

Scarlet Ties 2: Tempted

Anisa Damien

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Noely Lamont is a Southern Belle extraordinaire and, like every Southern woman, she knows how to get her man. Soon she's to become the queen of the Companions and the elders have chosen the vampire Cyrus Rayven, the man who vehemently resisted her advances, as her mate. Noely plans to bring him to his knees, but she didn't count on meeting her match in his twin brother Coye or the red-hot passion that he ignites within her.

Coye Rayven couldn't be more intrigued by the hellion who had her sights set on his recently engaged brother. He'll do Cyrus the service of taking care of Ms. Lamont -- starting with the lusty appetite that rivals his own. To do that, he'll tempt her, body and soul.

Chapter One

"You know what you must do?" Damara said in that calm, soothing tone her daughter had come to lean on.

Noely Lamont squeezed her eyes shut. She knew her mother's strength was dwindling due to the cancer, could feel it in the telepathic connection they shared. "Yes," she answered, biting her lip. "I know I must find Cyrus Rayven. He is the chosen one for me -- my mate."

"The fate of the Companions rests with you, Noely. It is our breed that balances out the world of vampires. You must mate with Cyrus."

Noely knew the threat of the diseases humans carried was the reason mating between Companions and pure humans was becoming a thing of the past, a taboo. Her people depended on the vampires, though many of them thought her race inferior. However she despised the idea of being sexual chattel for any vampire. Her royalty status notwithstanding, Noely had never agreed with that part of her legacy.

What the hell was the point then of being royal? The idea of settling for a man who thought she was inferior made Noely furious. She'd fought against her duties as a Companion princess until her mother became ill.

"You are the last of the royal family, as foretold by the Rites of Old," her mother reprimanded. "You must mate with a Deiwalker. There are only two of the race who walk the earth. You *are* the future queen of the Companions and the royal line must be preserved."

She felt a knot forming in her throat. The future of her people was in her hands. Some queen she'd make, not to mention a mother. The thought of motherhood made Noely's stomach lurch.

"Don't be nervous, my daughter. You were predestined for this life."

"I wonder if the Rites of Old would share in your certainty."

Her mother chuckled. "I *am* the queen, you know. I'm not second-guessed much these days."

"I keep thinking that this life -- my life -- is meant for someone else more..."

Damara chuckled. "Capable? Darling, I remember being told that I had to carry on the line and thinking surely they had the wrong person, but you learn and grow."

At twenty-eight, she hardly believed that there was anything more to learn about the Companion way of life. Her strong will had been beaten down by obligation, her girlhood dreams of meeting the man she was to share her life with dashed. "Yes, you're right, of course."

"I remember I didn't feel any real connection to your father when I first met him, but the more time we spent together the more I came to love him. And look at us now."

"You and Dad are wonderful." Still, Noely couldn't shake her distaste of forcing herself to love someone. It should be natural, but what, if anything, in her world was natural?

"I must go. Your father will be home soon." Damara sighed. "I'm feeling a little tired. He'll be upset if he learns I haven't been sleeping."

Noely bit her lip. She hated to hear her mother sound weak when she knew the opposite to be true. "Rest, Mother, and give Dad my love. I won't let you down."

"You never could, sweetheart."

* * *

"The man is scheduled to be married in a matter of days."

Noely turned in the direction of her assistant and friend Melanie's voice. They'd taken a day to indulge in tranquility at the spa. The knots in her shoulders proved there was nothing at peace within her, especially after her conversation with her mother.

Mel's statement barely registering, Noely looked at a chipped fingernail, thinking she had to schedule a manicure. "I thought the wedding was sometime next year."

"Ah, no!" Melanie pushed the wire-rimmed glasses up on her nose. The frown marring her pretty face was enough for Noely to tsk at her.

"Don't scowl, it'll give you wrinkles." She really hated deviations. "I'll have to step up my plan."

"Are you listening to a word coming out of my mouth?"

"It's hard not to when you keep yelling at me." She'd always been rough on her hands despite what the general population thought of her. The crème de la crème of socialites. Those people could kiss her ass. She was the daughter of Senator Lawrence and Damara Lamont of Atlanta. A Southern debutante removed to the gray skies and icy temperatures of the Windy City.

Noely didn't give a damn what people thought of her. She never had. It unnerved her that some *thought* they knew what she was about, as if they counted the seconds before she was caught up in some sex scandal. She had morals... values. Unfortunately for Cyrus Rayven's unsuspecting fiancée, none of those applied to her, not when destiny was at work -- forces beyond her control. Forces she'd fought for years to no avail.

"Calm down, Melanie." Noely rose from the massage chair she'd been sitting in, aware of the suggestive glances sent her way in the unisex day spa. She pulled her hair into a ponytail, wrapping the terry cloth robe around her ebony-hued curves. "What Cyrus doesn't know won't hurt him."

"It's you that could be hurt."

"I'm a big girl. I think I can handle him."

"Hello! You can't just ignore his fiancée."

Noely waved her hands, dismissing her friend's worries. "A minor snafu."

Melanie shook her auburn curls. "Have you lost your ever-loving mind? There's a rumor she's pregnant."

"Where did you get that little tidbit?" Noely asked, turning around sharply. Surely a pregnancy would have been reported from her sources. Wouldn't it?

"I read it in the *Inquisitor*."

"You believe that crap? If I told you how many times my family's escapades were gossiped about back home in the local paper, sugar, you'd turn three shades of red." And that blush would be hard to hide. Melanie's ivory skin and red curls were a sharp contrast with her own mocha complexion and razor-cut whiskey-brown hair.

"I'm just trying to be the voice of reason. You know, the friend that you paid me to be." Melanie tossed her a wicked smile.

Noely grinned. "I must not be paying you enough if that's the case." She loved Mel. They'd been friends ever since she'd opened her interior design business two years ago. It was usually her friend's voice of reason that saved her from major disasters.

Not this time!

There was something about his eyes that beckoned her, tempted her to want to know everything about him. Deep down, she knew it was more than just his molten looks that called to her. They were mates. It was prophesied.

The only catastrophe would be *not* seducing Cyrus Rayven. She liked challenges. The first time they'd met, he'd barely acknowledged her advances. She'd failed once and that didn't sit well with her. Not with stakes this high. She couldn't fail again. Too much was at risk.

She pouted, thinking of the last time she'd seen him. The suit he'd worn had made him look powerful and sexy. He'd been all business as he'd addressed the speculation about the Scarlet Manor. That deep voice of his was enough to make her cream. She'd heard about the secret rooms and the sensual pleasures that served lovers of erotic decadence. Noely wasn't a novice in the sexual arena and didn't doubt for one moment that the Scarlet Manor was filled with every sinful delight she'd fancy. She was counting on it. "I want him."

"You always want what you can't have. For once, can't you go after one of the million men who trail behind you everywhere you go?"

"Now what fun would that be?" Noely tapped her fingertips against her chin. None of those men were Cyrus Rayven. She needed him more than she cared to admit. "I want someone intriguing."

"You mean unavailable."

"There's little known about him. And he's sexy. He makes me want to uncover all his secrets..."

"You're scandalous."

"... Not to mention take off all his clothes." Noely grinned, thinking of all the things she'd do to him. "Of course, that's when the fun will start."

"Not if his fiancée catches wind of this." Mel sighed.

"She won't."

"How do you know?"

Noely shrugged. "Because she won't." She couldn't! There was a greater plan at work here, one her friend could never understand. Destiny and not just the kind a sex-crazed woman trying to get hers would dream up. Her life, her future, depended on making this mating happen.

Nervous energy ran rampant in her body. She couldn't explain this part of her life to Mel, who would surely think that she was insane. If her friend knew of the burdens that had been placed on her since birth, she'd quit on the spot.

The women came from two different worlds. Mel was pure human, a race they both shared. Noely knew what it was to get caught up in the traditional morals of humanity. She believed in them.

Well, most of them.

However, another race within her, the darker side of pleasure and night, beckoned her. She was half vampire, a Companion. Her biracial nature served her well. She credited her vampire side for making her that much stronger. Astute to the world around her, a world filled with scavengers.

"How do you plan to go about this grand seduction?" her friend asked, gathering up her belongings. "You can't just waltz into the Scarlet Manor."

"Oh, grasshopper, you have so much to learn." She winked. "Trust me, I have my ways of getting things done."

"I've heard that one before."

"It's true! I happen to know from a very reliable source that Cyrus is looking to acquire an interior designer. I was interviewed a couple of weeks back."

"You didn't." Mel shook her head. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I did. And I didn't tell you because I knew you would have a fit. He's planning to redesign the main office and the general lobby area of the Manor." She sighed as they walked to the dressing room. "He's a splendid being."

"What do you think your chances are of getting the job?"

Not good, if their previous meeting was any indication. So much for the ancient mysticism of vampires and Companions. What good was tradition if you couldn't count on it when you actually needed it?

"I think he was impressed with the work I've presented to him and my ideas for the areas to be renovated. I plan to spice things up with some bold colors, mixed with some paisley and some rich creams and beige colors, present a little more texture to balance out the regal feel with a contemporary uplift."

Her designs were the only things she was sure of, Noely conceded silently. She didn't like being left on shaky ground, even if Cyrus Rayven presented the sexiest challenge she'd been introduced to in years.

He had barely smiled during the course of their brief interview. She hated to question the Rites of Old, but maybe one of the wise leaders had had an off day! When she shook his hand, the immediate connection she thought she would feel rushing through her had been nonexistent, leaving the burning question in the pit of her stomach: was he truly the man she was fated to be with?

They needed more time together, Noely reasoned. A little Southern hospitality and sex appeal would turn his eyes, and hopefully that delicious body, in her direction! "I have another interview with him tomorrow. So that's got to be good, right? I aim to get that job by any means necessary." Noely grinned.

"Of course," Mel said dryly.

"Don't worry about me. It's Cyrus you should be worrying about."

"I'm past worry. You've given me a damn migraine."

"Mel, you sweat the small stuff."

"Uh-huh. Maybe you'd do well to follow my example."

Noely swung her handbag over her shoulder. "The only person I plan on sweating with is Cyrus Rayven."

Mel was quiet and then a smile broke out on her lips. "Was the Manor everything the rumors say it is?"

"I wasn't exactly allowed to roam the quarters, but it's very regal. There's definitely a seductive air to it. The offices and lobby area need a bit of touching up though."

"Then you'll fit right in."

"Girl, that's what I've been saying!" Noely chuckled.

Now, she just needed to make it a reality.

* * *

Coye Rayven was about to go out of his mind if he heard one more sickening pet name. He scowled at the couple before him. He turned his gaze away from the pair huddled together at the other end of the table. Every day it was the same thing between Cyrus and Ashlyn.

I love you.

I love you more.

No, I do.

No, I do.

He wanted to kick them both out of the Manor on their ever-loving asses!

It wasn't that Coye couldn't understand why his brother was in love with his future sister-in-law, even if she was human. However, it didn't mean he had to play witness to their bubbling affections every waking moment of his day. "Get a room!" he barked, not caring that he'd startled them from their intimate whispers.

Cyrus grinned up at his brother. A rare event until recently, he acknowledged, as Coye met the joy in his twin's eyes. And what had he gotten for his troubles, besides a sharp right hook? His jaw twitched.

