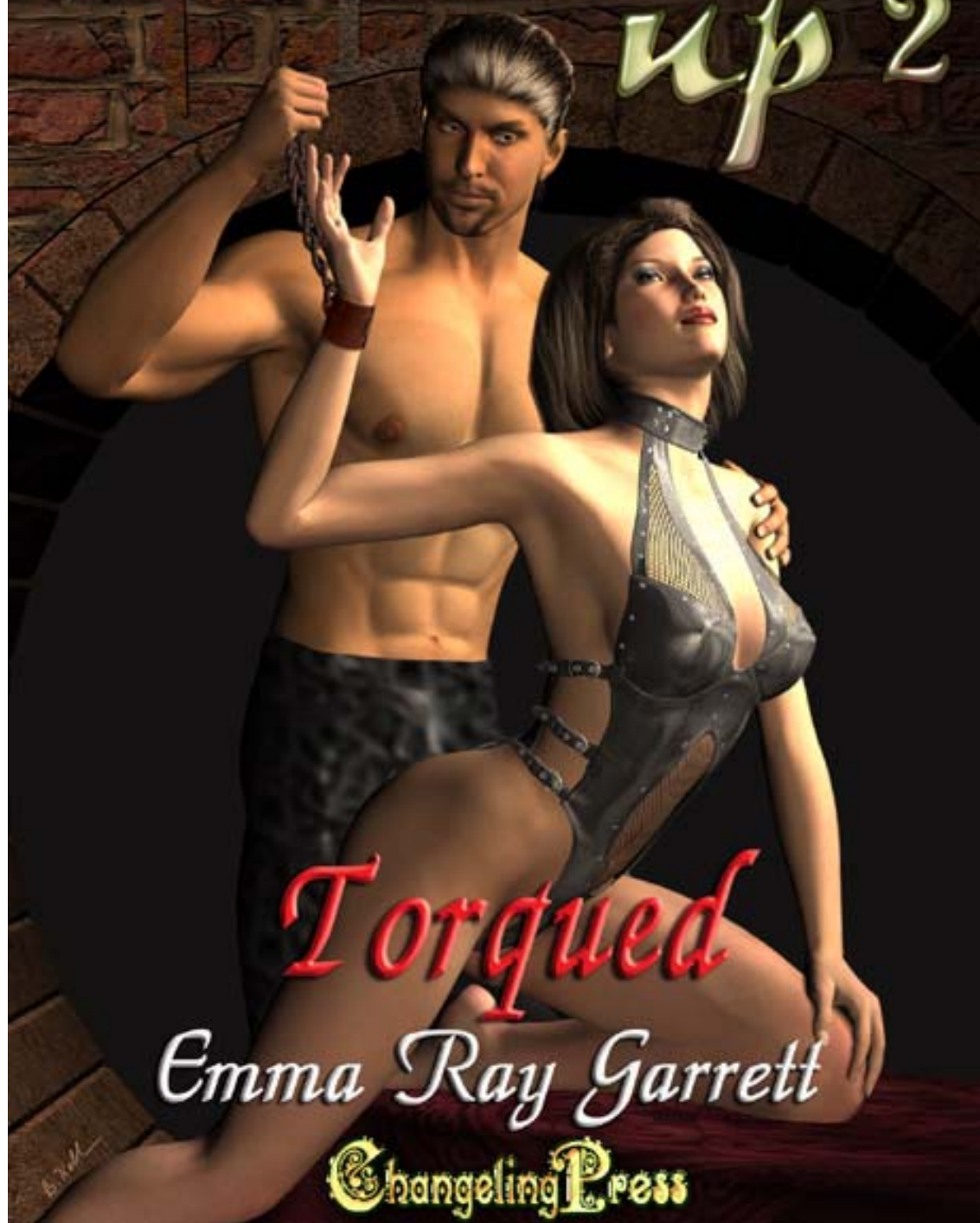


*all wrapped
up 2*



Torqued
Emma Ray Garrett

Changeling Press

All Wrapped Up 2: Torqued

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All Wrapped Up 2: Torqued

Emma Ray Garrett

Pru Gordon has spent the last ten years under the dominant rule of the Relic Group, learning and honing her unique telepathic skills. Now that she's graduated from the order and is a fully licensed Reliant Agent, she is free to shed the ill-fitting skin of a submissive and be the alpha she must to succeed at Ovelia -- the hottest BDSM club in Atlanta. Being a dominatrix gives her perfect access to the Nightside she polices. And it lets her fulfill her fantasies at the same time. It's the perfect life.

Until the night she meets Gage Mills and Ro Thomas. The two vampires' cadres have been at war for centuries, putting the safety of both humans and the Nightside in jeopardy. For that reason, and many more, they've been at the top of the Relic Group's Most Wanted for fifty years. Both men are definitely top-dog types, so Pru's heart beats hard when HQ assigns her the job of Collaring them. Despite the tiny voice in her mind suggesting she might be in over her head, Pru is determined to close the case.

When two of the darkest predators around meet up with the best Controller alive, things are bound to get messy... Just what the Domme ordered.

Chapter 1

The sleek glide of vinyl over hairless flesh brought a smile to Pru's lips. God, it felt good to dress the way she wanted. After ten years in training with the Relic Group, putting on a potato sack would feel good, as long as she chose it.

Pru pulled the zipper of her thigh high boot up before stomping both shoes against the floor and tugging at their tops. Legs properly ensconced, she turned around to look at herself in the mirror.

"Very nice."

With one last glance, Pru left her apartment, slapping her palm against the identpad to lock the door. As she made her way to the parking garage, she couldn't help but smile again. She worked at the hottest BDSM club in the country, Ovelia. Situated on the outskirts of downtown Atlanta, the club drew customers not just from the city, or the state, but also from all over the world.

Her work at Ovelia paid very well, and as she approached her prize possession, she couldn't help but purr with satisfaction. The hovercycle was unbelievably expensive, but worth every dime.

She slid her body onto the low-slung vehicle, starting the antigrav field and lifting off in the same smooth motion. The ride to her job took less than ten minutes, but it was ten minutes spent in complete joy. She pulled into the parking garage and powered down the cycle. With one last look, she made her way to the employee entrance.

Pru waved to Bertie, the lupercan bouncer, on her way in. He was wolfed-out, nothing odd about that, but the bright pink collar was new.

"Nice accessory, Bertie." She smiled when he preened at her comment.

"Thanks, Pru. I wanted to try something different."

“It looks good. What’s George think?”

The heavily muscled, hair-covered lupercan crossed his arms. “He likes me in pink.”

Pru laughed as she made her way through the steadily filling club toward her personal room. She knew Bertie liked pink too. She entered her well-appointed room, sighing contentedly at the clean, simple lines of the space. Antonio decorated with panache, careful to balance ambiance with functionality.

A simple queen-sized bed stood alone on the back wall. There was a small sitting area in front of a replica of a medieval rack. Pru didn’t use the device very often, but she found the simplicity of the torturous contraption appealing. The wall nearest the door held chains, the full complement of her whip collection, as well as miscellaneous paraphernalia she used to ply her trade.

She trailed her fingers over the whips, the supple leather cool and smooth beneath her hand. Her blood warmed as she thought about the night to come. Antonio no doubt had her booked. If this were any other job, she might have been grumbling. Instead, her clit swelled between her legs and her breasts grew heavy.

She turned to the bed, mussing the covers a bit for effect. It was time for her to check in with Antonio and get her schedule for the night. Before she left the room, she opened up the camouflaged safe and put away her things. She shifted a pair of furred cuffs out of the way to make room for her handbag and a thought tickled her senses.

“Another set of manacles might come in handy.” With a wicked grin, she shut the safe. A small control pad rested on her lingerie dresser. With a little giggle, she punched a few numbers on the remote. The wall panel between her whips and one set of chains recessed and rotated before sliding back into place with another set of cuffs and chains anchored to it.

She dropped the controller on the bed and headed out into the club. Time to go to work.

Chapter 2

The loud, body-thrumming beat of Ovelia's house music pulsed through the crowd of dancers as Pru made her way to Antonio's office behind the bar. Each rhythmic throb carried waves of thoughts, and though she wasn't an empath, the guests' emotions were easy to feel. Lust, hunger, desperation, rage created a seductive counterpoint to the music. Pru was long past the need for active mental shielding against picking up unwanted thoughts, but on nights like this, her instincts suggested she reinforce her protection to preserve her sanity.

Weaving through the closely packed bodies, Pru finally made her way to the massive oblong bar. Bertie's partner and the club's head bartender, George, nodded to her as she ducked beneath the bar top. She flashed him a grin before landing the flat of her hand against the identspad above the sink. The door to Antonio's office popped open. Thankfully, Ovelia's owner liked quiet in his sanctuary. As soon as the door closed behind her, the clamor from outside ceased.

"Pru, babe!" Her boss grinned broadly and bussed a quick kiss over each of her cheeks.

"Hey, boss man. Who am I doing tonight?" He laughed, then tsked her, but Pru just cocked a brow.

"Oh, Prudence, you are so hard." With a wink, he picked up a personal data pad from the desk and passed it to her.

Pru glanced at the schedule, then back to Antonio. The man was a hot, hunky slice of Mediterranean beefcake. He had a quick smile and a slow temper, and a body she'd love to work over. Pru had felt a tingle of desire the first time they'd met, but as soon as he'd walked toward her, she knew she didn't have a chance.

Antonio loved men as much as Pru did. In fact, they'd spent several lunches at the nearby sidewalk café appreciating the view and comparing notes. He wasn't into her in a sexual way, and after ten years with the Relic Group, Prudence was glad of it. They were fast friends and terrific business partners and neither of them would want it any other way.

"Booked solid. At least I'll be busy."

"Are you ever not?" Tony grinned. "All of them are regulars of yours too. It'll be an easy night."

"As easy as they come. Thanks, babe, I'll see you later." She curled her fingers around the data pad, wagging the digits of her free hand in parting.

Returning to the bar jarred her senses. She waved at George before slipping beneath the bar and heading back toward her room. When the thickness of the crowd had engulfed her, the DJ changed up the music and the group surged, knocking Pru off balance. She stumbled, trying to right herself, but another heave of bodies slammed her into a very hard, very male chest.

Strong hands clasped her shoulders and Pru was grateful. She wrapped her free hand around one of the arms and pulled herself upright. She looked up, and up, into a very sexy pair of distinct hazel eyes. *Holy shit, this can't be who I think it is.*

Thankfully, the sea of bodies writhed about them, jostling Pru and the man, creating the perfect opportunity for her to conceal her reaction and break eye contact. With care, she pulled away from him and pushed her way to the back of the crowd. *Fuck, I wanted an assignment with teeth. I certainly didn't mean it literally or without warning.*

"Are you all right?"

His voice sounded next to her ear and Pru fought the urge to spin around in surprise. Instead, she slowly turned on her heels and gave the man a cool look. "Yes, I am. Thank you." She turned back, dismissively, and heard him growl. Pru didn't even twitch in reaction. She simply put one foot in front of the other, walking away.

A strong hand grabbed her biceps, jerking her to a halt. Pru pursed her lips and swiveled her head to glare at the fingers biting into her skin. "Remove your hand or I'll

remove it for you." She narrowed her eyes, looking up into her rescuer cum pursuer's face.

His breath-taking face darkened with anger. "You need to learn some manners."

Pru gave a hard laugh. "And you need to learn not every woman is the submissive type." She jerked her arm from his grip.

"So you know who I am, then." He crossed his arms over his chest.

"I've seen you with the subs. To each his own, but that's just not my style. And I get paid very well to refine my style each and every night."

The man lifted an eyebrow. "Are you Calista?"

Pru smiled darkly. "No." Before he could ask her anything else, she walked away. He didn't follow.

* * *

Pru's heart didn't just pound in her chest as she slammed the door to her room. It banged and clanged around her rib cage so hard, so fast, her equilibrium went to hell. She staggered to the bed and collapsed on it, covering her face with her forearm, trying to get her bearings.

"Shit, fuck, shit, shit, fuck." Pru rolled to her belly and her eyes caught a glimpse of silver. She looked at her hand; her fingers curled tightly around the data pad. "Shit!" She had about ten minutes before her first appointment. She'd just run into a man who had avoided and eluded every attempt the Group had made to make contact.

Galbraith Millesinger, aka Gage Mills. Master Vampire of the Hades Cadre. Pru knew he visited the club, but despite her implication to him, she'd never seen him there before. His reasons for visiting were quite the fodder for regular guests, though, and she was very familiar with his Relic Group profile.

The Group had a half dozen data cards filled with his background, associations, and business information. Mills was a powerful man in the human world. When his cadre had gone to war, about fifty years ago, the Group had tried to intervene. They'd attempted a truce summit, offered mediation, even tried bribery, but neither side would

back down. As a last resort to keep the Nightside safe, they'd finally marked Mills and his enemy combatant for Collaring. A forced mediation was the only thing left to try.

The problem was, the Group couldn't charge into Mills' home or business and take him by force. They weren't set up that way. The Relic Group and their network of Reliant Agents operated in secrecy, hiding from the entire world, not just humanity.

Since the Group couldn't call Mills up and ask him in, they'd tried sending one Controller, then a pair of Controllers, to bring him in, but he was too well protected. No one had been able to get close to him. He was elusive and careful, so the Group was forced to wait.

Pru had told her Agent in Charge, Robert Levaton, what she'd heard about Mills' visits as soon as she had the information. She'd hoped the Group would have been more interested, but the AIC had informed her that unless she had more to go on, he wouldn't sanction her for the assignment. She couldn't set up a trap or even surveillance equipment to try to track Mills without his approval. But now that she'd seen him, touched him, she faced a crisis of conscience with no time to think it over.

If she verified Mills' presence at the club, Levaton would sanction a more experienced Controller to stake out the club. While it made sense on some level, preventing Pru from accidentally revealing her Agent status to her co-workers, she hated the idea. She wanted this case, partly for pride, but more to really test her abilities, to prove to herself she could Collar someone without giving in to her darker interests.

However, if she didn't report her findings to him, she'd be breaking about twenty Group regulations and risking her job at best, her life at worst.

"Fuck." Unable to address the situation at hand, Pru took a deep breath and made ready for her first client.

She'd put all her frustration, her irritation, to good use tonight. Her appointments would revel in her precise dominance and she'd be able to clear her head.

A soft knock sounded on her door. "Enter." Pru sat perched on the edge of the bed, one leg crossed over the other, swinging her foot slightly.

The door opened and one of her oldest clients entered. "Mistress Prudence." The phrase was the only thing she allowed her clients to say in greeting.

"Good evening, Leo." Pru didn't move, watching with disinterest as Leo shut the door behind him.

She took in every inch of his appearance, from the perfectly barbered hair, down the expensive suit, to the custom Italian loafers. At twenty-eight, Leo was the rising star of the stock market and he looked very much the wealthy, powerful man.

She didn't have to tell him what to do next. With his head down in deference, his gaze glued to the floor, Leo stripped off his clothes. He folded them neatly, then knelt to set the clothing atop his shoes next to the door. From his knees, he dropped to his belly, face and body held mere centimeters above the tile as he slowly crawled to the bed.

Pru stood and waited for Leo to approach. When he was within reach, she lifted her right foot and pressed her long, stiletto heel into the hard muscle at the top of his shoulder. He didn't hiss or moan, but his body shuddered. This was one of Leo's fetishes and Pru enjoyed rewarding him with it.

"Should I punish you, Leo?"

"Yes, Mistress. Punish me." His voice was low, almost a whisper.

Pru frowned. "Leo, did you just give me an order?"

"I didn't mean to, Mistress."

"Leo, Leo. Who is in charge in this room?" Pru removed her heel from his shoulder and he whimpered.

He wanted punishment, but Mistress Prudence didn't give her submissives what they wanted, until she felt they earned it. Topping from the bottom was not something Prudence allowed, though she knew some dominants did. Pru wasn't the type to judge others. It made no difference to her how other Doms and Dommes handled their relations.

"You are, Mistress."

"And who decides if punishment is needed?"

"You do, Mistress."

