

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



THE  
*Rememdiu*  
SHAYLA KERSTEN

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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The Rememdiu

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# *THE REMEMDIU*

Shayla Kersten

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Ohio State University: Ohio State University, The institution

## Chapter One

Roger Malloy could see the empty gauge flashing on his career. The mutilated body of Senator Walter Chandler sealed his fate. As agent in charge of the team protecting the senator's stepson, Roger had screwed up royally. The stepson—Kevin St. James—missing and presumed dead on his watch, was the reason the senator was in New York.

Roger nodded to the man holding up the blanket spread over Chandler's body. "It's him."

Torn open, the man's throat was a jumble of jagged edges, exposed sinew and flesh. Almost as if a wild animal had attacked him. Eyes wide open, haunted with fear of what killed him.

"There's not enough blood." With this severe a throat wound, the jugular ripped open, the body and surrounding ground should be soaked.

The coroner looked up at Roger. "I noticed. But he really doesn't look like he was moved. The scuffs in the dirt look more like a struggle not a dump. The depth and angle of the heel marks would imply he tried to get away."

One of the younger officers closed his eyes against the scene. His throat worked hard against his Adam's apple. "Are there any wild animals in the city that could have done this?"

"I don't know of any big enough but I guess it's possible. A mad dog maybe." The coroner didn't sound very sure. He sealed the plastic body bag then stood. "I might be able to find DNA around the wound. Maybe give us an idea of what kind of animal killed him."

Roger doubted the animal was still around. As a matter of fact, he knew the creature responsible for the senator's death had already fled New York.

It didn't matter that Chandler had his own Secret Service team and they'd managed to lose the man. If Roger hadn't let the son out of his sight, the senator wouldn't have been here in harm's way. And harm in this case had a name. Lorcan MacKenna.

MacKenna and his servants disappeared three days ago. Still no sign of MacKenna's lover, the senator's missing stepson Kevin.

A phone trilled and everyone in the immediate vicinity checked belts or pockets. Detective Edwards answered the annoying contraption.

"Yes, okay..." He paused to listen to the voice on the other end of the line. "I got it. We'll check it out." He flipped the phone shut. "A warehouse down near Battery Park. Four dead bodies, all killed in a similar fashion." His hand waved in the deceased senator's direction.

"Any of them fit St. James' description?" Roger's heart was in his mouth when he asked. If the missing man were alive, Roger's career might be salvaged.

"They didn't say. You're welcome to ride along."

Roger shrugged. He might as well. This would probably be his last case as a Secret Service agent. He should make the most of it.

\* \* \* \* \*

It didn't take long for Roger to see similarities between the two crime scenes. Four men, all dead, all with their throats torn open.

One body was in a car about thirty feet from the warehouse. The metal on the door was warped as if something had pried it open with a crowbar, but had no scratch marks. A gun sat next to the dead man on the passenger seat, the keys still in the ignition. If someone used a crowbar, he would have had time to shoot or even drive away. A crime scene unit was already printing the vehicle.

The three other men were sprawled around a large room in the warehouse. The stench gagged Roger. A cop at the door offered him a mask. Pulling the flimsy material over his mouth and nose, he nodded his thanks. Not that it helped much. New York in

August. Heat, humidity and what could only be several days of decomposition made the room almost unbearable.

A large pool of blood covered a nearby table. None of the dead men were anywhere near the almost-black substance. No smears indicating the blood could belong to one of them.

One of the investigators handed Edwards a wallet. He opened the center pouch and pulled a card from one of the slots inside. Shaking his head, he handed the card to Roger.

A sick feeling settled in Roger's stomach. Kevin St. James' smiling face looked up from the driver's license photo. The hope he had for the young man's survival evaporated in the sickening smells of the warehouse.

\* \* \* \* \*

Anger suffused through every pore in Roger's body.

"I'm sorry, Roger," Allan said with a sigh. "There's nothing more I can do."

"Because the powers that be need a scapegoat I'm out."

"You're not out. It's administrative leave pending investigation."

"Bullshit. I'll never see another operation again and you know it." Roger clenched his fists, restraining the urge to hit his supervisor. No sense giving them a reason to outright fire him. "I'll spend a few months on leave then ride a desk until you find a reason to fire me or I make your life easy and quit."

"You lost the senator's stepson. You failed the mission. If St. James were still alive, maybe... But he isn't."

"We don't know for sure he's dead. No body has been found." A faint hope teased Roger.

"Preliminary tests indicate the blood pool in the warehouse was St. James'. He couldn't have survived. You know that." Allan shook his head. "No, the responsibility for the entire incident is with the agent in charge. That's you. I'm sorry."

“So you keep me on three months administrative leave then kick me out? Why wait? Why don’t you just dump me now?”

“There has to be an investigation. If you have any hope of salvaging your career, your best route is to let the whole furor over the senator’s death die down.” Allan stood. “Let it go, Roger. Nothing can change what’s happened.” He pushed a pen across the desk.

Roger glared at the man he once considered a friend. Snatching up the pen, he scribbled his name at the bottom of the innocuous form letter. Tossing the pen down on the desk, he slammed his badge and gun next to the paperwork, ensuring the end of his career. He turned and stalked from the room.

Allan didn’t bother to even say goodbye.

They both knew he wouldn’t be back.

\* \* \* \* \*

The heat of August in New York simmered just below the burn of his anger. Roger’s only goal in life since he was a teenager was to work for the Secret Service. And now everything was gone. He knew the suspension would be permanent. The only way the Service would cleanse the stench of Chandler’s death would be to get rid of any embarrassing reminders.

That left Roger blowing in the hot wind outside the Brooklyn field office. His company-assigned car no longer his, he stepped off the curb and hailed a cab.

“Where to?” a hoarseness accented voice asked.

Where to? The question had so many levels. Instead of questioning the cab driver on the meaning of life, Roger rattled off his address.

Staring out the window, watching the city blur past him, Roger contemplated the events leading up to his disgrace. MacKenna had promised something dire would happen to the senator if Kevin wasn’t returned safely. Roger blamed himself for not taking the man’s threats more serious.



Something about the dark-haired man emanated danger. Not that Roger ever felt threatened. But underneath the polished, urbane exterior an unexplained darkness hid. Only once before had this feeling niggled at Roger's mind.

He let his thoughts turn back to eleven years ago. Roger had only been with the Secret Service for a couple of years at the time. One of the other agents—Charlie Stanton—became ill, had to quit. He said he was moving back to his hometown to be closer to family. Before he left town, some of his friends threw him a party.

Late that night, admittedly while under the influence of a lot of alcohol, Roger found himself alone with Charlie. The only sign of illness was his paleness. Otherwise Charlie seemed fine. While alone in a spare bedroom of his house, Charlie cornered him. In spite of the booze, a sense of cold and darkness surrounded him.

At first, from the hard gleam in Charlie's eyes, Roger thought he was going to hit him. Then the look softened and instead Charlie kissed him.

Nothing about Roger's life prepared him for the taste of another man's lips. He had startled himself by opening his mouth and welcoming Charlie's tongue. His cock had taken an intense interest in the events as well. Before he could find out what either of them would do next, someone came down the hall. Charlie backed off and left the room.

Roger had been strangely disappointed. The next day, with a hangover headache playing a drum solo through his head, he hadn't wanted to think about what had happened. The day after that Charlie was gone and Roger buried the incident deep in his mind.

Being around Lorcan MacKenna had dredged up the memory and reawakened the feelings of that night. The same sense of danger and darkness he found so arousing about Charlie had left him dreaming of a masculine body against him.

"...fifty."

Roger only caught the tail end of the cabbie's words. "Excuse me?"

"That'll be fifteen-fifty." Squinting eyes stared at him through the rearview mirror.

“Oh sure.” Roger dug for his wallet and some bills.

Standing on the curb, Roger’s gaze wandered between the entrance to his apartment and the bar four doors down. The battered sign and faux antique script read *Antiquities* and waved at him in the hot breeze. At three in the afternoon, Roger wouldn’t normally consider alcohol an option but today was special.

Decision made, he walked the short distance to the beat-up old tavern. In spite of living nearby for over two years, he’d only been in there once. Their regular clientele tended to fit in the weird category. How he ended up in a neighborhood with the Goth type, he didn’t know. But the place served alcohol and right now, he needed a drink.

Blinded by the change from the afternoon sunlight to the dim interior, his eyes blinked several times. With his sight regained, he peered around the small establishment.

A long polished wood bar took up most of the narrow room. Four tiny tables lined the opposite wall. A couple, though Roger wasn’t sure a couple of what, were taking making out to a new level against the wall just beyond the last table. The other patrons seemed more tame.

One man sat at the bar, his head in his hands, his beer half empty. Another couple was having a heated whispered conversation a few feet down from him. Then there was the strange woman sitting at the opposite end of the bar.

Looking almost too young to be in a bar, she had the usual pale face and dark makeup. Black clothes—only the form-fitting top visible over the bar. And she had a really good form to fit it too. Upturned breasts, thick nipples showing through the slinky material and just enough cleavage to make his cock twitch... But he wasn’t here to pick up a woman.

Roger didn’t really make a conscious decision to sit near her. He wanted to be away from the others and somewhere his line of sight didn’t include the man and woman against the wall. The thought made his gaze drift in their direction. Yep, making out

was definitely not all they were doing. With a double take, he wasn't sure there were two different genders involved.

Turning his back on the scene, Roger snagged a tall stool with his foot. His first inclination was to go for the hard stuff but his better judgment interfered. "Beer, whatever you have on tap."

Looking past the Goth bartender and his myriad piercings, a mirror reflected the scene he wanted to avoid. His cock swelled at the sight.

The curve of back muscles beneath a pulled-up shirt—long thick muscles obviously not a woman's. The dark-haired man slid to the ground in front of the man standing with his back to the wall. Fumbling fingers freed a swollen cock from tight jeans. A greedy mouth swallowed the thick flesh.

Roger's body reacted to the sight. Rapid breathing accompanied a flush of heat. His cock lengthened and filled. So long since the last time he'd had sex, even longer since someone gave him an enthusiastic blow job. And never one as eager as the young man on his knees in a public place.

"You like what you see." The sultry voice floated down the bar.

His breath caught in his throat. "I don't see anything." He grabbed his glass, sloshing a little over the top in his haste. Downing a third of the icy brew, he glared at his accuser.

The ebony-haired woman just smiled. The dark-ringed eyes didn't reflect her smile. "Then you're all hot and bothered for no reason?"

"Who says—?"

"I say you are." Her voice dropped to a sexy growl. "I can smell you. Right now your cock is leaking with anticipation. Enthralled with the idea of someone taking you deep in their throat." She leaned toward him. "Do you want Estefan to suck you off like he's doing to Cardin?"

Roger thought about getting up and leaving. He wasn't sure he could walk straight in his current condition.

"All I have to do is tell him." An almost feral smile crossed her lips. "And he will." She slid from the stool in a rustle of black cloth. The full-length skirt swooshed as she moved closer. "If I tell him to, Estefan will suck your brains out through your cock while you sit here and enjoy your beer."

A shudder swept through him. If she kept talking like that, he wouldn't need help from anyone. He'd just sit here and come in his pants.

"See how much Estefan loves to suck dick. He's so talented. And Cardin enjoys his mouth so much."

He couldn't stop himself from looking.

The mirror reflected the intense pleasure written across Cardin's face. The man's body rocked back and forth, pushing deep into Estefan's mouth. And every long, deep stroke Estefan took.

"Watch Cardin. He's almost at his limit. No one lasts long with Estefan." Her lips brushed his ear as she spoke. The heat of her breath teased his cheek.

He wanted to look away, to run from the bar but instead he looked at Cardin's reflection in the mirror.

The man's mouth drooped open, the fingers of one hand curled in his short reddish-brown hair. The other hand rested on the dark head bobbing back and forth on his cock.

"So tell me what you want. Estefan's lips around this," her hand brushed the hard bulge in his slacks, "or maybe you'd rather be buried hilt deep in his nice tight ass."