He supposed this was what a man in love looked like. A foreign emotion if ever he'd heard of one. In all his two hundred sixty-two years of existence, he could say he'd been smitten with the wretched misfortune only once. And he'd watched that love betray him with another. From that moment on, he'd vowed to give of himself only in the passionate realm.

Love -- Coye narrowed his eyes at his brother -- he'd leave that to the more unfortunate souls. He'd stick to fulfilling the more lustful endeavors that required less commitment and more arduous tasks. Like the challenge of making a woman climax three times in five minutes. He smiled. Those were the deeds he fancied.

"Jealous, brother?" Cyrus chuckled.

"Unlikely."

Cyrus gazed back into Ashlyn's eyes, kissing her hand. "You may be as fortunate one day."

"Joy."

"Sweetie, don't tease your brother." Ashlyn tried to hide her smile, but failed.

"Well, maybe if he had his own woman he wouldn't be walking around growling every day."

"I seem to remember you doing quite a lot of snarling yourself before you met the love of your life." Coye shifted in his chair, swirling around the chilled blood in his glass. He'd lost his appetite three "I love you's" ago. "I don't need the complications that a union such as yours would bring."

"He could have any woman he wants. Why would he give that up?" Ashlyn added, winking at him.

Coye grinned, liking Ash's addictive spunk. "Exactly."

Cyrus looked at him pointedly. "Is that so? Well, then at least I can enjoy the pleasure of knowing this is the woman I'll wake up with tomorrow." His eyes blazed with heat. "And tonight. And the next night after the night after that. Isn't that right, baby?"

"Careful, brother, the night is still young."

Ashlyn blushed but nodded. "Yes."

Unable to stand another episode between the pair, Coye stood up. "On that note, I'll leave you two lovebirds to it." He looked to see if anyone even noticed his departure only to find Cyrus pressing his lips against Ashlyn's.

He grunted. You'd think he'd get some sort of thank you. After all, had it not been for his meddling the couple would have never met.

He stalked out of the dining room, waiting for the weight on his chest to crumble away. It didn't. He'd always thought of jealousy as another useless emotion, especially when one could easily get what he wanted if he knew how to use the power of persuasion.

His thoughts weighed him down with curiosity as he continued down the hallway. He rarely spent his time wondering what it would feel like to indulge in the fantasy of love or the sacrifice it would take. Watching his twin made him feel out of place. Didn't the fool know he could feel his raging emotions?

Ludicrous is what he called it!

Coye smiled as he neared his private sanctum of the Manor. His bedroom. He took a deep breath, never certain as to what would await him on the other side of the double doors. He pulled them open, more than ready to leave his unsettling feelings behind and indulge in mindless pleasure.

Chapter Two

Coye's mouth watered at the tight-fitting cat suit outlining Tara's curvy body. His dick hardened. He ached to strip her clothes off and thrust his cock inside her moist cunt. When it came to sex, Tara was no novice, but lately her appeal had waned. With the erection lining his pants, Coye was having trouble remembering just why that was.

"I've been waiting for you," she said, sitting down in a chair, crossing her legs. "We need to talk."

A frown laced her brow and in that moment he gave up all hopes of the quick and furious fuck he'd hungered for. Anything to rid himself of the love frenzy he'd just witnessed at the table between his brother and Ashlyn.

Coye sighed, closing the door behind him. He would give her a moment to state her case, calm her as he usually did with his seductive charms and have her wedged between him and his mattress as he drove his cock into her tight pussy within the next five minutes. Maybe ten if she was determined to argue.

He knew what she wanted.

A commitment.

He shuddered as he walked further into the room. The determined spark in her eye should have been the only warning he needed.

"I gave up Peyton for you."

Coye rolled his eyes skyward. *Where the hell was the bloody wooden stake?* Just thinking of the male Companion and his weakness for Tara made him angry. "So you've told me."

"And I'm telling you again." She gritted her teeth, edging forward in her seat. "I deserve more than this. I've always been loyal to you, Coye."

He sat down the Louis XIV chair at his desk. "I never made any promises, Tara. In fact, I was clear about that up front." He laced his hands behind his head. "You said, if I remember exactly, that all you needed was my ten-inch hard cock." He smiled, unable to help himself. "Which you've made good use of, mind you." *Over and over again.* He couldn't understand why she was changing their arrangement now.

"I'm not your whore, Coye."

He frowned, placing his hands on his desk. "I never said you were. I may be many things, Tara, but I'm no monster. You know I care for you."

"Not enough to be at your side."

"You are."

"Not like Ashlyn is with Cyrus." Tara pouted, her dark eyes narrowing in on him.

Coye felt the cloak of despair ring around his neck. At this point he'd settle for a silver bullet. Commitment! Marriage! This was too much for a creature of the night to take.

He pounded his fist against the desk. "Absolutely not! We're vampires! We don't need to get married."

"Cyrus is a vampire and he's getting married."

"I'm *not* my brother, Tara. I never want to get married. I'm almost three hundred years old. And I've been doing just fine without tying a noose around my neck. So why would I want to now?"

His words echoed around the room.

Tara looked away and then stood. Her eyes blazed with tears. "I refuse to be with a man, vampire or not, who offers me no future. Life is more than just lust, Coye." She walked out of the room, not looking back. "Maybe one day you'll figure that out."

"Life? We're vampires, we live forever, what more is there?" he retorted to Tara's retreating back. He watched her walk out of his life, unable to go after her. Her words cut into him harder than he'd expected.

Lust was all he knew.

* * *

No sex, no satisfaction.

Coye contemplated his life the next day. How the hell had it changed in the course of one day? The late morning sunshine poured into his bedroom through the long, belted drapes. He muttered an expletive, reading the scribbled note Mr. Crane had delivered five minutes ago from his brother.

Now Cyrus was playing hooky from the manor with Ashlyn, neglecting his responsibilities for what Coye was sure was going to be a day filled with sex. What was the world coming to? Even his brother was getting some!

He grunted, crumpling the note. Cyrus had scheduled a meeting with an interior designer at noon. He clutched the glass of chilled blood in his hand, his appetite waning. The elixir was a poor substitute for the after-sex bite he preferred. Vampire Juice paled in comparison. He knew his surliness lay with Tara's departure. She was right. She deserved more -- more than he could give.

Damn it! Couldn't vampires be vampires anymore? Since when did everyone want a commitment? Coye frowned, his mood darkening. He had never deluded Tara into thinking such a future could exist between them. Yet he felt unsettled and angry.

His sexual appetites could not sink to nonexistence as his twin's had. Sex was where his creativity came from; pleasure was his paintbrush and a woman's body, his canvas. He needed someone to take his frustrations out on.

He'd better add acquiring a new lover to his growing list of daily duties.

Coye glanced at the clock. It was nearing noon and he hadn't even accomplished half the demands on his brother's boorish list. He emptied his glass and headed to the main office, deciding to get started with the dreadfully uneventful day.

* * *

Of all the times to get a run in her stockings... Noely looked down at the snag on her upper thigh, just above her skirt's hemline. She had the short black skirt rolled to her hips as she searched in her handbag for a small can of hairspray. She hoped Cyrus didn't catch her in the act.

Noely chuckled. If nothing else maybe seeing her ass in a silky thong and black stockings would get his attention.

She'd been waiting in the office for him for the last ten minutes. Her nerves had already kicked into overdrive. So much rested on the outcome of today's meeting. She quickly applied a coat of hairspray to the snag, hoping to avoid a full-fledged run.

Before she could adjust her skirt the door flew open behind her. She jumped and dropped the hairspray.

"Ms. Lamont --" The deep male voice trailed off as awkward silence covered the room.

Shit!

She whirled around, her gaze landing on his slightly amused and shocked stare. Her heart thudded as she shimmied her skirt down over her hips. Despite her embarrassment, she couldn't stop looking at him.

There was something different about Cyrus. He looked sensual. His white shirt was open at the collar, giving her a peek-a-boo glance at a gorgeous pec, and a simple pair of faded denim jeans encased long legs. He was a well-built man, standing over six feet tall, with broad shoulders, a lean waistline, muscles galore, and that face! His complexion could be compared to honey. He had thick eyebrows, generous lips, and eyes the color of the night sky. Raven-black hair hung loose to his shoulders, making Noely want to comb her fingers through it. The defined angles of his face only increased his powerful presence and her attraction to him.

She licked her lips, hungry for a taste of him. She wanted to experience that power, feel the raw strength of his thrusts as he pounded his dick into her pussy.

This casual style was so different from the way he'd appeared during her first interview. She definitely liked this look on him. The hunger racing through her body warmed her down to her toes. He looked unpredictable. The heat radiating in his eyes echoed to her soul. A newfound attraction soared within her, daring her to believe that all was not lost.

"I'm sorry." She supposed it was better late than never when it came to her libido kicking in. His gaze remained on her every move. "I got a run in my stockings..." She stopped, her throat burning with embarrassment.

Cyrus closed the door and smiled. "Not quite the introduction I expected, but it will definitely do." He walked closer, extending his hand. "You have beautiful legs, Ms. Lamont."

She placed her palm in his. Electric currents shot through her as their flesh touched. She almost jumped as the same shock swept down between her legs. She clenched her thighs together, silently willing the delicious ache spreading to her pussy to go away. Their gazes connected.

She felt parched and wanted to drink her fill of Cyrus. Noely swore she could feel him touching every part of her body. She wasn't sorry for the change in their sexual chemistry. "Ah, thank you."

She pulled her hand from his and bent to pick up her hairspray, inadvertently presenting her ass to him. She straightened quickly, tossed the can into her bag and sat down. Out of the corner of her eye she could see the glimpse of a smile on his lips. She was certain she wasn't the only female to toss their ass in his face, but this wasn't the way she wanted to go about it.

Did she?

Cyrus walked to the desk, and sat down. "You've made quite an impression."

"I'm sure I have. I do apologize. I didn't mean to offer you a strip tease." Those mysterious eyes of his were on her again, the easy smile gone and replaced by blatant heat.

"Yes, I would hope that you wouldn't use your physical attributes to land a job. My brother and I have to be cautious due to the anonymity we require for our clientele."

Noely tilted her head, raising her eyebrows. No one questioned her honor! Not even Cyrus Rayven. "As you explained during our first interview --"

He cut her off, his eyes burning into hers. "You'll have to excuse my frankness, Ms. Lamont. I have to ensure the reputation of the Manor and my name."

"Of course. However, I have standards of my own when I take on a project. I've never been questioned about my commitment to my business or my work ethic. And I wouldn't do anything to change that now."

"I believe we understand each other."

Noely's heart pounded. "Yes, we do, Mr. Rayven."

He stared at her, a pensive look on his handsome face, and slid a packet of papers across his desk. "The job is yours."

Yes! She tried not to appear anxious as she leaned forward, picking up the contract he shifted toward her.

Her eyes scoured over the legalese, although everything within her was attentive to the man sitting before her. He excited her, made her want to do wicked things to and *with* him. She managed to sign her name and shifted the papers back to him. She watched as he signed his name to the document, and imagined those long fingers pinching her nipples. The swift tingle between her legs made her clench her thighs harder.

"Thank you, Mr. Rayven. It will be a pleasure to work with you."

"Call me Coye, please."

Noely's head snapped up. Surely she hadn't heard him right.

"Coye? I'm sorry, but I thought I was meeting with Cyrus?" What the hell was going on here? She frowned, worry making her stomach dip. This interview was getting worse by the minute.