"Yet you disobey my rules, Leo, trying to force me into punishment."

Pru moved to the sitting area and took a chair. She opened the single drawer in the nearby end table and withdrew a small dildo. Tonight, Leo was going to suffer delayed gratification.

"Come to me, Leo." Prudence snapped her fingers and the lithe, toned man began crawling to her. When he was at her feet once more, she leaned forward and combed her fingers through his hair. "Show me your cock."

Leo raised up on his knees, his long, thick cock bobbing in front of him. Pru murmured her displeasure. None of her long-term clients, like Leo, were allowed to show their arousal without her permission. With a hum of irritation, Pru smacked his hard cock, not hard enough to truly hurt him, but hard enough for him to get control of his body.

"Uh." He made a soft sound of pain, but the erection immediately softened. Once he was properly relaxed, Pru slipped back into the chair and began to stroke the soft outer lips of her pussy.

"You may become aroused, now, Leo."

Her command worked like a magic spell and blood flooded his cock. It grew thick and long again, and Pru shifted to watch the transformation. After a few moments, his cock was blushed red and striped with veins.

"Now, stroke yourself and watch me. You are not to come, Leo."

"Yes, Mistress."

"What happens if you disobey me, Leo?"

"I won't be allowed to see the Mistress again. Not until she gives me consent to return. If she ever allows me to visit again."

"Correct. Begin."

Pru teased herself while she watched Leo caress the rampant hard-on between his legs. Her earlier run in with Gage Mills had aroused her and, for a moment, she thought about fucking Leo. Though she'd enjoyed him before, as a rule the services she offered didn't include intercourse.

Pru didn't want attachment and she didn't need a sub who thought there could be more between them. Keeping things intimate, yet detached, was best for all parties involved. Sex with a sub was something Prudence only did as the ultimate reward for exceptional obedience and she never did it on a regular basis. Usually, she slept with one or two long-term clients a year.

Leo moaned and Pru stopped touching her pussy. His body was rigid, his hand fisted so tightly around the base of his cock that his knuckles were white. When he had control again, Pru smiled at him and slipped a finger into her body. The walls of her sex were hot and slick, fluttering in pleasure at the invader. Pru sighed and withdrew her finger, offering it to Leo.

He licked it clean, his rhythm on his cock quick but strong. Pru withdrew her finger from his mouth and touched her clit, arching into the decadent sensations. She looked at Leo with heavy eyes. He would keep this up all night if she wanted.

Pru grabbed the dildo from beside her in the chair. The little beauty vibrated as well, its sleek, bullet shape designed to stimulate a woman perfectly. She turned the toy on and set it against her clit, moaning loudly. Leaning back further into the chair, Pru brought herself to the edge of release again and again, murmuring encouragement to Leo, relishing each time he nearly came but stopped.

Knowing her time with him grew short, Pru increased the speed of the toy. "Watch my pussy, Leo. When I start to come, you may as well."

She watched the muscles in his arms bulge with exertion, saw the flush of pained pleasure contort his face. He'd been stroking his cock for more than forty minutes and the delicate skin began to chafe under his relentless motions. Pru's pussy clenched hard, the sight of his pain as erotic for her as it was for Leo. "Faster, Leo."

He struggled to keep his eyes open, the need to come nearly overwhelming him. Pru set the dildo directly on her clit and threw her head back. She yelled her delight when she came, slipping a finger into the mouth of her sex to spread her cream for Leo's benefit. When the pulsations of her body slowed, she opened her eyes and looked at his cock. "Come, now."

His hand stuttered along his shaft as the first ejaculation burst from his cock. Thick, white come spurted from the tip and the well-trained Leo caught every drop in his free hand. He pulled his cock hard, up and down, until he'd milked every drop from his balls.

When he'd finally relaxed, his body softening, Pru stood from the chair. "It's time to go, Leo."

"Yes, Mistress."

Pru moved to the bed and picked up the control pad. She punched a few buttons and a tiny sink slid out from behind the wall beside her whips. While she cleaned her hands, Leo crawled back to the door and dressed. He left without a word, exactly how Pru had trained him to do. Alone again, Pru grabbed her schedule from the bed and prepared for her next client.

Chapter 3

Gage Mills leaned against the wall next to the door leading into Mistress Prudence's private quarters and fought back the beast roaring in his mind, commanding him to kick in the door and conquer the insolent woman. His cock was harder than he could ever remember it being, his heart pounding hard as he strained his superhuman ears, listening to the pained, ecstatic cries coming from the man who'd entered nearly an hour earlier.

He'd been standing there most of the night, using small magics to cloak his presence, while he listened to the woman, who'd dismissed him without care earlier in the evening, ply her trade. From the looks of sublime bliss on the faces of her clientele as they left her room, he'd say she knew exactly what she was doing. Still, he couldn't help but be slightly disgusted as he watched powerful men, and women, in their prime go through that door, knowing once inside they subjugated themselves to her will.

His hearing was ultra sensitive, but he only caught fleeting bits of conversation or an occasional yelp or moan. Obviously, Club Ovelia used sound dampening equipment around the private rooms. Gage hadn't ever thought about it before, whether others could hear him when he enjoyed the company of a submissive or two in the rental suites the club offered. Now, he felt a bit dissatisfied knowing that the people on the outside, unless they were lupercan or vampire, couldn't listen in on his pursuits.

A loud, shuddering howl came from the room and Gage's cock pulsed. He'd recognized the lupercan Prudence was entertaining and he had to admit, he'd never have suspected the male was submissive. And according to the information his lackeys supplied, submissive was the only way one could play with Mistress Prudence.

Confusion, foreign and unwelcome, slithered through his mind. What was it about this woman that so attracted him? Was it her total lack of interest, her dismissive attitude, which had him practically chomping at the bit to get in her bed?

A voice hissed in sibilant tones from the dark corners of his soul. He had to tread carefully here. He couldn't let emotion interfere with his objective. Still, a frisson of fear nearly gained life before Gage crushed it. The woman was dangerous and the predator inside him recognized it.

He shifted his stance, stroking his rigid cock through his pants. He'd been assured the Mistress would not accept an invitation to serve him. Gage squeezed his aching shaft. So, he wouldn't have control from the beginning. Confidence flared. He'd been at worse disadvantages before. He had to be close to Prudence and if that meant playing by her rules, to start, so be it. All that remained was to contact Antonio and set his plan in motion.

With reluctance, Gage left the wall and made his way back toward the music and mayhem of the dance floor. As he passed through the crowd, his sharp gaze selected a young man prime for the taking. He slid in behind the stranger, circling his waist with his hands, pressing his mouth to a sensitive ear. "Come with me."

The man shuddered in his grasp, a thready moan his answer. Gage smiled and pressed his mouth to the masculine throat, scraping his elongated canines over surprisingly soft skin. Then he let the man go and moved away, satisfaction making his cock pulse when he heard a small whimper from the man. He didn't look back and in record time, he felt the male at his back. Giving his guard a nod, Gage headed toward the rental suites, his night's enjoyment following without hesitation.

Chapter 4

Ro Thomas rapped his knuckles against the desktop. The communication monitor before him played back the night's surveillance video of Club Ovelia. Normally, he didn't watch every moment of data, but tonight was different. Gage Mills had made contact with the most popular dominatrix at Ovelia, and according to Ro's information, Gage had been keenly interested.

Ro bit back a laugh. The idea of Gage submitting to anyone, least of all a Domme, was incongruous with the man and quite funny. As he scrolled through the video, he thought about the lively, raven-haired Prudence. The woman definitely knew how to catch a man's eye. She dressed seductively without being slutty, her clothing expensive but understated.

Her legs were phenomenal, her body curved in all the right places. She walked with purpose and exuded an air of confidence that couldn't be faked. Pru Gordon was an alpha queen in every bone of her body and the animal in Ro stood up and took notice.

The icing on the cake was her wide-set blue eyes and a fantastic mouth Ro had spent many an evening wishing was wrapped around his cock. But being subject to another's will wasn't his idea of a good time, no matter how hot she made his blood run. Still, a part of him envied his ancient enemy. He doubted Gage could get the woman to play bottom to his top, but he bet the other Master Vampire would have fun trying.

A surge of movement drew Ro's attention to the screen. "Ah, there you are, Mills." Sadly, the video didn't have sound, but what it lacked in audio, the data made up for with various camera angles. He blew the picture up, zooming in on the figures

standing apart from the crowd. He had to give Prudence credit. She didn't give an inch. The expression on her face spoke loudly of how unimpressed she was with Mills.

It had taken more time than he'd thought, but finally, he was ready to put the plan into action. Ro picked up his phone, slipping the tiny bud into his ear and activating the line. With a keystroke, he switched the monitor to picture phone mode and waited for the other line to pick up. A familiar face looked back at him.

"Did you succeed?"

"I did, surprisingly."

"Good. It's time for phase two. This war between Mills and I might actually be more of a benefit than a thorn in my side for once."

His partner in conversation laughed. "It's a good thing I'm so willing to share information then, isn't it."

Ro gave the face on the screen a chastising look. "Yeah. I'll be in touch." He disconnected the line without a goodbye.

Relaxing into his chair once more, Ro called up a still image of Mistress Prudence. She really was breathtaking. He wondered if, after the plan was completed, she'd be interested in a private session with him. Though he doubted it, Ro couldn't help but hope.

* * *

Pru slid her palm across the identpad. The door of her apartment clicked as it opened and she pushed her way in. She dropped her purse on the table to the left of the door then pressed one palm against its surface to unzip her boots. Pru shook each foot until the boots dropped to the floor, then sighed with relief when her sore feet touched the cool tile.

She was pleasantly achy from her night's work, a sign of happy clients and a well-served Domme. Pulling her clothes off as she moved through the living room, Pru dropped the items without care. Tidiness wasn't her forte. In between appointments, Pru had decided on a plan of action, of a sort.

Flopping down at her small desk, she picked up a dirty T-shirt off the floor beside the chair. She rummaged around the cluttered desktop. Behind a large mug, half full with three-day-old coffee, she found her data port. Drawing it toward her with one hand, she felt for its stylus with the other. Her fingers closed around the small metallic pen and she got up from the chair.

She used the stylus to type in her ID and password, waiting for the Relic database to give her access. A small ping sounded. She was in. With slightly shaky fingers, she typed in a name and waited for the data stream to start.

Rothchilde Michael Xavier Thomas, aka Ro Thomas. Once an earl of something or other, he was as much a person of interest as Mills. It was his cadre, House of Morgan, which was at war with Gage Mills and his Hades Cadre. The two Master Vampires had a good, old-fashioned blood feud raging. And they both had a taste for Ovelia's submissive guests.

Antonio was a brilliant businessman. He knew everything that went on in his club and Pru was certain he made damn sure the warring vampires never got so much as a whiff of each other. As a Controller, she could have used her telepathic abilities to find out what Antonio knew. But as his friend, she refused to read his mind without his permission.

Thoughts of her dual jobs made her chest tighten. She wasn't just a Reliant Agent for the Group. She wasn't any Controller. Pru was the most powerful Controller alive, possibly that had ever existed. Her power of telepathy wasn't simply a gift. It was her weapon.

She had the ability to do more than Collar a target. Pru could completely rewire another being's mind, maybe even their soul. And therein lay her greatest strength; the reason the Group had been more than delighted to train her. It was also her greatest weakness. A darkness inside wanted to, no, hungered to control anyone, friend and foe alike. A tiny part of her delighted in subjugating others to her will by force of her power.

Thankfully, her work as a Domme satisfied the shadowy compulsions so she didn't worry, much, about succumbing to temptation. Still, Pru felt a powerful frisson of desire, dark and silky, wind through her body. She'd come four times today, but her body felt like she hadn't had sex in months. The idea of pitting her power against Mills and maybe even Thomas made her skin heat. Her nipples tightened into aching nubs, and her pussy grew wet.

"I'm nuts. Absolutely nuts." With a snort and a stern *down, girl* to her libido, Pru headed for bed.

As she settled in, she made up her mind. She wouldn't tell Levaton about Mills. Not yet, not until she had enough solid information that he couldn't refuse her the assignment.

Chapter 5

"It is now nineteen hundred hours. It is now nineteen hundred hours." Pru came awake to the voice of her alarm. She wasn't ready to get up and for a second she wished for an old time clock so she could toss the annoying voice across the room and shut it up.

"It is now nineteen hundred and one hours."

"All right, I'm awake. Reset alarm."

"Have a good evening, Prudence." The house computer's fake cheer grated on her groggy brain.

"Whatever." Dragging her body from the bed, Pru stumbled to the bathroom. She didn't bother turning the light on as she showered. Yet another of her gratuitous indulgences, the hydrogen oxide shower was the best way to wake up and get ready for the day. Not that a sonic shower cleaned less effectively, but something about warm water sluicing over the skin did wonders to clear the fog of sleep.

Fully awake, if not truly alert, Pru went to the closet. She kept her mind on the task of getting dressed. Her psyche wasn't ready to jump forward to what might happen at the club tonight. Once dressed, she dug around for her phone, surprised she had voice mail from Antonio.

Thinking about the club made her think about the Group. For a moment, she reconsidered calling AIC Levaton and spilling about running into Gage. "Forget Levaton. I'd better get ready." Butterflies took flight in her belly and Pru pressed a hand to her stomach to still them.

Taking a deep breath, she let her anxiety have free rein. All the possible negative outcomes of Collaring Gage Mills flooded her mind, amping up fear and self-doubt. The emotions rolled over her, heightening her senses, bringing her focus to pinpoint

sensitivity. Then Pru exhaled, all the negative feelings flowing out from her body on warm air. She was hyper-alert now, ready for anything, but there was nothing but pure confidence left in her body.

She grabbed her handbag from the table. Unzipping it, she emptied out everything but her Reliant Agent badge and quick credit card. She laid her palm on the identpad next to the door and punched in her access code. The table slid a foot to the left, revealing a shallow closet.

From the uppermost shelf, Pru pulled down a Group-issued collar. The device was no thicker than paper, made from an indestructible composite of M5, a synthetic fiber developed in the late twenty-first century, overlaid onto a ultra high molecular weight polyethylene fiber. Pru didn't really understand all the chemistry.

All that mattered was that the material was fire-proof, acid-proof, ultraviolet-proof, didn't break under less than twenty-five thousand psi of resistance, and most importantly, super-conducted telepathic energy. Made specifically for her, the collars were tuned to amplify the precise frequency of her electro-magnetic field.

Pru didn't want to think she'd need the collar, but she wasn't stupid. Vampires came wired with immense telepathic power. Even though she'd sparred with ancient vampires during training, none of them had achieved Master status. It hadn't been difficult to Control her sparring partners, but dealing with the real thing... She was taking the collar.

Chapter 6

"Pru, you're early." Bertie gave her an odd look.

"Antonio called and asked me to come in a little early." At his concerned look, she smiled. "Not to worry. He's not firing me."

"Good." The lupercan nodded to her as he left the bar.

George came up from the storage room, three heavy boxes filling his arms. He set them down on the bar and began restocking. Pru waited for him to acknowledge her, but he was either totally engrossed in stocking or he was ignoring her.

"George."

He tensed. Then he shook his head before emptying the last box. "Pru."

"You know what happened, I gather." She wasn't asking.

"I saw you blow off one of the most powerful men in the world. Yeah, I know what happened." He crossed his arms over his chest, clearly unhappy.

"Did I look like I couldn't handle it?" She mirrored his pose.

"You look like a raven-haired, blue-eyed, gorgeous girl who is about to get her ass handed to her when she tries to beard the devil where he lives."

Pru snickered, warmed by his worry. "Come on, George. You're right here. If I need you, all I have to do is sound the alarm. I gave you my word, if I need backup, I won't hesitate to push the button."

George frowned at her. Pru knew he'd been a Reliant Agent for longer than she'd been alive. And he was the only person at the club who knew Pru was an agent.

She looked at the man who'd been a better Transition Agent to her than Levaton could hope to be, ever. Thanks to some vampire blood, he didn't age like a human and he still looked fantastic. Tall, lithe, blond hair, soft brown eyes. Despite his good looks

and easy smile, there was a sharp glint of controlled power in his eyes. Pru never wanted to be on his bad side, but by the look on his face, she was toeing the line.