Roger tore his gaze away from Cardin's face. "Who says I want a man?" His fingers clenched around her wrist and pushed her hand firmly against his aching cock. "Maybe I want you."

Her fingers squeezed him, almost enough to bring him off where he sat. He forced the urge away. If she wanted to play games, he planned to choose which one.

“Would you take me here against the wall, in front of everyone?”

Roger looked up and down the bar. Strange, but no one seemed to be paying attention to their little tête-à-tête.

Her other arm slipped around his waist. Her firm, full breasts pressed against his back. “You want me. Take me.” Her lips nuzzled at his ear lobe. “Fuck me here.” Her free hand tugged his belt loose. Nimble fingers had his pants open before he could react.

Exactly how he was supposed to react seemed to elude him.

Adria dipped her face to hide her smile from reflecting in the mirror. His appearance had been a surprise but a welcome one. She’d bought the bar as soon as he moved in down the street. Watching him was so much easier being close by. And now she had the chance she needed. She had just decided it was time to approach him. Having him walk into the bar, into this situation, was the answer to her prayers.

His hot, thick flesh sprang free of the confining briefs. Her hand wrapped around his cock and stroked him. So far, his inability to answer gave her time to push him a little further. Keeping him close was necessary and once she had him, he wouldn’t be able to refuse anything she asked.

“Here,” he growled. His fingers dug into her arms, yanking her away from him. The old stool squeaked as he swiveled around.

Now facing her, his hands caught her face between them. Hot lips covered hers, his tongue pressured her lips to open.

She willingly took his hard mouth. Her hands slid down his cotton shirt and found his cock again. Stroking him with long, slow movements, she leaned in to him.

His fingers wound through her hair. Tiny stabs of pain shot through her scalp as he pulled her away.

Afraid he'd come to his senses, she worked his swollen flesh harder. She shouldn't have worried. His hands pushed her head down toward his cock. The smell of sweat combined with the musky scent of pre-come. The angry red crown oozed with almost-clear liquid. Dipping her tongue into the slit, salt and the bitter taste of him teased her.

His hands pressed harder against the back of her skull.

She took the hint and swallowed his length in one motion. Barely able to handle the length and girth, she avoided choking by sliding quickly back up to the tip. Again she deep-throated him followed by a fast glide up his length.

The pressure on her head eased. His fingers now twisted through strands of her hair but he didn't try to force her movements.

She glanced up to see Roger's glassy gaze glued to the wall behind her. The sounds Cardin was making meant he was close. Estefan's rapid grunts could only mean Cardin was fucking his mouth hard.

Swallowing Roger's cock again, her fingers slid across the tight material still confining his balls. His shudder and moan would have made her smile if her mouth hadn't been full of his hot flesh. She traced her nails across his sensitive sac once more.

His body bucked and warm liquid shot deep in her throat.

She pulled away and let the rest of his seed spurt across her tongue.

From the sounds behind her, Cardin filled Estefan's mouth at the same time.

She wondered if watching the two men made Roger come quicker than just Adria's mouth alone. Adria tucked her thought away for future exploration.

Releasing the spent cock, Adria moved between Roger's open legs. Kissing him hard, her mouth demanded entrance. With a dazed look, he acceded. Her tongue grazed his with his own seed, sealing the bargain he didn't even know he made.

\* \* \* \* \*

Roger didn't want to open his eyes. He knew the pounding in his head would only get worse with the intrusion of light. "Oh shit," he moaned. This had to be the worst hangover since the night he celebrated his acceptance into the Service.

The Service. The one he was now ostracized by and no longer an active part of. "Shit..."

When had he drunk so much? And where?

The bar down the street. His eyes popped open. Light wasn't as much a problem as he expected it to be. Candles, almost burned out, dimly lit the room—not his room. The décor was decidedly gloomy. The bedding, the curtains, appeared black in the muted light. Even the walls were dark.

The woman...at the bar. The two men. The memory of his actions flooded his aching brain.

He'd let a strange woman give him a blow job in public and he watched two men going at it while he shot come in her mouth. "Great," he mumbled, "I've completely lost my mind." He sat up slowly, hoping his head wouldn't explode.

"I wouldn't say that." In a nearby chair, a dark figure moved.

"Fuck!"

"We can if you want." The low, throaty growl was familiar.

He scooted to the edge of the bed. "Look, I don't know what came over me but this is not the way I am."

"You are what I want you to be." She stood and walked toward him.

Well, he didn't like the sound of that. Maybe she had recorded his little indiscretion. Maybe she planned to blackmail him? "Look, lady. Whatever I did, doesn't mean you have any hold over me."

"But I do. Just not the way you think."

Roger pushed off the bed to stand.

“Oh, you can leave. But you’ll be back.” She chuckled softly.

He glared at her as he walked past her to the door. When she made no move toward him, he yanked open the door and stepped out into a hot muggy hallway. Looking first in one direction and then the other, he spotted a dilapidated exit sign. The red lettering, faded and worn, pointed the way out.

The narrow stairs creaked under his step. Dim light bulbs hanging from wires barely lit the way. As an afterthought, his hand patted his back pocket for his wallet. The jangle of his keys in his pocket comforted him.

He emerged on the street next to the entrance to the bar. Evening had already fallen. A quick look at his watch revealed the time to be just past nine.

The thought of drugs crossed his mind. Maybe a quick trip to the medical clinic a few blocks away was a good idea. Although he couldn’t explain his earlier actions, he didn’t think he’d been slipped something. Or he didn’t want to think he had. Instead, he headed for his apartment.

Even now, as the memory of his earlier actions returned, his cock took interest. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time in definitely the wrong frame of mind.

Right now a shower, some sleep and a fresh prospective would set everything back to rights.

\* \* \* \* \*

Adria smiled to herself after Roger stalked out of her apartment.

“You can come in now,” she called out.

A door, hidden behind thick dark drapes, creaked open. The curtain moved aside revealing Estefan and Cardin.

“You did well.”

A frown creased Estefan’s brow. “Where did he go?”

Adria stood and walked over to the confused man. Her fingers smoothed his brow. “He’ll be back. Don’t worry. Once the transformation kicks in, he won’t be able to



resist.” Adria’s sharp memory swept her back to her own change. Without someone to explain the process, she’d struggled for more than a year after her first encounter with another Watcher. Roger wouldn’t understand what drew him back but on an instinctual level, he would know Adria had the answers he needed.

Estefan almost wiggled with excitement. He craved her approval more than anything. Both he and Cardin had been with her for a long time. She knew their loyalty was more to her than to her cause and that suited her fine. She needed them regardless of why they stayed.

She was confident Roger would be similarly bound to her. Although... She turned away to keep them from reading the concern on her face. There was something different about Roger. Something she couldn’t quite put her finger on.

She’d watched him for the last couple of years. So few men had the genetic makeup needed for her plan. The verification process took so long.

Silently she cursed the convoluted method. Finding other Watchers was never easy. Finding one like Roger, whose strength radiated an almost-visible aura, was rare. The last three she’d lost to the evil stalking her dreams. This time she’d make sure this one was safe. Until –

“Is everything okay?” Cardin’s voice interrupted her thoughts.

“Yes. He’s the one and he already has a reason to hate the demons. This time we’ll succeed. This time...”

## Chapter Two

Sleep didn't want to come. Adria turned over and punched her pillow. She could almost feel Roger's restlessness, although it was probably her imagination. Each time she bonded with a new Watcher, memories of her own transformation came rushing back.

She needed sleep. Forcing her eyes shut, she willed slumber to come.

*"Adria!" Cadencia's shrill voice echoed across the field.*

*Adria hesitated as she stared into the pool of still water. She had no choice but to return to the small inn. She had nowhere to go. Still the burning rush of blood through her veins told her something had changed. So many men had passed through her bed in the last four years but the one last night was different.*

*Resigned to being a whore for her guardians, Adria never considered running away. Where would she go? What could she do besides offer her body to men for money? No man would wed a common whore. But after the man last night, whose name she didn't know, left her bed, she began to dream.*

*Not dream. Nightmares of a man she could only hear tormenting a woman, telling her he would kill her slowly but first he would change her. Change her to what, Adria didn't know. The woman looked like the reflection staring up at her from the water.*

*Adria had never known her mother. Abandoned on the doorstep of the inn, she'd been raised by Cadencia and her husband Vallis. As far back as she could remember, she'd been nothing more than a slave to them until her body blossomed. Her virginity had been taken by the lord of a nearby manor as payment of a debt. Now any man with the asking price had access to her.*

*The woman in her nightmare, the one who looked like Adria, begged for the life of her unborn child.*

Adria started awake. She expected the dreams to return but not with such vivid clarity. Maybe she didn't need sleep tonight after all.

\* \* \* \* \*

Wearing only his briefs, Roger paced his apartment. The night dragged on endless. Already past three in the morning, his world was adrift. His job gone, he had no family and the strange incident in the bar kept replaying in his head.

The intensity of the woman's eyes had matched the heat of her mouth. The lush body encased in tight black material only added to the fire in his groin. His cock had been hard for hours. He refused to bring himself off. In a weird way, he felt as if he'd be obeying her.

Her strange words echoed in his ears.

*"You are what I want you to be."*

Tiny tremors shuddered through his muscles like a caffeine overdose. As if too close to a raging fire, his skin burned. He stalked across the room to the thermostat. The digital readout said sixty-two. Something must be wrong with the damn thing. His hair already plastered to his head, sweat trickled down his spine, tickling a shiver out of him.

Two cold showers hadn't done a thing to ease the heat of his body or his hard-on.

A vision of dark, cold eyes laughed at him.

He clenched his teeth and growled at the empty room. "No, damn it!" No matter what, he wasn't going back down there.

\* \* \* \* \*

Adria glanced up as the door opened. "Welcome home."

"Home?" Roger asked. "I'm not home and I don't know what the fuck I'm doing here." Some unknown compulsion sent him scurrying back to the woman's door.

“You’re here because you have to be. You’re bound to me now. Everything that has happened in the last few weeks was leading you to me.” Adria stood then walked across the room.

“How do you know what has happened?” Roger backed into the hall.

“Because I’ve been watching you for a long time. I know of your association with Lorcan MacKenna and his lover Kevin St. James.” She kept walking forward.

“Every paper covered the story.” Everyone knew of his disgrace. His pride was wounded right along with his career. And Lorcan MacKenna was somehow at fault.

“Yes, he was at fault but not how you think.”

Roger’s eyes narrowed. He hadn’t spoken aloud. Had he? “What are you talking about?”

“Come in and sit down. I’ll tell you everything you need to know. Including where to find MacKenna.” She held out her hand, but when he didn’t take it, she motioned to a ratty-looking recliner covered with a sheet.

The temptation to hear what she had to say was strong but so was the desire to flee. Something about her made his skin crawl and not in a good way, but being near her also made his cock take notice. He brushed off his arousal as related to the memory of the incident in the bar.

He wanted – no, needed – to know where MacKenna was. The man’s capture as the senator’s murderer might help redeem his career.

Nodding slowly, Roger moved to the chair. He avoided contact with the woman. “What’s your name?” He perched on the edge of the chair.

“Adria.” She walked across the room to the bed. Hiking up the hem of her long black skirt, she folded her legs under her, sitting yoga style.

“So where is MacKenna?”

Adria shook her head. "Not yet. First, there are other things to discuss." She sighed and her forehead crinkled in a frown. "What was your general impression of MacKenna?"

"Why?" Roger wasn't going to give her more ammunition. She already seemed to know too much.

She closed her eyes and her nose wrinkled as she rubbed her brow. "Some of the things I have to tell you are a little...unbelievable." Her hand dropped to her lap and she opened her eyes. The dark penetrating stare was unnerving. "But you are who you are. You should have gotten some impression of MacKenna because of it."

Roger snorted an unamused laugh. "Just who do you think I am, lady? A disgraced Secret Service agent? Yes. Someone who has lost everything he worked his whole life for? Yes." He stood and paced the floor. "Someone who has fallen so low, he'd let a strange woman suck his dick in a public place? Hell yes."