"Yes, I thought you would be as well; however, my brother is unavailable to meet with you today and has left me to make the decision regarding whether to hire you." He angled his head at her, no doubt scrutinizing her reaction. "Decision made. I hope you aren't too disappointed."

"Of course not," she said tightly. Noely tried to look unfazed by his announcement, but judging by the playful look on his handsome face he wasn't buying it. She couldn't be attracted to the wrong brother! "I'd like to be clear."

"Please do." Coye leaned forward, resting his arms on the desk.

She glanced at him, hoping her expression gave nothing of her true intentions away. "I didn't come here to undermine your business endeavors or seduce you... or your brother."

"No?" His eyes lit up. "A man has to wonder when he enters his office and finds an attractive woman offering up such..." his gaze slid over her, "... tempting sights. Were you hoping to arouse my brother? Very naughty, Noely." He smiled wickedly. "And your little ploy wouldn't have worked. His fiancée is a giant hurdle, seeing as the two are lip locked." He made a tscking sound. "Nevertheless, you've caught my attention."

"Now wait one minute --" Despite being very turned on by him, her anger sparked a notch higher. The fact that he was telling the truth only incensed her further. She would not let him have the upper hand.

"Relax, you wouldn't be the first to try to seduce one of the Rayven brothers. We're adults here."

Of all the pigheaded, egotistical comments!

"That's questionable," Noely retorted. "First of all, if I wanted to seduce you, I would." Her eyes narrowed over every delicious inch of him. "No doubt it wouldn't be hard to do."

Coye stood, rounding the desk to stand in front of her. "Is that right?"

"That's right." Noely stood as well, holding her clutch in her hand, her breathing ragged with conflicting emotions. Here she was, standing toe to toe with the wrong man and all she could think about was having his lips on every part of her body.

"Do you normally entice your prospective employers with such challenges?" he asked.

"You're insane."

"I think you're a woman who knows what she wants. I applaud you for that at least." Coye laughed. The sound of it raked over her nerves.

"Then you should know what I want right now."

"Hmmm." His gaze lowered to her heaving breasts and then riveted to her eyes. "I think I know the answer to that one."

"You are so improper, totally unlike your brother." She fought between the urge to knee him in the crotch or to kiss his lips. "I should have noticed the difference."

"Thank you and yes, you should have."

"It wasn't a compliment!"

"However, I doubt your mistake will stop you from taking the job, now will it?" He paused and went on to say, "No, I didn't think so. You know why? Because we both know we're the kind of people who want what we want and get it. No apologies, no explanation. I like that in you."

"You don't know me." Noely gritted her teeth. "What the hell makes you think you do?"

"Because I usually know my own kind."

"Would you still think that if you knew I was a Companion?" The surprise on his face was reward enough. "I didn't think so. You don't strike me as a man who believes in traditional ideals."

* * *

Something deep within Coye snapped. He stepped closer to Noely, reading her thoughts. He felt the fire raging deep within her. A tumultuous mix of passion, attraction, and power that could possibly challenge his own arousal. Her body offered an invitation he couldn't refuse. The haughty look in her eyes made his dick hard. He couldn't remember being this attracted to or infuriated with another woman and there'd been a lot of them. Companion or not, he wanted her.

"I'd bet my life as an immortal that there's nothing traditional about the lust you're feeling for me right now."

Her mocha skin was flawless and he was aching to see what lay underneath her clothing. The peek of her round ass in the silky thong had already whetted his appetite. He wanted to see all of her. *Touch* all of her. The need in her eyes was unmistakable. The flash of naughtiness that she'd quickly tried to disguise when he'd confronted her about trying to seduce Cyrus would be his undoing.

"You think too highly of yourself."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, damn it! It's so."

She thought she'd shocked him about being a Companion, but she hadn't. Coye wasn't particularly fond of her race due to an incident in his past. That incident wasn't enough to stop him from fucking the lovely Noely until she spoke in tongues.

He couldn't let her walk away.

What would it be like to watch those beautiful brown eyes of hers widen as he drove his dick into her over and over again? He wanted to be there when she realized she might have wanted his brother at first, but that he wasn't second best to anyone. He'd be glad to teach her the lesson as many times as necessary.

"Attraction doesn't just go away, sweetheart. Something tells me you know that or you would have walked away by now."

She bit her plump bottom lip. Coye smiled, watching the conflict on her face.

"I'm leaving." Noely turned away, nearly jogging to the door only to stop in front of it.

Damn, the woman had a walk about her that made his cock throb. He balled his hands into fists, refusing to move from where he stood. Not yet at least. All he could think about was burying himself in Noely's slick heat. Everything about her turned him on. That sweet Southern accent drove him insane, but it was the fire in her eyes that made him think maybe he'd met his match on a strictly physical level.

"What's stopping you?" Coye crossed his arms over his chest. "There's the door."

"I know what it is. Thank you!" Noely snapped, opening the door, but didn't walk out of it.

He walked swiftly behind her. The smell of her perfume made him close his eyes. He placed the palm of his hand on the door, while the other rested on the door frame. "I'm not my brother and I'll be damned if I compete against him."

Noely whirled around, her lips trembling. "I'm not fighting against wanting to fuck him right now."

Her admission brought a greedy smile to his face. The sexual heat enveloped them like a vise. He felt it. He'd felt the automatic pull to her when he'd first looked into her eyes. He'd wanted more. Much more.

"This... *this* can't happen."

"But it is."

Chapter Three

Coye closed the door and then directed his attention to her. That sweet mouth of hers beckoned him to taste it. He kept his eyes open as he leaned in to Noely. The rush of her heartbeat against him was enough to send him over the edge. Almost. He cupped both sides of her beautiful face, brushing his lips against hers ever so lightly. Luscious just as he'd thought, but it wasn't enough.

"Tell me to stop," he murmured against her lips.

She dropped the clutch, her fingers grasping strands of his long hair. "I can't."

"I think my brother made the right decision in instructing me to hire you."

"Yes, as do I. He has good taste."

"I second that." Coye watched her.

She pulled him closer; her tongue darted out to lick his lips. "I don't think I could confuse the two of you again."

His eyebrows arched. "Here's a way to make sure you never make that mistake." He gently bit her fleshy bottom lip before his mouth devoured hers hungrily. Their tongues met and awe struck him down to his core. He almost reeled back in shock at his reaction.

The sinful flavor of her mouth made him hungry for more than just a kiss. His thirst for this woman only intensified as he tasted her sweet inhibition. Her fingers tightened in his hair as they explored each other with abandon. Her curves were womanly and turned his cock to granite, as his hands tested the weight of her full breasts, kneading the soft mounds with his fingers and pinching the rigid tips of her nipples.

His hands swept lower, dipped outward at the sides of her waistline and smoothed over her hips, cupping her generous ass in his palms. He squeezed her flesh, liking the feel of her smooth skin against his own. Her scent drove him nearly insane.

Without missing a beat, Coye scooped Noely up, her legs wrapped around his waist, her skirt bunching against her belly. His fingers wandered over her thigh, and then clutched the seam that met at the juncture of her legs. He pulled the fabric until the sound of a rip echoed in the room.

Noely gasped.

"Sorry, but you won't need those." He pushed the edge of her panties to the side, finding his target. She shivered against him, her breast pressed against his chest. Her moist pussy gave to his touch. "Mmmn. You feel divine." His eyes met hers as he fingered her throbbing clit. "And so wet."

"Oh!" Noely gripped him tighter with her legs. "Harder."

Coye grinned. "Your wish is my command." He dipped another finger into her slick heat, spreading her wider and pressing her body toward a frenzied release.

He couldn't take his eyes off of her. The sexy sounds coming from her pretty mouth were a tease, pushing his resolve overboard. The more insistent her pleas, the more unrelenting he became as he pleased her pussy with quick and slow circles. He wanted her to call his name. He placed his thumb on her clit, working her over. He watched intently as her body shook with need. It was just a matter of time before she succumbed to him.

"Mmm." Noely licked her lips. "You're -- driving -- me -- crazy! I'm going to come." Her body spasmed with quick pulses and a heartbeat later, her cream coated his fingers as her body convulsed against him.

Coye had never seen a woman more beautiful than in that moment. He wanted to see more of that reckless abandon on her face and was about to voice his thoughts when she pushed away from him, righting herself.

She pressed a kiss to his lips and then grinned up at him. "That was... wonderful."

"I was thinking the same thing, but it'd be even better if we continued this in my --"

"No." Noely covered his mouth with her finger, shaking her head. "This is where we part ways."

"Excuse me?"

She pulled her stockings down those luscious legs, balled them up and placed them in her clutch, then looked back up at him. "Surely you didn't think there would be more?"

"Of course there's *more*, especially when a man does it right."

Her eyes roamed over Coye and stopped at the large bulge in his pants. "I have no doubt that you would do everything perfectly." She inhaled sharply, looking away from him. "That's not the problem."

"Then what is?" He gritted his teeth.

"Normally I don't live by regrets, but this is one, for more reasons than I can say."

"Is that the only excuse you can come up with? Or would the outcome had been different had I been Cyrus?"

"I resent that." Her head snapped upward. "What transpired between us was just that, between us."

Coye frowned. "Then what are you running from?"

"I'm not running. You wouldn't even begin to understand," Noely said. "From this point on, there is nothing between you and me *and* Cyrus but business."

"Is that the best you can do?"

She crooked her eyebrows at him. "Excuse me?"

"Is that the best you can do? That's your plan -- to ignore what just happened between us?" He wasn't in the least satisfied with the sample he'd had of Ms. Lamont and she was damn well going to know it.

"Yes."

"You really think that's best?"

Best?

She had passed up what was “best” one orgasm ago, or hadn’t he noticed?

Noely sighed, adjusting her clothes for the last time, and turned her gaze to the man who’d set her body on fire. She wanted him more than she could say, but for reasons that didn’t matter in the long scheme of things. She’d failed her mission.

How was she to explain this to her mother? Or to herself? Despite it all, the attraction and the heady burn of passion unspent had her body on edge. The connection remained with this man.

The *wrong* man!

She swallowed. “Actually, I think the best thing may be to terminate the contract altogether.”

He chuckled, his eyes simmering with heat. “You want to run away from your obligations?”

Run? As if she could. Her obligations had been drummed into her head more times than she could count. She didn’t need Coye Rayven telling her what her duties were, especially when fucking his brother would be on the top of that short list.

The connection between them was undeniably strong, strangely more than she’d thought it’d been with Cyrus. It made her wonder just what the hell the Rites of Old knew that she didn’t. It unnerved her that she was attracted to the wrong brother, yet couldn’t stop it. He made her want things, want *him*.

“I told you, I’m not running,” Noely answered, her teeth clenched. “I’m being reasonable and I think you should be as well.”

Staying away from Coye Rayven was the only way to keep her sanity. Her body rejected the idea. Her mind was whirling with how she’d derailed her mission. Being attracted to Coye had hit her square in the gut.

He made her feel things she should want to feel with Cyrus. And now, with Cyrus gone to parts unknown, the situation went from awful to disastrous. She’d let her mother and the future line of the Companions down for one moment of weakness. Lust. How would she rectify this? She’d face the consequences of her actions.

"So, let me get this right. You want me to tear up the contract, ignore that any of this ever happened and go our separate ways, and all before I've had a taste of you?"