"I also know you, Pru. I don't care what the Group says about your abilities. Even the most experienced Controller would have backup at their side before they took on Mills. You've got a death wish and I'm telling you right now, if you fuck this up and put the people I care about at risk, I'll kill you myself."

Pru nodded. George wasn't just worried about Bertie, his life partner, but also about Antonio, Calista, and the rest of the Ovelia family. Trying to defuse the tension, she gave him a small smile. "Does that mean you'll save me first, then kill me?"

George rolled his eyes and grumbled under his breath. When he looked back at her, Pru opened herself up to him, letting him read her thoughts. He sighed, then walked toward her and lifted the bar top. "Thank you. I still think you're out of your mind, but at least I know this isn't some ego trip you're driving at. I'll be here the whole night."

Pru stepped behind the bar and stood on tiptoe. She planted a chaste, quick kiss to his cheek. "I feel a lot safer knowing you've got my back. He's in the office, right?"

"Yeah, Antonio is doing paperwork."

"I'll let myself in." As she did every night, she placed her hand on the identpad and waited for the office door to open.

"Pru." Antonio looked up from his data pad at her entrance.

"How's it going?"

Antonio laughed and Pru frowned. "Did I say something funny?"

He shook his head. "Not really. It's just sometimes I wonder if you have any idea what goes on when you make an impression."

"I'm lost. What are you talking about?"

He slid the data pad to the side and motioned her to sit. "I'm talking about Gage Mills."

"What about him?" Pru frowned. Was Antonio going to reprimand her for giving the guy the cold shoulder?

"I had a most interesting call this afternoon. He contacted Ovelia and offered me triple your hourly rate if I would make him your only customer this evening."

"No fucking way." Pru was shocked and her lips moved before her mind could quell her reaction. This was too good to be true, Mills was handing himself to her on a silver platter.

Antonio roared with laughter. "I very nearly said the same thing. I told him I'd let him know before open what your answer was."

"Wait a minute. You did tell him I don't do submissive, right?"

"Apparently, he got that vibe from you last night. Just exactly what happened between you two?"

"Nothing, really. I almost got trampled, he helped me out of the crowd."

"Sure. Honey, I think more than that went down, but I'll leave it alone. I did impress upon him that you aren't bottom material, but he was confident you could work out an amicable resolution. So, what do you think?"

I think this can't fucking be happening. And my guts are balled up so tight, I might puke.
"As long as he understands I can cancel the session at any time, I'm up for it."

Antonio's eyes shone with mirth. "Somehow, I knew you'd say that. All right then, I'll call him back and let him know. Before I do, I want to make sure you know who he is."

"Huh?" Pru's mind had taken off into fractal possibility theory, her brain trying to assess all changes to her previous outcomes thanks to this new situation.

"I said you should know who Gage Mills is." Antonio gave her a curious look.

"Oh. Yeah, he's a wealthy-as-Midas businessman who likes his bed partners submissive. And he's a vampire."

"Not just any vampire, Pru. He's the head of the Hades Cadre."

When she didn't look surprised, Antonio frowned. She hadn't reacted like he'd thought she would. Pru couldn't change her initial reaction, so she improvised. "And? Either he can play by my rules or he can go home. Honestly, I figured he'd been

insulted last night and you called me in to reprimand me for pissing off such a powerful guest." She glanced down at her nails, projecting total confidence.

"If he was insulted, he didn't mention it." All suspicion left Antonio's eyes and Pru stifled a sigh of relief. "Well, you better go get prepared. I have no doubt he'll be late, alpha dominance thing and all that."

Pru smiled ruefully. "I'm sure. Ah, if things get a little crazy in my room..."

Antonio waved his hand. "He already made me promise not to disturb you. Of course, you and I know that only means as long as you say so. I don't care how powerful, rich, or old he is, no one messes with my people."

Antonio meant every word he said and Pru couldn't help the guilt that rose inside of her. She hated not being able to tell her friend that she was a Reliant Agent. Right then, she almost called the whole thing off. What she had planned, if the Collaring went bad, would put everyone tied to her in danger.

Maybe George was right. Maybe this was an ego trip. Maybe pride had taken over and she was headed for the losing end of this assignment. Pru smashed the self-defeating line of thought. She wasn't going to give up before she'd even begun.

"Are you sure you want to do this, Pru? All of a sudden, I don't feel like you're interested." Antonio leaned across the desk and took her hands in his.

She winked at him. "Babe, I'm good. Sorry, I forget sometimes how much you care for all of us. For me. Mr. Mills and I will be just fine tonight."

He gave her fingers a squeeze. "Off with you then. I have paperwork to finish and you have a very long evening to get ready for."

Pru left the office, stopping briefly to tell George what had happened. His entire body grew tense but he hadn't flipped out. She left the bar and headed for her "office." She had to make a call and adjust the room before her client arrived.

Chapter 7

"Computer, what's the time?"

"Twenty-one hundred and ten hours."

That gave her twenty minutes or so before Mills arrived. Needing to keep busy until then, Pru stalked to the medieval rack and leaned against it, looking into the mirror on the wall behind it. She took in the deep blue eyes, long black hair, and curvaceous body of the woman who looked back at her.

Her mirror image exuded confidence and control. She was a woman who knew her strength and wasn't afraid to wield it. Pru lifted her hand to the zipper on the front of her body-hugging leather dress, pulling it down just enough to show the hint of cleavage. She was ready. Turning her back on the mirror, Pru dropped down onto the nearest chair to wait.

The sharp rap of knuckles against the door made her smile. "Computer, what is the time?"

"The time is twenty-one hundred and forty minutes."

Pru pursed her lips and crossed the room to the door. She opened it just enough to see his face and met Gage's hazel eyes directly. "You're late."

He lifted a brow. "I had business to attend to."

"I don't care if you were saving the planet, Mr. Mills. I don't wait on anyone."

He put his palm to the door and pressed inward. "I apologize, Pru --"

"Mistress Prudence or just Mistress. I haven't given you permission to be so familiar." She gave him a small smile.

She watched the powerful male clench his teeth. Finally, he dropped his hand to his side. "I apologize, Mistress Prudence. May I come in now?"

Pru perused him, purposefully increasing his irritation. When his hands clenched into fists, she opened the door wider and stepped back. "You may enter, but you'll have to do better than that apology."

Gage inclined his head and moved into her room. She closed the door behind him and leaned against it, watching her guest as he took in every detail. Power emanated from him, surrounding him not like a mantle he might shed but like a second skin. The thrill of a challenge shivered over her and her nipples beaded beneath the soft, supple material of her dress.

"You have interesting taste, Mistress Prudence." Mills slid his hands over her collection of whips as he spoke. Watching his long fingers stroke over the leather stirred her senses. She wondered if he'd touch her as reverently, when she finally let him.

"Thank you, Gage. Would you like something to drink?" Pru stepped away from the door and approached the small sitting area near the rack.

"No, I'm fine. Shall we get started then?"

His body radiated impatience and hunger and Pru felt her skin flush with anticipation. "You should kneel down here, next to me. I don't know much about you, aside from your reputation, and I don't find gossip particularly accurate. I want you to tell me about yourself, what you like, where your limits lie."

Gage stalked toward her, a dark frown pulling at his full mouth. "You expect me to kneel?"

"Gage, let's be perfectly clear. This room is my domain and I rule here with absolute authority. If you can't handle that, I'd suggest you leave. It isn't negotiable." Pru stared at him hard, holding her breath. If the Master Vampire wouldn't play by her rules, it would be impossible for her to go through with the Collar.

His emerald, gold, and earth colored eyes bored into hers for a long moment. She didn't blink, didn't fidget. Pru didn't give an inch. Suddenly, his frown lifted and he smiled. Slowly, he dropped to his knees at her feet. "I think you already know who I am. As to what I like, well, it seems I like authoritative women at the moment. My only

rule is that I'd like to leave the same way I arrived. Otherwise, I'm game." Gage lifted his hand to her knee, curling his fingers around her leg. "What about you?"

Pru moved her hand to his cheek. She smoothed her fingers over his strong jaw, fanned them across his high cheekbones, teased the edges of his sensual mouth, before sliding her palm to the back of his neck and curling her fingers into the shaggy length of his wheat-colored hair. She smiled. Then she struck.

She locked onto his hair and jerked his head back, exposing his throat. He growled and started to pull away, but she tightened her grip and leaned close to his ear. "My domain, my rules." She flicked her tongue against the shell of his ear. He hissed and not in anger. Slowly, he relaxed and she rewarded him with a playful nip on the earlobe.

"What are the rules, Mistress Prudence?" Gage's low voice set fire to her blood. The thrill of having such a potent, dominant male subject to her will sent desire humming through her body. She wasn't under any delusion; the vampire was stronger and faster than she could hope to be. However, whether from his own hunger or out of curiosity, he'd agreed to her terms.

"They're simple, Gage. You do only what I tell you to do, when I tell you to do it, and exactly how I direct. You may ask me for permission, you may ask me for more, but you will ask, or I'll punish you."

"Will you?" He pulled free from her grip and Pru let him go.

She stood from her seat and walked to the whips. She took a short snakewhip from the display. This particular style was just over four feet long from stock to cracker and less than an eighth of an inch at the tip. The snakewhip was an old friend, its total flexibility making it perfect for flagellation.

She circled her wrist then flicked hard to the left. The small whip made a pleasant snap and Pru smiled. "You agreed to the terms, Gage. What's the matter, are you incapable of taking commands?" She watched his eyes narrow and his shoulders tense.

"I apologize, Mistress Prudence."

She hardened her voice. "This isn't going to work. Obviously, you can't take commands. You can't even answer a simple question." Pru cracked the whip a second time, letting displeasure flow out of her, then moved to the door.

"I can follow commands."

"Then do so, otherwise this session is over. I won't tell you again."

Power exploded in his eyes and Pru figured this was it. She wasn't going to be able to enjoy herself as much as she thought before revealing her secret. She nearly dropped all pretense when Gage dropped to all fours and began making his way to her.

Watching a man crawl to her always aroused Pru, but she'd never found the act itself particularly erotic. Then again, she'd never seen an alpha male do it before, but as Gage moved closer, the shifting of his muscles, the tightening and relaxing of sinew and flesh, froze her breath in her lungs. He was magnificent, his hazel eyes never leaving hers as he slunk, with pure predatory grace, to where she stood.

When he reached her legs, he lifted a hand and she lashed it, gently. He growled and Pru arched an eyebrow. His fingers curled and he pulled back. She hummed with appreciation. "You seem to have trouble keeping your hands to yourself. We'll deal with that in a moment. Press your face to the floor."

Flames of indignation danced in his gaze, but he did as she bade. She savored each bunch and flex of muscle, his choppy, angry movements feeding her hunger.

Without a word, Pru stepped around him. Watching from the corner of her eyes, she saw him fight not to raise his head and follow her movements. Pleased, almost smug, she sauntered to the chains anchored into the wall. She hadn't removed the second set from the night before, some subconscious thought that they might come in handy keeping them in place. She passed her right hand over the metal and all four lengths clinked and clanged, the noise heightening the tension between her and Gage.

"Come here."

His body rippled with strength and he started to rise, but caught himself. Instead, he shifted his body and crawled to her. Keeping his eyes downcast, he stopped a few short feet from her and waited.

“Good boy. You’re learning fast.” Pru took a step toward him, bending at the waist to slide her hand beneath his chin, lifting his head. “Stand up, here. I’d hate for your urges to detract from our enjoyment tonight, so I’m going to make sure you don’t get into trouble for something you can’t help.”

His eyes narrowed. “Do you need to restrain me?”

“Of course.” She smiled before pulling away. She reached out for the chains, stroking them slowly, fondling the cold metal. Still displeased, Gage stood and pressed his back to the wall.

Whip in one hand, Pru lifted his arms with the other, pressing his wrists into the manacles. At the touch of warm flesh, the cuffs snapped shut around his wrists, first one then the other. Pru stood back to admire her handiwork. Now, she could work without worrying about him taking control. With careful movements, she looped the whip over her forearm and approached her captive.

Gage’s nostrils flared when she laid her palms against his chest. So far, their evening together had her body primed for sensual play, the lips of her sex slick with want. Beneath her palms, his heart beat strong and fast, but when she pressed her pelvis to his, there was no hard cock to tease. A small smile tickled her lips.

“You haven’t fed tonight. I guess I won’t be able to enjoy the feel of you in my hands or my body. Pity.” Pru trailed a finger down his chest and over the fly of his pants.

“You could rectify that, Mistress. A small donation of blood is all I need.”

Pru frowned and leaned away from him. “I’m no sex worker. You should have come prepared.” She glanced down at his groin and made a tsking sound.

He growled and jerked at his bindings.

“If you’re very good, Gage, I might grant your request.” The metal didn’t give when he struggled harder. Pru looked into his face, saw the surprise there, and nearly crowed her delight. “After all, you’re mine to do with as I will. A slave to my wants, so to speak.”

Chapter 8

The slow, rhythmic sound of clapping almost made her scream in surprise. She stifled her cry, instead turning slowly. Pru let the snakewhip slip from her arm to her hand, uncoiling it in a single, unhurried motion.

"This is a private session. Get out." She narrowed her eyes at the visitor, putting her body between his and Gage's, before snapping the whip.

"I'm sure you'll forgive me, Mistress Prudence, but Mr. Mills and I have business that should have been dealt with centuries ago."

"Coward! Can't take me one on one, you wait until I'm shackled to attack?" Gage bellowed his rage, exploding into a frenzy of movement and power, fighting the chains, lunging away from the wall.

Pru turned to face him and pushed out with her power. She kept her influence light, concealing her psychic actions with softly spoken words. "Gage, you will be quiet. I'll handle Mr. Thomas."

"Is that right? Perhaps another time, but for now, you should leave while Gage and I resolve our business." Ro's voice held sarcasm and humor. Pru wondered how much laughing he'd do once she had him chained to the wall.

Turning back to her visitor, Pru tapped a finger along the stock of the whip. "Like I told him, I don't care if you're saving the world. Get out of my domain, Mr. Thomas." Pru stalked toward the other man, appreciating his long, black hair and the sculpted perfection of his physique as she approached.

"Come now, be a good girl and leave us be. I'll double what he's paying for your trouble."

So charming, his sexy smile and warm, baritone voice. His dark green eyes, however, failed to reinforce the playful attitude he projected. In the cold honey depths,

Pru saw rage and hate and dark satisfaction. "I'm no girl, and I doubt anyone would call me good, Mr. Thomas. Don't make me call security. Get out." She stopped far enough away to be out of arm's length, but close enough to use the whip for real if necessary.

Ro Thomas finally looked at her, really looked. Pru curled her lip at his attention, and not because she didn't enjoy it. Her woman's intuition told her feigning distaste would prick his pride. He lifted a foot, intending to move closer, and she flicked the whip, lashing the thin leather against his thigh in warning. He stepped back, shocked by her aggression.

"You really don't want to make me your enemy, Prudence." His full lower lips turned down at the corner, as if he were disappointed.

Pru frowned at the arrogant ass before her. She wasn't worried about enemies. She was worried about everyone in the room surviving this encounter. She had to get Thomas into the second pair of chains. "Mistress Prudence or just Mistress. And if you think I'm afraid of you, Mr. Thomas, you're sorely mistaken."

The challenge did it. Ro tore his gaze from Gage, stunning Pru with the power he displayed in his eyes. Impressive.

"Either you're incredibly stupid or you're incredibly ballsy. Either way, you'd better be careful, Prudence." He invaded her space and Pru let him, unflinching, stoic, showing only nonchalance and disinterest in his display. He growled and lashed out with his mind.

And that was all she needed.

When her power crashed into his, it was like the clash of two Kodiak bears. He hadn't expected an attack and as such, Ro's vampiric gifts raged beneath the assault of her telepathy. She had every advantage and she charged deep, beneath the surface façade of his mask, lower through the barriers he'd erected to keep other vampires out of his head, until she burrowed deep into his psyche.