Her eyes grew wide when he stalked over to the bed. She barely flinched when his fingers tangled in her hair.

"Who the fuck do you think I am?" All the rage over the missing St. James, the death of the senator, the loss of his job, his life, poured out at the woman in front of him.

"You are the *Rememdiu*." Something almost approaching awe shone from her eyes.

Familiarity rang in his mind like the pure sweet tone of a bell. "The *Rememdiu*." The sound rolled off his tongue as if he'd known the word all his life. He loosened his grip on Adria's hair and whispered the word again.

Adria watched as his mind digested the word. He was definitely stronger than those who came before but he was different. The intimacy of their sex act, his semen mixed with her saliva and returned to him, should have put him in a more malleable state while the genetic transformation took place. The method had worked before. His anger and attack on her shouldn't have happened. Maybe she needed to bind him again with a more complete encounter.

"You recognize it, don't you?"

His hand released her completely. When he turned away, the tension in his back radiated like a beacon in the dark. "What does it mean?"

"Simply translated, *Rememdiu* means 'Cure', although the concept is more complicated." She eased off the bed. "I'll explain everything to you." Walking slowly across the room, she made sure her steps warned him of her approach. Like a wounded animal, he shouldn't be startled. She'd waited too long for him and she wouldn't lose him now. "But you need rest. Come."

He jumped slightly at the touch of her hand on his shoulder. "I am tired. So tired."

His whispered words hurt her. She knew this was just the beginning and his life would be more complicated than he ever imagined. Pushing away the sympathetic thoughts, she trailed her fingers down his arm to his hand. "Come," she whispered. "Rest first and we'll talk in the morning."

Her fingers twined through his. The warmth of his hand sent heat to her core. He let her lead him to the bed. As if in a daze, he stood patiently while she pulled his shirt over his head.

The ripple of muscles across his chest as he lowered his arms increased the warmth between her legs. Dampness joined the heat when she stripped his slacks down his legs. The memory of his taste mingled with his musky scent. To avoid too much temptation for now, she left his briefs.

After she pulled the covers back, he stretched out on the bed without urging.

"So tired," he whispered. His eyes closed and his breath steadied.

Adria stripped her clothes and joined him. Pulling the light covers over them both, she breathed a sigh of relief. He wasn't completely under her spell but she would work on that when he woke.

His breath caught in his sleep. She laid a hand on his broad chest to calm him. His hand covered hers.

Her own transformation had been so long ago but the memory was as crisp as a fall morning. The burning pain searing her skin, the sharp knife-like stabs at the base of her skull and the confusion of memories and dreams not her own. All of this would be plaguing Roger soon, if not already.

She squeezed his hand and bit back the empathetic tears threatening to escape. She had no choice and neither did he.

Adria watched the sleeping man. So peaceful and naïve about the world around him, grounded in the law and a practical world. Soon all that would change. At least his life until now was free of pain. Not like hers before her transformation.

\* \* \* \* \*

A warm, soft body cuddled against his back and an arm draped over his waist. Roger didn't want to wake from this particular dream just yet. The arm was attached to a hand doing really nice things to his cock.

Long, slow pulls ended with a tight squeeze around the crown. A warm thumb teased the slit, gathering moisture before slender fingers slid his length again. Uneven breath puffed against his shoulder. Warm lips tickled his collarbone.

His dreams rarely had such vivid detail. With a sigh, he opened his eyes. The hand was still there, stroking his length, sending a trail of warmth from the pit of his stomach to the base of his cock.

Memory of last night, of early this morning, dribbled into his tired consciousness.

"Why are you doing this?" His voice, hoarse with sleep, cracked.

"Because I have to," was the whispered reply. "Let me make you feel good. Then we'll talk and if you can't help me, I'll leave you alone."

Her words struck a chord in him. Sadness resonated in her tone. Desperate sadness full of loss and loneliness. Something Roger had intimate familiarity with, and not just from the last few weeks. He pulled her hand free of his cock then rolled over to face her.

The paleness of her face was less without the makeup. Her eyes seemed bigger without the painted rings of darkness from yesterday. The dark pools of onyx held a quiet hope. Her fingers trailed over his lips.

He flicked his tongue across his mouth, gathering his own taste. With his mind screaming reasons to flee, he leaned in and brushed his lips against hers. A flicker of moist heat licked the remaining taste clean. Opening to her unspoken request, he let her flavor overwhelm him.

Arms snaked around his neck, pulling him closer. Gentle urging pulled him over her body.

His forearms curled under her shoulders and rested on the mattress to limit the weight of his body.

Her tongue twisted around his as her hands cupped his face. The soft curves of her breasts arched up against his chest. The rounded flesh of her mons pressed into his erection.

The only thing separating their bodies was the thin cotton of his briefs. Roger rolled off Adria and yanked the intrusive material down, kicking them from his legs. When he returned to the warmth of her body, relief flooded her eyes.

Strong legs wrapped around his waist. The damp heat of her cunt rubbed against his cock, inviting him in.

“Fuck me please,” she whispered between frantic kisses.

With a groan, Roger pushed back. His cock slid through the wet furrow. Moving forward again, the crown caught the edge of her moist core.

She arched her hips upward and tight, wet depths of molten heat surrounded him.

“Oh God,” he moaned. Sex had never felt so right, so real. The scent of her cream, the heat of her body, the taste of her mouth... Everything, even the dim sunlight trying to force its way through the black curtains, made the dreamlike sensations coursing through his body perfect.



A calm settled into his soul. The push and grind of her body changed the tempo of his life. The wicked mouth that taunted him yesterday became a shelter in the storm.

*Rememdiu...*

The word echoed in his head and fit into his world like a key to a lock.

Heat rose in the pit of his stomach, tightening into his balls. He didn't want the feeling to end—ever. He wanted to spend eternity merged with Adria's body but he couldn't stop the rising tide of seed.

*We will last. Forever...*

The unspoken promise pushed him past the barrier. Adria's body clenched around his as scalding heat erupted, filling her, mixing with her juices. His mouth fused to hers, he rode the wave of pleasure.

\* \* \* \* \*

Roger stared at the ceiling, his heart still racing. Adria was like a cat, curled around him in spite of sweat-slick skin. He expected her to start purring any second.

"What is a *Rememdiu*?" The word rolled off his tongue.

With a sigh, she rose up on her elbow. Her eyes were soft as she lifted her hand and brushed her fingers through his hair. "Before I can explain more, you need some background information." Her hand moved to cup his face. Her thumb ran over his lower lip. "Some of it you'll have a hard time believing but I need you to trust me."

"Why?" Roger pulled her hand away and sat up in the bed. "Why should I trust you?" He flipped the covers off then swung his legs over the edge of the bed.

The mattress rolled with Adria's movements. Her arms circled his neck and her firm breasts pressed against his back.

He grabbed her arms. "You aren't distracting me again."

A soft chuckle teased his ear. "You didn't like being distracted?"

"I did." He bowed his head and kissed her arm. "I don't like being used and I get the feeling that's what all this is about." He missed her heat when she moved away. The bed dipped again and he heard the rustle of material. Glancing over his shoulder, he caught her pulling on a black silk robe.

"Yes, in a way I am using you. But there's so much more to it." Adria circled the bed. She hesitated then moved to the battered recliner. With her long legs curled under her, she snuggled into the chair with feline grace.

"So explain it to me." Roger reached down for his underwear. Slipping them on, he sat back on the bed.

She bit her lip and squirmed in her seat. "You work for the government, right? You know there are more things walking the earth than just us."

Roger narrowed his eyes. "Like animals?" He hoped she wasn't going where he thought she was. All he needed was to get hooked up with some loony alien hunter.

"Of a sort. Do you believe that all legend has some basis in fact?"

"I've heard the theories." His skeptical nature didn't put much stock in them but he didn't say anything more. A sharp pain lanced through his skull almost as punishment for his cynicism.

Adria leaned back in the chair. "Okay, well, like Vlad the Impaler. You've heard of him, right?"

"Yes, he's the basis for vampire stories."

"But legends even older spoke of blood-sucking creatures of the night. Some thousands of years old. Many people believe the Impaler was just one whose notoriety led to modern stories."

Roger's gaze darted around the room in search of his clothes. So she didn't believe in aliens, she believed in vampires. Well, that at least explained her clothes and decorating choices.

“Don’t leave. I know it’s hard to believe but it’s true.” Her dark eyes pleaded with him.

She really believed in what she said. Roger shook his head slowly at first then more decisive. “I don’t believe. I have enough trouble without your crazy ideas.” He stood and stalked over to his clothes piled haphazardly on a dresser. Jamming his leg into his slacks, he continued. “I don’t know what you want or what you think I can do for you but I don’t need this.”

Adria jumped out of her chair. “MacKenna’s one!”

With one leg in his slacks and one foot in the air waiting, Roger stopped. His mind flitted through his memories of the man but logic quickly scoffed at the idea.

“The men who died, the senator, the ones at the warehouse, their throats ripped open like a wild animal attack.”

Roger jerked his pants on. “No, there’s another explanation.”

“But none that feel so right.”

Glaring at her pale face, Roger pulled his shirt on. A sense of rightness, like when Adria and he made love, clicked again. But it was preposterous. “There are no such things as vampires.” Without bothering to look for his socks, Roger forced his feet into his shoes. “Leave me alone.”

As he stormed out of the room and into the dark hallway, a sharp stab at the base of his skull caused him to stumble. A momentary shock then the sensation was gone. He took the stairs two at a time and emerged on the street with a sigh of relief. Whatever she wanted from him, Adria would have to live without. He wouldn’t go back there if his life depended on it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Adria sank into her chair and covered her face with her hands. She was so tired. Tired of the fight, of the lies and of the demons who rode her back for the last four hundred years.

She had been so certain Roger was the *Rememdiu* but he should never have been able to walk away. If he wasn't the one, then she'd wasted the years looking for him and watching him.

In almost fifty years, he was the only man to spark the part of her brain that told her someone with the strength to be *Rememdiu* was near. No, he was the one. Somehow he managed to avoid her spell.

She didn't understand. Never had a man, *Rememdiu* or not, made her body react with such passion. She batted away the thought. Her path had been set more than four hundred years ago.

Her life had changed so much in the last four centuries. She'd never known her parents although her mother still appeared in her dreams. Not dreams...nightmares. A terrified woman, disheveled dark hair and tear-streaked face, pleading for the life of her unborn child. A taunting voice had told her the child would be his next meal – after her.

Adria shuddered her way back into the present. No telling the horrors Roger would see while his body changed from mere mortal to Watcher. Her sympathy couldn't stand in the way of what needed to be done. Roger was merely a means to an end. An end she had to believe was possible.

“Cardin! Estefan!”

The sound of hurrying feet penetrated the door dividing their rooms. The hidden door burst open, sending the curtain flying.

“Where is he?” Estefan's disappointment showed in his darting eyes.

“Gone. Again.” Adria shed the robe then grabbed clothing from the closet.

“How? Didn't he fuck you?” Cardin's blunt words irritated her.

What Roger did wasn't... She closed her eyes. It *was* fucking and that's all it was. Having feelings for Roger would muddy things, confuse her. “Yes. Somehow he's able to pull away in spite of the bonding.”

“Then he's not the *Rememdiu*. He'd never be able to leave your side.”

Adria rounded on Cardin. "He is!" With an exasperated sigh, she pulled on a pair of worn black jeans. "He is," she said, her voice calmer. "Maybe he's into men. Maybe that would explain why the bond seems to have only partially taken." The idea worried her.

Cardin hadn't strayed far since she'd bonded with him. Likewise, Estefan stayed with Cardin. But with both of them, knowledge of their nature and purpose came quickly.

"Then tonight, Estefan and I will pay him a visit."

"I'm going with you." Adria's words surprised her as much as they did Cardin. She didn't want to see Roger with the two men. For some reason she couldn't explain, the idea bothered her. She ignored the tiny whispered word...*jealousy*.

