turned to me with grins on their faces.

Ice chose that moment to walk up. Night scanned the larger man. "Nope," he said in an aside to Nick, and Nick laughed.

Night threw his arm around my shoulder. "Nick and I look enough alike to be cousins. Rand too. Think about it."

Crap, so did Connor Reilly.

I wondered if Rand saw the connection. Thinking about Rand reminded me of why we were here, which caused my stomach to tighten.

"Very funny," I muttered, without the heat I'd meant to back it with.

Night lowered his arm to my waist. "Don't worry about it, babe." Then he turned to Ice. "It's going to take the men at least half an hour to get here," he said, meeting my eyes briefly. "Where can we go for a private conversation?"

The big man glanced at Nick before he answered. "Down that hall," he said, pointing a beefy arm behind him. "Second door on the left."

"My team will be heading in. Keep them occupied until I rejoin you." He winked at Nick, then led me down the hall and into the room.

I was staring at the bed when I heard him lock the door behind us. He moved to my back and wrapped his arms around my waist. "I'd like to say goodbye." He nuzzled my neck, his lips warm against my flesh.

"What do you mean, goodbye?" I leaned into his chest, and tilted my head to give him better access.

"Because I have a feeling that once we get Rand back, I won't get another opportunity to fuck you."

“Night...” I began to protest, when he grabbed the hem of my shirt and yanked it off over my head. My bra went next, with Night taking a moment to fondle my breasts before removing the rest of my clothing.

“On the bed.” He gave me a gentle shove in that direction, then began shedding his own clothes.

He joined me, propping himself on his elbow at my side, tracing patterns on my stomach with his hand. “Walt threatened to castrate me if I touched you again.” Night smiled a lazy, confident smile, and tweaked my nipple.

“I think it’s time I threaten to castrate Walt, if he doesn’t keep his nose out of my love life.”

Night laughed, a low rumble of sound as he bent forward and took my nipple between his lips. He rolled it with his tongue, then sucked on it, hard. He groaned, the vibrations shooting pleasure through the hardened bud trapped between his lips.

He trailed his fingers over my abdomen, through my curls, then between my labia. Gathering moisture from my slit, he teased the hood back from my clit, and brushed my cream over and around the nub. My hips jerked at his touch, desire heating my blood, sending a rush of warmth to my face, my breasts, and my vagina.

“Night,” I moaned, as I reached for his cock, running the tips of my fingers up its hardened length.

“If I had the time, I would play. Right now I just want to bury myself inside of you.”

He rolled between my legs, and swiftly guided his cock to my opening. With one hand under my hips, the other behind my head, he drove himself in to the balls.

I moaned, and he captured the sound with his mouth, teasing his tongue along the side of mine in the same rhythm he was flexing his hips. I drew my legs up on either side of him, locking my ankles in the small of his back.

“Christ, you’re tight.” He thrust harder into me, my hips slapping back, driving him deeper.

Dropping his head next to mine, he concentrated on his movements. My vagina clenched, gripping his dick, bringing with it a wave of sensations as his rigid flesh stroked over my swollen tissue.

My nerve endings sparked with his magic, drawing with it the familiar coil of tension that preceded release. I drove wildly against him, straining, as his thrusts became faster, barely controlled.

He grunted, slamming himself hard against my womb, blasting me with a jolt of power, and my orgasm ripped its way through me. He continued to drive in and out of me as I bucked with pleasure. Then he locked his eyes onto mine, and I felt the throb of his cock as his semen spewed into my depths. He slapped himself into me, groaning, as he emptied his balls. Finally he lay his full weight on top of me, catching his breath.

I felt his penis growing hard again, and sighed when he pumped it a few times within me.

He pulled out, flipped me over, and yanked on my hips. “On your knees.”

With my head down, and my ass up, he entered me again.

“Did I ever tell you that Walt and I once fucked a woman at the same time?”

“Night, *I’ll* castrate you if you talk about fucking another woman while you’re fucking me.”

He just chuckled, leaned over and toyed with my clit. “Then I’ll be sure to tell you

later. It's a story you'll want to hear."

Then all I knew was Night. With his strong fingers gripping my hips, he hammered into me. He paused, sliding his hand up my side, cupping my breast, then he rolled his hips, his strokes growing strong and deep. "I could have Nick join us. Ever been that full of cock? One in this tight, hot pussy of yours, one up your sweet little ass?"

"No." I never had, but I also meant that I didn't want to now, either. Though my inner muscles clenched at the idea.

"Jesus." He shuddered, his movements becoming jerky.

He zeroed in on my clit again, thrumming it relentlessly until I blew apart. He palmed my entire crotch as I came, his fingers pressing down on either side of his cock.

"So fucking sweet." His voice rasped out of his lungs. Then he was jerking and twitching through his own climax.

He stilled, then he flattened me to the bed with his body. "I'm going to miss you," he mumbled into my hair.

A few minutes later he shifted his weight off me. I felt the bed dip as he moved and made ready to get up. I'd managed to roll over onto my back, when he planted himself between my legs again, only it wasn't Night, it was Nick.

"Just saying goodbye." Nick kissed me, and speared me with his cock.

I had the presence of mind to wonder just how long Nick had been in the room.

Thankfully there was a shower in the bathroom attached to the bedroom we'd used. Night had cleaned up while Nick and I were occupied; now the two of us took a quick shower before we dressed.

The last member of Night's team was just arriving when we entered the conference room. Several of the men looked between Night and Nick and me with raised eyebrows, speculation in their gazes. I knew I was grinning, but couldn't stop myself.

Night sat on my left and Nick on my right, with Ice on his other side.

Nick gave a rundown of the house where they were holding Rand. He detailed security measures that he was aware of, the number of men seen and estimated at the property, as well as the number and type of arms the men carried.

Night took over from Nick, adding information on the location that he had a personal knowledge of. He didn't offer how he'd come across this information, and no one asked. He also alerted the team to the fact that most, if not all, of the men would be vampires.

When they started discussing their plan of attack, both men looked at me and told me I was staying here, out of harm's way.

I adamantly refused.

Night relented first, knowing how stubborn the Coventry's were. In the end, Night set me up for the role of "distraction" while he and his men would execute the remainder of the plan. At least I was going to have an active part, if just a small one.

Night sent one of his men to retrieve the items I'd need for my cover, then everyone trooped out to the vehicles to see what arms Night had brought to the party. Ice was admiring a rocket launcher when I glanced in his direction. His lips curved in a wicked smile as he stroked the barrel of the weapon. I shivered.

"Are you carrying?" I jumped when Night spoke from behind my shoulder.

"Didn't have time to grab my gun when I left home," I said.

He placed a Vektor CP1 in my hand. "Don't lose it." Then he turned his attention back to disbursing the rest of the equipment to the other men.

His man returned with a bundle under his arm. Night took one look at him, grabbed the package, then motioned for me to follow him into the building.

He took me to the room we had used earlier, setting the bundle on the bed. Opening the bags, he removed articles of clothing, a handbag, and shoes. "Put these on." He tipped his head at the articles, then sat next to them and waited for me to comply.

Laid out for me were a very short skirt, a tiny skintight shirt, thigh-highs, and spike-heeled shoes. A push-up bra, but no underpants. I changed into the clothes, thinking about the diversion I was supposed to create at the house, and feeling appropriately attired to achieve that goal.

His man had also supplied some makeup, in colors that complemented my skin tone. I also noted a curling iron, a brush, and hairspray.

"Did you specify what makeup he was to get?" I had to wonder.

Night just grinned at me. He followed me into the bathroom and watched avidly while I did my face and hair.

"Haven't you ever watched a woman do this before?" I asked.

"No, actually." He moved to stand behind me, and placed the palms of his hands over my hip bones. "It's kind of sexy." He continued to watch as I finished.

I walked back into the other room to gather my things together, and placed the Vektor in the handbag. When I turned around, Night's eyes were glazed.

"Guess I'll do." I sashayed towards the door.

"Christ," Night breathed, then followed me out of the room.

I opened the outer door and sauntered out onto the parking apron. Every last man stopped what he was doing to watch me as I approached. I surreptitiously glanced at a few midsections, and couldn't help the grin that spread across my face at the sight of so many—attentive males.

Night snapped them out of their captivation. "Remember, we take McIntyre out of there no matter what." He glared at his men.