"Yes, I do." Her eyes roamed over his. The sexual pull between them grew stronger the longer she remained in his presence. She tightened her knees together; her clit throbbed with a wanting that shook her to her very core.

"No."

"No?"

"No, a contract is a contract and I want you to abide by it." The sexy grin on his lips made her body flush with heat. He knew damn well what he was doing.

Undeniably, Noely wanted him to taste her as much as she wanted to taste him. Or strangle him. Neither act would get her any closer to completing her mission, which was looking like a distant memory at this point. He had to be the most infuriating man she'd ever come across. She had to push him away. Hard. "I'm sure you're not used to a woman rejecting you. But now is hardly the time to act like you care about rules. Or me."

He narrowed his gaze at her, standing so close she could feel his hard cock brushing against her thigh. "But I do care and I'm more than willing to show you how much."

"I bet you are." She bit her lip. What she wouldn't give to feel that heavenly cock inside her, pounding against her wet flesh with no care for the outside world or responsibilities or royal lines. "It'll never happen."

Maybe in another lifetime they'd have a chance to indulge in the tempting pleasures she envisioned happening between them, but she had bigger problems.

"Never say never. You will cave, Ms. Lamont, and I will enjoy every minute of it."

"You'll be waiting a long time, Mr. Rayven."

"I highly doubt that." He chuckled and then whispered, "I really like how you call me Mr. Rayven after what we've just done. Next time maybe you will be wearing the French maid costume in the Master's Lair Room." Coye stepped closer, touching her

cheek. "Although we both know clothes aren't necessary to get us going." He cleared his throat, stepping back. "I'll have a copy of your contract sent to your office. My brother will be so happy to see that you've accepted the job, as am I."

Noely grabbed her clutch, opened the door and slammed it closed behind her for good measure. There was no sense reasoning with him, not when sexual sparks were shooting between them like wildfire and her resistance to him was low. No, what she needed to do was distance herself as far as possible while she still could walk away.

* * *

"She met Coye Rayven today." Riefe, the oldest of the Rites of Old, stated, his pure white eyes directed toward Damara.

Damara nodded. "She assumed it was Cyrus she would be meeting today."

"Are you certain that this is the right path, Damara?" the second elder, Saake, asked.

She grinned. "I know my daughter. Noely would never settle for being coerced into doing something, especially a forced love. This is the only course that will produce a future for our people and still give my daughter the true love she seeks. The choice will be hers to make."

"What will you do when she comes to you with the truth?" Delmer, the final member of the Rites of Old, questioned.

"I will be the mother she needs and the queen," Damara answered.

"That will require a delicate balance." Riefe smiled.

"Yes, indeed." Damara sighed. "But then it always has."

* * *

Later that afternoon, Noely found her nerves were no better than they'd been when she'd arrived back at Lamont Designs. She'd literally stormed into her office, asked Melanie not to disturb her and slammed the door, causing the glass center of it to rattle.

Seconds later, Mel knocked on the door and peeked her head through the crack. "Ah, are you all right?"

Noely threw her clutch into a chair. She wiped the tears from her eyes before turning around. She managed a half smile. "Yeah, I'm fine. We've landed the Rayven job."

"Awesome." Mel clapped her hands, then looked at Noely's face. She widened the door, walking into the office. "Aren't you excited?"

Noely turned to her desk, her smile slipping. She was rattled and had been since the moment she'd walked out of Coye Rayven's arms. She could still feel him, his hands on her. The smell of his erotic scent refused to fade. Her clit still tingled. She wanted him like the last piece of German chocolate cake. Feelings of regret and anger only made her more nervous.

"I'm ecstatic, just a bit tired. The meeting ran longer than I expected."

She sat down at her desk. How could she explain to Melanie what she was feeling when she could barely rationalize what had come over her when in Coye's presence? Her friend knew nothing of her world. The world of vampires and Companions. Royal lines that were on the verge of extinction all because she wanted to be claimed by the wrong damn brother!

Just her luck!

Melanie didn't press her and went on to say, "Ms. Duval called and wanted to thank you again for the lovely job you did in her new house. She said you'll be receiving all her business and has referred you to some of her friends."

Noely grinned. Alice Duval was an eccentric, lottery winning millionaire. Her "house" was over ten thousand square feet of opulence. It had been a fun project. She couldn't say the same of the Scarlet Manor. "That's good."

The bell at the door proved to be Noely's saving grace as Melanie went to address the visitor. She really wanted to be alone right now, to gather her thoughts and to figure out just what the hell she would do about the mess she'd made. Usually when she was stressed she'd go right in to her masseuse, Dolph, to have his magical hands work out the kinks in her back.

She frowned, knowing nothing was going to work out the sexual frustration knotting up her whole system. Now, nothing or no one was going to do that but the devil himself, Coye Rayven.

"This was just delivered," Melanie said, reentering the room. She handed the large envelope to her. "I'm going to head out. I have a dinner date."

Noely glanced up, smiling. "Anyone I know?"

"Richard."

"Richard from the spa?" Noely chuckled, in awe at how her friend had hooked up with him so quickly.

Mel nodded, a naughty grin on her face as she slipped off her glasses. "You're not the only one with some moves."

"I guess not. You go, girl! Where are you guys going tonight?"

"Sutherland's." Mel blushed.

"Nice." Noely was happy to see her friend getting out and about after a bad breakup. "Have a good time."

"I will. Are you sure you'll be all right?" Mel asked.

She waved her off. "Go, I'm fine. I'll see you in the morning."

"OK. Bye."

Once Mel left, Noely sat a few minutes in complete silence. Her eyes closed, she could still see the reckless look in his eyes. He was the type of man many women had lost their heart to. She had never felt so... so connected to a man before.

No! What she felt was lust, she reasoned. It was the only conclusion she could come up with. Cyrus was the brother she was to mate with. Fat chance of that ever happening now that things had transpired the way they had. Soon she would have to face her mother and tell her the truth.

A knot formed in Noely's throat, and tears built up behind her eyelids. Her whole life was a mess. She had to fix this. Somehow, some way.

Her eyes found the envelope. She reached for it, tearing it open, and wasn't surprised to find the contract that sealed her fate to work around Coye. He'd pegged

her from the beginning. She did normally go after what she wanted, simply because she wanted it. She lifted the attached note.

Dear Ms. Lamont,

It was my greatest pleasure to accept your agreement of employment today. However, in light of the shroud of anonymity we've established here at the Scarlet Manor and to ensure no possibility of security risks there is an amendment to your contract. I've decided it best if you take up residence here at the Scarlet Manor during the renovations. All amenities will be at your utmost disposal. I look forward to a prosperous business relationship.

Sincerely,

Coye Rayven

P.S. You dropped your stockings. Your scent is intoxicating...

Noely's body shook with anger, despite his erotic words. The image of him smelling her stockings made her blood boil but not as much as having him dictate that she would be stuck with him night and day!

He decided?

He'd decided to make her life hell! And hell, he would pay. She crumpled the paper in her fist, thinking of the many ways she would make him squirm.

Starting tomorrow, Coye Rayven would regret the day he decided to test her resolve. She'd be the best housemate she could be and then some!

Chapter Four

"Why are you doing this to me? Did I sleep with one of your girlfriends in the past?" Coye muttered into the phone receiver, while searching his mind. Surely he would remember if he had. The truth was the women in Cyrus' life were slim pickings.

He preferred picking his own bedmates. He thought of Noely. She was a different case altogether. His response to her was an enigma, aside from the obvious physical attraction. He liked a sexual challenge, but there was more. Every time he looked into Noely's eyes, he felt there were secrets to be uncovered. Secrets that he had every intention of discovering whether she wanted him to or not.

"This isn't about you, Coye. Ashlyn and I decided that now was the time to get married. So we eloped. Surely you can handle the Manor for a week," Cyrus said, the hint of a question in his tone.

"Despite what you may think of me, I can manage not to run our business into the ground until you grace us with your presence again."

"Yeah, well, this means you're going to have to tone down those midnight rendezvous with Tara or for that matter, the mid-day ones."

Coye felt his patience snap. "That won't be a problem seeing as she's gone."

"Really?" Cyrus chuckled. "I never thought I'd see the day. What brought that on?"

"It's your damn fault. Who the hell ever heard of vampires marrying?"

"So now you're blaming me."

"Damn right, brother. If you and Ashlyn hadn't started this little trend I wouldn't be in this mess."

Cyrus snorted. "Somehow, I think you will survive."

Coye had to smile, thinking of Noely. "By the way, I hired Ms. Lamont. She starts today and will be arriving to do some draft work."

"Excellent, I really enjoyed her presentation above the other two designers."

"So did I," Coye said, his mind wandering back to having Noely in his arms. "Did you know that she was a Companion?"

There was a pause. "No, I didn't. You do know of the prophecy, don't you?" Cyrus asked.

"I don't want to hear this."

"You were always hardheaded, Coye. So when you come up against trouble don't say I didn't tell you so."

He frowned. "What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"It means that if you were smart, you'd brush up on the prophecy between Deiwalkers and Companions." Cyrus sighed. "In words you can understand, don't screw with Ms. Lamont."

Too late for that. Coye laughed. "Don't worry, brother, I have no intention of ever falling for a Companion again."

"That was centuries ago. One close brush with a Companion does not make you immune to their sexual scent."

"That *one* brush with a Companion almost cost me my life." Coye gritted his teeth; wounds from a lifetime ago rushed forward, despite years of neglecting the memory that had torn into his soul.

"I remember, however, female Companions and Deiwalkers are a lustful mix, one even you and your super-strong will won't be able to ignore, especially if Ms. Lamont is of royalty. You need to heed the prophecy if you don't want --"

"Do you hear yourself? You sound crazy. Why don't you take care of your new bride and I'll handle Ms. Lamont and the Manor."

"Yeah, you do that. I'll talk to you in a couple of days."

"Oh and, Cyrus, congratulations. I believe Ash will make you very happy. Someone around here needs to be."

Coye hung up the phone. Could it be that Noely was of the royal line? What secrets was the sexy Noely hiding?

He glanced at the clock on the wall. In half an hour, the showdown would begin. What would Noely be carrying in her arsenal today? He prayed she was prepared for the battle of her life.

A Rayven never gave up easily.

* * *

Cyrus hung up the phone. He turned back to the woman who'd made his dead heart come alive again. Ashlyn sat on the bed, dressed in a white nightie, biting into a chocolate-covered strawberry. Her once short tresses had grown down to her chin. Her protruding belly turned him on and her brown eyes found his.

She was his wife. His. If ever he could immortalize one moment, it would have been now. Never in a million years had he dreamed that he would be a married man, in love again. Ashlyn had showed him how to experience living again.

"Did the Manor burn down yet?" she teased, chuckling.

Cyrus smiled, nearing the bed. "No, he hasn't managed to do that... yet."

"Have a little faith in your brother. He may seem reckless, but I've always gotten a sense that he craves stability."

Cyrus laughed. "Surely you have the wrong man."

Ashlyn crooked her finger at him, shaking her head. "I don't think so. Why don't you come closer?"

Cyrus felt his cock harden. When she looked at him with those naughty brown eyes everything within him went wild. He hungered for her more than he'd wanted anyone in his near three hundred years of existence.

He slowly stripped off his white dress shirt, watching her wet her lips as each button opened to expose his hard flesh. If she kept looking at him so ravenously, he'd take her right now.