## **Chapter Three**

The afternoon heat didn't help Roger's mood. After leaving Adria, he'd gone home to shower the smell of sex away and change clothes. Dressed in shorts, a T-shirt and running shoes, he thought a long run would cleanse the feel of Adria's silky skin against his. His plan hadn't worked.

Instead of going home, he wandered into the park. After snagging lunch and a couple of bottles of water from a hot-dog vendor, he found a park bench and planted himself there. His mind ran in circles while he absentmindedly wolfed down the hot dog.

"I'm not afraid," he mumbled. Lying to himself didn't help. Something about Adria made the lure of her apartment almost too strong to bear. Every time his mind wandered from a determined path of not thinking about her, the memory of her scent, her sweat-slicked skin sliding against him, nearly overwhelmed him.

Balling up the napkin and wrapper from his hot dog, he tossed it into a nearby trashcan. "Two points..." he mumbled. He drained one of the bottles of water and the empty plastic followed the paper. Food and water did nothing to clear his mind of thoughts of Adria.

"But she's fucking nuts!" His words came out louder than he meant them to. Glancing around, he checked to see if anyone was close enough to hear him. Fortunately his little haven was empty of other people. The park was rather deserted. The middle of a workday, a school day, there shouldn't be much happening.

He took a deep swig of water. Cool trails escaped the corner of his mouth and dribbled down his chin. "Vampires," he muttered as he drew his arm across his mouth. As he said the word, goose bumps sped down his spine and a numbing sensation settled behind his eyes. He shook the feeling off. "Ridiculous."

The memory of the bloody mess where Chandler's throat used to be pushed to the front of his thoughts. And the four men at the warehouse.

No body. Kevin St. James was presumed dead from the vast blood pool left behind but there was no body.

"Nope. Stupid thought. Not possible." He took another long draw of water. Still, a part of his brain rang like the winning jackpot of a slot machine.

"You know talking to yourself will make people think you're crazy."

Roger jumped off the bench, the open water bottle raised as a weapon, spilling the remainder down his already sweat-damp T-shirt.

Adria's eyes smiled as well as her lips. "Oh, I'm scared now."

Her sarcastic tone made him lower his "weapon". "What are you doing here? And how did you find me?"

"We have a connection. I can find you anywhere. Running from me won't help."

Shaking his head, Roger flopped back down on the bench. Sitting made hiding his growing arousal a little easier. "Look, I don't believe in vampires or werewolves or things that go bump in the night. So do us both a favor and leave me alone. Whatever you want from me, you can't have it. Find someone else to play with."

"No one else will do." Adria sat down next to him.

A foot separated their bodies but Roger could still smell her spicy exotic fragrance. "Surely there's another loony out there willing to believe your stories. What about the two guys from the bar? You seemed to know them pretty well."

"Estefan and Cardin, while invaluable to me, are not *Rememdiu*. You are."

"Why do you keep calling me that?"

Adria tilted her head toward him and arched an eyebrow. "Are you at least willing to listen to the legend, no matter how much you don't believe?"

"Will it make you go away?"

She chuckled softly. "No. But it will pass the time."

“Fine. Tell me about the *Rememdiu*.”

“Once upon a time...” She grinned at his groan. “Thousands of years ago, vampires were created. As far as my research has shown, the first one started with an ancient Egyptian priest bereft over the loss of his lover. During her embalming, he cast a spell to return her to him. Little did he know the nature of the magic he was trying to work. She was restored but he was her first victim.”

Something in her words resonated deep in Roger’s gut. He tugged his skeptical nature back in place. “That doesn’t sound like the stories I’ve heard about vampires.”

“A lot of what you’ve heard about vampires isn’t true. They don’t spontaneously combust in sunlight or have issues with garlic or crosses. Most have never slept in a coffin.” Adria turned toward him, one leg cocked at the knee rested on the bench. “About the only things vampires have in common with modern storytelling are they drink blood to survive and they can live for hundreds or even thousands of years. Unless someone intervenes.”

Roger waved his hand dismissively. “Yeah, yeah, yeah, you mean drives a wooden stake through their heart.”

“Actually, that doesn’t work either.”

“So how does one intervene?” He spun the words as sarcastically as possible.

Adria smiled at him. “Oh, you cut the head off and burn the body.”

“And you know this, how?” Again familiarity echoed in his brain. Almost like déjà vu but not quite.

Her smile faded and her jaw clenched. “Because I’ve done it before. Several times.”

His first instinct was to question her further about the deaths. A vampire-believing lunatic was one thing. A murderer was an entirely different story. But how could he know she was telling the truth? He needed more information. “And you think MacKenna is a vampire?”

“Yes. He’s definitely one of them.”



She sounded so sure, Roger wanted to believe her. "Except there's no such thing as vampires." Roger stood up. He tossed his empty water bottle in the trash then turned to face her. "Thank you for the fairy tale but I don't want any part of your delusion. Leave me alone."

Roger walked away with a steady stride. He hoped his voice sounded more confident than he felt. Everything she said had a ring of truth and the whole thing shook him to his very core. Vampires roaming New York City in the twenty-first century? If the idea was ludicrous, why did it disturb him so much?

The sharp pain in his skull returned with a vengeance. The headache had lingered on low all day.

A soft footstep sounded behind him. "Go away."

"No. Not until I've told you about the *Rememdiu*." Adria fell in step beside him on the running path.

"Fine!" He stopped abruptly.

She moved a few steps beyond him then turned back to face him. "The *Rememdiu* is the cure for the evil stalking the world. I can't kill them all but the Cure can."

"But you said I was the 'Cure'?"

She clenched her fists and knocked her knuckles together. "You are. The cure isn't a spell or magic, it's a person. A special person who will start a series of events to eventually destroy all of the demons."

"And how does a person do that?" A sinking feeling hit the pit of his stomach.

"By letting one of them bite him."

"You really are nuts." He started around her but her hand grabbed his arm.

"MacKenna is one of them. Would it help you with my delusion if it got rid of him?" Her fingernails dug into his bare arm.

"No. I don't want him dead. I just want him..." Hell, what did he want? Vindication? Someone else to take some of the blame for Kevin's death? If MacKenna

had cooperated, allowed Roger to do his job instead of forcing him to work around him, Kevin might still be alive. And the senator as well. "It doesn't matter. MacKenna's vanished." He shook free of her hand and walked away.

"But I know where he's at." Her voice lowered when he stopped. "My contacts have confirmed his destination."

Turning back to face her, he asked, "Where?"

"I can't tell you but I'll take you there."

"When?"

Her eyes lit up and a sigh of relief escaped her rigid body. "Tonight. All you need is a passport and some clothes. I'll take care of the rest." She practically wiggled with excitement. "Meet me at the bar at eight."

Roger shook his head at her almost-skipping run down the trail. She really believed her stories. Although he didn't, he didn't have to. If she knew where MacKenna was, that's all he needed to know.

\* \* \* \* \*

Roger finished throwing his toiletries in a carryon bag along with several pairs of jeans, T-shirts, sweats, underwear and a healthy dose of anxiety. Had he lost his mind when he lost his job?

If he looked too hard at the events of the last twenty-four hours, he'd have to say yes. Sex in public and now running off to who knew where with a woman who thought vampires walked the earth. "Yeah, I've lost my mind."

Zippering the case closed, he looked around the tiny apartment. He'd never needed much. Why pay for more square footage? But this had been home for the last two years. A sense of foreboding made him wonder if he'd ever see it again. Grabbing the bag, he headed for the door. No sense in moping. "I have a vampire to catch." He snorted at his own words and left the apartment.

\* \* \* \* \*

Adria could barely contain her excitement. The mood rubbed off on Cardin and Estefan. Both men were almost giddy at the prospect of their quest coming to an end. Of the three of them, Adria was the oldest and had been hunting longer than both men combined.

Over four hundred years ago, she'd learned of her true nature. With no one to guide her in her new state, it took her a year before she finally knew what had to be done. Cardin joined her a little over two hundred years ago, Estefan only eighty-five years. And now Roger, the answer to her prayers, dreams and nightmares, had seen the need.

She frowned at the memory of his acceptance. Maybe he didn't believe yet. Meeting MacKenna again would convince him of what had to be done. For a second time a niggling thread of doubt crept in. If he was the Cure, then he should believe by now.

Each time she'd made love to a new Watcher, he'd been bound to her — some by her cause, some out of desire to be with their own kind, but most because of the shared bond. Roger had walked out on her twice, nearly three times, if she counted the park. After the bonding through an exchange of sexual fluids, semen or vaginal, the new Watcher was able to see the truth in what they were told. Even the most doubting of them had been won over without a fight. Everything else fit but his inability to believe, to understand the need and the ability to tell her to get lost didn't fit the pattern.

"He's coming with us. The bond is just taking a little longer than normal."

Cardin moved next to her. "Or maybe we need to go through with our plans for tonight. If he's into men, not women, he'd be bound to us by sex with me or Estefan." A wicked grin split his lips. "Or both."

Displeasure at the idea nearly made her yell but he was right. She needed Roger too much to let something like jealousy ruin their chances. "Later. On the plane."

Estefan's whispered, "Oh yeah..." nearly made her change her mind.

“For the good of the mission.” Maybe if she repeated that several dozen times, she’d get used to the idea.

\* \* \* \* \*

Roger wasn’t sure what he expected but a private jet wasn’t on the list. Luxurious surroundings, thick cushioned chairs, even a couch. Definitely not what he expected. “This yours?” His arm swung wide to take in the luxurious cabin.

Adria laughed as she slipped past him. She stowed her gear in a closet. “No, it’s chartered. The pilots won’t come out unless there’s an emergency and there aren’t any stewards for the flight. We can serve ourselves. And maybe we can finish a conversation without you running away.” She held out her hand for his carryon.

“Uh, maybe.” Roger handed her his bag.

She passed the small duffel to Cardin.

The two men made him nervous. Not so much because of their behavior at the bar, well, maybe a little, but they kept looking at him as if he were an all-you-can-eat buffet.

The high-pitch hum of the engines signaled his last chance to jump ship. A sign lit, warning to fasten seat belts. Roger slipped into the nearest seat and obeyed out of years of habit. The bump of the plane pushing back from the gate imbued him with a sense of helplessness. “So now that I can’t get away, where are we going?”

“Ireland. Where else?” Adria replied as she buckled into the seat opposite Roger.

The jet picked up speed on the runway. A sick lurch in his stomach indicated they were wheels up and he was on his way to Emerald Isle.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Oh God.” Half awake, Roger smiled at Adria’s hand on his cock. How she got his pants open without waking him, he didn’t know. Didn’t really care. She felt good. “Oh shit.”

A hot mouth circled the crown then a tongue teased the sensitive spot just below the glans. His recliner had been back when he dozed off so he was lying almost flat. Fingers teased his balls and then another tongue...

"What the fuck?" A strap across his shoulders held him fast.

Cardin and Estefan worked his cock and balls like an all-day sucker.

"Adria!"

"I'm here." The soft whisper came from behind him.

"Get them off me! Now!"

"Relax and let the boys make you feel better." Her fingers caressed his hair.

Roger struggled to kick the two men but a strap around his shins kept him from moving. Another was around his lower thighs, just above the knee. His pants were down below his hips. Adria's two goons were busy ignoring his protests. "Damn it, you bitch. I didn't sign on for your sexual freak show. Let. Me. Go." Violent tugs against his restraints punctuated his words.

No amount of struggle loosened his bonds and the "boys" were damn good at what they were doing. His traitorous cock reveled in the attention.

Estefan was going at it like a starving man. With each swallow, his throat tightened around the tip of Roger's cock. Cardin had his face buried in Roger's thighs, alternating between tonguing and sucking his aching balls.

Maybe he could appeal to her with calmer words. "Adria, please. I don't want this."

"You might not but your cock says different." She silenced his protest with her mouth.

Long, slow kisses, one hot mouth on his cock and another on his balls... Roger couldn't stop himself from falling into Aria's game. His body wanted to let them finish him. The sharp pounding headache he'd had all day eased when her mouth distracted him.