My heart suddenly dropped to my feet when I realized what he was really saying. They were to save Rand. Even if he was dead.

The men loaded up, dividing their numbers between four vans. Soon, Night, Nick, and Ice were all that were left standing around me on the apron.

"I've wired a charge in the left front tire." Ice began as he held up a remote. "When you're close enough to the main gate at the house, I'll activate the charge, causing your tire to blow out. You know what to do from there." He leered down my shirt, his tongue snaking across his lips.

I shuddered and moved closer to Nick. Nick slipped a hand up the back of my skirt, and squeezed my buttock. I swatted his arm. "Hey."

He just grinned at me, sending blood rushing through my body.

Ice grunted, and I saw that my nipples had hardened. "Let's get this show on the road." I twisted away from Nick, intent on getting in the car.

All three of them groaned when I bent to get into the driver's seat.

With an innocent smile plastered on my face, I rolled my window down. "Something wrong?"

They shuffled around, cleared their throats, then climbed into the car.

*

Rand could hear several men enter the room behind him. The sounds of cans being

opened and chairs scraping against the concrete followed.

A different man from before moved to the side of the bed. "I'm going to taste you, and if you're good, I'll even make sure you enjoy it." His captor laughed harshly.

The bed dipped as the man settled onto it. His head was roughly shoved to the side as the weight of the vampire settled over his back. He felt the warmth of the man's breath on his neck, then the wetness of his tongue as he swirled it over his flesh. The vampire nipped him with a fang while he ground his erection against his back.

Rand went insane. Bucking and writhing under the man, praying to throw him off. Anything to keep him from what he was about to do. "I like it when they fight, it happens so rarely." The husky voice only added to Rand's fury. He bucked harder, twisting while he did so.

The vampire clung to him, snaking an arm around his throat, then tightening his hold before he struck. Pain lanced through Rand's shoulder, stilling his movements. Then the creature sucked, drawing his blood in long sensual pulls that caused an unwanted arousal to build in Rand's groin.

*

I pulled behind a closed gas station about a mile from the house. As the men exited the vehicle, Night asked me to stay put for fifteen minutes before continuing on with the plan. He bent through the driver's window, intending, I think, a quick kiss, that turned decidedly heated before he backed away.

With a wink he turned, and the three of them disappeared into the darkness.

I fidgeted while I waited for the fifteen minutes to elapse. Checked my makeup in the little mirror over the visor, freshened my lipstick, then fidgeted some more.

Finally it was time, and I put the car in gear, remembering to turn on the headlights as I pulled out onto the street.

I was tooling along, thinking about Rand when the tire blew. Taking my foot off the accelerator, I wrestled the car to the side of the road closest to the house, then shoved it into park.

Trying to act helpless, I opened my door, and tottered out of the vehicle. I made a short circuit around the front end, until I could see the offending tire. I kicked it, for good measure, then looked around at my surroundings, my attention coming back to the guardhouse as the only source of possible life I could see.

With a sway in my hips, I strolled up the drive. I was breathing heavily by the time I'd made it to the top, three men waiting for me, their scowls leaving their faces as they stared at my cleavage.

The biggest of the three, a veritable giant of a man bunched with muscles upon muscles stalked up to me, standing far too close for comfort. "This is private property, ma'am. You'll need to leave," he told my boobs.

I tipped my head back until I could see his face. It gave me an interesting view up his nostrils. "My car broke down. I've got a flat, and I don't know how to fix it." I didn't even have to try for a breathy voice; I was still panting from the hike. Don't know if it sounded sexy, but it seemed to do the trick. The muscle man moved a step closer, his stomach almost brushing my chest.

"Well now, I think I just might be able to help you out there." His grin made my stomach roll with a wave of nausea.

Without trying to be obvious, I sidled slightly to his side so that the other men could

still see me. Several more had gathered now on the other side of the gate. So I smiled in their direction.

“What’s going on here, Dodge?” The speaker motioned for the gate to be opened so he could come through.

I saw Dodge stiffen. “Lady has a flat. I was just offering to help her fix it, sir.”

The new man strode up to my side, his eyes hard as they scanned down my body. “A flat, you say?” His dark eyes narrowed on my face.

I smiled at him, raising my hand and nearly placing it on his chest. “Yes. I could really use some help.”

He studied me for a minute, something flickering in his eyes that I didn’t like. I dropped my hand.

“I’ll change her tire, Dodge.” He didn’t bother looking at the man as he dismissed him.

Then he took hold of my elbow in a firm grip and started leading me back down the driveway. I tried to walk slowly, and glanced down at my shoes when he raised an eyebrow at my plodding pace. With a grimace, he slowed down, but tightened his hold on my arm.

I glanced back once, and found more than a dozen men ranged along the fence watching me walk away.

*

“Hear your blood has a lot of punch to it.” There was a different man on top of Rand, tangling his fingers into his hair. Then he yanked Rand’s head to the side, and pressed his mouth to his neck.

Shit. Rand started sweating, his breath coming in short gasps as he tried to prepare himself for what was about to happen. He hissed into Rand’s ear. “Fight me now.”

Then he sank his fangs into Rand’s neck as he locked his fingers of his free hand into his upper arm.

He sucked a mouthful of Rand’s blood, sending tendrils of pleasure throughout Rand’s body. Then he adjusted his grip, and drew harder on his neck.

Rand tried to blank his mind to the pleasure that rolled through him, an artificial, hollow arousal only caused by a body on top of him. He forced himself to think of T.J., the business, anything but the fact that he was *enjoying* what the man was doing to him. The vampire withdrew his fangs, moved to another part of Rand’s neck, but didn’t bite him again. Rand heard it then, the muted grunts and scuffles of a fight taking place behind him. He tried to draw his body closer to the head of the bed, but whatever bolstered him kept him propped in position. All too soon another set of hands landed on his back. “Hang on, we’ll have you loose in a moment.”

Relief washed over him at the promise. Then he felt his arms freed from the head of the bed, and someone was helping him to his feet. Someone else ran cool water over his eyes.

He blinked; found he could open both of them, even if only partially, then looked around the room where he’d been held. Most of the vampires in the room were either dead, or bound with silver, smoke curling into the air wherever the metal touched skin. His eyes came to rest on one specific man, though. The man was next to the bed, a drop of Rand’s blood glistening on his lip.

His throat had been slit, his head nearly severed from his body but for a thin section

of skin. His eyes stared sightlessly at the ceiling. "Let's go." The man on his left barely breathed the words.

Rand nodded, following behind him, not once looking back.

*

I leaned against the side of the car and crossed my legs at the ankle. I couldn't help but watch the man who was moving between the trunk and the front of the car as he set about changing the tire. I'd never been this close to a vampire before, and outside of the distinctive aura that radiated around him, I couldn't see much difference from a regular human.

I also couldn't help but wonder about Rand, and how the rescue was going.

As casually as I could, I opened my purse, removed a compact and my lipstick, making sure that the gun was in easy reach while I did so. I fixed my lipstick, then returned it and the compact to the purse, but neglected to zip the purse shut again.

The man finished with the tire, returned the tools to the trunk, then walked back to where I stood. "Your spare looks a little low on air," he stated as he moved closer to me. "You'd better get it checked before you drive too much on it."

He dropped his hands to my waist, dipping his face closer to mine. "I'm dying to know what you've got on under this skirt."

He captured my lips, one hand sliding up the side of my thigh and around the back to cup my butt. He groaned, pressing his groin against my stomach as he deepened the kiss. Trailing his fingers down the crack of my ass, he rocked his hips, while his tongue foraged in my mouth.

My body was responding, even while my brain was telling me to get the hell out of there.

"I can think of a way for you to thank me for changing your tire." He breathed into my ear, his hand cupping my crotch from the back.

"Uh." I couldn't think of any way to get out of the situation without raising his suspicions. I didn't imagine he'd buy a "no," seeing I was dressed like a hooker.

"Come here." He took my hand and led me to the front of the car. You could see the gatehouse from there, the men still standing at the top of the drive focused in our direction.

"Rest your elbows on the hood." He pushed gently at my back as he tried to work me into position.

Taking a deep breath, I bent over the hood, and braced myself. Trying not to think about the men, my men, who were undoubtedly watching from the surrounding area, not just the ones watching from the gate. Then I willed myself to believe I wanted this.

Spreading my legs, I glanced back over my shoulder and grinned at him. "What are you waiting for?"