To an onlooker, they were staring each other down, eyes locked, bodies rigid. But between them, inside Ro's head, they fought for control of his will. Pru's darker self

roared with triumph when she loosed her power, unadulterated, into his mind. Unprepared for her assault, the Master Vampire rolled under her ability and Pru nearly sagged with relief.

She had no time to celebrate. Her control over Ro was temporary. She hadn't been fully primed to attack him. So while the element of surprise worked to her credit, she needed to secure him before his rage gave him the strength to attempt to fight free.

"I'm definitely not stupid, Mr. Thomas. As I'm sure you've figured out." She turned away from him, trailing the whip at her side, sparing a glance at Gage.

His expression was a mixture of anger, uncertainty, and surprise. He was an ancient, it wouldn't take him long to figure out at least what she could do, if not for whom she worked. *Good thing I brought that collar.* With sure, unhurried steps she went to her hidden safe and retrieved her bag.

Bag in hand, she made a small pirouette then crooked a finger at Ro. He started forward immediately, but he tried to fight every step and so his pace was slow and uncoordinated. Pru glared, irritated, and pressed two fingers to her left temple. She closed her eyes and launched a flurry of small, powerful psychic blasts into Ro's brain. "Get over here, now." She commanded and he obeyed, her volley of energy overwhelming him.

When Ro stood beside the bed, she pointed toward the floor. "Kneel." The beautiful vampire dropped down and Pru sauntered to him. She stopped in front of him and lifted his chin, taking a little time to smooth her fingertips down his neck and through the thick strands of his dark hair. The collar fastened with a small click and Pru pressed her fingers against it.

A tiny electric shock connected her mind and energy to the material. She gave a silent sigh, pulling her presence back from Ro's mind. The collar made it easy to control him, her power amplified and focused. When she was completely out of his head, she walked back to Gage, pleased when Ro followed without verbal command.

She looked at her handiwork, smiled broadly, and gave Ro control of his mind, but not his motor cortex. She had full control of his body, but he proved she wasn't master of his mouth.

"Now what, Mistress?" He spat her title, his tone laced with contempt. "I knew you weren't a Domme. You're just a telepath with a taste for control."

Though he was trying to insult her, Prudence couldn't help but laugh. "You'll have to do better than that, Ro. Honestly, do you think for a second I care what you think I am? Look at the situation. Neither of you can escape. No one can hear you scream. Essentially, at least until my time is up for today, you're my playthings. It sounds like I have complete control."

"Bitch!"

Pru laughed again at his clichéd statement, the sound fading away slowly under his burning gaze. "I asked you to leave. You deserve what comes to you." She shrugged at him, tucking her bag under her arm. "Kneel, facing Gage. I want you two to get to know each other." Ro's mind rebelled, but his body complied.

"Mistress Prudence?" Gage had been very quiet, not that Pru had forgotten he was there.

"Yes?"

"Where did you get that collar?" His voice held a note of strangeness, as if he were nervous.

"You know what it is?" He nodded slightly. Pru raised a brow, concealing her surprise. "Isn't it amazing what you can get on the black market these days?" She grinned, hoping he bought her excuse. "Now that there's two of you, I'm going to need to let Antonio know I'll be extra busy." Gage tensed in his shackles, glancing at the genuflecting form of his enemy. "Don't worry, Gage, poor Ro won't be able to move unless I allow it. Behave while I'm gone, won't you, boys?"

Chapter 9

"I'll kill her!" Ro bellowed his frustration, uncaring of what the man at his side thought. He did everything in his considerable power to break free from the mental chains she'd bound him with, but they didn't give at all. It galled him to admit it, but she was a much stronger telepath than his information had detailed. Now that he was Collared, he was trapped.

He growled. Only short minutes before he'd been overjoyed watching his mortal enemy struggle to free himself, thinking Gage Mills must have been weaker than he remembered. Now, as he sagged in his restraints, chest heaving from exertion, he had to quell a stab of empathy.

"This isn't exactly how I imagined we'd meet next. How are you, Ro?"

Gage's voice held no animosity, not that Ro cared if the other vampire hated him. He refused to chat with the bastard next to him. Regardless of the situation, he wasn't about to pretend the other vampire was his friend just to pass the time. In fact, if Mills suddenly got free, Ro would refuse his help to escape. It'd be better to remain a prisoner than to accept help from the betrayer of the Vampire Nation.

"I see the House of Morgan finally unearthed the ability to day walk. Congratulations, on that and on sharing your findings with the rest of our people."

Ro snapped his head to the side and looked into the hazel eyes of a man who'd been his closest friend once. He bared his fangs and hissed, enraged Gage would even mention the root of his betrayal as if it were nothing. "No thanks to you. Thousands of our people slaughtered because you refused to share the secret. Why our king sided with you, I'll never understand."

"Because he knew I was right." Gage shook his head. "Fuck, Ro, that shit is ancient history. We'd only barely survived the Inquisition, and you wanted me to tell

more than ten thousand pissed off, revenge-hungry vampires how to walk in sunlight? They'd have rampaged across the planet and gotten us all killed. We weren't ready for that gift then and we certainly weren't ready for all out war with humanity, either."

"What a fucking cop out! You wanted the power all to yourself."

"If that's what you want to believe, I can't change your mind."

Gage looked away then, his gaze zeroing in on the door. Ro didn't look to see if Pru had returned. He wouldn't be distracted. "You're right, you can't. The House of Morgan won't rest until the Hades Cadre is exterminated."

Gage didn't respond and Ro clenched his jaw. He didn't want to talk to the man anyway. His head was still spinning over the unbelievable twist the evening had taken. When he'd entered into the night's adventure, he certainly hadn't thought he'd be caught in the mind control of a telepath. He'd thought the gods were finally granting his prayers, offering him the perfect way to move his plans to the next phase.

He'd waited outside the room until he was certain the Mistress had Gage otherwise occupied before breaking in. He'd hoped to find Gage on his knees being smacked with a riding crop, but he'd been shocked to see him trapped in mere chains. His triumph at finding the room's inhabitants busy with each other had blinded him to the strangeness of the scene. If he'd taken a moment to listen to his gut, he might have been better prepared to take on the Mistress when she'd engaged him telepathically.

Maybe. The human woman was stronger than any telepath he'd met, the power of her skill a force of nature that crashed down on him and rolled him beneath its waves. He'd fought to expel her from his mind with every ounce of skill he had, but she took his will as a bird takes flight. With total confidence and ease.

* * *

Her body hummed with adrenaline and the neuro-kinetic connection she had to Ro's collar. The sensation of fully Collaring someone was completely different than she'd thought. She didn't have to focus on him. Instead, it was as if a tiny monitor watched his every thought in the back of her mind. When he tried to break free, the monitor beeped and Pru released a pulse of telepathic energy.

Her power arrowed straight to the collar and reinforced her control. After a couple of minutes of trying, she sensed Ro giving up. His acquiescence was temporary, she was sure. Regardless, she had the situation under control for now. Relaxing a bit, Pru dug into her purse, searching for her phone.

The tiny ear bud fit snugly into her ear canal. When she'd gotten it properly situated, a dial tone buzzed softly. "Relic HQ." Her command produced immediate results and the line began to ring.

"We're sorry, the number you have reached is not in use. Please try the number again." Typical wrong number message, but Pru didn't hang up. When the recording stopped playing, a series of musical tones sounded. She waited for the precise tone, then continued.

"Reliant Agent Gordon, Prudence. Ops number 748-12-9." The tones stopped and the line rang anew.

"What's so important you had to wake me, Agent Gordon?" AIC Robert Levaton's voice sounded sarcastic and bored, as usual.

Prick. "Something has happened. Something huge."

When she didn't continue, Levaton snapped at her. "Well, what is it?"

"I'll tell you if you give me your word I can have the assignment."

"Gordon, are you trying to piss me off?"

"Give me your word, Levaton, or I'll call the Deputy Director and get him to agree. Trust me, you'll want in on this."

"Fine. You have my word." He gave it grudgingly, but Pru didn't care. There was no way he could back out on his promise, not when every call into the Relic HQ was taped.

"Right now, Gage Mills and Ro Thomas are in custody."

"What? Where?"

"In my personal room at Ovelia."

"How the fuck did you manage that? Have you been holding out on me?" He practically snarled the queries.

"Agent Levaton, the how doesn't matter. Call it luck, call it kismet, call it fate. It doesn't matter how, just that I have them."

There was a pregnant pause before Levaton responded. "The response team will be there in less than five minutes."

"We'll be waiting." Pru pulled the phone from her ear, ending the call.

She stood outside her room, for how long she didn't know, trying to process the unexpected turn of events. The next phase meant Pru would be captured with Gage and Ro. The response team would move the three of them to a special holding cell at headquarters where the real work began.

The trick to forced mediation was arbitrating without letting the parties involved realize what was happening. The best way to do that was to put them in a situation where they had to join forces, set aside differences, in order to regain their freedom. Pru's job was to help them resolve their problems. If the parties refused to come to a peaceable resolution, remained unable to work together, then the Group would consider the removal of memories or mental reprogramming.

"Having second thoughts?" a familiar voice murmured from behind her.

"Shit, George. And third and fourth."

"The team is nearly here, Pru. You can't back out now. For what it's worth, I think the gods have it in for you."

She looked over her shoulder at his smart-ass grin and snorted. "I think I agree." She squared her shoulders and grabbed the doorknob.

"See you on the other side. Good luck." George slipped back down the hall and Pru re-entered her room.

Chapter 10

"Did you behave?" Pru closed the door softly.

Gage turned his head at the sound of her voice. His expression confused her. He looked sad and a touch guilty. Fear blossomed in her belly. What had he done?

"We're still here aren't we?" Ro snapped.

"You really should get into a better mood, Ro. Good boys get rewarded." She walked up beside him and sank her fingers into his hair. Pulling gently, she tilted his head back so she could look into his handsome face. "Don't you want to be rewarded?"

"I want you to let me go."

It wasn't Pru's style to force people into submission, no matter how much part of her loved the idea. "All right. I'll let you go if you give me your word to leave this room immediately. Mr. Mills is my client for the night and I can't have you killing him, now can I?"

Ro's emerald eyes narrowed and his jaw clenched. With a vein pulsing strongly in his temple, the vampire closed his eyes. When he opened them again, Pru saw surrender. "You have my word."

"Now wouldn't this whole thing have been much easier if you'd left when I asked?" Her condescending tone got her a growl, but nothing more. "Too bad you don't want to stay and play." Pru tightened her grip on his hair and pulled his face to hers.

Slowly, her eyes locked to his, Pru traced his lush bottom lip with her tongue. The moisture from her mouth eased her path and she moaned softly. His skin tasted slightly salty, just the way she liked. Pressing her mouth closer to his, she took his lip between her teeth, nibbling gently, intensifying the sensation with the friction of her lips against his.

Ro held out against her sensual assault longer than she thought he would, but when she took his mouth with hers, hard, controlling, demanding he respond, he finally kissed her back. His lips parted and his tongue surged into her mouth. Pru didn't doubt for a moment he kissed her for reasons other than lust, but she enjoyed his expertise regardless.

When she pulled away from him, he caught her lip against a sharp canine. If she continued to withdraw, she'd cut her lip and give him a taste of her blood. With a taste, he could find her anywhere, anytime. If she moved closer, she'd acknowledge his control. It wasn't a difficult choice to make.

The sting of his nip barely registered. Pru lifted a finger to her mouth and touched the hot blood welling from the injury. She swiped her tongue over her finger first, then her lip, and smiled darkly, hungrily. "How do I taste?"

Ro's eyelids were heavy, carnal thoughts whirling in the black irises. "I can find you, now, no matter where you go."

"You need to learn to follow directions, Ro." With a disappointed sigh, she rose and moved to Gage.

She hadn't forgotten the blond barbarian, despite her actions. After tasting his enemy, Pru craved the touch of his mouth. She lifted her arms, circling his bound wrists with her fingers, and traced down his lightly furred forearms. She kept her touch light, stroking over the soft curve of his inner elbows and down the hard rise of powerful biceps and triceps. When she reached his shoulders, Pru pressed her body the length of his and turned her face upward. "Kiss me."

His pupils expanded until they took up nearly all of his eyes. Full lips parted, pointed teeth flashing between the rose-colored skin. "Yes, Mistress." Pru ignored the growl from behind her. Wrapping her hands over Gage's massive shoulders, Pru lifted her body off the floor, placing her feet against the wall on either side of her vampire.

Gage shifted beneath her, giving her room to wrap her legs around his waist. In this position, his superior height wasn't a problem. Calves locked against his tight ass, Pru relaxed her arms enough to clasp his head in her palms. This time she didn't tease.

Gage opened his mouth and Prudence kissed him wildly. She thrust her tongue deep, making sure his sharp teeth cut her.

He groaned, the deep sound vibrating her lips, tightening her nipples and her sex. She let go of his head, winding her arms around his neck as she kissed him harder, deeper. Gage's warm lips branded hers, as his hips lifted against her aching clit. The metallic taste of blood tinged the contact with dark, erotic sensations, made Pru's head spin. He captured her tongue in his mouth, sucking hard, then releasing to nip her lip. Pru moaned loudly.

"Excuse me." Robert Levaton's voice worked better than a bucket of cold water.

Pru let go of Gage and tumbled to the ground. She jumped to her feet, whirling on the "invaders." "Who the hell are you?" What she really wanted to ask was how long he'd been there, but Pru held her tongue. She had to stay in character.

"No one you'd know. I'm afraid there's a problem in the club and everyone needs to be evacuated."

"Thank you." Pru turned her back to Levaton, pretending she was going to unchain Gage. With her focus elsewhere, her asshole boss detonated the ultra-sonic device.

The frequency of sound was so high, it rendered most living things unconscious. Pru fell to the floor, struggling to stay alert. She looked at Gage, then at Ro, fear on her face as each man collapsed under the sonic pulse. She didn't last long enough to look at Levaton, but she was sure he was smiling.

Chapter 11

"Wake up." Rough hands shook her and Pru grumbled. "I said wake up."

A sharp smack on her ass brought Pru to fighting wakefulness. She rolled to her back, flipping up and off the floor in one motion, and whirled on her attacker. Teeth bared, hands curled into fists, she blinked to clear her vision.

"I guess spanking is out." Ro Thomas gave her a cocky grin, keeping out of her reach.

Wary of his flirtatious attitude, Pru glared. "Was there a reason for that, or did you do it just to piss me off?"

"I've been trying to wake you up for twenty minutes."

Pru looked around the room. There were no windows and only one door, with a one by two sliding panel in the middle. A small table with water and packaged blood, three inflatable mattresses, a toilet and small sonic shower did little to warm the cold, gray space. It was odd being inside a mediation room this way. She'd seen the room before, but not from her current position, with the door closed and locked.

She knew there were two agents standing guard outside the room. Protocol stated when the Controller reached resolution with the Collared, the agent inside would send a telepathic message to the guards and the release procedures were then activated.

She had forty-eight hours to get Gage and Ro to bury the hatchet. After that, the heads of the Group would meet and vote on whether to wipe the subjects' memories or proceed with total reprogramming. Pru looked at Ro, then around the room to Gage who lay unconscious in the far corner. Despite the fact that she didn't know either man, she knew either of the Group's last resorts would be difficult orders for her to follow.

"Do you know where we are?" Ro hovered nearby, pacing in a small circle.

"No. Do you?" Pru walked to Gage, pressing her hand to his chest. He breathed in and out, the slow, regular rhythm assuring her he wasn't hurt.

"I tried to kill him, but I couldn't."

Pru whirled to look at Ro. "Are you fucking insane?"

"It doesn't matter. I went at him with every intention of ripping out his throat. Then wham! The damn collar you put on me knocked me flat on my ass. It's some sort of psychic amplifier, isn't it?"

"Yeah." Pru was telling the truth, sort of.

The collar he wore, the collar both men wore now, weren't her collars, though she could use them as if they were if she needed to. The new collars looked similar to hers, but their main function was to keep subjects from seriously injuring or killing their mediation partners. The only way Gage and Ro would be able to touch each other was if they had zero plans to inflict harm.