With Estefan's slurping enthusiasm, it wouldn't take long.

*Let go...*

Roger didn't know who whispered the words but his body obeyed and relaxed. So close...just a little more...

A calloused hand wrapped around the base of his cock and squeezed. With the urge to come restrained like the rest of his body, Roger tensed again. Estefan's mouth didn't miss a beat though. The gentle graze of teeth, a twisting, teasing tongue and the alternating tightness of his throat, kept Roger on the edge of oblivion.

Adria's lips kept his moans muffled. Her tongue searched his mouth with slow, deep strokes, almost keeping time with Estefan.

A rough hand slid under his ass and cupped one cheek. Fingers teased his crack. Roger clenched his butt to prevent the probing intrusion.

"Relax. The boys will make you soar." Adria nuzzled his lips while she spoke.

"Please," Roger whispered, "let me go." His hips arched into Estefan's mouth. He couldn't control his body. The erotic sensations were too intense to ignore.

"I will. As soon as your bond is complete."

*Relax... Let it happen.*

Again the persuasive whisper sounded in his mind. Adria hadn't spoken the words. Her mouth had been busy distracting his lips.

Roger couldn't resist. His tense muscles relaxed.

Thick, blunt fingers teased the crack of his ass. Hips arching once more into Estefan's hot mouth gave the inquisitive hand room to slide between his cheeks. Warm calloused flesh pushed at his anus.

With a clank of a buckle, the restraint across his thighs loosened. The strap fell to the carpeted floor with a soft thud. Roger pulled his knees up, his shins sliding free of his bonds.

*Let it happen. You know you want it.*

Instead of kicking resistance, Roger spread his legs wide, his heels on the edge of the recliner's footrest.

Cardin moved away and the teasing fingers went with him. A sense of loss overwhelmed the brief feeling of relief. The snap of a cap then the rough finger returned, covered in cold, slick lube.

Moaning into Adria's kiss, Roger pushed against the blunt intrusion. Slight burn accompanied the press and push of flesh. His mind screamed objections but the soft murmuring words washed out his anxiety.

*You want this. You need this.*

*I want this. I need this.*

His body didn't know which way to turn. The sweet taste of Adria's lips, the hot, deep strokes of Estefan's mouth and now the slow pumping of Cardin's finger. All combined to confuse his body, his mind.

"Yes," his voice moaned over all the turmoil clouding his brain. He ached to push into the moist heat at the same time the rough finger pushed into his body.

As if the two men could read his mind, their movements synchronized. Cardin brushed against something inside him as Estefan sucked him deep. The tight muscles of Estefan's throat squeezed the crown of his cock. Boiling heat shot from the base of Roger's spine and erupted in the depths of Estefan's mouth.

Again Cardin pressed against the knot of tension inside him. Estefan swallowed the pulsing seed without pulling away. The contractions of his throat milked each jet of semen. Adria caught each of his cries as her tongue delved deep.

Roger hadn't realized the rest of his restraints were gone until his arms were wrapped around Adria's neck. With the intense orgasm still shaking his body, weakness loosened his grip.

The wet heat left his cock and the intruding finger slid free. Adria pulled his arms from around her. Her eyes flickered from his to Cardin and back again. Finally resting on Cardin's eager gaze, she nodded.

Slow acceptance flooded Roger's veins. Cardin lifted him from the still reclined chair as if he weighed no more than a child. His mind, too clouded with satiation, refused to wonder at the man's strength. Gentle arms lowered him to the wide couch. More hands than he could count or cared to think about undressed him. The cool cabin air sent a shiver through him.

With lazy eyes, Roger watched Cardin and Estefan strip. Cardin's body was lean, wiry, hiding the strength underneath. Thick reddish brown chest hair flowed down his body narrowing at his waist then tracing a line to the nest of darker pubic hair. His cock stood up, an angry swollen red, thick and long.

Estefan was softer, less muscle, almost as if he'd never lost the baby fat of youth. Almost hairless, he appeared younger naked than he did dressed. Although his cock wasn't as thick as Cardin's, the weeping flesh matched him in length. And arousal.

Roger knew he should object, fight what was coming. He liked women. No doubt in his mind about the arousal a soft woman's body caused in him. But this...

Cardin parted Roger's legs, climbed on the sofa and knelt between them. Adria handed him a small bottle.

While his spent cock twitched with interest, Roger let Cardin arrange his legs. One on the back of the sofa, one planted on Cardin's thigh.

Estefan's hungry gaze devoured him but Adria's eyes held something less than arousal. Almost doubt.

Cold lube and a warm finger drew Roger's mind back to Cardin. The burn of stretching from before wasn't there, only the slick slide of flesh and the memory of pleasure. A second finger joined the first and the ache of arousal joined the heat of the intrusion.

Roger bit his lip to keep from asking for more.

*It's okay. You can want this.*



His resolve to stay silent didn't stop his body from pushing into the gentle strokes. A third finger answered his unspoken desire. Arching into the pressure, Roger gave in to the need.

Then the fingers were gone. The emptiness threatened to overwhelm his silence. A thick, blunt cock pressed against his entrance. Saved from the begging resting on the tip of his tongue, Roger pushed into the cold heat of the lubed flesh.

"Easy." Estefan's words came from near his head. "Let Cardin do the work."

He'd lost track of everyone except the man kneeling between his legs. Estefan's luminous blue eyes met his gaze. Fingers ran through his hair then trailed down his cheek. Rough calluses rubbed his lips.

When Cardin's cock pushed past the still tight ring of muscle, Roger's mouth opened with a gasp. Estefan's finger slid in to tease his tongue. Not thinking, Roger sucked on the slender flesh.

Estefan smiled at his actions. "Now, exhale and bear down."

Roger followed the dark man's instructions, blowing out around the finger still lingering in his mouth.

The thick, hard flesh slid deep. A feeling of fullness and heat combined with pleasure.

*You want more.*

His gaze flickered between Estefan's eyes and his leaking cock. He sucked hard on Estefan's finger, knowing the message he sent but unable to stop himself.

A huge grin split Estefan's face. His finger pulled away. Estefan knelt on the couch near Roger's head. His cock in his hand, he rubbed the wet tip against Roger's lips.

His curious tongue darted out to taste the bitter liquid. Not so different from the taste of his own seed. The thought brought back the memory of the bar and Adria's tongue coating his with semen.

His gaze searched for her and found her standing near Estefan. Her soft smile didn't reach her eyes. She nodded her head slightly.

Opening his mouth, the soft tip of Estefan's cock slid between his lips. Then Cardin moved. Slow, deep strokes filled Roger from both ends.

His cock reawakened and began to fill. The heat filling his ass bumped against a sensitive knot of pleasure with each thrust. The bitter taste of leaking pre-come made him want more. Estefan kept his strokes shallow but Roger needed more. A soft hand wrapped around his cock, pulling him to hardness.

Adria knelt next to the couch, her head dipped toward his dick. He moaned around the cock filling his mouth when moist heat engulfed him.

Cardin's strokes moved faster, his balls slapping Roger's ass with each blow. Adria reminded him Estefan wasn't the only talented mouth in their weird little group. Estefan's cock pushed in and out of his mouth with increasing depth.

*It feels so good...so hot, so good.*

Roger quit fighting his desires and let his subconscious take over. Moans and slapping flesh sounded above the low whine of the aircraft.

Cardin lost the rhythm of his strokes. His body jerking against Roger's in a familiar loss of control. Searing liquid filled him, lubricating his passage for Cardin's final few strokes.

Roger's erection strained against Adria's throat. Not enough to relieve the ache in his cock. He needed more.

"I want to fuck you too." Estefan's growl almost set him off.

Releasing the hot dick with an audible pop, Roger nodded. His heart raced in his chest, pounding an erratic beat. He'd just agreed to be fucked. As long as he hadn't said "yes", he could try to tell himself he didn't want what was happening to him. Now he'd given consent. Enthusiastic consent.

Cardin's cock slid free. A rush of liquid trailed down Roger's crack. Estefan nearly tripped over Adria in his rush to take Cardin's place.

The pop and squeeze of lube sounded loud to Roger's ears but his mind dissolved in the sensuous slide of Adria's lips on his cock. Time stopped as Estefan's flesh pushed into him. With no resistance, Estefan pumped hard and fast.

Between Adria's intense sucking and the rapid-fire fucking, the ache deep in Roger's balls built to a roiling boil. His eyes closed, concentrating on his impending release, Roger didn't realize where Cardin was until rough lips met his. The scrape and rub of scratchy beard didn't keep him from opening his mouth to the forceful tongue.

For the second time Roger flew to the edge of reason and fell over. Adria's mouth and hand worked to milk him dry. As Roger's ass clenched in ecstasy, Estefan's growls grew louder. With jerking movement against his ass, Estefan emptied into him.

*Too much... Too much...*

With Cardin's mouth still glued to his, darkness moved in on Roger and he slipped into its embrace.

\* \* \* \* \*

*A blonde woman beckoned to Roger. Her smile shone as bright as the sun and her laugh made her blue eyes dance.*

*Roger had no idea who she was but a warm feeling of security and love curled through his chest.*

*A man's voice, not his own, scolded her with teasing words. "Serena, you should be resting."*

*The scene pulled away like a zoom lens retreating. The woman's belly, swollen in the late stages of pregnancy, came into Roger's line of sight. She rubbed the bump of her stomach with a gentle caress. "He doesn't want me to sleep." Her hand reached out of view, tugged his hand.*

*Roger expected to see his hand. Instead, her fair skin contrasted with the black, masculine hand she pulled into view.*

*"Feel. He's anxious to meet you." She placed the hand on her belly.*

*The gentle bump of a kicking child teased the palm that wasn't Roger's but was. Keen hearing caught the rapid beat of the unborn infant's heart. The man's hand rubbed the woman's hard belly.*

*"Soon, love. Very soon." The man's accented voice choked with emotion as he leaned forward and rested his head on Serena's stomach.*

Roger woke with a start. A warm back snuggled into him. His mind didn't want to wake. He needed to think, to analyze the dream. The screeching whine of jet engines signaled their descent. The ding of the seat-belt indicator confirmed it.

"Wake up, we're landing." Cardin's low voice floated somewhere above him.

A soft groan from the body next to him and movement meant he had to at least open his eyes.

Adria turned toward him on the wide couch. Her naked flesh pressed against his. For a second lust twitched deep in his groin. Then the memory of earlier events flooded his brain.

"Why?"

Adria's dark eyes filled with remorse at his question. "Because you had to be bonded. It wasn't working with me." She sat up, seemingly unconcerned with her lack of clothing in front of the other two men. "Now you are with us. Body and soul."

Roger shook his head. Sitting up quickly, he gripped the thin blanket. "I don't know what you want from me but I'm not yours. Or theirs." His gaze scanned the cabin in search of his clothes. "I'm here to find MacKenna, to try to salvage my career." He spotted his clothes neatly folded and stacked on one of the plush recliners.

Careful to keep the blanket tight around him, Roger scrambled off the couch. Snagging his things, he stalked into the tiny bathroom. Before he closed the door, he turned back to Adria. Her eyes were wide with surprise. "When we land, I'm out of here. I want nothing to do with any of you ever again."

Adria jumped as the door slammed shut. Cardin handed her clothing. He and Estefan looked as if they'd been awake for a while. "The bond didn't work. Why not?" Her heart in her throat, she remembered Roger's pleas from last night. Did she force Cardin and Estefan on him for no reason?

But in the end, he'd wanted it, wanted them both.

Still, she hadn't liked seeing him with them. And now, if the bond still hadn't taken... She exhaled a long shaky breath and began yanking on her clothes.

Cardin shook his head, confusion narrowed his eyes and wrinkled his brow. "Adria, maybe he's not a Watcher, not the *Rememdiu*."

"No, I've never been so sure of anything. The sense of him is stronger than any other before. But for some reason the bond isn't working."

"Could it be because he *is* stronger?" Estefan didn't usually say much. He wasn't big on thinking but sometimes he broke the complex down to the simple and things made sense.