Hunger blazed in his eyes as he stared at my crotch. His fingers hurriedly opening the fastening of his pants, he groaned as he wrapped his hand around his cock, pulling it from the confines of the fabric.

A commotion up by the gate drew his attention. Dodge was coming down the drive towards us. The commander grumbled something, then went to meet him. I straightened up, and leaned a hip against the car, watching as Dodge started talking. I couldn't hear what they were discussing, but I had a pretty good idea. Buoyed by the idea that Rand might already be free, I planted an expectant expression on my face, hoping they

wouldn't realize I was part of the problem.

They glanced over at me then talked some more, the commander laughing. Another look in my direction, and Dodge's face creased in a smile. The commander said something else, slapped Dodge's shoulder, then sauntered over to where I waited.

He wrapped an arm around my back, and pressed his hips into me. "I'm afraid I don't have the time to—accept—your thank you. Perhaps another time?"

"Perhaps." I slid him a grin. "You want my number?"

He did, so I gave him the number for Papa Joe's Pizza, figuring a vampire wouldn't know what it was.

Then he mashed his lips over mine, his fingers digging briefly into my ass. "Don't forget about the air." He smirked at me, the tip of one fang showing. Then he turned on his heel and sauntered back up the drive.

I threw myself into the driver's seat, started the car, then had to get a grip on myself so that I drove away sedately.

I got lost a couple of times, and had nearly turned back towards the house when the sight of a familiar donut shop saved me. As it was, I was the last one to arrive at Ice's place. He opened the gate for me, which I wasn't sure he was going to do.

I ran into the building, searching the main room for Rand. He was sitting on the far side, half in shadow. Ice was on his knees in front of him, daubing at his wounds with a clump of gauze.

Rand's eyes burned into mine, and I barely stopped from flinging myself into his arms. Standing behind Ice, I smiled tentatively at him. "Thank God you're alive."

"Thank you for getting me out of there." Rand dropped his eyes, and I had to wonder about that.

"Rand?" I asked.

"Let me get cleaned up, then we'll talk." Rand still wouldn't look at me, so I agreed and set off towards the bedroom I'd used before.

Rand was sitting on the bed when I returned from my shower. I sat beside him, unconcerned with my nakedness as I wrapped my arms around him. He hesitated, then placed his arms around me.

"I'm so sorry, Rand, that I got you messed up in this," I whispered into his neck, where I'd buried my face.

"Not your fault." His words were clipped.

"Of course it is. I'm the one who insisted on messing with one of my brother's investigations. Even after being warned not to."

"Yeah, well, I didn't exactly try to stop you." He sounded hollow.

"Are you hurt bad?" I leaned back and looked into his eyes, waiting for his answer.

"Some." He flinched. "A couple of them..." He dropped his gaze.

"What? One of them fucked you?" I figured that was the only thing that could possibly embarrass Rand.

His eyes flashed to my face. "God no, they drank my blood."

"Is that all?" I looked at his other wounds, knowing they'd done a lot more than that.

His eyes grew stormy, his arms tightening around me. "Jesus, T.J., I never thought something like that would happen to me."

"I've heard it can be quite pleasurable, if you're willing," I said in a teasing tone.

One side of his mouth curved in a smile. "I think I might have enjoyed it, under

different circumstances.”

“Really?” I goggled at him.

“Don’t get me wrong.” He relaxed against me, then picked me up and set me in his lap. “I don’t have a thing for vampires now, but I can’t say that it really hurt.”

“Well, I’ll be.” I brushed a stray strand of hair out of his face.

“God, I missed you.” He bent his head to mine, and ate at my mouth.

I worked my way around so that I straddled him, pressed my breasts against his chest, and let myself devour him in return.

Chapter Ten

Rand pounded into me with a vengeance. I met him thrust for thrust, the muscles of my vagina screaming with the pleasure he was giving me.

"Rand!" I cried out as my orgasm ripped through me.

"Fuck me," he breathed into my ear as he continued pumping.

A second orgasm claimed me, far harder than the first. I sobbed as my body shuddered, my channel clutching at his cock.

He cursed, then yelled my name as his cum blasted from his balls. He slammed into me a few more times, then pinned me to the bed. Grinning down at me, he flexed his hips, letting me know that he was still hard. "Say it again."

I hesitated, but the utter joy in his face caused me to relent. "I love you, and I want only you."

"Yes!" He stroked slowly within me a few times, then stilled. "I love you." He bent to kiss me, but I turned my face to the side. "What?"

"You haven't said anything about other women." I glared at him.

He laughed. "I swear, T.J., I will never touch another woman, as long as I have you."

"You'll swear, huh?" I raised my eyebrow at him.

He rolled his hips, digging his cock against my womb. "Why would I ever want to when you give me more than all of them combined?"

God, that was good.

"You'll move in with me, of course." Rand started thrusting in earnest.

"No." I rotated my hips in counterpoint to his rhythm.

"What do you mean, no?" His hips stopped, and I swatted him on the ass.

"I think you should move in with me. Closer to work. We would have more time together."

He laughed, then got down to the business at hand.

* * * *

Rand pulled into the parking lot in front of the office, swung out of the Jeep with the bags of Chinese gripped in one hand. He whistled as he headed for the back door.

Baxter nearly careened into him, along with three of his cousins. "Rand, there were vampires here. They went into the house." Baxter spoke in a rush.

Rand tensed. "Are they in there now?"

"I don't think so. We took a quick look around, and didn't see them," the pixie said.

"What about T.J.?" Rand's heart felt like a fist had closed around it.

"I didn't see her." He looked at his cousins, and they shook their heads.

"Thanks for the heads up," he told them, then moved to the door. Letting himself into the kitchen, he called out to T.J. that dinner had arrived. He had hoped for a response, but wasn't surprised when he didn't get one.

Listening, he didn't pick up any sounds that would indicate another presence. He moved with the stealth of his kind towards the door to the office, stopping to scent the air before going through. He smelled vampire, and sniffed again. There'd been more than

one of them, and they'd been here recently, but he couldn't detect a strong enough odor to indicate they were still here.

He slipped his Glock out of the holster and proceeded cautiously into the next room. He continued to clear the remainder of the first floor before moving to the second.

With the scent of vampire everywhere, he took the stairs slowly, while his body screamed at him to hurry. Moving as quickly as he dared, he searched each room as he came to it. Turning up nothing.

The stench of vampire increased the closer he came to T.J.'s bedroom. Bracing himself for what he might find, he opened the door, keeping the bulk of his body to the side. A quick scan of the room showed nothing, but he could hear water running in the shower. He checked the closet first, then moved to the far side of the room, looking under the bed, before he allowed himself to focus on the bathroom.

Taking a calming breath, he palmed the door open, staying low and off center. He slipped into the room, his eyes flashing left and right, skipping across something in the sink that his brain didn't immediately process. He stepped next to the shower, crouched, then slid the door aside.

With his heart hammering in his chest, he peered into the tub. T.J. was lying in a heap on the bottom. He reached in and turned off the water, noticing that it was ice cold. Then he placed his hand along the side of her neck, feeling a wave of weakness wash over him when he found her pulse beating strongly beneath his fingers.

Lifting her out of the tub, he started towards the door, when his eyes fell on the sink, and his brain finally made sense of the grisly contents that rested in the bowl. It was the head of one of the men that had fed from Rand.

His long strides took him to her closet where he grabbed a robe that he wrapped around T.J.'s chilled body. Then he carried her down the stairs and into the kitchen, intent on getting her out of the house. He paused only long enough to collect the food he'd brought, knowing there wasn't anything edible at his place, and T.J. would need the nourishment. Keeping the Glock in his right hand, he lifted T.J. higher, then set off across the lawn.

He settled her in his bed, then checked her eyes, and inspected her inch by inch for any injuries.

There were fading bite marks on the side of her neck and above one breast. That puzzled him; they hadn't taken enough to threaten her life, though there'd been plenty of vamps present to do so. The unconsciousness bothered him as well, since there wasn't any physical reason for it.

Digging his cell phone out of his pocket, he punched the number for Night.

"What?" the man answered tersely.

"Night? It's McIntyre."

"Christ, man, I didn't expect to hear from you. What's up?"

"Can you come over to my place? It's T.J."

"What happened?" Night asked, his tone changing in an instant.

"I'll have to tell you when you get here, but you might want to bring a couple of men along when you come."