Cyrus quickly stripped his pants off, his cock standing tall and rock hard. He loved how her face lit up as she took him in. He saw love, acceptance and passion all

within her gaze. He climbed onto the bed on his knees and leaned forward until their noses touched. "I love you, Ashlyn."

Her eyes teared up. "I love you too, Cyrus. Tonight I want to show you how much." She pushed him on his back and slowly climbed over him, straddling his body.

Ashlyn raised the nightie over her head, her brown skin exposed to her husband's greedy perusal. She felt no shame or embarrassment over the weight she'd gained as a result of her pregnancy. She was proud of her body, the life they'd created. His hands reached out to cup her breasts, testing the weight of them then pinching the rigid tips lightly.

She moaned, aroused by him, his touch. There would never be another man who would be able to replace Cyrus. Ever. She lifted her hips. His hands helped guide her over his long shaft as her pussy slipped down his cock like a glove. She held her breath, loving the sweet torture of their union.

Cyrus gritted his teeth, his fingers digging into her ass. "Are you sure you're all right? I don't want to --" A groan slipped his lips as Ashlyn started to ride him. His iron grasp on sanity evaporated into thin air as her hot pussy gripped his dick. He was under her control.

"Ahhh. I love your cock," she moaned as she ground onto him, slowly at first, and then found her momentum as she moved over him with deeper gyrations.

He smiled. "So that's the... mmmn... reason you married me?" He surprised her by raising his hips to thrust deeper into her wet heat, loving the gasp that tore from her throat.

Ashlyn's climax was close. "Maybe." She wanted to say more but words failed her as Cyrus thrust into her again and again. Each time she met him with her own thrust. She cried out. "Ohhhh! Baby. Yes!" Her body was on fire. Love extended deep into her heart as her pussy contracted against his cock. Spasms of white-hot heat shot down from her head to her toes as she came.

"Ashlyn!" Cyrus moaned loudly as he ground his dick into her possessively. The orgasm tore through him as swift as a rod of lightning tore through the night sky

outside the window of their hotel suite. His body succumbed to the waves of pleasure rocking against them as he ground his cock into her pussy.

She collapsed against Cyrus in a heap, sated with love and sex. "Do you want to know the real reason I married you?"

He kissed her forehead, his arms bracketing her against him. "Why?"

"You're the one man who has been able to claim not only my body, but my heart," Ashlyn replied.

"In that case, I'm the richest man in the world."

Ashlyn chuckled. "Baby, you're loaded. We're talking Bill Gates here."

"Well then, I need to start expanding my riches, now don't I?" Cyrus turned her over on her side, so that her hips brushed against his cock. He was hard again. He rubbed his erection against her buttocks as Ashlyn shivered. He wedged his long thigh in between her legs, spreading them apart. His cock slipped into her wet heat from behind.

She groaned. "On second thought, it was definitely your cock!"

Cyrus chuckled, delivering a swift thrust. "I'll give you whatever you want, baby, as long as you're mine."

"As long as you keep doing... ahhh... what you're doing, that will never be a problem."

"Good, because I never intend to stop fucking you."

* * *

Noely arrived at the Manor right on time. Her first stop had been the bathroom. Her stomach was in knots, her palms sweaty, and for the life of her she had no idea why. She waited for the nausea to ease.

Fat chance of that happening, she thought, fanning her hands in front of her face, seeing as she was about to go toe to toe with the devil himself. She usually left men like Coye quaking in her dust, but this time was different. This time she felt a connection to a man who in every sense of the word was forbidden. Everything about him spoke of wickedness, which, if she hadn't so much to lose, she would want a part of.

Who was she kidding? She'd already lost so much. The chances of her being able to pull off her mission had been annihilated. Coye hadn't mentioned when or if Cyrus would be back. And it didn't really matter when all she could think of was fucking the wrong brother. Still, she would not back down. To do so would be admitting to herself that she'd fully given in to temptation.

She'd tried contacting her mother, but she hadn't been available to talk to her yesterday. Noely didn't know whether to be thankful or cry. She'd never wanted to disappoint her mother. She'd never wanted to be queen of the Companions either, but she couldn't change what was or what would be. Again, she fought against obligation and her own needs.

The plan to seduce Cyrus might as well be flushed down the toilet. She hadn't the slightest idea how to fix it. Not when Coye was the man she dreamt about last night. They might be twins but there was no way that she could pretend she couldn't tell the difference. No way to erase the burning memory of his touch on her naked skin.

Noely squared her shoulders. There wasn't a chance in hell that she'd let him get the better of her. She'd do her job, then move on and somehow explain the recklessness of her actions. She opened the door to the bathroom and walked straight into a brick wall.

"I'm sorry." She inhaled the rich masculine scent of Coye's body, froze and tried to pull away. Her senses tingled, her body aroused. "Why don't you watch where you're going?"

"Good morning, Noely." His arms wrapped around her waist, preventing her from moving. His dark eyes searched her face, a roguish smile lacing his lips. He looked around, before he nearly swept her off her feet and into a nearby room.

"Put me down, Coye. Now!"

"Let me think about that." He backed her up into the wall, blocking her in. His eyes took in her sexy skirt and crepe blouse. "No."

She was certain the opaque material and thin undershirt did little to disguise her erect nipples. Lust reawakened despite her efforts. Her struggling only increased the

arousal flowing through her veins. It didn't take much with him. "Could we avoid the games today, please?"

He smiled. "What you mean to say is avoid *me*."

"Whatever works."

His eyes darkened. "It doesn't work for me." His voice dipped as he leaned into her, his cock pressed against her quivering belly.

Noely's eyes fluttered. How the hell was she supposed to complete this job with him around? "So what does -- cornering defenseless women in abandoned rooms? Do you think I'll fuck you right here, Coye? Right now?"

"You're anything but defenseless, Noely. You could walk away right now if you wanted to." He paused. "Although we both know that fucking me is the only thought on your mind. If you'd just give in now, you'd save both of us a lot of frustration."

"You are the most egotistical man I've met in my life." Her voice wavered as the heat of his body melded with her own.

"Yet you still want to fuck me, don't you?" His hands cupped her ass, grinding the apex of her sex against his cock. His gaze held hers.

Noely refused to give in to him, despite the dizzying effect his touch had on her body. Her pussy was already dripping wet. "I can and will resist you, Coye. These antics you play will not work."

His eyebrows arched. "Then I'll play with *you* instead." He hiked up her skirt, his fingers trailing over her thighs. "How far will you let me go?"

What sexual challenge would he throw at her next? "You're setting yourself up to lose," she said between clenched teeth, willing herself not to react further to his manipulations, although the dizzying spasms of pleasure tempted her to ride them to the edge of completion.

"Am I?"

Coye didn't need her to speak. He needed her submission and knew about the varying ways to get it. The heat in her eyes drove him forward. His fingertips caressed the curls covering her and pressed closer to stroke her pussy leisurely. His thumb

molded the crease of her wet cunt. Her eyes were half closed, the challenge in them enough to make him want to strip her completely naked and fuck her into the early morning dawn.

"See, even your body knows what it wants." He swooped downward to capture her lips. His tongue thrashed urgently against hers.

He wrapped his hands around her waist, enjoying the feel of her curves against him. His cock enjoyed it even more. He didn't know what it was about her, a Companion no less, that drew him in. He just knew he wanted more of her, more of the thrill she caused while in his presence.

Coye broke away from her to slam the door connecting to the corridor. Noely attempted to walk around him, but he caught her by the waist, whirled her around to face him. "I won't let you walk away from me."

She slapped his hand away. "Try and stop me."

His cock hardened. Despite the one step he let her take toward the door, the need he witnessed in her eyes was unmasked, naked, just as he wanted her. Right here. Right now.

Coye grabbed her, pulling her roughly against him. His eyes bored into her. "Haven't you learned yet that challenges are like aphrodisiacs to me?" His lips captured hers once again before she could protest. Her body melted into his as he cupped her ass, fitting her against him like a second skin. He lifted her up, twining her legs around his waist, and walked over to the chaise lounge next to the wall.

Her hands twisted in his hair as he unbuttoned her shirt. His knees struck the wooden frame of the chair, causing them to pitch forward with a jolt. Coye made quick work of the clothing that kept him from feeling her against him. He lifted her shirt and started with the hooks of her bra. Pushing the lace aside, his hands cupped her full breasts in his hands and squeezed.

Noely pulled back, taking a deep breath. Her hands found the zipper to his jeans and slowly lowered it over his bulging cock. He watched as her hazy eyes went wide.

She licked her lips and looked back up to him. "Fuck me." She caressed his dick with her fingertips.

Coye thought he'd gone to heaven. "Yes, ma'am." He smiled, liking the in-charge version of Noely. He liked it a lot.

"Wasn't that polite enough?" She stood up, dropped the rest of her clothes on the floor and pulled the pins out of her hair.

"Like sugar," he replied, his eyes nearly bulged out of his head. She was the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen. Large breasts and nipples dipped in chocolate, curvy hips and long legs. She wasn't as thin as some of the other vampiresses he'd been with and not one of them could hold a candle to the lush beauty of Noely Lamont.

She placed her hands on her hips, her breasts jutted outward. "Do you like what you see?" Noely asked.

Coye licked his lips. "Yes." He was more than willing to lick them and more. His gaze traveled lower to the apex of her legs. The dark curls glistened with her juices. He wanted to taste every nuance of her cunt. Every part of her body was calling out for his kiss.

He stood, unzipped his jeans and stepped out of them. Coye watched the sharp intake of breath as he sat down slowly, his gaze never breaking from her. "Come to me."

She sashayed over to him. Her walk appealed to him even more without her clothes on. She stood directly in front of him, a playful look on her face. "This changes nothing."

"This changes everything. We both know you want me. I sure as hell want you. There's no getting around it."

"Wanting only lasts so long."

"Or a lifetime." Coye tried not to measure the significance of his words, though it struck a chord deep within him, one he hadn't known existed. He never imagined wanting anything or anyone for one moment longer than necessary. He wasn't the type

to confuse lust for love. He wasn't going to start now with Noely. She had secrets that he planned to uncover. He was sure that was where his fascination lay.

He didn't give her a minute to prepare as he leaned forward. His hands latched to her ass, hauling her moist sex to his mouth, and he inhaled. "Just as I imagined, wicked."

He pulled Noely onto his lap so that she straddled him, and placed her legs over his shoulders. He maneuvered her backwards, until her hands were touching the floor. His palms cradled her hips as he rhythmically massaged her sensitive folds with the head of his cock.

Coye closed his eyes, feeling every sensation rocking her body from his touch. It was as if they were connected. In tune from the very lightest touch to the last lingering kiss. He'd never felt anything like it.

What kind of spell did she have him under?

Chapter Five

“What are you --” Noely never managed to get the last word out as Coye lifted her pussy to his lips, tongue fucking her slowly, methodically and oh, so tenderly. Every muscle in her body responded to the sinfully good sensation he built within her. “Yes!” She thrust her hips upward to meet his passionate onslaught, using his shoulders as leverage.

His hands gripped her ass as he hungrily licked her aroused cunt. In and out. Deeply and possessively he took his fill of her.

“Yes! Damn it! Fuck me.” Noely closed her eyes, not knowing which would do her in first, the blood rushing to her head from the position she was in or the man licking her like a lollipop with hedonistic thrusts of his tongue.

She felt her muscles clench. “Oh! Coye! Yesss!”