Adria and Cardin both turned to stare at him.

"Some of the older legends talk of one special individual." Adria winced at the awe in her own voice. She'd always been the strongest of the immortals. Her genetic makeup didn't give her the power of the Cure, the power to destroy the demons permanently, but she'd always been the one in control. She'd tried once and failed. The vampire who tried to turn her died, but by her sword, not her blood.

Her heart raced in her chest. If Roger was the one of the old tales, then the time really had come. The destruction of the night demons, the ones who caused her so much pain, could be at hand.

The bump of the aircraft's wheels hitting the runway startled her from her thoughts.

“If it’s true, then we need to tell him everything.” After nearly four hundred years of control, the idea of giving her authority over to a man shook her. But she would. If relinquishing her position meant the end was near, she’d willingly give Roger anything.

The short taxi to the private terminal ended as the door snapped open behind her. Cardin and Estefan both had awestruck looks on their faces.

She turned slowly. Looking at Roger with new eyes, she tried to sense what logic was telling her. “It’s true.” Strength deep within him radiated outward. “We need to talk.”

Roger ignored Adria, moving past her to the jet’s exit. One of the pilots pushed open the heavy door.

“Please, Roger! It’s important. More so than you can imagine.”

The open door presented a view of the sun’s rays peeking through an overcast dawn sky. Another jet sat a few hundred feet away from the one Roger exited. From the top of the stairs, Roger saw a limo waiting at the bottom of the stairs while another pulled away from the other aircraft. The dark vehicle moved at a crawl toward a gate.

The breath rushed out of his lungs with a whoosh. Roger’s skin crawled with electricity as if he’d been standing too close to a lightning strike. Grabbing the railing, he slid down to the steps.

“What the fuck...” Even his voice sounded tinny and distant.

“Cardin, Estefan, help him!”

The fear in Adria’s voice didn’t help sooth his alarm. “What’s wrong?” Blackness threatened the edges of his vision. He forced the impending darkness back by sheer will. He refused to faint over... Over what?

Strong hands gripped his arms, pulling him up. He wanted to protest but focused all his will on staying conscious.

“Get him to the car. Quickly.” The strength of Adria’s commands hadn’t diminished the panic threading through her voice. “Someone’s nearby.”

Knowing she was handling things gave him a measure of comfort but the fear in her voice didn’t reassure him. Cardin’s arm around his waist was strong and warm. Roger leaned into the man, trusting him to take care of him.

His legs regained some coordination within a few feet of a long, black limousine. Stumbling instead of being dragged, Roger focused on Adria opening the back door. Getting into the car was an uncoordinated effort. With Adria pulling and Cardin pushing, Roger fell over into the seat.

“What’s wrong?” The whisper took much of his remaining strength.

“We’re in close proximity to a vampire. The first time the sensation hits can be debilitating.” Adria ran her fingers over his face. “I’m sorry. I would have warned you but you didn’t want to hear it.” A frown furrowed her brow. “Though his estate is several miles from here. I wouldn’t think it would be quite so bad. But I felt him too.”

“MacKenna?” Roger whispered.

“Yes.” Adria cradled his head in her lap. “Before the bonding, you wouldn’t have felt anything from MacKenna except maybe a sense of unease. Now when you are near a vampire, you’ll know it. The effects won’t be so intense but you’ll recognize a demon’s aura immediately. But still, his presence shouldn’t be so strong this far from his lair.”

“There was another car.”

“What?”

Cardin and Estefan crawled into the limo, to the seat opposite Roger and Adria. “We’re ready.”

“Another car. Limousine. Drove away,” Roger mumbled.

Adria shook her head. “But my sources said MacKenna should already be here.”

“We know he went to Canada first,” Cardin said. “Maybe he couldn’t get out as fast as he expected.”

“I didn’t think he would delay. Too dangerous. Quebec already has a vampire. Serena wouldn’t like having him hang around.” Adria’s voice sounded worried.

*Serena...* Roger’s mind conjured the image of the blonde woman in his dream.

The car moved slowly away from the jet. Roger welcomed Adria’s calming hands and silence. He had to think.



## Chapter Four

His weak fingers clutched the warm mug. Fragrant steam from the tea rose to caress his face. Roger didn't want to hear any more just yet.

The hotel room was small. Not what he expected after the private jet and the limo. Two rooms adjoined, Estefan and Cardin in one, Roger and Adria in the other. But right now the two men stood near the window in his room as Adria spoke. His tired mind heard only garbled words.

"Not yet. Please. I can't think straight." His mind couldn't stop picturing the pregnant woman Serena and her lover. Was she a vampire? Could a vampire have a child? Somewhere his subconscious answered no. The name had to be a coincidence.

"We may not have much time, Roger. Your reaction was so severe. MacKenna might know we're here. You have to know everything before he finds us." Adria tucked another blanket around him.

The shivering cold wouldn't go away. Strength slowly returned to his limbs but he couldn't get warm. He recognized the symptoms.

"Cold. Shock." His hands shook, sloshing the tea over the brim of the cup.

"Damn." Adria took the cup from him. "Help me get him in bed."

While Adria turned down the covers, Cardin and Estefan lifted him from the chair. Carrying him between them, they placed him on the bed.

"Get his clothes off. We need to warm him up." Adria stripped her shirt over her head while Estefan and Cardin began to undress him.

Hands tugged at Roger's clothes. "No...not again." The protest was weak, probably unheard.

With the little warmth his clothes provided gone, Roger's shivers became violent, almost convulsions. The blankets Cardin pulled over him didn't help. Adria's warm body slid in next to him and eased the chills some but he needed more.

She pulled him onto his side and snuggled her chest against his. Her legs twined around his thighs.

Irony almost made him laugh. After everything he'd been through in the last week, dying of shock seemed ludicrous.

The bed dipped opposite Adria and another warm body embraced him from the other side. The scratchy hair of Cardin's chest tickled his back.

Between the two warm bodies, the shaking racking him eased.

"Stay awake, Roger. You can't sleep yet." Adria's voice whispered to him. "Soon. Just not yet."

Roger nodded at her words. His throat was too tight to speak.

Cardin's strong arms wrapped around Roger and Adria both. His body pushed tight against Roger's back and his flaccid cock pressed against the crack of his ass.

Memory of the plane, of the sex, sent a flush of warmth through him. He concentrated on heat, the heat of Cardin's cock plowing deep, of Estefan's hot flesh in his mouth and Adria's soft, wet lips on his dick.

Between the two bodies and the hot memory, the shivers finally subsided.

"Look at me, Roger." Adria's commanding voice made him obey.

Her concerned eyes examined his face. Slowly, she nodded her approval. "You can sleep now. Rest. We'll talk more later."

Feeling almost a compulsion to obey, Roger let his eyes slide shut. Cardin's arm started to move off him but he caught the thick wrist. "Stay." Wrapping his arm around Adria, taking Cardin's with him, Roger buried his face in Adria's fragrant hair and faded off to sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

*An agonizing cry echoed in Roger's mind. Sobs of loss, of fear, of anger... A flash of blood-covered blonde hair... A dark hand, coated in bright red smoothing back the stained long hair... An accented voice pleading...*

Roger's eyes flew open. His heart beat hard in his chest as he gasped for breath. The sense of loss made his throat tighten. His surroundings clarified around him. His body ached all over. Deep in his overused muscles. Some from the shock of earlier, some from last night's adventure. The debilitating electrical current just below the surface of his skin had eased, though the sensation was still there.

The comfort of the two bodies sandwiching him helped ease the ache left over from his dream. Adria's back warmed his front. Her soft skin caused heat of a different kind. If he were completely honest with himself, the hard cock nestled between the cheeks of his ass helped push his arousal to full steam.

He pressed his erection against Adria's ass then slowly pushed back against Cardin.

Both of them stirred slightly.

He moved again. The ache in his ass from last night didn't seem to deter his cock from jumping when Cardin pushed back.

The man's arms tightened around him. A warm calloused hand rubbed his chest. Fingers teased his nipple.

Adria mumbled softly in her sleep. Her words weren't coherent but her body snuggled closer.

The scratch of Cardin's day-old beard stung Roger's neck. His lips teased the sting away. Softer than Roger expected, Cardin's mouth kissed a wet line to his collarbone.

Roger turned his face toward the warm wetness. His lips brushed against Cardin's forehead. The other man's eyes questioned. Roger's must have answered.

A soft tongue traced the seam of Roger's lips, teasing them open. Stubble rasped against stubble as Cardin deepened the kiss.

Roger welcomed the man's tongue, tangled his own around the moist flesh. The hot cock against his ass moved slowly, the base teasing his aching hole. Roger moved against him, pressing back as Cardin pushed forward. Roger's cock nestled between Adria's cheeks with each movement.

Movement distracted Roger from the warm mouth and hot flesh. Estefan appeared on the other side of the bed, near Cardin. He held out a tube of something.

Lube.

Roger's breath caught in his throat. His tongue stilled against Cardin's.

"Do you want me?" Cardin whispered against his lips.

Finally able to exhale, Roger barely breathed his consent. "Yes."

Cardin's hand slid across Roger's chest then up toward Estefan. The other man opened the tube and squeezed a generous amount of the slick clear gel on Cardin's fingers.

Estefan pulled the covers off their bodies. Adria mumbled again, her hands trying to grab the retreating blankets.

Roger turned to face Adria's back. He willed his body to relax when the cold lube touched his anus. His arm wrapped around Adria, brushing her full, warm breasts. His fingers reached for a soft nipple. He focused on the tiny nub of flesh while inquisitive fingers pressed into his ass.

Adria's gentle moan merged with his.

His passage still stretched from last night, Cardin's fingers found little resistance. Three fingers worked lube deep, each stroke brushing his prostate. He'd heard of the pleasure prostate massage could give a man but he'd never believed it until last night. Shudders of bliss raced through him.

A small hand covered his. Adria pulled his hand away from her breast and pushed it down her stomach. Soft curls rubbed against his fingers before she pushed his hand against her wet pussy. Her already-swollen clit rose from between her nether lips.

Roger brushed his fingers against the damp flesh. His attention distracted by a hot cock pressing against his entrance, his hand cupped her cunt hard. "Yes... Do it." He pushed back against the welcome invasion.

Cardin met his backward thrust.

With one long, slow stroke, Roger was full of hot cock.

Estefan circled the bed like a vulture looking to feed. His eyes bright with lust and his jeans open, he pulled at his leaking cock.

Adria lifted her leg, wrapping her ankle around Roger's knee. She shifted slightly and his cock brushed against her wet heat. With another twist of her body, his cock was sheathed in her cunt.

Roger wanted to thrust in both directions. The creamy depths riding his cock called to him but the thick flesh buried in his ass yelled just as loud.

"Hold still," Cardin whispered in his ear.

Roger stopped his erratic motions. His gaze rested on Estefan's slow, stroking movements. Cardin moved at the same slow pace, fucking his ass with long, deep thrusts.

Adria bent forward, angling her pussy better to fuck herself on his cock. With a space near his head cleared, Estefan's eyes glowed with anticipation.

Roger slowly licked his lips and nodded.

Bouncing the bed in his haste, Estefan climbed on and offered his leaking cock to Roger's mouth.

This time, the subconscious urging wasn't necessary. Roger wanted to suck Estefan. He wanted – no, needed – the man behind him fucking his ass. And Adria? He craved her wet depths as much as he hungered for the two men.

Roger strained his neck toward Estefan's offering, his tongue outstretched to taste. The silken crown brushed against his lips then his tongue. A burst of bitter flavor sent heat through him.

Cardin shifted position, his hands grabbing Roger's hips. Long, slow strokes grew shorter, faster. He pumped hard into Roger's ass, battering the sensitive gland with each blow.

Adria's moans increased with her pace. The push and pull grew frantic.

Estefan's eyes never left Roger's face. His hips rolled back and forth as he fed Roger his length.

Estefan climaxed first. Warm, pungent fluid filled Roger's mouth. He closed his lips tight around the crown, his tongue teasing the edge of the sensitive flesh. Sucking hard, he gulped the spurting seed.