"Anything else?" he asked.

Rand could hear others moving in the background on Night's end.

"Bring a med kit, and some food. I didn't have a chance to pick up more than some

takeout Chinese.” Rand thought a minute. “And...” He couldn’t remember what really worked against vampires and what was fiction.

“Spit it out,” Night growled.

“Holy water,” he said.

“Fuck.” Night swore, then hung up.

Night and three of his men showed up an hour later. T.J. was still out cold, not responding to anything Rand had tried.

“Tell me what happened.” Night strode into the room, and went to Rand’s bar, helping himself to some scotch, while his men unloaded bags of groceries into Rand’s refrigerator and cupboards.

Rand fixed himself a drink, then slouched into a chair across from Night. “I was on a surveillance most of the afternoon. I checked in with T.J. around six o’clock when I’d decided to pack it in for the evening. She told me she was going to pick up some more of her clothes from the house, and asked me to bring something home for dinner.”

Rand took a long swallow of his drink, then told Night about searching the house and finding T.J. in the shower.

“There’s a head in the bathroom sink that will need to be disposed of,” he said, slugging down the rest of his drink and heading back to the bar for another.

Night motioned to two of the men, and sent them off for the body part. “Any idea whose head?” Night asked him.

“Yeah.” Rand slouched lower in his chair.

“Ah, the guy that introduced you to the joys of blood drinking.” Night grinned at him.

Rand shot him a glare. “Fuck you, Night.”

“Oh, get over it, Rand. It was past time for you to have that kind of experience. Most of us get it out of the way in college.”

“What?” Rand gaped at the man.

“You’ve led a sheltered life.” He gave Rand a wicked smile.

“Are you telling me you’ve been vampire fodder?” Rand eyed the other man with more than a little suspicion.

“A female.” Night’s smile widened. “It was one hell of an experience, and I’d do it again.”

“I’ll be damned.” Rand leaned forward, eager to hear the details.

“I’ll tell you all about it, some other night.” Night smirked.

Rand rolled his eyes.

“We’d better take a look at T.J.” Night stood, shaking the keys in his pocket impatiently.

Rand led him into the bedroom, noticing that T.J. hadn’t moved at all since he’d laid her down.

Night’s hands went to the belt of her robe, and Rand grabbed his arm. “What are you doing?”

The other man shook him off. “I’m checking her for injuries.”

If Rand had taken a moment to think about it, he would have known that’s all the guy was doing. Raking his fingers through his hair, he stepped back, and watched as Night examined her.

Night’s man stepped into the room, and stood beside Rand, watching silently. Rand

glanced at him, thought about telling him to get out, then changed his mind.

“Shit.” Night closed the robe, tying the belt. “Just the two bites.”

The three men moved back into the living room.

“One of them has a powerful enough *influence* to have gotten to her,” Night said.

“I’m not sure I understand the significance of the two bites. They didn’t rape her, didn’t drain her, and certainly didn’t kill her.” His brow creased in concentration. “And the head. It came from one of their own.”

Rand listened while the man basically talked to himself.

“Were they trying to turn her?” Night’s man asked.

Rand glanced sharply at him, then waited for Night’s response.

“Myth. Three bites from the same vamp within thirty-six hours doesn’t do it.”

“Mind if we move this to the kitchen?” Rand picked up his drink, and started across the room.

Night and the other man followed behind him.

“This is Malekar, by the way.” Night pointed at his man.

“Rand.” Rand nodded at him. The guy nodded back. Then he took the boxes of Chinese out of the bags, dumped the contents onto paper plates, and started heating them up in the microwave. He grabbed five plates out of the cupboard, dropped silverware on top of the pile, then slapped a package of napkins down on the table.

Once the food had been reheated and was laid out, he pulled out a chair and sat down. Night and Malekar were already helping themselves to the chow.

“So, got any idea what this all means?” Rand asked as he scooped sweet and sour chicken onto his plate.

“Best I can figure, they’re telling you they know you were responsible for the death of one of theirs, and they’re letting you know that they can get to your woman without any problem.”

Rand thought about it. “Makes as much sense as anything I can come up with.”

“Because they didn’t really do anything to her, I’d say it’s a statement: you leave us alone, we’ll leave you alone.”

Night’s cell phone rang. “What?” He listened for a moment. “Fuck. Weapons out, men, we’ve got company.”

Rand slid his gun out and held it loosely in his hand. “You loaded with silver?”

“Yes, thanks to your heads up.” Night had a Sig P220 out, flicked the safety off, and loaded a round into the chamber. Then he checked the sheaths at his wrists. “You got any silver blades, you might want to put them on.”

Malekar slung the strap of a Spectre submachine gun over his shoulder, then readied his Sphinx.

Rand went to the closet in his bedroom, opened the wall safe, and removed two daggers, a sawback, and sheaths for all three. He sat on the bed next to T.J. while he strapped one of the blades to his ankle.

“Teej, if you can hear me, we’ve got the enemy moving in on us.” He clipped the second sheath to his left hip and attached the sheath for the sawback across the center of his back. “Night’s here with some of his men.” Standing, he looked down at the woman who meant more to him than his own life. Bending over, he kissed her unresponsive lips. “I love you.”

The other two men had returned, and were detailing the situation to Night when

Rand walked back into the kitchen. Night slanted a look at him, and he didn't like what he saw there.

"There's at least thirty of them surrounding the property," Night told him.

"Why do they give a fuck about us?" Rand straddled a chair.

"Maybe because we killed half a dozen of their guys when we rescued you," Night said.

"But you don't think that's it," Rand stated.

"No, I don't," Night agreed. "I think it has something to do with whatever FandS was investigating to begin with."

"All Walt said to us was that they killed some people in the beginning... What if they're looking for that necklace Walt has?" The image of the peridot spike flashed through his head.

"What necklace?" Night's expression sharpened.

"Walt had copies of Kin Coshee's scroll, and a necklace with a peridot pendant in the shape of a spike," Rand explained.

"I thought Kin Coshee was made up."

"He's real, all right, and the scroll told the guys outside what to do to be able to withstand daylight."

"So it's a special pendant, then," Night mused.

"We didn't think so, but I've got to wonder about it now." Rand dug in his pocket for his cell phone.

Night saw the phone. "Who are you calling?"

"Walt," Rand said, but Night snagged the phone out of his hand.

"Think about it a minute first."

"There's nothing to think about. Walt knows we're involved because of T.J. If all these guys want is the pendant, then I say let them have it."

"Should we give them back the head too?" asked a beefy guy that Night hadn't introduced.

"Why not?" said Night, throwing his hands up in the air.

Everybody looked at each other, then at Night. "Call Walt." Night handed the phone back.

Rand talked briefly to T.J.'s oldest brother, then stuffed the phone back into his pocket.

"They're on their way," Rand said.

"How many?" Night asked.

"Part of his special team, and all the brothers," Rand replied. "About seventeen guys in all."

"We'll try to wait." Night looked to his left over the counter that divided the kitchen from the living room. "Anything going on out there, Reed?"

"A couple of the vamps are standing out in the open talking to each other. The rest that I can see are hiding in the trees around the edge of the property."

Rand heard a sound from the bedroom. "Bedroom," he said, and jumped over the counter, rolling into the other room.

T.J. was at the window, trying to get it open. He scanned the room, didn't see any movement, and rushed the woman. Grabbing her around the waist, he picked her up and hauled her back to the kitchen. He sat down and planted her on his lap. Her eyes were

open, but glazed. She struggled against his hold.

“T.J.?” He tightened his grip on her.

Night moved to their side of the table and knelt. “Let me.” He raised his hands and coasted them over her body, just shy of touching her. Rand felt the prickle of magic along his skin, the feeling intensifying as Night continued to work.

Night untied her robe, and slipped his hands inside, encircling her waist. The air shimmered to life around her midsection like a halo. Then the man began moving his hands over her in a circular pattern, covering as much of her skin as he could reach. The air grew thick with the growing power. He lifted her off Rand’s lap, and laid her gently on the floor, making another circuit with his hands.

A wave of energy rose, and wavered in the air over her. Sparks of light glistened throughout that wave as it pulsed and writhed like a living thing.

Night cupped the bite over her breast, and light flared in a blue-white flash from his hand. T.J. jerked; she continued to stare sightlessly at the ceiling, but had ceased struggling.