She lifted a hand to her throat, her fingers skipping over the band encircling her throat. A tiny flame of fear tightened her throat, but as she felt the material, a tingle of connection flared across her skin. She wore her own collar, the one she'd put on Ro at the club. Even knowing the adornment at her neck was for pretense only, part of Pru balked at wearing it. She wouldn't submit to anyone again.

"If you couldn't hurt him, how come you smacked me and didn't get knocked out?" Pru knew the reason, but she wanted to hear Ro say it aloud.

"I didn't want to hurt you."

She lifted a brow. "Really."

"Not in the same way."

"Hmm. We'll talk about that later." Turning the topic back to their captivity, Pru began the routine for mediation. "So, do you know where we are?"

Ro began pacing again, his body growing tense. "I have an idea."

"What is it?"

"First, let me ask you a question. How much do you know about Mills and me?"

"I'm not sure how to answer that, Ro."

"What's that supposed to mean?" He spun on her, suspicion written in every line of his face.

"It means I don't take on new clients without a thorough background check, which includes looking in less than conventional places for information."

"It's no secret we're vampires." He was hedging.

Pru gave him a "give me a break" look. "You're Master Vampires and heads of two extremely powerful cadres."

"Houses."

"I suppose that depends on who you ask. You're head of the House of Morgan." Pru turned to look at Gage. "He's head of the Hades Cadre. Whichever way you cut it, you're powerful, you're old, and you run huge groups of vampires."

"I feel like you aren't saying something." Ro cocked his head and lifted the corner of his mouth. What a smart ass.

Playing her reaction up a bit, she gave him a stern glance. "And you two have been embroiled in a blood feud for centuries."

"That's not something that's well known, but it'd be easy enough to find out if you asked the right questions." Ro seemed impressed, but Pru sensed the wheels spinning behind his green eyes.

"I have a talent for learning secrets." She grinned a Cheshire-cat smile. "Now, I've answered your questions. It's your turn."

"I think we've been captured by an underground organization."

Pru barked a laugh. "Are you sure you should be saying that? Someone might be listening."

"Not if we've been kidnapped by who I think we have. This is a conflict resolution cell. It's not monitored."

Mediation cell, but close enough. She looked at him with apprehension riding her. "And why isn't it monitored?"

"Because a lot of the Nightside don't register on technological equipment."

"Okay, that's true." The knot of suspicion eased in Pru's gut.

"And because a conflict can't be solved, not really, if any of the parties feel like they are being manipulated."

Ro was right, but he shouldn't have known enough about the Group to figure that out. "How do we get out of here?"

"Either we escape, which is possible but not very probable, given that the three of us would have to work together to accomplish that."

"Hey, I'm willing to be a team player." Pru spread her arms in a gesture of openness.

"I'm not."

Pru dropped her arms and rolled her eyes at him. "Fine. Got any other ideas?"

"Gage and I could make amends with each other. That should get us our freedom." Ro didn't meet her gaze, almost like he was ashamed.

He should be. "I'm guessing that's out as well. Fantastic. How long will they keep us here?"

"No more than three days." A shuffling of fabric followed the hoarse words and Pru whipped around. Gage pushed himself upright and bent an arm to rest one palm on his head.

"I'm glad you're awake." Pru was a little surprised to find she really meant those words.

"I'm not." Neither Pru nor Gage acknowledged Ro's comment.

"What happens after three days?" Pru knelt down in front of Gage, sliding her hands over the tops of his knees.

"I don't know for sure. I've only met one person who's been stuck in a room like this. The lupercan was a real piece of work."

"Most lupercans are wild. It's in their DNA."

"Yeah, but this guy was extreme. He didn't belong to any pack and refused to respect the local leaders. He killed three different pack enforcers during sanctioned challenges, something that hadn't happened in almost a century. To top it off, he started

infecting anyone who'd fuck him. He didn't care if humans knew what he was and he didn't care about Nightside."

"So what happened?" Pru leaned closer, totally focused on Gage. Footsteps sounded behind her as Ro approached, but she didn't greet him.

"He fucking disappeared. Some humans showed up, according to the girl he'd been with, and knocked her and the lupercan out with some weird device. About a week later, I saw him in a bar. If I hadn't recognized his scent, I wouldn't have believed it was the same man."

"What? Why?" Pru had no idea who the individual was, but both Ro and Gage were giving her priceless information. The Group operated under the assumption that there were rumors about them, but nothing concrete. It was beneficial to their secrecy, despite any hearsay created. What her vampires were sharing was more than gossip.

"He was polite, soft spoken, relaxed. The hint of blood rage he'd always had in his eyes before was gone. I chatted with him for a long time. He told me he'd just gotten out of the hospital and that he had temporary amnesia. All he could remember was his name."

"Fuck." Ro's harsh curse made Pru wince.

"Yeah. He'd been totally mentally overhauled. Whatever happened, when these people finally let him go it was only after they made sure he wouldn't be a troublemaker anymore."

Pru didn't say anything when Gage stopped speaking. She was too busy trying to figure out what to do next. Normally, after the whole "how do we get out" discussion, the Controller would begin to get the subjects to talk about the problem at hand. Carefully manipulating the thoughts and will so what happened felt natural. But Gage and Ro had a scarily accurate grasp of the state of affairs.

Going completely against her training, Pru took a direct approach. "I'm not about to be zombified just so the two of you can keep duking it out. I shouldn't even be here." She shoved away from the men and stomped to the door. Pounding her fists

against the metal, she screamed. "Let me out! You've got the wrong person here! I'll tear the place down if someone doesn't open this door right now!"

"They won't let you out. Whoever's in charge must think you'll be helpful or they wouldn't have taken you in the first place."

"Fuck you, Ro." She pressed her back to the door. "It's your goddamn fault we're here at all." Crossing her arms over her chest, Pru dared him to contradict her. Ro was about to give her an in to work her magic, she felt it in her bones.

"What do you know about it?" He mimicked her stance, glaring back at her.

"I know that besides calling you a coward, Gage hasn't done anything remotely aggressive toward you. But you've tried to kill him twice!"

Chapter 12

"He should die! He let hundreds of us die because he's a power hungry bastard."

"Do tell." Pru looked at Gage, and the sad, guilty look she'd seen earlier was back on his face.

"He found out something that could have helped to protect vampires, but he chose not to share his knowledge."

"He's right. I didn't pass on my secret and vampires died." Gage stood, stretching the kinks from his body. "What Rothchilde forgets is that it's because a few rogues discovered my secret that anyone died. Exactly what I thought would happen, which was why I didn't share in the first place."

"You're so perfect, you knew what was best for us all? So a few took advantage, so what? We could have handled our own, but at least no one would have been as vulnerable to the inevitable human retribution." Spit clung to Ro's lower lip. Pru watched him fight against his need to attack. She had to regain control before they were stunned.

The two men stood less than a foot apart, bodies tense, rage and betrayal thick in the air. Without hesitation, she boldly stepped between them, placing a hand on each chest. "I don't think you want to be zapped again."

Ro growled, but eased back. Gage swiped a hand over his face, and then looked down at her. "The thing that Ro isn't saying is that his older brother was one of the few who learned how to day walk and it was because of his attacks on humans that so many died. Including my parents."

Pru looked at Ro, but the other man said nothing. "So, the long and short of it is Gage broke free of his chains to the night, and refused to tell every vampire how to do it. Your brother found out how, went nuts, and a bunch of people died."

"Less would have if they'd been able to waken during the day."

"Maybe. But I doubt it. Anyway, it's ancient history, right?"

"Inquisition ancient. Look, I don't really know why we're here. I do know I don't want to stay here long enough to find out if I'm right."

"I agree." Pru dropped her hand from Gage's chest. "Look, I get that there's more to this, but I figure you already tried to have him executed through the proper channels."

"The king agreed with his decision." Ro jabbed a finger at Gage, pain and betrayal lighting his bright green eyes.

"Then isn't it time to let this go?" Pru spoke softly. She didn't think it would be this easy, but a tiny part of her hoped.

"Never."

"Fine! Be a petulant child!" Furious with the stubborn vampire, Pru grabbed Gage's forearm and jerked him across the room. She dropped down onto one of the mattresses, urging him to follow.

Sex was one of the easiest and least intrusive ways to get deep into someone's mind. They focused on pleasure, which often left their minds open to those with the ability to see inside. Pru didn't think Gage would make it easy for her, but when he came, he'd have no control. She had to make sure his orgasm was as intense as possible. Otherwise, he might cling to some command over himself or the encounter. He'd seemed on the verge of giving over to her domination before and she hoped he would acquiesce now.

When he'd settled next to her, she rose to her knees and pressed Gage's broad shoulders to the wall. "Are you sure they can't see us?"

"No. Why?"

"Because I'm going to fuck you." She wiggled her body until the strength of his thighs pressed against her hips.

"I don't think that's a good idea." Gage put a hand on her shoulder, holding her back.

"Why not? These aren't ideal conditions but I don't care. If I'm going to get my brain scrambled then I'm gonna fuck you before that happens. Who knows, maybe we'll run into each other again and I'll remember?" Pru gave him a slow, naughty grin.

"We aren't alone." Gage moved his hand from her shoulder, curling his fingers around the back of her neck.

"Screw him. He can't bother us if all he wants is to hurt you. Let him watch. Maybe he'll decide he wants to play nice."

"Maybe." Gage grinned and tightened his grip. Pru raised a brow at his controlling action, lifting her own hands to caress his jaw.

There was a hint of desperation when their lips met. Neither of them gave in; instead, they took control with a caress of tongue or the nip of teeth. Back and forth, they fought for dominance, shifting their bodies until they were so close Pru felt the hard nubs of his nipples chafe against hers. She climbed over his thighs and settled over his groin, rolling her hips and pelvis in a wave-like motion, pleased by the rise of his cock against the lips of her sex.

"Mmm, you feel good." Pru arched her back when his hands cupped her breasts.

"Who's leading this show?" Gage pinched her nipples and Pru gasped.

She was shocked to find a part of herself wanting to let him take the lead. "I am." She looked down into his face and ground her pussy against him.

"Then command me, Mistress." Gage scraped his nails over the hard tips of her breasts and she moaned.

She rose off him, unzipping her dress. The leather fell away, exposing her naked body. When he reached for her nipples, Pru stopped his hands. "I didn't give you permission to touch me." He frowned but pulled back.

She tugged her arms free of her clothes, flinging the dress away. The shoes followed, leaving her naked in his arms. She wanted his mouth on her breasts. "Come and taste my nipples, Gage. Make me wet."

He growled with lust, then took one nipple deep into his hot mouth. His tongue worked over the stiff peak, flicking back and forth, circling. He tormented her aching

flesh with the scrape of teeth followed by hard suction. "So good." She groaned and her body shivered. "Touch the other nipple."

Gage moved his right hand up her ribcage and over the slope of her breast. He curled his fingers around it, squeezing softly, then more firmly. When Pru moaned, he tightened his grip. Reluctantly, he eased back, dragging the tips of his fingers over the nipple. Taking the hard nub between his thumb and forefinger, Gage pinched her. He didn't expect the way she went wild in his arms, fingers biting into his shoulders, hips slamming down against his rock hard cock through his pants.

She ground her pussy against him, riding his length, the hot smell of her desire driving him to the edge. Gage torqued her nipple hard and she shuddered. He bit down on the hard flesh in his mouth and she writhed. Prudence showed him how to please her with sound and motion and Gage gladly followed her lead.

"Mmm, Gage. You've done well. I'm so wet." Her blue eyes darkened with need and she tilted her neck to rest her forehead against the soft strands of his blond locks. "Stop touching me, now."

Gage didn't want to stop. He wanted to grab her hips and change their position. He wanted to ram his cock so hard and deep into her wet cunt that she screamed. But when she pulled away, he let her go, unsure when he'd agreed to become her submissive, but knowing he wouldn't change this moment if he could.

Pru stood on shaky legs and looked down at Gage. His hazel eyes were bright and clear, trust shining from their depths. She smiled. "Lie down." He obeyed and she dropped to her knees next to him.

Here in this room she didn't have any props. She had nothing with which to keep herself detached from Gage. Part of her was afraid she was getting too close already, but another part didn't care. With slow movements, Pru removed his shirt, pants, and shoes, telling him when and how to move. The pulse between her thighs pounded and her breathing grew harsh as she looked at the magnificent masculine body laid bare.

She laid her hands on his chest, stroking over the light hair, smiling at the ticklish sensation against her palms. His small nipples were tight, and he grumbled when she teased them. Pru massaged his hard musculature, enjoying the softness of his skin over the firmness of his pecs, abs, and thighs. She avoided touching his cock, pleased to watch it pulse with the pounding of his heart while she learned his body.

When her fingers had mapped all she'd let them, Pru lifted her body over his. Gage lifted his hands toward her, but she arched a brow. With a low growl, he dropped them, but the fierce passion in his eyes grew stronger. She grinned and lowered her torso until just the tips of her breasts caressed his skin. Up and down his body, she stroked her aching nipples, brushing against his hair-roughened cheeks, down over his own nipples, and lower.

When the thick shaft of his cock slipped between the heavy globes of her breasts, Pru dropped her chin and parted her lips. She slid her tongue past her teeth, tasting his flesh with soft, sweeping strokes. Gage moaned beneath her, lifting his hips. Knowing it was instinctive, but needing to keep control, Pru slipped just the head of his cock into her mouth, then bit down. His body grew tense, but his hips lowered to the bed once more. She loosened her teeth then rewarded him.

"Fuck!"

His guttural exclamation drew things low in Pru's body even tighter. Her pussy pulsed as she swallowed the entirety of his cock in one quick motion. Using a gulping action, Pru caressed the long, hard flesh until she had to rise to breathe. His body slipped from her mouth, slick with spit and bright red with need.

"Damn."

Pru looked over her shoulder, pleased to see a naked, aroused Ro standing off to the left. He had his cock in hand, slowly rubbing the heavy organ. Slimmer than Gage, but no less beautifully built, he'd honed his body in life. Now, it maintained its perfection for eternity. His shoulders were broad, his chest covered with a thick mat of hair that trailed across his pectorals and down the center of his abs. His magnificent

upper body tapered to a narrow waist, the sexy cut of muscle and skin above his groin drawing her eyes.

"Can we help you, Ro?" Pru wrapped her fingers around Gage's cock and brought it to her lips. Eyes locked with Ro's, she sucked, licked, swallowed, and enjoyed the hard flesh in her hand. She drew her mouth away to mimic Ro's hand, sliding her palm up and over Gage's cock in the exact rhythm.

Both men moaned. When Ro stopped moving, so did Pru. She watched the dark-haired vampire fight the urge to come as he watched her. From the corner of her eye, she saw a bead of liquid appear at the tip of Gage's cock. Turning away from Ro, she laved her tongue over the crown of the stiff shaft, murmuring how much she enjoyed the taste and lapping up every drop Gage gave her.

Looking up at Gage, Pru smiled. "I'm going to fuck you. Do not come until I tell you to."

He swallowed hard. "I won't."

Pru turned around, shifting her legs and her body until she could ride Gage, as she liked best. And to best affect their voyeur. With exaggerated slowness, Pru held the heavy cock in her hand upright and lowered herself onto its length. He felt so good, finally buried between her legs, filling her pussy. She didn't bother to stop the soft, keening wail as she impaled herself.

Opening her heavy eyelids, Pru locked gazes with Ro. "Be useful. Come lick my clit while I ride this magnificent cock."

A battle of wills ensued, brief though it was. Prudence sensed Ro wasn't keen on following her directions, but his arousal was such that base instinct overruled his ego. With a snarl, he released his cock and strode toward her. Pru didn't smile, knowing he would look for any reason to balk, but oh, how she wanted to.

Pru leaned back, spreading her thighs farther apart, moaning when Gage shifted beneath her to make room for Ro. Excitement sizzled through her blood as she watched his mouth move toward her slick pussy. At the first electric touch of his tongue, Pru ground her hips against Gage, bracing her palms against his hard abs.