With a sharp groan from Cardin, rough beard scratched the back of Roger's neck. Teeth bit into his shoulder as the hard pounding gave way to jerking pumps. Warm seed filled Roger's passage.

If the two men hadn't been enough, Adria's pussy clenched, tightening around his aching cock.

Sucking hard on the softening flesh in his mouth, Roger let go of his tension. The sexual release was only part of it. He realized he needed this motley crew of strange characters. He needed their bodies, their companionship and something more he couldn't define. The fear and tension flowed out of him with his seed.

As if they realized his submission, his acceptance, his three lovers stroked and petted him. A confusing jumble of mouths covered him with kisses. Bearded skin, soft willing lips, hairless features... It didn't matter. He'd come home. For the first time in his life, he'd come home.

\* \* \* \* \*

Roger let the hot water wash away the smell of sex. His body ached but his mind was at ease. He hadn't said anything to his strange crew of lovers after they finished. He needed time to think, to form coherent words to explain his change of heart. What he really needed was a way to clarify his actions and feelings to himself first.

Maybe this was the "bond" Adria kept droning on about. Something clicked earlier and as strange as his union with three people sounded, the situation felt right. Comforting even.

Steam swirled around him as he rested his forehead on water-warmed tiles. He'd never known his real parents. Passed through the foster care system, he'd never had a real family. Never been close to anyone, man or woman, except work friends. The kind of friends he had a drink with after-hours but never invited to his home.

He wasn't exactly a virgin but his experience with women had been limited to short-term relationships mostly based on sex. He never seemed to be satisfied with anyone for long and soon moved on.

Men, on the other hand, were a totally different story. Well, he was virgin no more on that front either. A few times a man had attracted him sexually. The first time had been with his friend Charlie but they hadn't gotten past a kiss.

The second was Kevin St. James. The blond young man he failed to protect had made concentration difficult. Knowing Kevin was MacKenna's lover gave him dreams of seeing the two men together. He'd awakened from his dreams hard and unfulfilled, feeling like a voyeur.

And then there was the man himself—Lorcan MacKenna. The dark, brooding presence hid something more and being near him had excited Roger.

"Oh shit..." Memories of Charlie's goodbye party, of his paleness, the hunger in his eyes. The feelings from that night mixed with his visions of MacKenna. "Charlie wasn't sick."

Hurriedly, he rinsed the remaining soap from his body. Now was the time to talk.

\* \* \* \* \*

Adria scrolled through her computer screen scanning the text.

Cardin leaned over her shoulder, staring at the screen. "What are you looking for?"

"I'm trying to find anything that could explain Roger's transformation. The process is too different. I remember something from one of the older manuscripts but I can't find it. A reference to a Watcher whose change took a different path. He was thought to be the *Rememdiu* but died before he had the chance to try the cure." Her frustration grew when she heard the shower shut off. "I need to know for sure."

The door squeaked open behind her. She didn't bother to look at Roger.

"We need to talk." His voice cut with a hard edge. The heat of his shower radiated off his body.

"I know but I need to find something here first." Adria kept scrolling through the document on the screen.

"Now." He closed her laptop, almost catching her fingers.

Adria sighed as she tapped her nails on top of the computer. "Okay, fine. Now." She turned around to face him. Wrapped only in a towel, the muscles beneath his damp chest hair glistened with moisture from his shower. His lack of clothes made concentration difficult. "Are you willing to suspend your disbelief long enough to hear the whole story?"

"First, I have a question. If you can answer, maybe I won't have to suspend anything."

"Okay." Adria wondered where he was going but she really hoped she had the right answer.

"Do you keep track of all the vampires?"

His question surprised her but she nodded. "As best I can."

"Do you have names? Details about them?" Tension radiated off him like the rays of the sun.



“When I can. Is there someone you want to know about?”

Roger shifted his weight from one foot to the other. “Can you look up a name? See if he’s a vampire?”

“If he’s in our database, yes.” She started to open her computer. “I will need this.”

He smirked his approval.

“What’s his name?”

“Charlie...Charles Stanton.”

She watched her computer wake up from standby. The answer was on the tip of her tongue. The man he wanted to know about was definitely in her database. Under deceased demons. She’d sent him to his final rest eight years ago. The young ones were always easier, especially when they left a trail of dead bodies in their wake. The older ones, like MacKenna, were more cautious about their personal safety and better at hiding the bodies.

She typed the information in anyway, making a show of looking the name up. Estefan was in the other room and Cardin knew better than to react.

“Charles Adam Stanton. Born February 4, 1968. Graduated with honors from Ohio State with a degree in criminology. He worked for a couple of years for the Secret Service but resigned citing illness in 1996. He was transformed eleven years ago by Jeremy Cannon, the resident vampire of Washington, D.C.”

“Resident vampire?” Roger seemed more surprised by the term than the details she provided about Stanton’s life and condition.

“Yes. One of the things we need to talk about.” She shifted around to look at him. “Are you ready to hear what I have to say?”

Roger nodded slowly. The tension in his neck eased. He walked over to the bed and climbed on, scooting up so his back rested on the headboard. “I’m ready.”

Cardin sat next to him, their shoulders touching.

Surprise swept through her when Roger's fingers played with Cardin's hand. Maybe the bond had finally taken hold. A wave of sadness tightened her throat. Estefan was gay and although Cardin went both ways, he preferred men. Until Estefan's bonding, Cardin had been satisfied with Adria's company and her bed. They'd never been exclusive but the bond of immortality and a shared goal kept them together. A lasting relationship with mortals was impossible. Once she realized the two men's preferences, she'd backed away.

After watching Roger for the last two years, she'd come to view him as not only the cure capable of destroying the demons but maybe the solution to her loneliness.

She mentally shook her head clear. Her life's work was more important than a single man. If a bond with Cardin or Estefan kept him close, she'd learn to deal with it.

Adria pulled the straight-backed chair over near the foot of the bed facing the two men. "Okay. We are part of a group of people who are immortal. We call ourselves 'Watchers' for lack of a better term." She kept her eyes fixed on Roger, seeking any kind of disbelief or ridicule. She found none. Only calm interest. "I'm over four hundred years old. Cardin is approaching his two hundred and thirtieth birthday. And Estefan is just a young thing at one hundred and four."

Roger appeared to accept everything she said. Relaxing back on the chair, she put her feet up on the end of the bed. "We keep tabs on the demons – the vampires. And we kill them when we can. The *Rememdiu* is the Watcher who will cure the world of the demons forever."

Cardin's fingers twined through Roger's. His thumb brushed Roger's palm. Still Roger didn't pull away or lower his stare.

"Watchers appear almost at random. Vampires rarely turn people. They're too territorial and fear their progeny would end up defeating them. The special circumstances needed for the creation of a Watcher makes the odds even higher. Sometimes no one finds them to do the bonding and they will live out their life as a mere mortal never knowing they had a grand purpose. Other times, the bonding takes

place but they aren't strong enough to survive the sacrifice and die. Then there are those like us, who've bonded but weren't the *Rememdiu*."

Cardin's fingers tightened on his hand.

Roger's eyebrows arched at the word "sacrifice" but he stayed quiet.

"The bonding normally revives a genetic memory in the Watchers so the need to explain isn't there. Though memory is probably a misleading term. When we're told something, we're able to tell whether the information is true or false. It makes understanding our purpose and fate easier. You just know it's right."

"And the bonding is sex?"

"Yes, with another Watcher. We only become immortal when we've had sex with another of our kind. The Watcher's body changes as well as their memories. Strength, speed, sight, hearing...as if we inherit the advantages of the vampire without their limitations against daylight or the need for blood. We also can live peacefully with each other. Vampires can't due to their territorial nature. But we are more rare than vampires. If the bond works properly, the new Watcher is tied to the one who brought them into their legacy by genetics and by mutual purpose." Adria paused for a breath. "And we have the ability to sense a vampire when they're nearby."

Roger's thumb stroked the back of Cardin's hand. "So the feeling I had when we got off the plane?" His eyes were wide with realization.

Adria nodded. "You sensed MacKenna. He must have been in the vehicle leaving the airport. To some degree, we all felt him."

Roger shook his hand free of Cardin's. "So he is really here." He leaned forward on the bed.

"Yes. And you must be ready for the sacrifice because just as we can sense vampires, to a lesser degree they can sense us as well."

## **Chapter Five**

Creeping through the woods, the word “sacrifice” kept echoing through Roger’s ears. The thick foliage surrounding MacKenna’s estate tugged at his clothes as if warning him against his current course.

Although past midnight, the darkness didn’t seem complete. The moon played hide and seek behind thick clouds but he had no trouble finding his way toward the house.

Adria was not happy with him. She didn’t want him near MacKenna until she thought he was ready but he needed to confirm the man’s presence for himself. He almost wavered in his resolve when she forbade him to go. A strange compulsion to obey her even now made his movement hesitant.

Adrenaline caused the soft whisper of the wind in the trees to sound foreboding. The current of energy tingling below his skin grew worse. His heart beat loud in his ears, vying with the creak and snap of twigs.

Peering through an opening in the brush, Roger spotted the figure of a man. Outlined against the lighter sky in a clearing, the long, flowing hair glimmered in a stray shaft of moonlight. The man’s profile revealed an upturned face.

Roger’s vision seemed to blur and sharpen as if he turned the focus ring of a camera. He didn’t question how his sight zoomed in on the almost delicate features.

The man’s nose wrinkled as he sniffed the air like an animal. His head wavered from side to side in a slow rolling motion. His mouth opened, tongue darting out to taste the air.

Again Roger’s eyes refocused. Long, sharp fangs...

The blond head snapped to the side and almost glowing eyes stared at Roger.

“Kevin!” The exhaled word, barely audible, broke the spell of fascination.

As Kevin St. James lunged, Roger turned and fled. His racing heart matched the pace of his pumping legs. The forest around him blurred as branches and twigs slapped against his body. His breath drowned out all sounds, leaving him no way to judge how close Kevin was.

Another voice penetrated the almost panicked state of Roger's mind.

"Kevin, no!" MacKenna's voice was a hoarse shout.

The high wall surrounding the estate loomed in front of him. A quick glance over his shoulder showed two figures gaining ground. Indecision slowed his flight. Climbing the wall might give them time to reach him. He had no choice. Adria and the guys were just on the other side. His body ached with the effort of outrunning a demon. If he were to escape, it would have to be over the wall.

With a fresh burst of adrenaline, he headed for the barrier between him and his friends. Jumping, his hands clawed for the top. His fingers caught. The tips of his shoes searched for footholds. Just before he dropped to the other side, he saw MacKenna tackle Kevin.

"We don't kill," the dark man's whispered words reached Roger's ears as he landed on the grass below the wall.

"So hungry..." The tormented growl wasn't MacKenna but didn't sound like the soft-spoken Kevin either. "I hurt..." The gentler words made Roger's heart ache.

"I know, love. I know." MacKenna's voice cracked with emotion. "You can feed soon. Donal's waiting at the house." Rustling leaves and the crack of twigs whispered to Roger as the two men moved away from the wall.

With a gasp of air in his overtaxed lungs, Roger pushed his aching legs into action and ran toward the small copse of trees hiding the van.

\* \* \* \* \*

Roger settled in the van as Estefan sped away from the edge of the MacKenna property. His chest burned from his frantic run through the woods. The muscles in his legs screamed over his abuse.

"I told you this was a stupid idea." Adria glared at him from the front seat.

"I needed to look around. I wanted to confirm MacKenna's presence."

"I told you he was there." Adria's nostrils flared in her anger. "Why can't you trust me?"

"Because I've known you all of three days! I'm still having trouble believing half the things you've said, things I can't confirm. Just let me do what I need to!" He wasn't totally honest with her. Whatever the newly established bond had done to him, he didn't doubt the existence of vampires. What he had trouble with was Adria's claim they were all evil and that MacKenna deserved to die.

"Well, now you should believe me about the changes in your body." She turned in the front seat to stare out the windshield.