Then he stretched out over her body, resting his hips against hers, and bent his mouth to her neck. Tipping his head back, Rand saw the flash of fangs before Night struck.

He sank his teeth into her flesh and drew on her blood. The magic blanketing them grew denser, heavier, hotter. Night continued to feed on her, rocking his hips now, pressing his groin to her mound.

Rand saw his hands move to the front of his pants, and before he realized what the man intended, he’d freed his cock.

“Hey.” Rand half rose out of his chair when two sets of hands grabbed him and forced him back down.

Night draped T.J.’s legs over his elbows, then forged his way into her sex. Using fast, hard strokes, he continued to suckle at her neck.

Rand struggled to break free of the restraining hands, without success.

Night powered on, grunting as he hammered into Rand’s woman. The feel of the energy changed, grew denser yet, then started slowly to swirl. Night released her shoulder, arched his head back and bellowed as he came. An explosion of light shot out from the point where their bodies were joined.

The magic spiraled faster and faster, sucking in the light, drawing in upon itself, compressing. Then it shot straight as an arrow into T.J.’s head. All of it disappeared in the blink of an eye.

Her back arched, and she cried out. Night rode her body as she convulsed. He pinned her arms above her head and held on as she jerked hard enough to lift them both off the floor. Sweat pouring down her face, she gasped, her eyes rolling up until only the whites showed.

Night’s face hardened in concentration, the bones in his cheeks sharp as a knife, a muscle twitching in his jaw. Then her body went slack, her eyes closed, and her breathing returned to normal.

Still Night waited. She opened her eyes, and looked up at him. Blinked, then looked around the room.

“Why are you fucking me in front of Rand?”

Night laughed, withdrew from her body, and shoved his cock back into his pants.

“Glad to have you back with us,” he said as he left the room. Rand knelt, and helped

T.J. off the floor, and into a chair just as Night returned with drinks for the three of them.

*

"Anyone care to tell me what's going on?" T.J. glanced warily around the table.

"The vampires got to you, *influenced* you," Rand began. "I think Night was just breaking that spell." He glared at the man. "At least, that's what he had better have been doing. Or I'll just have to kill him."

"Hey, I tried to do it without actually going that far, but it wasn't working." Night shrugged, unconcerned with whether Rand believed him or not. "Or would you rather she went willingly to the vampires?"

Rand just narrowed his eyes at him, then moved his chair closer to T.J.

"Those two vamps that were talking in the middle of the parking lot are heading this way," Reed called over his shoulder. "And someone's pulling into the lot."

Night moved to the man's side, and took the nightscope from him. "It's Walt and Art." He scanned the rest of the yard. "Don't see the two vamps, but I see ... six along the edge of the property."

Everyone was quiet. Two of Night's men went to the front door, both of them pressing their bodies to the wall on the left. The cat door flapped. The men jumped, pointing their weapons around the room as they searched for danger.

Night's hand shot out from his side in a blur of motion.

"Hey!" They all heard the tiny yelp.

Night held his fist up, and shook it at Rand. "Care to tell me what I've got in my hand?"

Rand hurried over to the man's side, afraid he might crush the little being he'd caught.

"It's one of our resident pixies." Rand reached for the other man's fist.

"Really?" A goofy grin spread across Night's face. "I've never seen a pixie before." He uncurled his fingers, and blinked at the four-inch tall man he found on his palm.

"Thanks a lot, asshole. You nearly crushed my wings." Baxter braced his hands on his hips and glared up at Night.

"Are they always this rude?" Night asked.

"Only when you try to smush them," Rand replied.

"There you are." Baxter jumped off Night's hand, and hovered before Rand. "Do you know the yard is crawling with vampires?"

"Yes," Night answered, before Rand had the chance.

Baxter's gaze landed on the man at the window with the nightscope.

"Shit. You've got humans in here." He turned to dash out of the apartment when Rand stopped him.

"They're part of a special team. It's okay, Baxter."

"His name is Baxter?" Night asked, amused.

The pixie spun on him, his wings darkening to navy as his anger flared. "You won't find me very amusing after I dust your sorry ass."

Night glanced at Rand. "Magically induced unconsciousness," Rand explained. When Night just shrugged, unconcerned, Rand added, "Believe me, you don't have the power to counteract it."

Night looked a little more impressed.

"They often do something to you while you're out. Like shave off all your hair."

"Now that, I don't believe," Night said.

Baxter laughed, and it sounded ominous, even coming from his tiny form. "In your case, I'd consider tattooing 'luv muscle' on your dick."

"Hey guys, Walt and Art just got out of their car. They're acting like they're just here for a normal visit. Yucking it up as they head this way," Reed announced. "The ones at the periphery are staying put."

A couple of minutes later there was a knock on the door. Night nodded to Malekar, who then stepped to the viewer in the center of the door, flattening himself back against the wall as soon as he'd looked.

He flicked a hand signal to Night, and Night strolled across the room as the rest of them looked on. He went to the door, took a look for himself, then opened it.

Walt and Art walked in, clapping Night on the shoulder, like old friends.

As soon as the door was closed, they all moved into the kitchen.

"What's the situation?" Walt asked. His eyes widened as Baxter took a seat on a plate on top of the table.

"Around thirty vampires are surrounding the property. Two of them were visible, talking to each other in the parking lot. They'd just started heading this way when you pulled in," Night said.

Walt eyed me, raising an eyebrow. "Why are you only wearing a robe?" He glanced at Night, then Rand. Then, he checked out the other men in the apartment.

"Is there any of that Chinese left?" I asked Rand, ignoring my brother's question.

"In the fridge," Rand said, the side of his mouth curling in a smile.

"Why isn't she wearing any clothes?" Walt focused his attention on Rand.

"Good question. It could be because some vampires joined her in the shower, and left her there, unconscious. Or it might have something to do with the fact that Night had to fuck her to break the *influence* they held her under." Rand bared his teeth at my brother. "Then again, these men and I might have been taking turns with her all afternoon, when the vampires showed up and interfered."

"T.J.!" Walt roared.

I sat down with my food and gave him my best innocent look. "I can't decide who I enjoyed more. Reed's got a very inventive tongue, and that big guy over there?" I scrunched my face up. "I can't remember his name, but he's a wonder at ass work. And Rand..."

"Shut up. Just shut the hell up. I know when I'm being had." Walt dropped his head into his hands.

"What about Rand?" Art asked, winking at me.

I laughed at Walt's groan.

"We think they want the pendant, Walt," Night said, a hard edge to his voice.

"There's movement outside," Reed called from the window. "Christ, there's a dozen guys out there going hand to hand."

Night made it to Reed's side first, Walt right behind him.

"Shit. James is going after the guy who changed T.J.'s tire," Night muttered. "Dave and Robert are trying to get to him. The other guys must be from your team." He handed the scope to Walt.

"More of the vamps are getting involved. We need to get out there and find out what's going on," Walt said.

"Aren't you wired?" Night slanted a look at him.

"Didn't want it found if we got caught on our way in." Walt shrugged.

"Malekar, Davies, with me," Night called to his men.

Rand stood and went to his side. "I'm coming too."

Night gave him a long look. "You need to protect T.J. I'm leaving Reed and Marsaw with you."

"Hey, I'm not helpless in a fight," I nearly shouted.

Night moved so close to me, his chest nearly touched my breasts. "Honey, they've already shown they can *influence* you. You want to end up fighting against us?"

"He's right, T.J." Walt added. "The rest of us aren't susceptible."

I mumbled under my breath about the unfairness of it all, but dropped back into my seat at the table. I flicked a finger at Baxter, who was helping himself to my fried rice.

The men moved out, leaving the apartment suddenly silent. "What's happening, Reed?" I called to the man at the window.

"Your brothers just charged into things like a couple of maniacs." Reed turned, and gave me an odd look. "Night and our guys are walking casually towards the parking area."

Rand went to the window. I didn't bother. I wasn't blessed with better night vision, either. Another thing to complain about.

"Robert is down," Rand said, the lines of his body going taut. "Dave's with him." He pivoted his head. "Night is just standing there, not doing a thing. No wait, I can see his hand moving, I think he's working a spell."

"Look at that one brother go," Reed said, admiration in his voice. "He's a regular berserker."

Baxter fluttered down and stood on the sill next to him.

"Who'd have thought?" the pixie muttered.