She forgot where she was, that anyone could interrupt their interlude at any moment. Nothing was more important than having him pleasure her. Every nerve in her body exploded in unison. The exquisite strain of her climax overcame her. Heat spread through her body as if she were on fire. The orgasm extended and then again as she came. Coye’s mouth suckled her pussy with a gentleness that almost made her weep. She clung to him like a vise. Never had she wanted anyone as much. Never had she felt connected to a man as she did him. The realization made her shudder as she slowly recovered from the intense waves cocooning her body.

Coye looked down at her, licking the excess of her cream from his lips. The need in his eyes only mirrored her own. He raised his hand to her and in that moment all she wanted to do was forget about being the future queen ruled by obligation, destined to be with a man she didn’t love.

She wanted this. Coye. Now.

Noely took his hand so he could pull her upright. She straddled him and gasped loudly when his fingers gripped her ass. The tingle of his roughened flesh against her felt so erotic. She slowly descended down over his rock hard cock. Their gazes held as he lifted his hips slightly, impaling her pussy with a swift thrust, then they were still, adjusting to the sensations of each other's bodies.

How was it that everything within her melded into him, became one with a man who had no clue what being with someone on such an intimate level meant?

"You are so tight, so wet." Coye leaned forward to taste her lips and murmured against her mouth, "Sweet." He clutched her hips, grinding her against him. "Fuck me, Noely."

She undulated against him, pumping her hips down hard along his throbbing cock and upward slowly, drawing out the sweet tension between them. "Yes!"

Each move she made, Coye mirrored. Each thrust was met with another hard, heart-pounding thrust. Sweat beaded at her forehead as she fell in love with the erotic sound of their bodies slapping together. The feel of his hands molding her ass, his lips on her throat, his cock sliding in and out of her cunt, was enough to make her scream.

Coye must have felt her release building as he doubled his thrusts, causing Noely to gasp. She felt it. Yes. The climb of her climax, the joining of lust, passion and sexual tension combined into one. She could feel it from the tips of her toes, spreading quickly through her limbs, and bursting into her heart. She didn't have time to react, only to feel as she screamed out his name.

"Noely!" He groaned, his come shooting deep into her pussy. He leaned his head against hers as they slumped back against the chaise. Neither said a word for a moment. He cradled her in his arms, his fingers trailing patterns against her back.

She had never felt sex so intensely or the wild heat that had coated her body. Noely shuddered and bolted upward. "I -- I've got to go." She shimmied into her clothes, not bothering to meet the questioning look on his handsome face. The delicious aftereffects of their lovemaking still traced her body with awareness. She quickly

buttoned her shirt, praying that Coye would just sit there and not say a word. When she felt him behind her, she closed her eyes.

"You're running from me again?"

"Don't be ridiculous," Noely replied. The words snapped out of her mouth harsher than she'd intended.

"Your anger won't erase what's happened here today." Coye whirled her around to face him. "No matter how much you try."

He was right. She was angry, not as much with him but herself. This would make the second time she'd given in to temptation -- to him! What kind of damn queen would she make? Her own selfish needs came before anything or anyone else, including the future of her race!

Guilt made tears shine in her eyes. She bit down on her lip, refusing to cry in front of Coye. "The only thing that happened today was that we had sex. Good sex. Nothing more, nothing less."

His eyebrows rose. "Sex?"

"Yes, a good fuck! Surely one interlude with me hasn't made you forget that sex is just sex."

"Noely, you --"

She brushed her finger against his lips. "Please, Coye. There is no need for promises we both know you don't care to make. This was... it is what it is. And seeing as you're a man known for your lusty appetite, I'm sure it won't be a problem for you to forget this ever happened. You'd be doing us both a favor."

Noely turned from him, pain burning her throat. Pain she hadn't known she could feel. The rejection she'd seen in his eyes had thrown her. Everything about Coye Rayven had surprised her.

She refused to think any more about him, or what had just transpired between them as she practically ran out, leaving him standing in her wake.

* * *

Coye was in a foul mood for the rest of the day. Stalking Noely and her team hadn't gained him one inch of satisfaction. His body hungered for her. And for the brief moments she'd actually looked into his eyes, he'd witnessed the same hunger, but he also saw pain.

He wanted to reach out to her and that shocked him. It had been a long time since he'd been connected to a woman. A Companion, no less. What the hell were the damn odds?

Centuries ago he'd believed in love and mates and Companions. He'd been such a fool. The scar on his back was reminder enough. Alannah had betrayed him to the notorious vampire hunter Van Atherton, bartering her freedom in exchange for Coye's life. Not that it had done her any good. Van Atherton had taken her life even as she betrayed Coye.

Coye balled his fists. Atherton had been the first and only man he'd ever killed. There was no glory in watching a monster take his last breath, no vindication for the love lost or the sense of betrayal he'd carried for centuries.

Once again he was captivated by a Companion. Only lust wasn't all that he was beginning to feel for Noely. He'd felt her own defenses wane as his cock had slipped in and out of her moist pussy. The taste of her was still on his tongue. She tempted him in more ways than he cared to admit. Tempted him to dream of things he had no business believing in.

He thought of Tara, knowing that what they had shared couldn't be compared to what he'd felt while being with Noely. She excited him, challenged him and made him believe in possibilities he had closed his mind to long ago.

Coye pounded his fist against his desk. He knew there were secrets she was keeping from him. He needed to know what they were, who she was. He'd witnessed the passion, her sassiness and her need. She'd come to the mansion intending to snare his brother. Maybe that's where the secrets lay and his answers would start.

He couldn't afford to jeopardize his family, the Manor or his life by believing in another woman who had her own agenda. Coye would find out what Noely wanted and he knew exactly how to do it.

* * *

"Your room, madam."

Noely gazed at the wizened butler, Mr. Crane. He assessed her as if he was trying to read her mind. "Thank you."

"You will let me know if you are in need of anything."

She felt goose bumps on her arms. "Of course." She watched as the older man moved away with the agility of someone a hundred years younger. "Mr. Crane?"

He turned back to face her. "Yes?"

Noely stepped toward him. "Is there something you want to ask me?"

His face was expressionless as he said, "I've been with the Rayven family for a long time, Ms. Lamont."

She nodded.

"I have devoted myself to them and I will not see harm come to Master Coye."

"I have no intention of hurting Coye or anyone else. I'm here to do a job and when it's done I will not be returning to the Scarlet Manor."

"Sometimes, Ms. Lamont, the heart knows not what the mouth speaks." He turned and walked away, leaving her baffled.

The thought of being able to hurt Coye was unimaginable. Primarily because the man seemed impenetrable. The lingering glow of their lovemaking had not left her after a long day's work. She was exhausted, yet the intense need to fuck Coye heightened the tension in every muscle. Her pussy pulsed as she recalled the feel of his thick cock gliding into her. He fit as if he were made specifically for her.

"No!" Noely shouted, slamming the door and leaning against it. Coye Rayven was not made for her. The Rites of Old would have known if he were. She was the one having trouble staying away from him and apparently he'd had the same problem. Several times through the day she'd felt him watching her, those wicked eyes studying

her every move. She hadn't been able to tell him to stop, seeing as he was the owner of the Manor and to do so in front of her crew would make her seem unprofessional.

Noely snorted. *What the hell was professional about screwing your client?*

She looked around the room. The warm honey and earthy tones were soothing. She was staying in what Mr. Crane had called a quieter section of the Manor, "away from the clientele," which didn't bother her. She needed peace and quiet. She walked over to the bed, sat down and inhaled deeply as she fell backwards.

How long could she go on ignoring Coye or the desire he'd stirred within her?

Sex. It was sex. That's what she'd told herself. That's what she wanted to believe, but she couldn't get Coye out of her mind.

The sound of footsteps in the hall brought her up on her elbows as she waited for the impending knock. None came. Instead a white envelope slid under the door.

Noely bolted up off the bed, walking over to the fancy gold-lettered envelope. She lifted it up, inhaling the scent of roses. An alarm went off in her head telling her not to open it, but curiosity won out. She opened the envelope and pulled out a single white card.

*You will be picked up within ten minutes by Helene
and whisked away to an evening of self-indulgence.*

Coye

Noely's heart sped up. She didn't have to do a damn thing. She could just stay in her room and ignore the knocking at her door, take a hot bath and go to sleep. Being anywhere near Coye would only end up one way, with her doing sexual gymnastics on his cock.

She placed the invitation on the bureau, wondering why her life couldn't be simple. Looking at her reflection, she saw the fear in her eyes. For the first time in her life, she was scared of having what she wanted most: Coye. The man had gotten under her skin. Having him came at a high cost. One she was already going to have to pay when she confronted her mother. Noely still had no idea how she would be able to

admit that lust had toppled obligation. The shame of that realization was evaporating as desire quickened in its wake. When he'd watched her earlier, she'd felt him and the raw energy he projected toward her. It was powerful and demanding and left no room for second guessing.

You could always leave. The idea made her smile. *That's right! You have choices.*

The knock at the door stopped her from internalizing any longer. Noely brushed a hand through her hair and opened the door. She faced a raven-haired woman whose blue eyes peered back at Noely.

"You must be, Noely." The other woman's gaze traveled over her slowly.

"Yes." She felt as if she were being sized up.

"It's nice to meet you. I'm Helene. I will be your female servant tonight."

"Hello... say what?"

Helene smiled. "I'm here to ensure that tonight your mind is relaxed and your body is at ease. Shall we get started?"

* * *

Hidden in a dark alcove adjacent to Noely's room, Coye smiled. He watched as Helene took her hand, leading her to the Jungle Room, where the large garden tub awaited her and so would he, when the time came. As a Deiwalker he could make himself invisible and watch Noely lose control. He followed the women silently. Noely might be a Companion, but she could not sense his presence. Coye found the reality of their current situation a powerful aphrodisiac.

They followed a candlelit pathway through the private sector of the Manor until they neared the single door on the left. Helene turned to Noely. "Are you ready?"

"Yes." The slight tremor in her voice made Coye grin. She was nervous, unsure of what to expect. So unlike the self-assured vixen she portrayed herself to be. Just the way he wanted her.

Helene opened the door and gestured Noely to go first. The look on her face was priceless as her mouth gaped open. The Jungle Room was filled with lush plants, a large pebbled path leading to a sunken oval bathtub in the center of the room. Ceiling fans

whirled slowly above them. The hypnotic sound of a running waterfall played in the background. Sex toys were displayed all around the room: a swing, a wedge, cuffs, massage oils and votive candles.

Another servant, male, stood at the foot of the tub, dressed in a tunic that displayed bronzed muscles and an engorged cock.

Coye watched as Noely's breathing hitched. She turned to Helene. "Ah, surely this is the wrong room."

"No, we're definitely in the right place. Come with me." Helene led her over to the tall stone-faced man. He looked like he'd have no trouble breaking either one of them in half.

"This is Eiron. Eiron, meet Noely, a guest of Master Coye's."

Eiron bowed his head but said nothing.

Helene turned to her. "Tonight will be for your pleasure -- be assured of that. Please turn around."

Noely did as the woman told her. Helene slowly maneuvered her shoes off her feet, and stood to unzip the slim-fitting skirt, her hands tracing over the lush swell of Noely's ass. Next the female servant moved in front of Noely to remove her stockings. Her lips tasted her thighs with light butterfly kisses.