“More.” Ro looked up at her, fire and need in his eyes. He leaned back, disobeying her, but Pru merely lifted a brow. “Lick me.” Ro slid his hands up her legs, the feather light touch making her breath catch, until his hands framed the smooth triangle of flesh at the apex of her thighs. His thumbs teased the swollen lips of her sex, trailing through her juices, spreading them over her skin.

Pru moved to draw her legs together. She wasn’t going to play his way and he knew it. When she shifted, he pressed the base of his thumb to her clit. Pru didn’t react, a groan lodging in her throat. “Play my way or not at all.”

Ro narrowed his eyes and ground his teeth. When his thumb moved away, she knew she had him. “Fine.”

Settling his lithe, lean body against the bed, Ro drew his thumbs down her labia, pulling the slick lips apart. He looked up at Pru, then down to where she was impaled on Gage’s thick cock. With a growl, he lowered his mouth to her and began to lick for all he was worth.

Pru bit her tongue to hold back her orgasm. She sat up on Gage’s hips, bringing one hand around to Ro’s head, threading her fingers deep into his thick hair. With her guiding him, and keeping his motions slow, Ro ate her pussy like he’d been trained for it. His tongue lapped, circled, then stiffened and flicked her hard, throbbing clit until cream ran from her sex.

“Yes. Fuck, lick me harder.” She tightened her fingers against his scalp and quickened her hips. Gage’s cock grew harder, longer inside and Pru tilted her hips so the wide head rubbed over her G-spot again and again. It still wasn’t enough.

She jerked Ro’s hair. He looked up at her. “I want to feel you inside me, Ro. I want to burn.” She wasn’t sure if he’d understand her meaning but when she felt the tip of his finger slide between her labia and Gage’s cock, she moaned loudly in delight.

His tongue continued to tease her clit as he worked first one finger and then two inside her, moving in counterpoint to her pumping hips. Pru’s clit swelled beneath his mouth and need built into an overwhelming tsunami of sensation until her body couldn’t hold it in anymore.

"Yes!" She screamed her orgasm at the top of her lungs, her pussy tightening, burning, convulsing around Gage's cock and Ro's fingers. The pain was delicate, enhancing the pleasure until nothing existed but the white-hot ecstasy coursing through her blood.

Both men stayed still as she writhed and bucked around them. When her orgasm ebbed to small shudders, Pru licked her dry lips and tried to steady her shaking limbs. She leaned her body backward until Gage's breadth and strength cradled her.

Pulling her legs up, she rested her feet on his thighs and looked down the slick, sweaty line of her torso. Ro's emerald green eyes met hers over the rise of her mons and she smiled. "Fuck me."

He lifted his brows in question. "What?"

"Put your cock in my pussy."

"We're too big together." Genuine concern flashed in his eyes and Pru sighed.

"I've just come, Ro. I'm slick with cream. And you aren't too big. You'll hurt just right. Now, fuck me." She laid her head back against Gage, dropping her arms to his, lifting his hands to her breasts.

"You know what I want, Gage?"

His palms cradled her flesh while his fingers began plucking her nipples. "Yes, Mistress." Her title on his lips, given without order, sent her blood humming once more.

"Hard. Pinch them, pull them, and do it hard." Nipple torture was Pru's single favorite bondage kink. She didn't have clamps here, but with the first hard compression of her nipples between Gage's fingers, she knew she wouldn't need them.

Her pussy fluttered around Gage, the orgasm only warming her up for this. When the blunt head of Ro's cock pressed against the mouth of her sex, Pru moaned softly. It took him a few tries to find the soft place at the opening of her pussy where his cock could gain entrance without problem.

When the head of his shaft was pressed tight between the rippling walls of her pussy and the rigid length of Gage's cock, Ro stopped. Pru opened her eyes to watch

him, arching her back when the blond beneath her twisted her aching nipples. She flexed her pussy, working the muscles around the dual cocks, juices flowing like honey to smooth the way.

“Oh, God.” Ro’s body shook on the verge of release.

“No.”

“I... can’t...”

“What are you, a randy boy? You will not come.” She gasped as he slid another few inches of his cock inside.

Their bodies were slick with sweat when he had his slightly shorter, but equally thick shaft buried in her wet pussy. Pru’s lungs struggled to take in enough air. Her body vibrated, the burn of double penetration moving her toward a state few dominants or submissives reached. The pain was beyond delicious, it was decadent, heady, powerful and more erotic than the lash of a whip or the tightening of a clamp.

“Move.” Her command was harsh, but neither man disobeyed.

With a synchronicity that might have made her curious any other time, the two Master Vampires pushed and pulled their swollen cocks in and out of her body with sinful precision. Gage’s fingers tormented her breasts, squeezing the tender buds, taking Pru into the oblivion of absolute control. She heard their moans, felt their tempo increase, and she tightened her body around them.

“Harder. Harder!” She reached up blindly, her hands landing against hard muscle and coarse hair. She curled her fingers, digging her nails deep, for a moment giving over to the leashed power pounding into her. When white light exploded behind her lids, she opened her mouth and bellowed one word. “Come!”

Ro and Gage pumped once more each. Then one cock pulsed, steaming hot seed flooding her pussy, and the other echoed. Once, twice, three times they exploded against the tight, wet walls of her pussy, until they had nothing left to give. She was full to overflowing with cock, with come, and Pru mewled at the perfection.

Slowly, with gentleness, Gage and Ro extracted themselves from her body. She shuddered hard in their arms, smoothing her palms over their skin, feeling them shiver

in response. The intensity had passed, for now, but the immensity of the two men lying so close without fighting wasn't lost on Pru.

Chapter 13

If only all progress felt as good as this. Pru shifted between the vampires, their bodies cradling hers. They hadn't slept after the sex and they hadn't talked, but neither man had pulled away either. What they'd done was good and more than just physically.

Carefully, Pru reached out with her mind to Ro. His thoughts churned, confusion clouding his head. He felt like he was losing his advantage. How could he have been so aroused sharing a lover with his sworn enemy? Images of both her and Gage rolled through his mind, perplexing her. It was as if Ro wasn't sure which was the enemy. Pru delved deeper, searching for some hope that she could move forward from here and not lose ground.

Ro and Gage had been good friends before all of this. They'd done all the things young vampires did together. They spent their time learning to shape shift, learning to wield their power, seducing humans. Then the Inquisition came and all the fun stopped. Vampires were at war, struggling to survive. Toward the end, Gage had told Ro that he'd learned how to day walk.

Guilt as thick and choking as smoke crashed through Ro. Pru was close to the heart of his hatred. Breathing slowly to maintain focus and control, she dove into his guilt. It was time for the truth.

A fragment of thought whipped through her mind, a small bit of information about the Group. She frowned, attracted by it, her instinct telling her to chase the thought. But Ro's mind flashed another image of anger and Pru turned her attention to it.

Wrapping her power around the tiny memory, Pru pulled it close and read it. Ro knew his brother had conquered day walking. He suspected his brother would do

something stupid, but he'd told no one. When he'd finally stepped in it was too late. His brother had attacked a group of Inquisitors, slaughtering them. His thirst for revenge caused the humans to take up arms, one last battle against evil before their leaders ended the Inquisition.

Pru slipped from his mind. No wonder he couldn't forgive Gage. He couldn't forgive himself. She shifted to press her mouth to his chest. Knowing where his hate came from helped, but Ro had been carrying it so long, she wasn't sure if two days would be enough time to fix him.

Gage shifted behind her, his cock hard once more. She grinned when he prodded the cheeks of her ass, asking without words if she was ready to go again. She grabbed his hand from her hip, intending to guide it to her swollen breasts. But as she watched his hand move over her body, an impish idea formed.

When she laid his palm against Ro's stomach, the other vampire flinched. "Back off." He tried to jerk away.

"Since when do you make the rules?" Her tone was hard.

Ro whipped his head to face her, his eyes hot and angry. "I always make the rules, you just don't know it yet."

"Really?" With her hand guiding his, Pru slid Gage's palm up over Ro's washboard abs. She moved slowly, watching the long masculine fingers as they traced over muscles, then ribs, finally circling flat, male nipples.

Ro tensed, his eyes dilating as rough fingers teased the buds to taut points. His nostrils flared and his lips parted, flashing the white of fangs. Under Pru's guidance, Gage brought Ro's cock to life once more, just by teasing his nipples. When a bead of pre-come glistened on the tip, she pulled Gage's hand away.

He gasped at the loss of Gage's touch. "Don't stop."

"Wrong thing to say."

"Fuck you." Ro rolled away from them to a sitting position on the edge of the mattress.

"I already allowed that. Now I want to watch you fuck him. Then I'm going to watch you suck his cock until he comes down your throat." Gage tensed beneath her and she was sure her words had surprised him.

She slipped off Gage, cuddling next to his side. With the gentle pressure of her fingers along his jaw, she turned his face toward hers. She searched his eyes, looking for the glint that said she'd pushed her submissive too far out of his comfort zone. Instead, she saw desire and a little apprehension.

"You'd do that, wouldn't you? Let him slide his cock deep inside you, then watch his mouth taste you until your come shines on his lips?" She whispered her question, knowing Ro could hear her regardless.

"Yes." His voice was gravelly and his eyes never left hers.

"I won't do it."

Something about the way Ro said the words gave Pru the feeling she was missing something. It felt as if he were trying to push her. As if he wanted to see what her breaking point was, and what she'd do when she went past it. Ro Thomas presented a challenge she hadn't had in quite a while and part of her did want to bend him to her will.

In fact, the more she thought about taking over his body, feeling his fight to break free while she manipulated him for her entertainment, the more the dark part of her fought to get its way. But Pru wasn't a prisoner to her base self. She wouldn't deprive herself of gaining his obedience through manipulation of a different sort. Her satisfaction wouldn't be as complete if she cheated, so to speak.

"Then don't. I don't need a cock to fuck Gage. My fingers will work just fine." She trailed her fingertips over his belly, dancing over the hardened shaft of his prick, tracing the soft sacs below that, until she came to the hidden entrance to his body.

"Hmmm." Gage spread his thighs apart, opening himself to her ministrations.

She pressed against his anus, pleased to find the opening still slick with their combined juices. Using gentle pressure, she eased her index finger inside. The best thing about vampire lovers was neither party had to worry about disease or

contamination. The first knuckle slid in easily, bringing a smile to her lips. Gage wasn't a stranger to anal sex.

The second knuckle slipped into the soft, warm grasp of his body, and Pru wiggled the digit slightly. Gage groaned, his glutes flexing as pleasure poured through his body. The small, almond-shaped rise of flesh beneath her fingertip pulsed, and pre-come began leaking in a near steady stream from the head of his cock.

"Damn you." Ro flipped his body over Gage's leg, his knees landing between the other vampire's. Pru withdrew her finger.

"Did you want something?"

His jaw tightened and a vein in his temple throbbed. "May I fuck him, Mistress?" Each word was barely audible through his clenched teeth.

"Let's ask Gage. Do you want to be fucked?"

"Yes, please."

The powerful man at her side continued to impress her. It was obvious he wasn't used to a bottom position, though he'd enjoyed it a time or two. But still, since Ro had joined them, he'd given the other man no reason to attack and every reason to forgive him. In fact, Pru thought he made a better Controller than she did. He seemed to instinctively know how to moderate without making others feel like they were being led.

"If that's what you want." Gage nodded and Pru glanced at Ro. "Then you may take him." She pulled her finger from Gage's body, sliding her hand upward to envelop his cock and balls, holding them out of Ro's way.

She watched as Ro readied himself, coating his hard, veined length with spit. He shifted closer to Gage, pressing the wide head of his cock against the tight opening. Gage mumbled something Pru didn't understand, his back arching slightly as Ro slid his cock past the first ring of muscle. With the head of Ro's prick lodged firmly within his ass, Gage relaxed, his cock flexing in Pru's grip. She watched the muscles of his stomach tighten as he bore down on the thick flesh invading his body, but his face held nothing but pleasure.

Pru sat up so she could see the two men locked together. Her pussy was so wet, wetter than before. She thought about turning their focus back onto her, then tossed the idea away. The eroticism of two powerful, legendary men fucking each other was too arousing for her to spoil it in selfishness.

She watched, enraptured, while Ro's cock speared Gage's body. Their movements held her captive, unable to look away. Gage moaned, the muscles of his body flexing, tightening, as pleasure rushed through his blood. Ro's powerful shoulders tensed, the muscles of his back rippling, as he slid his cock in and out of his lover. Seeing these men locked in carnal ecstasy was the most sensuous vision Pru could remember witnessing.

"Ride him hard and deep, Ro. I want his come to coat my hand."

Ro made a guttural sound and his hips began to move. She watched the thick length move, slowly then faster, in and out of Gage's ass. Gage dug his hand into her shoulder. His head tossed from side to side as Ro took him to the edge, then retreated. His body shuddered, so close to fulfillment, but he didn't say a word.

When his breathing slowed, Ro thrust his hips again. He shoved his cock all the way in, then pulled it completely out, only to slam home once more. Sweat beaded on his brow and dripped onto Pru's hand where it held Gage's cock and balls. She leaned close to lick it off and the action sent Ro over the edge.

He gripped Gage's hips like a lifeline, lifting himself onto his knees. The new position made his penetration deeper, stronger, and he let himself go. He pounded into the tight, hot channel, his balls drawing tight to his body, his entire frame going rigid. Pru watched at close range, fascinated by the barely suppressed violence in his motions. Ro fucked like a madman, ramming his cock deep over and over until he came with a gasp, the air forced from his body by the strength of his orgasm.

When he was finished, he dropped to his hands and knees, slipping from Gage's body with a slippery sound. Gage growled and his body shook. Pru leaned over and whispered nonsense in his ear, soothing him back from the edge. She gave Ro a few moments to compose himself before she spoke. "Take his cock in your mouth."

This time, for the first time, Ro didn't argue or glare. He simply brought his mouth to the head of Gage's cock and opened wide to take him in. Pru moved her hand and scooted back so she could watch without intruding. She pulled Gage's hand from her shoulder, resting it against Ro's head.

While Ro swallowed Gage's length, Pru slipped a hand between her thighs. Her body was a little sore from earlier, but deliciously so. Pressing her index and middle fingers on either side of her hard clit, Pru began to pluck and roll the most sensitive area on her body until her pussy spasmed.

She watched Ro's sensual mouth slip over Gage's thick cock head, watched his throat work to swallow the massive length and girth. Saliva shone on his lips. He sucked cock like a pro, his hands playing with Gage's balls while he bobbed up and down.

From the way Ro positioned his body, Pru couldn't see if he was hard again, but the slow pumping of his hips implied there was a good chance. Vampires really were amazing in the sack. As long as they'd fed recently, they could go, well, if not forever, for a very long time.

The red tip of his tongue slipped from his swollen lips, flicking rapidly at the underside of Gage's cock, stimulating the sensitive point where shaft meets crown. Gage jerked the thick hair beneath his fingers, suddenly taking control. He tilted Ro's head slightly to the side before plunging his cock past masculine lips. Ro relaxed his jaw, humming loudly, as Gage pumped his hips, thrusting his cock deep down Ro's throat, holding the smaller vampire's head still as he worked his cock in a circular rhythm.

Pru strummed her clit fast. She was close to coming again, amazed at the animalistic hunger watching Gage and Ro unleashed inside. She nearly spoke, wanting to tell Gage to fuck Ro's mouth harder, faster, but she held her tongue, unwilling to ruin the moment.

"May I come?" Gage pulled his cock free of Ro's mouth, then stuffed it back deep, the muscles in his stomach and arms bulging with tension.

“Yes. Oh, yes.” With a hard pinch to her clit, Pru went over the edge, surprised at the softness of the orgasm despite the hard need making her blood pound.

“Fuck, yeah. Oh, God.” Gage held Ro’s head very still, his cock half in and half out of the other man’s mouth as he shot load after searing load of come down his throat.