"Jesus, T.J. That's one scary brother you've got there." Rand watched in fascination as Walt took on three vampires at once.

"That's because he *is* a berserker," I said. "He and Art got the strongest of that particular gift, from our mother's side. The others, not as much."

"Explains a lot," Rand mused. "How come you never told me?" He glanced over his shoulder at me.

"I did. I told you they had a crazy, wild, fighting magic," I grumped.

"Shit." Rand grinned. "You were six when you told me that."

Marsaw had joined the men at the window, curious to see Walt in action. Reed passed him the scope.

"That's your brother?" Marsaw said. "Look at the fucker go."

"Probably why Night does so much work for them," Reed stated.

"Think they'd beat him up if he turned them down?" Marsaw laughed.

"Not likely; it's more that they actually managed to impress the man," Reed said.

"Night is surrounded by vamps," Rand said, his voice tense.

I felt a tingle along the back of my neck. Getting out of my chair, I headed towards the men at the window, my feeling of unease increasing.

"Something's coming," I whispered. Then louder, "Something big."

Rand took a step towards me. "Where?"

Reed was scanning the lawn, sweeping from side to side, searching for the threat.

Small electrical discharges zapped throughout the room, close to the ceiling. The unseen weight of dark magic pressed down on us, making it difficult to breathe.

"Behind..." The door to the hallway exploded inward, the power of the blast shooting it straight through the room, clipping Marsaw's shoulder. The man spun around from the impact, then collapsed to his knees, his arm hanging at an awkward angle from his body.

In a rush of burning power, a thick, black fog blew into the room, first enclosing Reed, then Marsaw, then Rand. The twisting tornado of energy spat Rand and the other men out, brushed the front windows, then rushed right at me.

It enveloped me in its stinging essence, sucking at me, infusing itself into every opening it could find. I was choking, gagging, gasping for breath. Stumbling, I felt the world tilt, then I was turning end over end.

When my equilibrium returned, I was flat on my back, looking up at the stars.

Sitting up, I took in my surroundings. I was on the side of a hill, and there was nothing else in sight.

*

Rand dragged his ass off the floor, and lurched in the direction he'd last seen T.J. There was nothing but the swirling darkness where she'd been. Fighting off the feeling of revulsion that coated his skin and was caught in the back of his throat, he lunged into the seething mass.

And out the other side.

Spinning around, he was just in time to see the blackness wink out. Gone. There was no sign of T.J. at all.

Rand bolted out of the apartment and down the stairs. Glancing frantically around, he saw that most of the fighting was over. A few bodies littered the ground, but most of the men remained standing.

He spotted Walt, and hurried over to his side.

"Something just took T.J.," he said. "I don't know what it was; all I saw was a black fog."

Walt nodded, scanned the area, and pointed to Night, where he was talking in the parking lot with several of the vampires.

"Come on." He strode across the yard, gathering his men around him as he went.

Walt and his brothers shoved their way through the ring of vampires, Rand right on their heels. When he cleared the men, he found Night in a heated argument with the vampires' leader.

Art placed a restraining hand on his arm. He glared at his brother, then had to visibly control himself, but he managed. "Sorry to interrupt your little party here, but they've just taken T.J. and we want her back."

Night's hand went to his weapon, prompting everyone else to reach for theirs. Tension rose in a wave among those gathered, eyes wary and glittering, bodies readying for combat.

The commander set his black eyes on Walt and blinked once, slowly. "When we get the pendant, you will get your whore."

Walt leapt at the man, but Art and James grabbed his arms and grappled him to a standstill a mere foot away.

"That *woman* is no whore. She just happens to be my sister," Walt ground out

between his teeth.

The vampire squared his shoulders, and narrowed his eyes at him. “That *woman* eagerly bent over the hood of her car, and all but begged me to fuck her from behind.”

It was Art this time. Faster than Rand could see, the man punched the vampire square in the face. The vampire shook his head, then bared his fangs in a wicked smile.

“I look forward to finding out how tight her ass is.”

Rand held his breath. But the brothers must have realized they were being baited, and didn’t respond.

The vampire turned back to Night. “I thought you had better control over your men.”

Night just shrugged. “Those aren’t mine.”

The commander rolled his eyes. “So, what will it be? Do you want your sister back?” The vampire dropped a hand to his groin and adjusted himself. “Or do I and my men get to keep her?”

“What’s so important about that pendant, anyway?” Walt asked, his expression showing he didn’t expect an answer.

“It was mined at night by Egyptian slaves more than three thousand years ago on Zeberget,” the vampire informed him.

“We were under the impression that any peridot would do,” Walt said.

“It will. But the pendant has another purpose. It controls the creature that is now in possession of your sister.” He smiled, showing lots of fang, and for the life of him Rand couldn’t tell if he was lying.

“Convenient,” Walt spat out, but he stuck his hand in his pocket. “We have no use for it.” He withdrew his hand, but kept his fingers curled around the object. He held his fist up and near his chest. “My sister?” He opened his fingers, and allowed the green stone to show.

The vampire’s eyes lit up. He motioned to one of his men, on the left side of the circle. “Petrus, have the beast bring the girl.”

Petrus closed his eyes, and the shiver of magic tainted the air around them. He stayed that way for several minutes, his right hand occasionally tracing patterns at his side.

Opening his eyes, he tipped his head to his commander. “He does not respond.”

The Coventry’s exchanged a glance.

Rand stepped forward. “You’ve got to know that we’re all thinking this is a ploy to gain possession of the pendant and keep the woman.” He moved close enough to the vampire to smell him. Probably useless, since they could generally lie without any physical evidence.

What he didn’t expect was the look of discomfort that passed over the commander’s features. “I know,” he stated simply. “We were lucky to get him to kidnap the girl, to begin with, without the power of the spike.”

“So if I just hand it over, you can get her back?” Walt asked skeptically.

“Maybe.” The vampire looked straight at Walt. “I don’t really know what he’s going to do now that our hold over him has been broken.”

Chapter Eleven

I walked to the top of the hill and, once I got there, turned around in a circle, trying to figure out where in the hell I was. I didn't see a single light burning in any direction. Just the shadowed open areas, and the thicker blackness that denoted trees.

Outside of the muted whispering of the breeze, there wasn't another sound to be heard. That, more than the lack of obvious civilization, disturbed me.

I debated choosing a direction and seeing if I could find a road, a house, anything. But the utter stillness of the night discouraged me. Feeling magic coalesce behind me, I spun around, then took a step back as something shimmered in the moonlight, far too close to me.

As I watched, an indistinct form began to take shape, rapidly becoming much more solid. Whatever it was, it was huge, and while I watched, it expanded. Then, with an odd burst of power, it contracted. It had taken on the form of a man, but I knew it was far from a man as anything I'd ever seen before, highlighted by the dark glint of magic that sparkled around its body.

It strode to me, stepping close enough to embrace me if it chose. I stood my ground, partly out of fascination, but mostly because I wasn't picking up anything to fear from it. Oh, it was large, much larger than myself, but the creature had opted for an exceedingly handsome male figure, and I couldn't help but feel a warming between my legs as the moonlight played over its naked body.

It eyed me, taking its time to thoroughly scan me before returning its gaze to my face.

"What are you?" Its voice was deep and rich, with a romantic accent that I couldn't place.

"Magic user," I said.

It strolled around me, and I wondered if it was checking out my ass.

"You are a female of your species," it stated, once it was in front of me again.

"Yes. Doesn't your kind have different sexes?"

The creature smiled, and a wash of liquid dampened the inside of my thighs.

"My—kind—has all manner of things."

"So, if you don't mind my asking, what are you?" He'd asked me, so it seemed only fair.

He took a step forward, and wrapped me in his arms. With a playful smile, he lowered his lips to mine. "Guess," he said, then took my mouth in a thoroughly erotic kiss.

One hand holding my head, the other grasping one of my buttocks, he ground my stomach across his erection. I gasped, and moisture flooded my core as I clutched the muscles in his back.

Breaking the kiss, he smiled lazily down at me. "What am I?" he purred.

"Horny," I blurted, before my brain had engaged. "Uh..."

He laughed, the sound caressing me. "Perhaps." He brushed my robe off my shoulders, then pressed his arousal directly to my flesh. "I'll give you another clue," he breathed, then picked me up and impaled me in a single try.

I cried out at the sudden and intense pleasure of having him fill me. His hands firm on my hips, my arms locked around his neck, he began to thrust.