Coye could see the confused lust in Noely's eyes. She tried not to give in to her emotions or Helene. *Very good, Helene. Take off her thong.*

The servant pulled down her silky underwear, inhaling her scent as she did, pressing her mouth against the damp fabric. "Mmmm."

Noely moaned, and her back arched despite herself. "Ah!"

Helene leaned back, looking up at her. "I can see why Master Coye likes you. Isn't she beautiful, Eiron?"

He nodded.

Helene stood to unbutton her shirt. Her eyes met Noely's. "I can tell you are a passionate woman. Tonight, we will be the ones to display that passion before your eyes." In seconds, Noely stood completely naked. Helene led her to a large chaise

placed before them. She sat down quietly, saying nothing but her eyes took in the scene before her. Her body language spoke of nervous energy like a starving, caged animal being taunted with food.

Coye felt his cock harden. She was beautiful. He witnessed the lust in Eiron's eyes and felt the prick of jealousy erupt through his mind. He directed his thoughts to the male servant. *Tonight, no one will be touching Noely. He balled his fists. But me.*

Eiron nodded, the lust in his eyes remaining, but now he directed his gaze to Helene.

Coye turned back to Noely. He'd never wanted to possess a woman as much as he wanted with her. He'd have to wait. He wanted to show her what it was to be totally captivated by lust, to give in to it. To claim it.

You both know what you are to do.

Helene nodded her head and walked over to the male servant. She shed her clothes and Eiron took off his tunic. Helene turned to Noely, smiled. "Tonight it is our mission to bring you passion in every sense." She turned back to the man in front of her just as he swept her up in his arms and placed her on the wedge.

Eiron bent down to kiss Helene's lips, gently at first and then with urgency. It was as if they couldn't get enough of the taste of one another. His hands molded her breasts. Hers smoothed down his back to clutch his firm ass, urging him forward. The passionate sounds of their fuck session echoed around the room.

Coye grinned. *Yes. Watch, sweet Noely. Soon you and I will be doing that and more.*

Chapter Six

Noely batted her eyes, thinking this couldn't be happening. Surely she wasn't watching two individuals get it on right in front of her. Her heart pounded. She couldn't bring herself to look away as Eiron tongued Helene's erect nipples and teased them with his teeth. She arched off the wedge, and then wrapped her legs around his waist.

Noely felt the tight bud of her clit spring to arousal. Her pussy throbbed with need. She gripped the side of the chaise, her nails digging into the soft fabric.

Eiron widened Helene's legs to sample her cunt. Her fingers scraped his back as she mewed and bucked upwards. His head bobbed slowly, his tongue taking generous laps at Helene's pussy. Helene called out his name and her hands cradled his head as he delved faster.

Noely never thought she'd get so turned on by watching someone else having sex, but the scene before her was erotic in all its glory. Lush and untamed. It was almost as if she could feel what Helene felt. Noely spread her legs, the tension between them too intense. She pressed her fingers to her dripping cunt, needing to feel, to enjoy the pleasure that the female servant did. She massaged her clit in circles. Her head dipped back. "Oh!"

She turned to watch the couple as Eiron straightened and rewrapped Helene's legs around his waist. He pulled her downward to him and plunged his hard cock into her pussy with one sound thrust.

Noely watched the other woman's face as her mouth formed an O. No sound erupted as Eiron fucked her in a slow grind. Their rhythm matched the slow movement of her own fingers as she dipped deeper into her pussy. Masturbation didn't even make a good substitute after having Coye inside of her.

"Mmm," Noely moaned. Her focus stayed on Eiron, wishing it were Coye, needing his dick inside of her, claiming her. She was so close to coming. So close.

Eiron quickened his thrusts. A guttural sound tore from deep in his throat as his balls slapped against Helene. The sound was one of the sweetest Noely had heard. She cried out, closing her eyes, and that's when she felt him.

Coye!

She opened her eyes and licked her lips at the delicious picture he presented before her. He wore a tunic similar to Eiron's, except what the other man lacked in length Coye made up for, and every inch of his cock looked tasty.

Noely bit down on her lip, to keep from touching him. She didn't pause as she kept finger fucking her pussy. "You... like?"

"I like very much." His deep voice was rough with arousal. "You look absolutely gorgeous tonight." He knelt down beside her. "I like watching you play with yourself."

"Mmmm." Noely thrust upward and tossed him a grin. "But not as much as you like fucking me."

"No contest." Coye smiled. He turned to watch Eiron plunging his cock into Helene's backside. "Watch."

The single word was not a suggestion but a demand. Noely turned her head to watch the amorous couple. Coye leaned closer to her ear. "Is that what you want?"

She felt her muscles clench. The intensity of his nearness, the sounds of Helene and Eiron fucking like jackrabbits, the ceiling fans swirling above her and the lush rhythm of the waterfall background music all swirled into one. Her pussy convulsed against the quickened thrusts of her fingers. The orgasm made her arch her back "Yes! God, yes!"

Coye's mouth replaced her fingers. He tasted her with long swipes of his tongue, feasted on her until she clung to the chaise with her legs over his shoulders. She no longer cared who was in the room as long as he stayed with her. Her second orgasm came with a ferocious force that sent her over the precipice of submission.

Coye loved the feel of her pussy melding to his touch. *His pussy.* The words burned into the back of his mind. He looked up to see Noely's head thrown back, her lips slightly parted. He didn't want to waste another second. Another minute would be too long, if he couldn't have her to himself.

Out! Coye told Helene and Eiron who were just finishing up their heated tryst. They both nodded, grabbed their clothes and took a back exit out of the room. He turned his attention back to the woman who drove him insane. He didn't know why he couldn't get her out of his mind.

Did he even want to?

His gaze met hers. The need in those brown depths was answer enough for him. "You ignored me for most of the day."

"Ahh. And your ego can't take that." Noely bit her lip, trying to hide the smile on her lips. "You made it nearly impossible, especially since you followed me around."

"It's my house." He frowned. "Never do it again."

Her eyebrows quirked. "Excuse me? I don't belong to --"

Coye's mouth covered hers in a bone-crushing kiss. His tongue mated with hers as he pulled her into his arms. He cupped her face in his palms, in awe of her smooth dark skin and how he couldn't stop touching her. He picked her up from the chaise and walked them over to the oval tub, dumping her in.

"You bastard!" Noely shrieked.

"I've been called worse." Coye chuckled, watching the shocked expression on her face. He discarded his clothes and climbed into the tub, pulling her against him.

She tried to kick him but he was quicker, slipping his leg in between hers. "Uh-uh, now that's not nice. After all I've done for you." His eyes simmered with heat as he pulled one of her arms behind her back, flattening her breasts against his chest. He stifled a groan.

"What you've done for me is corrupted my life."

He laughed. "Well, I couldn't agree more." He backed her up against the side of the tub, water sluicing over their bodies. "You see, Ms. Lamont, I can't seem to stop wanting you." He angled his head at her. "Would you happen to know why that is?"

"Because you're a horny devil."

He peered into her eyes. "No, I was thinking something a little more traditional, like something to do with prophecies."

She went still. "What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about who you really are and why you came to the Manor in the first place."

"You know why I came..."

Coye watched her carefully. "Yes, you were after Cyrus, but instead you got me. It must have complicated your little ruse."

Noely pushed at his chest. "Let go of me, dammit."

"I don't think so." He tightened his hold on her. "You know what I've noticed?"

She continued to struggle in his arms. "No, but I'm sure you're going to tell me."

"That you have secrets and you haven't divulged one of them."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"I think you do," Coye answered.

She stopped fighting him and stared. "Fine, you want to know my secrets?"

"Yes."

"You've fucked up my life. From the moment you walked into that office you threw off my plans. And now I'm stuck, wanting the wrong man. I can't stop thinking about you, and if I'm not thinking about you, I want you, and if I'm not wanting you, I want to strangle you!"

Coye couldn't help but smile at her admission. "Really?"

"Yes! Damn you!" She covered his mouth with hers, her palm pulling him closer.

Passion reignited quickly, imprisoning them both in its tight web of heat. Coye moaned as Noely's hot lips trailed a path down his throat. His fingers gripped her forearms. She continued with her taunting, planting soft kisses over his pecs, down his

ribcage, his navel until she knelt in front of him. His cock jutted outward proudly, waiting for the ultimate kiss he longed for.

“Let me show you what you do to me.”

Before Coye could brace himself, a wicked heat spread through his limbs. He gripped the side of the tub as Noely sucked his cock, licking him from the head to the base and then sucked again. “Yessssss! Take all of me!”

And she did. Each time, taking more and more of his rigid flesh into her mouth. Swirling, teasing and suckling until Coye swore he felt the room spin. His finger pulled several strands of her hair as she worked him over.

“Noely. Yes, love. Yes!”

Spirals of white-hot pleasure shot from his body and collided in his cock as he ground his hips, making her take his flesh deeper into the back of her throat. He lost control as he grunted out loud. He felt the blunt force of his climax surge forth as he came long and hard. Noely didn’t stop until she’d licked up every drop of his essence.

Coye pulled her to her feet, lifting her until her sex was planted right above his cock. He didn’t give her a moment to recover as he plunged into her cunt. Hard. Urgent and unforgiving. With each thrust he pushed her deeper, faster into a sexual abyss neither would overcome.

“Give it to me!” Noely pumped her hips against his pelvis. The sound of their bodies slapping against the water and the slow hum of the ceiling fans all added to the magic of their lovemaking.

“I’ll give you all you can handle,” he said between clenched teeth as he plummeted into her tight pussy over and over again. Faster and faster. She was like no other woman; he knew that and this moment proved it. Her pleasure was all he craved; hearing his name being screamed out of those luscious lips would be his greatest reward.

Coye felt her climax building, felt her pussy tightening against him. The sensation was too much, so intense and so good. Just as Noely came, he felt his own

body tense and released his seed deep into her warm cunt. They shuddered from the sheer force of their union, clutching each other like their next breath.

He just hoped that whatever secrets she kept from him wouldn't be the start of his demise.

* * *

No one ever said he had to play fair. In fact, no one would say that about him, Coye reasoned as he soared through the night. After taking a leisurely bath with him in the tub, Noely had remained quiet and had quickly removed herself from his presence.

Coye floated through the night sky, willing the blackness of his mood to be released among the stars. He'd needed to think. The emotions swirling inside of him made the feat impossible. He couldn't get Noely out of his mind. Whenever he closed his eyes, she was there. And if she wasn't around, he wanted her with him. The implication of where this was headed made him dizzy.

Is this what Cyrus felt with Ashlyn?

Could he possibly be in love with Noely? Coye flapped his wings. *No! Absolutely not!* Then why couldn't he stop wanting her? He had been jealous of the way Eiron had looked at her and would have raised hell had he even thought of touching her. He needed answers and seduction would not be the way to get them as he'd thought earlier. No, their time in the Jungle Room had only proven that their insatiable need to fuck each other senseless was untamable and only grew.

The wind whirled around his wings. He saw the light illuminating the window to Noely's room. He flew to the windowsill and peered inside. She'd left it cracked open.

He entered the room soundlessly and watched her sleep, her breathing even and uninterrupted. His eyes caught the rhythm of her pulse and wondered if her lifeblood would be as decadent as the rest of her. He was aching to taste her, claim her, and could count all the ways under the moon why his spying into Noely Lamont's room was indecent. He couldn't bring himself to give a damn about any of them.