Pru watched Ro swallow convulsively, trying to get every drop of come, but some slipped from his mouth to trickle over his lip and onto his chin. She moaned softly when Gage grunted hard and pulled Ro up his body, leaning off the bed and crushing the mouth that had pleased him against his own. Pru shuddered as Gage licked his own release from the lips of his lover, her body clenching in reaction.

The two men broke apart, their large bodies moving to settle on either side of her. Pru sighed. She could definitely get used to this.

Chapter 14

Ro opened his eyes and looked down at Gage. A small smear of come glistened on the other man's lower lip and Ro fought the urge to drop down and lick it away. What was he thinking? He had to remain focused, but with each passing moment that was getting harder and harder to do. Ro didn't know what was happening to him. His face must have shown some emotion, because Gage grabbed his forearms in a vise-like grip. "No. I won't let you turn this into something bad, Ro."

Trying to free himself, Ro shook his head. "This is bad." He glanced at Pru then back to Gage. "We shouldn't be doing this..." Ro trailed off.

"This is exactly what we should be doing and you know it. It's the best way to get to the heart of the matter without hurting anyone." Gage tightened his fingers.

The exact same thought had flitted through Ro's mind. "Stay out of my head, Gage. You have no right." Ro looked away, panic rising through his belly and chest. He had to be free. He couldn't stay here with Gage or Pru. They were stripping him of his control and it was unacceptable.

"He has every right. If you would swear to stop the blood feud, maybe we can get out of here." With interest, Pru watched Ro argue with himself at her suggestion. Then she looked toward Gage.

Pru would have had to be blind and dumb not to see Gage wasn't interested in fighting. He probably hadn't been for a long time. He only continued the blood feud out of his sense of responsibility to his cadre. A strong leader wouldn't allow his people to suffer without retribution.

The sliding portal in the door opened and a box was stuffed into the space. The smell of food made Pru's stomach grumble. As soon as she pulled the container free, the opening slammed shut. With a harrumph, Pru settled at the table.

"There's stuff for sandwiches in here as well as more water and packaged blood." She had to stifle laughter at how quickly her companions moved toward her. She was sure they were hungry, but the chance to change the topic spurred them into action.

The men sat with her and she handed each a portion of blood. They were polite enough to turn away and drink with some care for her human sensibilities, which Pru found very sweet. As they satisfied their need for hemoglobin, Pru took out the rest of the box's contents and spread the food out on the table.

When the meal was finished, Pru was ready for bed. It had been a very trying day, and though there had been some reward, she'd done all the mediating she could for one day. "I'm going to sleep, boys. Why don't you two try and come up with a way to get out of here." With a kiss to each man's cheek, she shuffled to the beds and went to sleep.

* * *

"What is it about her that makes me want to do what she demands?" Ro watched Prudence as she slept, trying to understand all the emotions she stirred in him.

"She's a woman unlike any we've known." Gage tapped his fingers on the table.

"No, I've met women with control issues."

"Prudence doesn't have control issues, Ro. She's in control."

Ro snorted. "I'm not so sure that's true. Still, there's something else I can't put my finger on."

"There's more to her than a dominatrix at Club Ovelia." Gage looked away from Ro's face, taking in the sleeping form of their companion. "She's doing exceptionally well. I know she's manipulating me, it's her job, but I can't even detect her presence in my head."

"She's incredible. I wasn't pretending earlier, in her room. She had complete control of my motor cortex. It's a damn good thing I kept her focused on me. You wouldn't have stood a chance against her power. She'd have known it was a set up." Ro faced him, an unasked question shining in his eyes.

"I suspected as much. You were definitely convincing. Hell, I almost thought you really hadn't forgiven me and moved on after that argument."

Ro laughed. "Thankfully, we really did hate each other at one time, otherwise there'd be no way we could keep this believable. I don't know how much of our disagreement she heard or sensed, but it still ended up working to our benefit." He leaned back in his chair and rested his forearms against the tabletop.

"Or hers. Bringing all that up kept my brain focused on the right things and prevented her from being suspicious."

"No, you're lucky I'm so antagonistic. You were throwing guilt off in waves."

Gage grinned sheepishly. "I know. But it worked. She didn't question why I felt guilty did she? Besides, I don't like this whole operation."

"You know why we're doing it. She's too strong for the Group to assign her a true Collaring until they know she can control her darker self."

"Ro, she hasn't even stepped over the line." Gage lifted his hands, palm up. "She's passed in my opinion. We should call off this practice."

"We haven't pushed her hard enough yet. I've felt her wavering." Ro frowned and shook his head.

"What do you suggest, then?"

"We're going to have to take her control."

"She could destroy us."

"Better us, so the Group can be here for damage control, than some unsuspecting Nightsider."

"Ro, she's totally dedicated. You saw her file. I know you've been poking around in her head."

"I'm not a true telepath, Gage. You know that. I'm strong, but not that strong. Shit, she was digging around earlier and I know she sensed a stray thought about the Group. I had to dredge up some anger and refocus on our old argument to keep her from chasing after that fuck up. I'm lucky she did."

"Have you really found out anything to make you believe she might go rogue?" Gage leaned closer, his intensity making Ro wonder if his lover would be able to follow this assignment to the end.

The other vampire truly believed Pru wasn't a threat. "All I know for sure is she really dislikes Levaton, she feels gratitude for the Group and all they've done for her and her family, and she really gets off on watching us fuck. Or fucking her." Ro grinned lustily, lightening the mood. He still felt Pru was a risk to the Group, but he couldn't help the surge of satisfaction that came from knowing how much they affected her.

"Her father's the reason she joined. If it weren't for the Group, he'd have rotted away in a mental institution."

"She feared the same thing. I understand her loyalty. But the Group has to know she won't snap."

"She made it through training, didn't she?" Gage lifted a hand to stop Ro's response when Pru shifted on the bed.

"She made it through by telling herself she only had to submit until she graduated. There isn't any carrot for her to chase anymore." Ro leaned forward and tapped Gage on the chest. "Stop letting your feelings cloud your judgment."

"That isn't the problem and you know it. What if we manage to do what all the instructors couldn't? What if we break her?" Gage scooted his chair away from the table.

"I don't think that'll happen. If it does, the Group is ready for that possibility. She'll be well taken care of, you know that."

"Bullshit. She won't be the same." He turned away from Ro and stood up, then began to pace in front of the wall.

Ro sighed and moved to his partner and friend. "We won't let that happen. She's dominant. She's always been dominant. What she lacks is trust in her abilities. She frightens herself. It's our job to rid her of that fear." Slipping his arms around Gage's waist, Ro pressed his face against powerful back muscles.

"All right. We'll do it your way. But if I think --"

"We'll stop if you think she's in real danger."

Gage turned in Ro's arms, sliding his hands into his lover's dark hair. He lowered his head, his mouth grazing masculine lips.

"Isn't this wonderful. You've made up." The scathing, furious words jerked Ro and Gage apart.

"Let us explain, Prudence." Gage motioned her to move closer.

"Stay away from me."

"Look, we're sorry. At least it's out in the open now. We can get to work." Ro had drawn close to her, but Pru wasn't oblivious.

"If you don't stop moving, I'll stop you myself."

Ro stilled. Her threat was potent. She was potent. Despite the very real threat at hand, his cock filled with blood. The danger of confronting her added a sexual element that wasn't entirely unwelcome.

"Pru, please, just listen." Gage spoke softly and held still as one would do if they cornered a deadly animal.

"Shut up. I don't want to hear a word. This charade is over. Release me or I'll prove to the Relic Group just how right they were to fear me."

Chapter 15

Prudence held onto her control by a thin, fraying thread. She couldn't believe what she'd heard. She'd poured everything she had into the Group and they'd treated her like a guinea pig. They didn't trust her and the hardest thing about learning that was facing the part of her that agreed.

Rage unlike anything Pru could begin to comprehend tore through her soul. The little evil inside fed off her fury, growing, fear reinforcing its control. She wanted to lash out. She wanted to destroy every mind she could.

"No. No." Pru clasped her head in her hands and dropped to her knees. She wouldn't submit to the dark voice. Instinct nearly overwhelmed her, her subconscious screaming so loudly in her head, demanding she protect herself.

"Pru, let us help." Gage's voice was close.

"Get away from me."

"Suck it up, Agent Gordon." Ro spoke in a tone that was harsh and disappointed. "The Group has been around for a very long time. Do you think they'd have maintained secrecy and effectiveness if they let untried, but powerful new agents just hit the pavement unchecked?"

Every word that left Ro's mouth increased her rage tenfold. Pru clenched her fists. If they'd just leave her alone, she could deal with her feelings and pack everything away like she always did. But they wouldn't leave her alone.

"Prudence, trust us. We can help you, but you have to let us in." A palm, so familiar, caressed her arm.

She shrugged Gage off. Why wouldn't they give her some room?

"Forget it, Gage. I guess I was right. The Mistress isn't in control after all, she just likes to play at it."

Pru looked up at Ro. He was pushing her, trying to make her snap. They thought, hell, it seemed everyone thought she was some sort of wild cannon. What did they think, she was going to create a brainwashed army and take over the world? Though she wouldn't deny a tiny part of her thought the idea had merit, Pru realized that part didn't rule her.

No, it helped her remember the boundaries. For all the evil she could do, Prudence finally understood she shouldn't fear her gift. She should embrace it. With her conscience as a guide, she didn't need to fight so hard against her base instincts because they kept her grounded. They kept her from being too cocky, too arrogant.

She stared into Ro's eyes and felt the weight of her internal struggle float away. A brief thought to thank him flitted through her mind, but she couldn't do that just yet. They wanted to push her to the edge, and Prudence couldn't think of a better way to prove she was in charge than to take it.

"You think so, Ro? Well, I guess you're right." She didn't even try to be nice. Pru blasted him, charging full bore into his mind and crushing his ambulatory functions beneath her will. He didn't even have a chance and the shock in his green eyes was almost enough to satisfy her small need for payback.

"Prudence, what have you done?" Gage's voice was soft with worry.

Pru turned her face toward him. Even though he'd been involved, she'd heard his hesitation about the entire operation when he'd thought she was asleep. Pru did not intend to hurt either man, quite the contrary, and she felt a moment of guilt over what she was about to do.

It lasted for a minute. Gage hadn't been a jackass like Ro, but his deception hurt just as much. Partly because of the intensity of the last few days, and partly because she'd been in their heads, Pru knew she was dangerously close to falling into something more than lust with the Master Vampires. The aching part of her heart needed this small vengeance.

"I'm going to show you two how wrong you are." It was easier to roll Gage. He didn't fight her for control. She arched a brow at him. "Perhaps you're the one who plays at dominance."

"No, Prudence. All I know is domination, but I trust you. I don't see you as a challenge to conquer, but as an equal."

Yeah, I could definitely love Gage Mills. She didn't respond with words. Instead, Pru tapped into his mind and brought him to her side. Ro was of course more difficult, but she had little trouble getting inside his mind. She ignored the part of her that said he didn't fight as hard because he felt guilty. It didn't matter what he felt. He was no match for her either way.

Though what she was doing had little to do with lust and everything to do with power, Pru softened her grip on Gage's mind once she had them both firmly in hand. He would follow her instructions as he had before, as any good mediator would.

Now that she had control, she didn't need words to gain obedience. When she had them positioned how she wanted, she dropped to her knees and took their cocks into her hands. With her power deep in their psyches, it took little time for them to come all over her bare breasts.

With their fluid hot on her skin, she mentally shoved them to their knees, directing them to lick her clean. Pru fought against arousal. She wasn't doing this to get off, but to prove a point. That she could make them do whatever she wanted, however she wanted it.

When her skin was clean, she sent them to dress. Like perfect automatons, they did as she desired. When they were clothed, and she had redressed as well, she forced them to the door. Ro fought her every inch as she forced them to give the all clear.

She heard the lock unbolt. Pulling them away from the door, she shoved her power into them with all the rage and betrayal she felt. Both men caved under her fury, dropping to their knees.

“I could obliterate your minds, your memories, wipe your souls if I wanted. But I’m not going to. My power doesn’t rule me. I want you both to remember this, every minute of every day. Remember how close you came to being nothing.”

The door opened and Pru released them from her power. The guards entered, taking in the scene with suspicion. “Is everything okay?”

Gage recovered himself first. “Yes. She’s clear to leave. She passed.”

Pru turned back to glare at the vampires. Gage met her gaze, the old sadness and guilt shining there, but Ro didn’t even look up. She stared hard at the back of his head before turning her back on them in disgust. “Get me out of here.”

Chapter 16

"Heya, Bertie!" Pru gave the massive lupercan an equally enormous hug. After two weeks of "vacation," it was fantastic to be back at Ovelia.

"We missed ya, Pru. How was your trip?" Bertie gave her a sweet peck on the cheek.

She grinned. After leaving the mediation cell, Pru had turned in her badge. While she understood the Group's reasons for what had happened, she couldn't be a part of anything that would perpetuate subterfuge against its own. She'd gone to Antonio and asked for time off, which, after looking at her haggard appearance, he'd granted with the rule that she keep in touch and let him know how she was.

"I had a very relaxing time." Pru squeezed him one more time before letting him go.

"George wants you to stop at the bar. He said Antonio left a message for you."

"Where's Antonio?" Pru frowned slightly. Her boss never took a day off.

"He's looking into opening a new club in Chicago. He'll be back in a couple of days."

"Good for him, then. Business must be good." With a small smile, Pru left Bertie at the door and headed for the bar.

George looked up as she approached, an awkwardness settling over his features. "Hi, Pru."

"George." She'd been pissed when the Group had debriefed her about her "test," informing her George had been aware of the situation. But she wasn't leaving Ovelia, so over her leave she'd decided to let the past stay there.

"Look, about what happened. I'm sorry."

"I know. Tell you what, we don't ever talk about it again?" Pru let a little bit of anger leak into her tone.

George nodded. "Here, Antonio left you this." He handed her a data pad.

"My schedule?"

"I don't know. Probably."

"He'll be back by the end of the week, right?"

"Yeah, as far as I know. Anyway, I gotta get ready for tonight."

"See ya later, then." Pru gave George a thumbs up before making her way to her room.

When she stepped inside, the first thing she noticed was the small package on the bed, wrapped in plain brown paper. The second thing she noticed was a small desk in her sitting area. She frowned at the communications monitor on its top.

"What the hell?"

Data pad in hand, Pru wandered toward the desk. She pulled the chair out and began opening drawers. In one, she found stationery and antique writing equipment. In another, she found a micro-CPU. The tiny computer interface cost more than a year of her salary. Curiosity became befuddlement as Pru tried to figure out why on earth she needed any of the items.

Looking down at the data pad, Pru pressed the power button and waited for its system to boot up. Once it did, she touched the only icon on the preview pane.

"Hey, babe." Antonio's smiling face looked up at her in 2-D. "I bet you're looking around and thinking someone made a mistake. Well, it's not a mistake, but it is up to you."

"What the hell are you going on about?" Pru didn't expect an answer from the recording, but she couldn't stop from asking the question.

"I bet you've already rifled through the desk, so I don't need to tell you where the CPU is. Boot up the system, the rest of my message is there." The data pad went blank.

Anticipation like a flock of butterflies fluttered in her belly. She turned on the computer, watching with nervous energy as the communication monitor came to life. Antonio had set his program to auto run and as soon as the machine was active, his face reappeared.

"Okay, first, I have to tell you I'm sorry. I didn't realize what was going on with the vamps and you until it was too late to help. If it's any consolation, I have never doubted you and I was furious over the whole situation."

Pru sat back in her chair, wondering if everyone around her worked for the Group.

"Don't go thinking I work for the Relic Group. I don't. But Ovelia is my business, my employees a family. I wouldn't be a very good businessman if I didn't know what was going on, and who my people really are." His grin shone from the monitor and Pru smiled back.

"Sorry about that. Protocol and all." She wasn't actually talking to Antonio, but apologizing felt right anyway.

"Don't apologize for not telling me. You shouldn't have and I didn't expect you to. Anyway, I figure I know you pretty well, better than the Group, which is what all this set up is about."

Pru cocked her head to the side, giving the recording an odd look.