"Tell me what you're thinking about," he whispered into my ear.

"How good you feel inside of me," I replied.

He ground his way deep, then captured my mouth again, eating hungrily at my lips as he powered himself within my sheath.

I came, screaming into his mouth, my vagina rippling around the girth of his shaft. He increased the speed of his strokes, and I came again.

Chuckling deep in his chest, he drove me through another orgasm, and brought me to the peak again. Staring into the deep, dark depths of his eyes, I suddenly knew what he was. Saw what I was doing, and wished I were anywhere but here.

He tipped his head back and roared as he shot his fiery cum inside of me. And still he drove into me, coming again, filling me. When he was finally finished, he buried himself deep, then held me tightly to his chest. His lips brushed the top of my head while he spoke. "I believe you have figured it out. So tell me, T.J., what am I?"

"You're a demon," I muttered, a fist closing around my heart.

*

Nothing. Walt had handed over the peridot, and Petrus had tried several times to command the creature to return with T.J. And nothing had happened.

Rand kicked at the pavement, tension building in his shoulders. There had to be some way to get her back. "Night." He stalked over to the man. "Can't you do anything?"

"Don't you think I've tried?" Night snarled. "Everything I could think of, and nothing worked."

Unwilling to give up, Rand cornered Walt. "Don't you know anybody who can get her back?"

With a determined expression, Walt confronted Petrus. "What type of creature has her?"

Petrus looked at his commander, waiting until the man nodded, before answering. "A lesser demon."

"Shit." Walt spat. "Art. Who do we know that handles demons?"

"We don't get much call for that kind of work, Walt, you know that," said Art, rocking back on his heels.

"For all the fucking people we've worked with, we've got to know somebody who can help us," Walt growled. He motioned for the other brothers to join them. When they had gathered around, he asked them the same question.

The vampires had gathered loosely around the brothers, and began discussing the same thing. James had Petrus try a couple of his ideas, while the commander explained to Walt the original summoning and binding of the demon.

Rand found the whole situation increasingly bizarre.

*

The demon gestured behind my back, and my robe floated open and spread itself across the ground. Then he knelt with me, lowering my back to the ground.

I only had rumors to go by, but once a demon decided he wanted you, you were pretty well had. Demons were a temptation that was virtually impossible to resist. And once you'd given in to that temptation, they got to keep you.

Adjusting my legs around his back, he placed a large hand under the middle of my

butt, bracing himself above me with the other. He grinned at me as he started stroking his cock in and out of my depths.

"You feel very good," he rumbled, twisting his hips, driving a shock of pleasure through me. "I've never had a magic user before. I'll be sure to try more in the future."

"Uh..." I couldn't stop thinking about Rand. I didn't want to be having sex with this guy. The stories were true though; if they wanted you, they got you. This one not only wanted me, he made sure I enjoyed it. I found it—disturbing—having my body react enthusiastically while my mind was on the one man I really wanted to be with. I just hoped the creature would keep his word about the rest. "Are you going to take me back?"

He continued to thrust while he gazed down at me. "Do you want to go back?"

"Yes," I told him, gasping when the head of his cock brushed my favorite place, deep inside of me.

"Then I shall take you back." He bent to kiss me. "As soon as I come in you again."

*

Everyone was huddled in little groups about the circle, tossing out names, and giving reasons why they may or may not be able to help.

Walt was holding the pendant again; the commander was adjusting his grip on it.

"No, like this," he said, moving Walt's fingers into the position he wanted them in.

Rand was the only one watching as the air began to shimmer in the center of the gathering. He blinked, his hand automatically moving to his weapon, as the wavering magic began to condense.

Then she was there, with an enormous man standing next to her, his arm wrapped possessively around her shoulder.

Rand's wolf rumbled dangerously in his chest. Stalking over to the pair, he caught the scent of sex before he even reached her side.

"Son of a bitch," he cursed, T.J.'s eyes flying to his face. "The demon?" He flicked a glance at the guy that still had T.J. in his grasp.

Night came over, laughing when he caught sight of the demon's arm around T.J. Rand punched him in the shoulder, harder than he probably should have. Rubbing his arm, Night continued to laugh. "You've got to admit, Rand, she's one hell of a woman."

"Rand?" The demon said, turning his fathomless eyes on him.

"Yeah?" Rand squared his shoulders, and glared at the beast.

"This would be yours, then." He swung T.J. towards him, and Rand caught her in his arms. "Congratulations."

Rand raised an eyebrow, looking between the two. "For what?"

The Coventry brothers and the vampires both had drawn around them.

"It was your name she cried out when I was fucking her." The demon bowed his head at him.

"Uh..." Just what did you say to that? Thanks?

Several of the men were trying not to laugh.

Shaking his head, he looked down at T.J. "How are you doing?" he asked, feeling more protective of her than angry.

"Just glad to be home," she whispered.

Later that evening, after all the vampires had left, and Night and his men had gone out drinking with the entire group from FandS, Rand took T.J. by the hand, and led her out into the middle of the back yard.

He'd spoken to Baxter earlier, and was pleased to note that the pixies were staying out of sight.

Slowly he removed all of her clothing, then his own, until the two of them stood naked in the light of the full moon. "My mother's people mate under the full moon when they bond with their lifemate. I want to mate with you."

She looked up at him, her eyes shining. "Oh, Rand, I think that's the nicest thing you've ever said to me."

Easing her down onto her hands and knees, he braced himself behind her, and let his wolf come to the surface, but no further.

"I love you, T.J." He pressed himself into her vagina.

"I love you, Rand." She leaned back, taking him deeper.

Then he rode his woman, his magic linking with hers. And when they came, together, he sank his fangs into her shoulder, marking her, as his mother's people had been marking their mates since their species began.

Chapter Twelve

“McIntyre and Coventry.” God, I hated answering the phone, but Rand was out on a case, so I had no choice.

The door opened while I took down the information and scheduled an appointment for an unhappy housewife.

When I looked up from my notes, my brother Walt loomed before me. “You’re living with him?” he growled. He braced his hands on his hips, a scowl darkening his expression.

“Say, Walt, I heard the strangest story the other day.” I leaned back in my chair and plopped my feet on top of my desk. “It happened in Cincinnati, at Bob Good’s gun and knife show last January. Maybe you heard about it, you went to that show.”

I could see the tension rising in the set of his shoulders. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Grinning widely, I continued. “Let’s see.” I let the pressure build a little higher. “I believe it had to do with two men, a bottle of Jack Daniels, and a busty redhead with a surprise.”

Walt jerked, then slumped into the chair he’d been standing next to. He dropped his head into his hands, and spoke to me without looking up. “What will it take for you to forget you ever heard that story?”

“Why, Walt, I had no idea your interests ran in that direction.” Seems the lady turned out to be in the middle of a sex change operation and still sported a dick. Walt was already inserted in her dark passage when Night found the evidence. He let Walt reach completion before he alerted him to the fact.

Walt had consumed so much J.D. that he waved off the additional equipment and continued screwing the guy for the rest of the night.

Though Night had never told me how involved he himself got in the affair, he did impart that Walt was not the only one doing the screwing. In fact, you might just say that it was the first I’d ever heard of my brother getting screwed, personally or professionally.

Walt raised tormented eyes to me, and I felt myself relenting. A little.

“What will it take?” he groaned.

I leaned forward in my chair and looked him straight in the eye. “All you’ve got to do is remember I’m an adult, and my life is my own. Rand and I live together now, so you’d better be happy for us, because I can tell you I am. And if it comes to having you and my other brothers in my life, or having Rand, then you’re going to lose.”

Walt straightened in his chair, then shook himself like a wet dog. “I try to be happy about you and Mr. Erection, and you’ll forget all about Cincinnati?”

“Can you call him Rand?”

Walt narrowed his eyes at me.

“All right. You try to be happy with my choices, you try to keep your nose out of my life, and I never heard a word about Cincinnati.”

Walt nodded, a stiff down-up gesture. “You’ve got a deal.” He slouched back, draping himself over the arms of the chair. “So where is the boy wonder?”

“Out on a case, not that it’s any of your business,” I snapped.

“Are you sure?” He grinned slyly at me.

“Walt,” I said in warning.

“It’s just that I was eating an early lunch at Pettiti’s when who do you think walked in? ’Course, he didn’t seem to notice me, what with his attention riveted to the leggy blonde at his side.”