He'd visualized her undressing and sliding her nude, hot body underneath her sheets, after she'd taken the luscious bubble bath earlier. Those legs, her ass and the soft curls covering her sex nearly drove him insane with lust.

Coye told himself that he was doing this to protect his family, not to mention avoiding a repeat of history.

He would stay long enough to get the information he sought from Noely and then leave. He hadn't used this side of his power in decades, not to this extent. He looked down at her pretty face. Would she really do him harm? He remembered all too well another pretty face and the promises of love that had led to him almost being carved open.

Still it shocked him at how in tune he was to her. He'd felt her pulling him into her dreams. She was dreaming of him. Coye could see her thinking of their time in the Jungle Room. It did his mind good to know that her restlessness and the twisted bed sheets confirmed that she was as frustrated as he was. He forced his body not to react and concentrated on the information he sought to retrieve as he searched her mind.

"Christ!" he muttered, looking away from her. The covers slid down below her beautiful breasts and he clutched his hands into fists to keep from pinching the plump black nipples. She was exquisite. Her brown hair covered her satin pillows, her beautiful mocha skin contrasted against the satin sheets.

And he was drawn to her, despite his normal reserved nature when it came to the opposite sex. He waited them out, knowing they'd cave in to him. Noely made him wonder if that day would ever come. She might be a Companion, but all he could see was pure woman filled with a passion he wanted to explore. She intrigued him more than he wanted to admit.

None of that would matter if she was out to destroy him.

He closed his eyes, moving past the erotic images, thoughts of lust and passion. And then he felt it, the fear. A sense of sadness and remorse or guilt.

But why?

When he saw the image at the cornerstone of his mind's eye, Coye felt a renewed anger sweep through his body. The crown being placed on Noely's head by the Rites of Old.

Noely was the queen of the Companions!

The realization made Coye lose connection to her immediately. He felt drained as if all his energy had been sucked dry. His eyes burned into the woman on the bed.

She'd lied to him!

You fool! You knew what she wanted from the moment you confronted her in the office! And still... he hadn't listened to his instincts. He'd accomplished the one thing he'd said he would never do. He'd fallen for a Companion. Not just any Companion, but the future queen who would stop at nothing to get what she wanted as long as she got it. She'd played on the Rites of Old's foresight to seduce a Deiwalker, only she'd gotten the wrong one! Just how far would she have gone? And would she have bided her time before ensnarling his brother?

Coye felt the bitterness rise up within him. She was no better than Alannah. He turned to the window, refusing to stay another moment in her presence.

He watched at the window as she shifted in her bed. He quickly metamorphosed, flying out of the window, his long wings flapping against the black night air, wishing he could be swallowed up by it.

Anything to forget the crushing weight on his chest.

Chapter Seven

Noely woke up the next morning feeling like her head was about to burst. She took a long shower, dressed. It was only as she went to open the door to get her crew ready for the day's work that she felt her mother's presence.

"Mother?" She closed the door, feeling the sickness and its power. Her mother's energy was almost completely gone. Noely felt the tears glide from her eyes. She walked to the bed.

"Yes, daughter. It is I," Damara's weakened voice announced. "I'm sorry... I haven't much time."

"I... there's so much I need to say to you." Noely bit her tongue.

Damara coughed. "I know, my darling. I know."

"Mother, I've disappointed you and our people. Everyone. I don't know where to begin. Coye Rayven --"

"You care deeply about him?"

Noely shook her head. "Mother, it will not make a difference what I feel for him when he is not the one I am fated to."

"You didn't answer my question."

The time she'd spent with Coye came flooding back. His touch. His smile. His loyalty to his family and the way he made her feel when she was with him. Noely exhaled. "Yes. Yes, I do. But Mother, I never intended for all of this to happen. He makes me feel things that I never thought I would."

"One never does when it comes to finding your mate."

Noely's body tingled. "W-what?"

"Cyrus was never your intended. It was Coye all along."

"No. But the Rites of Old..."

"Lied. I knew how important it was for you to find the one you've been looking for without the restraint of obligation. Coye is that man. He is the Deiwalker to which you are fated to be with."

Noely felt sick to her stomach. "Mother, none of that matters now."

"Of course it does. You are about to become queen."

She wiped angrily at the tears rolling down her cheeks. "I don't want to be queen. I don't want to let you go. Please, don't go."

Damara coughed. "I will always be with you, Noely. You will make a fine queen. You are already a beautiful woman. All will be well with you and our people."

Noely cried. She felt her mother's last remaining strength slip. "Mother --"

"I will never be far from you. I love you."

"I love you, too."

Noely felt her mother's presence fade away. Her mother had been wrong; her world would never be the same.

* * *

Coye felt her presence before she entered the room. He didn't turn away from the window. "I was wondering when you would make your appearance."

Noely closed the door. "You were right when you said I had secrets."

He whirled around, glaring at her. He tried not to take in her lush beauty or the way her body filled out the blue jeans and black cotton T-shirt. Her hair was pulled back, making her appear younger. It was the pain in her eyes that brought him to her side, yet he made no attempt to touch her, afraid if he did, he wouldn't be able to stop. He could feel her unease, but also a deep sadness. He recognized guilt when he saw it.

"Let me guess. You've come to tell me that you're the queen of Companions and that you still plan to seduce Cyrus? Am I fucking close?"

Noely's eyes widened. "What? How do you know about me being queen?"

"I read your mind last night while you slept."

"You did what! You had no right. How dare you."

"No, how dare you think that you could fuck me and confuse me for your fool. You had your secrets, Noely, for whatever your reasons, but you will not put me or my family in danger. I've been misguided by one Companion in my lifetime and I will not do it again." Coye grabbed her by the wrist, hauling her toward him. He pressed his lips against hers and then broke away. "Tell me, was I as good as you dreamed of?"

"You bastard!" Noely barked.

"So you keep telling me."

Tears shone in her eyes. "The only good thing is that I didn't waste any time believing for one second what I was told about you being my mate."

His eyes gleamed. "Is that the story now?"

Noely shook her head. "I can see that no matter what I say to you, you won't believe me. I've just lost the one person in the world who knew what I was about. I don't give a damn what you think of me."

"Good, then you'll see that you have your belongings packed and out of my house." He glared down at her. "Your services are no longer needed, Ms. Lamont."

She spun on her heels and walked out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

Coye took two steps toward the door and stopped. It was the second time that he'd watched this woman walk away from him. Why was it that this time, the pain registered on a deeper level than he'd thought imaginable?

He wanted Noely to pay for her deception, but felt like he was the one paying the ultimate price. Suddenly his world felt a lot colder than when she'd been in his arms.

* * *

A week later, Cyrus walked into the office to find his twin looking like he'd been struck by a silver bullet.

"You look like death warmed over."

Coye clutched the glass of chilled blood in his hand, glanced up at him. "Brother."

"I heard you fired Ms. Lamont." Cyrus sat down in a chair, facing the haggard face that resembled the fun-loving, wicked sibling he remembered.

He grunted. "No one in this house can keep a blasted secret. However, Ms. Lamont, Noely, she was quite good at it. Very good."

"I tried to warn you of the prophecy."

Coye frowned. "You didn't tell me that I would fall in love with her."

Cyrus broke out into a full belly laugh. Once he could contain himself he replied, "In love? You? Are you feeling sick? She's a Companion or did you forget?"

"I know who and what she is," he barked. "I've tried to get her out of my mind, but I can't."

"Maybe because you aren't supposed to."

The truth burned in his mind. "You're not helping." Coye cut his eyes to him. "She came here with the mission of seducing you. Only it turns out the Rites of Old told a white lie."

"You're her mate?" Cyrus' eyes widened. "How did you handle that?"

"How the hell do you think?"

"Good God, man. You can't keep holding on to Alannah."

Coye grunted. "Aren't you the pot calling the kettle black? Weren't you the one holding on to your piece of the past?"

Cyrus nodded. "Yes, and I almost let Ashlyn walk out of my life for it. Are you truly prepared to do the same with Noely?" He stood and began to walk out of the room. "Thanks for not burning the place down."

"Cyrus?"

He turned back around. "Yeah?"

"How did you know that it was love?" Coye asked.

"Brother, have you looked at yourself lately? You could use a shower too."

Long after his brother's visit, Coye found himself clean, dressed and feeling like a new man. There was only one thing he could do.

Find Noely.

Coye stopped dead in his tracks as the object of his search stood at his door. Everything within him responded to Noely and the red dress she wore. Her hair was pinned up in some fancy upsweep. The black heels made her legs go on for days. His cock hardened. He couldn't take his eyes off of her.

"I-I was on my way to find you."

Noely walked further into the office. "Looks like I've saved you the trouble."

Coye watched her glide across the floor. His cold heart swelled with love. "I'm sorry to hear about your mother."

She looked down at her hands and then back to meet his gaze. "Thank you. What were you coming to see me about?"

He couldn't take a moment longer. He needed to touch her. He reached out to cup her cheek with his roughened palm. "This."

Coye pulled her into his arms gently. His lips pressed against hers in a soft kiss that turned more possessive within seconds. She clung to him and he to her as his hands splayed across her back, flattening her curves against him.

He pulled away. "I was a fool."

"Yes, yes you were."

"I gave in to love centuries ago and it almost cost me my life. She was a Companion too."

Noely angled her head at him. "So you thought I would do the same?"

"I know now that's not you." His eyes sought hers. "I need you in my life. I need to love again. To remember what it felt like to be loved again. You are my mate and I want to be yours."

She wrapped her arms around his neck. "What makes you think I'll have you?"

"Because I'll follow you to the ends of the earth if you deny me the pleasure of making you mine." He picked her up and led her to the stairs.

"Ah, where are you taking me?" Noely squealed.

"To my bed." He grinned. "We've never managed to make love there."

"I haven't said yes to you, Coye."

"Oh, but baby, when I get done fucking you --" he leaned in to kiss her lips, "-- again and again... you will."

Noely smiled. "That might take a long time."

"We've got forever."

He continued to his room and practically kicked the door down. He placed her on the bed. His eyes feasted on the red dress as he lifted the hem, pleased to find her pantyless.

Coye knelt down in front of her, spreading her legs. His hands massaged her thighs. "Why did you come back?" He leaned forward, brushing her pussy with his lips.

"For this." Noely arched her back, leaning on her elbows.

He licked her clit once. And then twice. And paused. "Is that all?"

"Oooh! And that."

He nipped her clit and lapped at her pussy hungrily and paused. "And?"

Noely chuckled, raising up to meet his questioning gaze. "I love you, Coye. I came back to have you prove to me it wasn't a mistake. I am the queen, you know."

"Hmmn," he grinned, "I'll get started with that right now, your majesty. You just tell me... when to stop."

"Never!" Noely murmured as she let the power of their love and passion overtake her. She'd never been so tempted to abide by the rules of tradition until this moment.

Until she'd found him. Her mate. Her love.

Anisa Damien

Anisa Damien writes African-American and multicultural erotic romance. She's been immersed in the wonderful world of romantic fiction and creating characters known for their diversity for years or since grade school (where she sneaked romance books up to her bedroom and skipped to the "good" parts!) But who's telling? She blames her obsession with heroes on Rhett Butler.

Anisa resides just outside of Chicago with her family where she can be found jotting notes for her character sketches, people watching or catching up on *CSI*.