"Everyone thinks I'm in Chicago for a few days, scouting possible locations for a second club. Well, the truth is I already have a new club. I named it Control." She laughed, as did the recording.

Antonio's image continued. "Anyway, the grand opening is this week, and I had to be here. Now it's time to lay it out there. I knew you wouldn't stay with the Group after what happened. I'm sure you could understand their actions, but loyalty is very important to you, Pru. You wouldn't be able to work for someone you didn't trust."

"Got it in one, Antonio."

"But I also felt sure you'd come back to Ovelia. And she needs you. I need you. I want you to take over Ovelia for me. You have everything you need, inside, to keep the club going and, I'm certain, make it even better."

"What? Antonio, you're crazy!" Pru jumped up from her chair. *What in the hell is he thinking? I don't know how to run a club.*

"I don't know what you're thinking right now, but let me give you some reassurances. The business part will almost take care of itself. George runs the bar with extreme efficiency. You won't have to worry about that, either. It's the employees who need you. I'm not a dominant. I've never pretended I was. Everyone is reasonably happy, I think, but I'm sure there are some things I do totally wrong. You will do them right."

"Well, the scheduling is a little crazy." Pru bit her lip, anticipation turning to excitement. Antonio was asking for something huge.

"I'll be back Friday. Think about what I've asked. When I get back, we'll go to dinner and work out the details. I'm glad you came back to us in one piece, Pru." With a small smile, Antonio blew her a kiss. "Oh, one more thing. I don't know if you know it already or if it will even make a difference, but... your vampires really are at war. Well, so to speak. Gage and Ro have been lovers for a while. Knowing you, you're probably only feeling more like a fool. Don't. Only their closest guards even know about their relationship. The only reason I know is because, well, I wouldn't be the kind of business person I am if I didn't know what was going on in the Nightside. I want you to remember that they're both brilliant businessmen. In order to protect their groups, they have to allow little skirmishes to occur.

"I'm sure the Group pumped the animosity up for your benefit, but from what I've learned, your boys keep their groups separate so as not to draw fire from the Vampire Nation. If they combined their people into one House or Cadre, they'd lay claim to about sixty percent of the U.S."

"Holy shit. I didn't know they were so far-spread." Pru tapped a finger to her lower lip. There was no way vampires would allow a monopoly like that to exist. Gage

and Ro would be at war with any number of houses and cadres, not to mention the king himself. All of them intent on destroying Gage and Ro's expanded power base. It just wouldn't do for two Master Vampires to have more influence than the Vampire King.

"And I'm sure you know that at one time, they did hate each other. I'm not trying to make excuses for them. I'm just suggesting they lied to you a little less than you thought they did. Anyway, Gage dropped that package off. I think you should open it. One more thing, I didn't schedule you tonight. You can take the evening to watch the club or whatever. Maybe it'll help you decide. See you Friday, babe." The screen went blank.

Pru looked back at the present. She had refused to speak to either man since she'd left them in the cell. They'd both contacted her, for the first few days afterward, but she'd ignored them. The ex-agent part of her had forgiven them almost immediately, but the woman inside was still hurting. With a sigh, she stalked to the bed and picked up the gift.

Never one to be careful of wrapping paper, Pru tore the covering off the box. She lifted the lid and looked inside. Two collars lay on a bed of thin paper. She set the box down and took out one collar. It tingled beneath her fingers, then sent a jolt up her arm, the sign they'd been made to amplify her powers.

"Do you want them?" The low voice released a wave of emotion through Pru. She closed her eyes, trying to hold back her feelings. She should have known Gage wouldn't allow them to part with so much anger between them.

"I don't need them."

"You might." Ro spoke in a soft whisper, a tinge of hope lifting the sound.

"I doubt it." Pru knew they weren't talking about the collars.

"They're made for you. They won't be of any use to another." Gage's voice was rough and heavy with emotion.

"That's not true. I've only just touched them. I haven't had them long enough that they can't be reprogrammed for someone new."

Fingers encircled her upper arm and Pru turned to look up at Ro. "No. Damn it, Prudence, I don't want someone new. I want you. We want you." He gave her a little shake and she glared at him.

"Let go of me, Agent Thomas."

"Ro, be nice." Gage smoothed his palm across her back, but Pru refused to lean into him, though her body wanted to.

"I don't want to be nice. I want to shake some sense into her." Ro shot a pained, furious gaze at Gage.

"That isn't going to work and you know it."

"I think you two should leave." Pru jerked her arm free from Ro's grip and moved away from them, though not far. She dropped the collar into the box and closed the lid. "Take these with you."

"So there's nothing we can do?" Gage took the box.

"Relationships are built on trust and honesty, Gage. Whatever we had certainly lacked honesty and I don't trust either of you now."

"Is that right?"

Pru started to turn her eyes to Ro, but he captured her in his arms before she could blink. With one arm banded about her chest, he laced the fingers of his other hand through her hair, pulling her head to the side and exposing her neck. Hot breath danced over her skin, the scrape of sharp teeth raising gooseflesh over her body.

"Ro." Gage stepped toward them.

"You don't trust me?" He whispered the words against her ear.

"What are you trying to prove? I can force you to let me go."

"Not before I tear your throat out." Ro sank his teeth into her neck. She gasped at the burning pain, her body flushing with desire.

He was right. She had to focus to control him, and as off balance as she was, he could kill her before she succeeded. His strong-arm tactics pissed her off, but her heart swelled. Ro wasn't good at diplomacy, but he was showing her in the only way he

knew that she did trust him. Despite the deadly fangs buried in her neck and the trickle of blood seeping from the wound, Pru wasn't afraid.

"You won't hurt me." She struggled to speak.

"How do you know he won't?" Gage stood in front of them, his hands tracing the slope of her nose.

"I trust him not to."

Ro's arms tightened around her, a soft growl vibrating the sensitive skin of her neck. She shivered in his arms, desire setting her blood to thrumming through her veins. He pulled his mouth from her, licking the wound closed. Then he turned her in his arms. "You do trust me. Us. We hurt you. I hurt you. I'm sorry."

"I know. And it seems I've already forgiven you both, at least a little."

"Then be with us." Ro lifted his hands to cup her face. His green eyes filled with hope.

"I don't know. I think you two are letting guilt get the better of you. So we fucked a few times. It's no reason for Master Vampires to be interested in commitment."

"Prudence, sometimes you're completely oblivious. You may not have noticed us, but I assure you, we've been interested in you for a very long time. Those two days only reaffirmed it."

"Great, you're stalkers." Pru managed a small smile. Ro snorted and pulled her closer.

"Let's just see what happens. Please, Pru." Gage spoke, but she focused on Ro.

They searched each other's eyes. Then, he lowered his head and pressed his lips to hers. Pru didn't respond for a moment, but with a groan, she gave in to the need and happiness rushing through her body. Pru threw her arms around Ro's neck and kissed him back with fervor.

The clearing of a throat broke their kiss. He grinned and released her. Pru turned to Gage. "All right." The powerful barbarian tossed the box on the bed and reached for her, lifting her off the ground and into his arms.

They kissed for a long time, tongues dueling, hands gripping, refusing to let go. When they finally broke apart, they were both flushed with hunger and smiling broadly. Looking past Gage, Pru made eye contact with Ro. In her heart, she knew what she needed to do next, but she was a little nervous.

"Come here." She crooked a finger and Ro sauntered to them.

"What?"

"My schedule's clear for the night."

He wiggled his brows and grinned lasciviously. "What do you have planned for your free time?"

Pru swallowed hard. She wasn't sure she could go through with this, but she wanted it so badly her teeth ached. "I want you two to show me how good it can be to let go."

The look on both men's faces could only be described as shock underwritten by powerful need with a touch of triumph. "Now don't get crazy. I'm not a submissive. I never will be. But I want to know what it's like to be with you, letting you take the lead."

Gage hugged her tighter. "You won't be sorry you trusted us."

"I know."

Chapter 17

As one, the three of them moved to the bed. Ro, ever impatient, flung the box to the floor. They tumbled onto the covers, arms and legs wound around each other. Hungry mouths kissed, nipped, and sucked while restless hands and fingers worked buttons and zippers. When the only thing between them was skin, Ro and Gage moved off Pru, sitting up on their knees.

They looked at each other, then at her. Fear tripped her heart into marathon mode and dried her mouth. In this case, she didn't need to be telepathic to know what they wanted. "In the top drawer of the lingerie dresser."

Ro smiled and got up from the bed, returning with four silk scarves. They secured her to the posts, nipping and kissing every inch of her skin except the areas that wanted their attention most. By the time they immobilized her, Pru had to bite her lip to keep from screaming in frustration.

"You have to ask us for what you want." Ro's cocky grin did little to ease her anticipation or nerves.

"Yes, Ro." He arched a brow.

If he expected her to say "Master" he had another think coming. Pru turned her eyes to Gage's and saw something in them that scared her more than putting herself at their mercy.

"You're not ready to hear it, Pru. But you will be, someday." He leaned down and took one rosy-red nipple into his mouth.

"Someday." Her hips lifted of their own volition as Gage played her body like a virtuoso.

Ro plied the other nipple with bites and licks, but neither of them were moving fast enough. They seemed more than willing to keep her hovering above one plateau

but before the next. Her pussy grew wetter and wetter, her breasts swelling, her blood pounding through her veins until she thought she'd go mad.

"Please, please, master me!" She couldn't believe the words that sprang from her lips. She had begged, unbelievably, but when two sets of fingers slipped into her hot pussy, Pru knew she'd do it again.

Gage and Ro made up for lost time, using their fingers and mouths to bring her to a quick, blistering orgasm. She fought her ties, needing to touch their skin, and they soothed her with soft words and softer kisses. And though she'd come, her body ached for more, unsatisfied.

"Please, don't stop. Oh God, I need more. Give me more!" She writhed on the bed.

Both men pulled back and their sudden departure sent her frustration skyrocketing. She opened her eyes to look at them, a spark of anger igniting in her belly. They were reminding her who was in charge and she didn't like it one bit.

What surprised her more than their actions was the lack of that dark voice in her head. Since those days in the cell, Pru hadn't been lured by temptation, but a part of her had thought being with Gage and Ro again, giving them command, might raise the ghost of her past. When it didn't, she had to fight the urge to cry. She'd truly conquered her fear.

Twin looks of worry and confusion clouded her vampires' faces. Before they could ask her what was wrong, she smiled. "I'm fine. Actually, I'm damn near perfect."

"I'll agree with that." Ro leaned down to take her mouth, sucking her tongue between his lips to caress with his own. His hands sifted through her hair so he could change the angle. He kissed her with command, taking his time, pleasing her beyond measure.

When he pulled away, she tried to follow and he nipped her lip. The slight sting wasn't the best reprimand. Pain was an aphrodisiac Pru savored often, but then he knew that.

"I'm going to fuck you while you suck Ro's cock. Do not come until I tell you to." Gage moved between her thighs and she groaned. Did he know how hard it was for a woman to try not to come?

"He knows." Ro moved up to straddle her chest, his heavy cock brushing against her lips. In this position, he wouldn't be able to go as deep, but Pru didn't think he'd care.

Gage didn't hold back, slamming his cock into her slick heat, seating himself to the balls in one solid thrust. Pru gasped and Ro took advantage, slipping the crown of his shaft into the wet warmth of her mouth. Pru's head spun as the men set a steady, yet unfulfilling rhythm, as they slid in and out of her body.

She whimpered her need around Ro's shaft and felt him shudder above her. They did with her what they would and Pru was shocked to find she loved every minute of it. She loved the feel of Gage's wide cock spearing her hard and deep. She loved the tension in Ro's body as he pushed slowly into her mouth and stopped just short of choking her. The possibility that either man could take her somewhere she might not want to go gave an edge of danger to the encounter that Pru couldn't resist.

Her pussy fluttered around Gage and she sucked hard on Ro's cock to distract herself. Release shone like a glittering diamond in her mind's eye, but Pru fought to ignore it. They sped up their movements, Gage lifting her ankles to his shoulders as he began a pounding, primal pistoning into and out of her slippery, swollen pussy.

Ro mirrored him, shafting his cock rapidly in and out of her mouth, groaning as she flicked her tongue against the underside of his cock head. He tightened his grip on her hair, holding her head still while her lips and teeth worked his cock.

"I'm gonna come." Ro's rhythm broke, becoming frenzied as he filled her mouth with salty, bitter come.

Pru choked a little and he eased his grip on her hair. She swallowed each explosive ejaculation, loving the taste, loving the feel of her hard, strong Ro losing himself inside her mouth.

When he was done, he moved off her chest to watch his lover take her to the edge. Pru wanted to lick the sweat from Gage's chest, she wanted to rake her fingers over his belly, but all she could do was take every punishing stroke of his cock and struggle not to come.

"Are you ready?" Gage didn't slow at all as he asked the question.

"Yes, yes, please!" she begged, screaming the words, needing release more than her next breath.

Gage took her clit between his fingers and nodded to Ro, who did the same to her nipples. They squeezed all three rigid points at the same time. "Then come."

She screamed. There was nothing else she could do, but gasp for air and scream at the top of her lungs. No orgasm had ever been this intense, this satisfying, this magnificent. She gave herself into her men's care and they had shown her how beautiful that could be. When her voice was hoarse from keening, when her body had no energy left to move, she sagged against the bed, truly spent.

Gage lowered her legs to the bed before laying his body atop hers. His weight made it a little hard to breathe, but she didn't want him to move. His still hard cock remained buried inside her softly pulsing sex and she wanted it, him, to stay there forever.

When her breathing returned to normal, Gage lifted his head to kiss her dry lips. She kissed him back, weakly, too drained to offer him more.

"I still haven't come." Gage looked at Ro. "Do you think if she watches us, she might be ready to play sooner?"

Ro glanced at Pru. "I think we should find out."

Chapter 18

Pru looked up from her desk at the knock on her door. "Come in."

"Hey, I didn't say you could take over my office." Antonio slipped into the room. He tried for a stern expression, but the glint of happiness in his eyes ruined the effect.

"I use the desk in my room, but this is a better place to watch the club from."

They hugged and kissed each other on the cheek. Antonio came to Atlanta once a month to see how Pru was doing. In the last six months, Pru had managed to streamline the domination services into doing twice the business it had under Antonio's management. Her boss was pleased, and he trusted her guidance, but Ovelia was still his baby.

"Ready to quit?" Antonio teased as he took a seat.

"Not even close."

"I heard you had a visitor this week."

Pru burst out laughing. "Yeah, Levaton stopped in. The Group needs my expertise, it seems."

"Did you agree?"

"I told him I'd think about it. He wasn't happy, but then he ran into Calista. I think she took his mind off work."

Antonio chuckled. "I bet she did. So, are you going to work with them?"

"My boys think I should, but I haven't decided. I probably will. I'll let you know before I do. I'll probably have to leave George in charge for a couple of days."

"He can handle it. So, speaking of boys, how are things?"

Pru sighed. "Fantastic. Beyond fantastic. I'm on the verge of stupidly happy."

"And?" Antonio leaned forward in his seat. Pru knew what he wanted and she rolled her eyes.

"And I don't know. The idea of being immortal is a little scary."

"Girl, are you nuts? Who cares if it's scary? Master Vampires don't offer the gift on a whim. They love you."

"What if we break up in sixty years?" Pru knew it was a ridiculous thing to say.

"Prudence, the future is just that. The future. Do you love them?"

"Yes."

"Then that's all the certainty you need. Now, how about lunch?"

Pru laughed. "You're paying."

Emma Ray Garrett

“... and I -- I took the road less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”

-- *The Road Not Taken*, Robert Frost

The last line from award-winning author Emma Ray's favorite poem pretty much sums up her life. Her tendency to do her own thing is what her friends and family love best, and least, about her. Chaos is a constant in the Garrett home, which currently houses three intelligent, energetic children, a devoted husband, her grandmother, and a very large, very lazy, white tom-cat.

No matter how busy, Emma Ray writes every day. If she didn't, she says they'd put her in a white coat with buckles. Fans can contact her at emmaraygarrett@changelingpress.com or they can visit her website at www.romance-the-night.com.