No.

I grabbed my keys off the desk, glaring at my brother like it was his fault. “If you’re lying, I’m telling James.”

Walt had the decency not to smirk.

I was good and truly pissed by the time I parked in the lot next to Pettiti’s. Slamming my door, I stomped to the front of the restaurant, managing, just barely, to get a grip on myself before I stormed inside.

A waiter stopped me in the entryway and asked me how many there were in my party. I blinked stupidly at him, then laughed. “My *party* is already here.”

Brushing past him, I began to scan the tables and booths. I spotted him in a rear booth, sitting on the same side as the woman, head bent as he listened to something she was saying.

He never noticed me as I stalked across the restaurant and closed on him. When I got to the table, I saw that his hand was on her thigh, his fingers tucked between her legs. I planted myself next to his side, arms crossed over my chest.

The woman noticed me first, nudging Rand and nodding in my direction.

His eyes were heavy with desire as he turned to face me. “T.J.”

I could see the wheels turning in his head. “Rand.”

He looked from me to the blonde, then back to me.

I raised an eyebrow at him, then turned and walked away.

* * * *

I didn’t see Rand the rest of that day, nor the next.

Oh, he’d come home not long after I’d managed to get most of my stuff out of his apartment. I was back in my old room and still fuming over the incident. There was no resolution that I could see. None that didn’t involve neutering Rand, and that would kind of defeat the purpose.

The business was suffering, though. And that pissed me off even more than the personal betrayal. When I’d finally had enough, I called him on the phone. At least he answered.

“Get your ass in to work. If you cause the business to fail because you can’t keep your dick in your pants I will personally cut it off for you.” Okay, I hadn’t really meant to say that.

He hung up without saying a word. A few minutes later he strolled in, totally ignored me, and went to his desk. I managed to keep from looking at him through my first three clients.

Lunch proved to be a little touchy since we both headed for the kitchen at the same time. I thought about turning back to my desk, but then I thought, *fuck it*. Let him be the one to wait for lunch.

We moved around each other in the kitchen, neither of us saying a word. I grabbed a coke from the fridge, and sat down at the table with it and the sandwich I’d made. He sat

across from me with his own sandwich and drink.

The silence grew heavier as we ate. I just about broke from the strain and blurted something out when he spoke.

“What can I say? What can I do to fix things with you?”

My heart stuttered in my chest. “You can’t. We mated under the full moon. We promised ourselves to each other and you broke that promise. That’s not something you can fix, Rand.”

“I’m in love with you,” he said.

“No, if you were truly in love with me you wouldn’t have been with that blonde.” I didn’t sound mad, and that pleased me. Small comfort.

He took a deep breath, then let it out with a sigh. “About that...”

I cut him off. “I don’t want to hear about it, Rand.”

“I think you should,” he insisted.

I glared at him. Really glared, and I wondered just how much pain I’d allow the man across from me to inflict.

His expression darkened. “Look, if I can put up with you screaming Night, or Nick’s name while we’re fucking, I think the least you can do is listen to me about the blonde.”

I blinked at him. I didn’t do that, did I? “I called you Night, or Nick?”

“Yeah.” He dragged his fingers through his hair.

“Huh.” I dropped the rest of my sandwich to my plate. “Okay, I’m listening.”

“The blonde was one of the few women I’ve been with in the past five years who meant more to me than a casual fuck.”

I grimaced, but he continued.

“If you and I hadn’t gotten together, or if you’d ever gone and married someone else, things would probably have gotten serious between us.”

I squirmed in my seat, but kept my attention focused on him.

“She’s been in Canada on assignment for the past year. She just came back into town three days ago. I didn’t think it polite to tell her over the phone, not with what we had between us, and not when we hadn’t seen each other in so long.”

It was Rand’s turn to squirm. “I didn’t realize the impact she’d have on me when I saw her.”

He dropped his eyes to his plate, then looked back at me. “If you hadn’t showed up at the restaurant, I probably would have taken her to bed. I admit that. But just that once, just to say goodbye.” He didn’t look away this time. “I happened to be telling her about us, you and me, when you arrived. I knew if I said that goodbye to her, you’d never speak to me again.”

I held his gaze for a minute, thoughts of Night and Nick saying goodbye, plaguing me. “Is there anyone else you failed to mention?”

Rand shook his head. “No one.”

Ah, hell.

“If you still need to say goodbye to her, do it soon. And whatever you do, don’t do it in our bed.”

Rand blinked at me. “Our bed?”

“Yeah, our bed. I understand this goodbye thing. But so help me Rand, don’t you ever do anything like this to me again.”

He was around the table in a heartbeat, yanking me out of my chair and crushing me

in his arms.

“So long as you try to remember my name when I’m making love to you.”

I laughed, and it felt good.

Epilogue

Rand and I have been living together for four months now. The business is thriving, and so is our relationship.

He never did say goodbye to the blonde, and that, more than anything, made a believer out of me that he really did want me, and only me.

As far as I know, I haven't called him by anyone else's name in almost as long.

Walt has been as good as his word and has even managed to refer to Rand by his given name on occasion.

Right now, I was standing in the back yard, watching the workmen as they blocked out the addition that Rand and I were adding to the house. We were putting in more offices, converting the numerous bedrooms into five separate apartments, and adding a shooting range and armory in an extended basement.

Even though we'd tried to keep the business small, we had more cases than we could handle. Both Rand and I had signed up for additional courses in self-defense, weaponry, and computer languages. We'd kept back enough money to upgrade our computer systems so that we could do a better job with network security as well as information gathering.

We were also working towards hiring two more investigators and a secretary, all the while keeping an eye out for people with "special" talents.

Movement at the side of the lot caught my attention, and I watched with rising interest as Rand strolled towards me. His loose-hipped stride starting all kinds of fires burning around my body. His eyes never leaving me, he drew me into his arms and kissed me with abandon.

Several of the workmen whistled.

"Hi," I breathed into his mouth when he'd parted slightly from me.

"Hi," he breathed back. "If I don't get you somewhere private soon, I'll give the workmen something to really whistle about."

Grinning like an idiot, I let him take my hand and drag me across the yard to our apartment. As soon as the door closed behind us, he launched us at the couch, coming down on top of me. Before I knew it, we were naked, his cock filling the tight confines of my pussy.

"Much better." He held himself above me on his elbows, his eyelids drooping over his eyes as he flexed his hips, driving his dick in and out of me.

"Much," I agreed, rotating my hips, taking him deeper.

He stroked me for a while, his rhythm slow and steady, and I was getting close to begging for more.

"I've been thinking." In, out, in, out.

"About picking up your speed a little?" I asked.

He looked down at me, a smile spreading across his face. "About asking you to marry me."

I froze, while he continued to steadily stroke. "You're kidding, right?" I spluttered.

"Not at all." He picked up his pace a little, then settled into the new rhythm.

"T.J.," he said, a twist to his stroke, "will you do me the honor of becoming my wife

and spend the rest of your life with me?”

“Huh.” I started rocking against him, wondering why I was speechless at this turn of events.

“Is that an answer?” he asked, surprised.

I looked into his face, a face I had known most of my life, a man who I had often dreamed of marrying, before we fucked things up so much. Now I was being given a second chance at that dream.

“Yes. I’ll marry you, and spend the rest of my life with you.” I squeezed my inner muscles to emphasize the point.

The grin that spread across his face was the brightest I’d ever seen.

“Yes!” he cried out like a battle call.

Then he went berserk.

The End

About the Author:

Lisa Andel was born in Iowa City, Iowa. When in grade school, her family moved to Illinois, where she found she had a knack for telling stories.

Most of them got her into trouble.

It wasn’t until she had lived in Ohio for several years before she finally found a constructive outlet for her creativity.

She lives with her lover, two mentally challenged dogs, and an ever-changing number of freshwater fish.

Lisa writes contemporary erotic romance that features vampires, shapeshifters, dragons, demons, sorcerers, gods, and beings that you’ve never dreamed of before. You’ll even find some humans. Visit her online at www.lisaandel.com

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Benevolent lusty witches keep evil forces at bay

Fallen: by Tiffany Aaron

Fallen angels in hot flight to redeem their wings

The Max Series by JB Skully

Meet Max, her not-absent dead husband, sexy detective Witt, his mother...

And many, many more!