Roger ran a hand through his sweaty hair. "What are you talking about?"

"You ran so fast I couldn't see you until you were at the car door."

Estefan grinned at him through the rearview mirror.

Cardin nodded his agreement.

He had been moving fast. His physical condition had always been a source of pride. When he started running, his mind focused only on the need to get away from what was chasing him.

What was chasing him... "It wasn't MacKenna."

"What?"

"In the woods, chasing me..." Still short-winded, Roger gasped for air. "It wasn't MacKenna. The man..."

"Demon," Adria corrected.

"Wasn't MacKenna. What do you know of Kevin St. James?"

“The dead senator’s son?”

“Yes.”

Adria shook her head. “Not much. He was MacKenna’s lover. He’s thought to be dead. Pretty much what the news reported.”

“Could he have been turned? Transformed into a vampire?”

“Was it him?” Cardin clasped a hand over his.

Roger hadn’t realized he was shaking until the warmth calmed him. “I think so. But would he be here with MacKenna? I thought you said vampires couldn’t live together.”

The van pulled up in front of the small hotel.

“They can’t. Not for long. And MacKenna knows that better than most. Let’s get inside.”

Roger’s legs didn’t want to cooperate. Cardin wrapped his arm around Roger’s waist and supported him to their rooms.

“What’s wrong with me?” Roger’s annoyance turned to anger. He didn’t like feeling weak.

“Your transformation isn’t complete. The physical aspects usually take longer. You were forced to use your strength before you were ready. It’s nothing rest and a little time won’t cure.” Adria flipped open her laptop while Estefan and Cardin helped him into bed.

Their hands were gentle as they tugged his clothes off. Soft blankets covered his skin. The bed dipped beside him as Cardin sat down. He stroked his hair with a casual touch.

Roger smiled at the man. He’d grown fond of this weird trio rather quickly. Maybe there really was a genetic connection to them.

“Still no sign of St. James’ body.” Adria closed her laptop. “I have several news services on the payroll, so to speak. None of them have heard a word. There’s still no

sign of the killer. A lot of name-calling and finger-pointing.” Adria paused and took a deep breath. “And you’ve been officially listed as missing and a person of interest.”

Roger should have known. Running off as he had would look suspicious. With him missing, the Service would be free to point the blame at him. Although unexpected, the idea of being the prime suspect in the whole scandal didn’t worry him as it should.

The bed dipped opposite Cardin. Adria smiled down at him.

“Rest for now. We’ll worry about everything later.”

Roger smiled at her touch and closed his eyes.

\* \* \* \* \*

Low voices whispered from the corner of the room. Roger focused on them, mentally narrowing the field of hearing until the words clarified.

“He’s coming into his strengths too fast. He should never have been able to outrun a vampire. Not yet.” Adria’s worry sounded loud and clear.

Roger turned his head slowly toward the voices. Adria and Cardin stood near the door, heads bent close together.

“Do you think we should wait? If he gets away now, we might not have another chance.” Cardin’s mumbled words didn’t keep Roger from hearing him.

“We can’t. The manor isn’t as secure as most of MacKenna’s homes. If he moves anywhere else, we may not be able to get to him.”

“Adria, we can’t lose Roger like we did the last one. I won’t let it happen.” Cardin’s hard tone made the words easy to hear.

“We won’t, Cardin. We won’t. We just have to figure out what to do next.”

“Why don’t you talk to me instead of about me?” Roger sat up as the two jumped apart. “I’m in the room. I can hear you.”

“We were barely whispering!” Adria’s face paled.

Cardin shook his head slowly. “You shouldn’t have been able to hear us, Roger.”



“You were talking out loud. Just like you are now.”

Adria looked at Cardin and then back to Roger. “He whispered so low, I could barely hear him.” She walked over to the bed and sat down next to him. “You’re gaining strength too fast. I’ve never seen this happen and only read something similar in one of the oldest texts. I don’t understand.”

“What does it mean?” Roger sensed her nervousness.

“I don’t know.”

Roger turned his gaze to the worried man still standing near the door. “Cardin?”

He just shook his head. “I’m sorry, Roger. Adria knows more about this than I do. If she’s unsure, there’s nothing I can add.”

Roger rubbed the base of his skull where a knot of tension ached. “So if we wait until we see what’s going on with me, what will happen to MacKenna?”

“Since he knows by now someone or something is watching him, he’ll probably move. If we wait, we could lose him.”

“And Kevin.”

As if she could read his thoughts, Adria shook her head. “Finding Kevin alive won’t salvage your career. You can’t go back. Not as you are now and not as what you’ll become. Even if you left us tonight, you won’t be the same.”

Roger’s throat tightened as the truth sunk in. He wasn’t a mere mortal anymore. How could he exist in the regular world? The thought of leaving Adria, Cardin and Estefan made his breath catch. No, he was stuck in their world now. But he would have some say as to how he fit there.

\* \* \* \* \*

Roger watched Adria sleeping. Her dark hair sprawled across the plain white pillow. The darkness before dawn was too bright. He could see her as plain as if the sun shone through the window and across the bed.

Cardin stood near the window watching. For what, Roger didn’t know.

Estefan's snores bled through the partially open door to the other bedroom.

If he had half a brain, he'd be on the next plane out of Ireland. Leave them and the thought of salvaging his career by finding MacKenna and Kevin. The idea of abandoning his weird trio, strangers only a few days ago, sent pain shooting through his chest.

If the man was a vampire... Roger snorted. Vampires. The disbelief he'd felt over the last two days seemed to have evaporated. Vampires, immortals. What next? Werewolves?

More difficult to reconcile was Adria's view of vampires and MacKenna's efforts to stop Kevin from catching him. The man's words—*we don't kill*—didn't fit with Adria's convictions.

"It's hard to take in, isn't it?"

Roger jumped at Cardin's whisper. "Yeah." He chuckled softly. "Just a little."

"It was hard for me too." Cardin turned back to the window and continued his watching.

Roger crawled out of the bed, careful not to disturb Adria. He walked over to stand next to Cardin. "How?"

"How did we get this way?" Eyes peered out of the darkness.

Roger nodded.

"There's only one way to receive the genetic material to become a Watcher. During a woman's pregnancy, late in the third trimester, she's transformed into a vampire."

"You mean my mother..." Roger pressed his shoulder against Cardin's. The warmth gave him some comfort.

"Was a vampire. You survived your birth and she let you live. Sometimes they don't. A fledgling vampire has an almost insatiable thirst for blood. For the first few days, he or she will take from whatever source is available."

Roger cringed at the idea of a woman killing her own child for its blood. Although Cardin's words explained Kevin's anguished words in the forest.

"Sometimes other Watchers intervene and steal the child before harm can come to it." Cardin slid his arm around Roger's waist and pulled him closer. "We suffered through the change with them."

Roger didn't flinch at the contact. In fact, he welcomed the heat of the man's body against his.

His gaze fixed on the street below, Cardin continued. "To become a vampire, the victim is drained of blood to the point of death and then drinks from the vein of their creator."

Roger shared his shudder through their close contact.

Cardin's arm tightened on Roger's waist. "As a child in the womb, we didn't drink the vampire's blood but it ran through our veins, mingled with our blood. Because of the violence of the transformation, the woman's forced into premature labor. If the pregnancy wasn't far enough along, the child dies. But if the fetus is able to live on its own, the infant survives."

"Are there many of us?" The numbers couldn't have been large. What were the odds of vampires turning pregnant women?

"Not many. Us. As far as I know we're it. Adria tries to keep track of the vampires and all their victims. You were harder to find." Cardin turned his head and nuzzled Roger's ear.

He leaned into the warm breath. "Why?"

"In earlier times, the demons didn't move as much and orphans stayed close to extended families. Since most Watchers are orphans, we tried to keep tabs on news records of abandoned premature infants. Doesn't always work." Cardin turned to face Roger. "We only came across you two years ago when you moved to the Brooklyn field office. Adria bought the bar so we could stay close. We needed to make sure you were one of us."

The scratch of day-old beard teased Roger's jaw. "And the bonding Adria kept droning on about?"

Cardin's lips smiled against Roger's. "That's the fun part." His tongue teased Roger's lips. "Sex with another of our kind."

"Just one?" Roger slipped his tongue between Cardin's lips. A soft chuckle vibrated against his mouth.

"Usually. The bond didn't take the first time in the bar. When she gave you back your semen, the process started but it didn't take completely. After the second time in her room, you still didn't follow the pattern even though the bonding was more intimate."

Roger tilted his head so he could better nibble Cardin's lips. After a sharp playful nip, he asked, "Is the pattern obedience?"

"Not really..." Cardin returned his bites. "Usually the bonding triggers something like memories, an almost instinctual knowledge of the demons so you don't have to believe what she tells you. You know. The memories don't seem to have kicked in with you."

Roger understood what he meant. The sense of truth about MacKenna already permeated his being. But he also knew what his body wanted. "Maybe I need more sex." By now, Roger's cock strained against his jeans.

Cardin's laugh seemed loud in the predawn silence. "I think it's time for Estefan to take his turn at watching." Cardin's hips bumped against him. His rigid cock rubbed against Roger's aching groin.

"Good idea." Roger let Cardin move him backward across the small room. He trusted him to guide him around the furniture. "What are we watching for anyway?"

"If MacKenna knows we're here," Cardin nipped at Roger's lower lip, "he could attack before you're ready." His hand squeezed Roger's ass. "Don't want any surprises." Cardin paused in the slow erotic dance to pull the other bedroom door open. "Estefan!" The hoarse whisper meant the loss of the playful, biting kisses.

Roger wrapped his hands around Cardin's head and pulled his mouth back against his. The back of his legs bumped against the bed. Cardin's hold on his waist kept him from falling over Estefan's sprawled body.

"Estefan. Get up!"

The soft snores ended abruptly. "What?"

"Your turn to watch."

Roger looked over his shoulder at the sleepy man.

Estefan's eyes widened with anticipation. "Watch?"

Cardin pulled away from Roger. "Go watch the street." His exasperation nearly matched the disappointment in Estefan's eyes.

Roger leaned over and kissed Estefan hard. "You'll get your chance later."

The man shrugged and climbed off the bed. "Have fun." He made a quick exit, closing the door gently behind him.

Distracted by curiosity, Roger stared at the closed door. "How does this work? With you and him...and Adria."

Cardin glanced over his shoulder. Turning back to Roger, he shrugged. "It's a weird relationship. For so many years, it's been the three of us." He rested his forehead against Roger's. "Occasionally, one of us has found a mortal we clicked with, had a relationship but it can't last." Sadness flashed through his eyes before he blinked it away.

Roger ran his fingers down Cardin's cheek. Trying to imagine the loneliness of eternity without someone, his thoughts touched on Lorcan MacKenna. Roger remembered anguish in the man's eyes when Kevin was missing.

Cardin's hand caught Roger's. He kissed the palm. "I love Estefan and Adria. Would do anything for them, would die for them. But our relationship can't be measured by normal standards."

"I wouldn't want to cause anyone pain over this..." He waved his fingers between his and Cardin's chest.

"You won't. We're not exclusive by agreement but more from necessity." Cardin grinned. "Besides, Estefan will make you live up to your promise of later."

Roger laughed when Cardin waggled his eyebrows.

"Now where were we?" Cardin pulled Roger close.

The sensuous rub of Cardin's erect cock against his sent a shiver through him.

"Right here," Roger whispered. His fingers pulled Cardin's face close. The gentle nips turned to bruising kisses. Tongues fought for dominance, advancing and retreating strategically.

Hands pulled at his clothes, buttons and zippers gave way under the unrelenting advance.

"I'm going to fuck you. Hard and long." Cardin's growl made Roger nearly lose the war right then and there.

Roger released his hold on Cardin's face. His hands roamed the man's body, tugging and ripping at the material hiding his flesh. Finally naked skin pressed against him, his cock bumped Cardin's. Leaking come eased the slide of flesh on flesh.

Calloused hands pushed him. With his arms wrapped around the other man's body, he pulled him down on top of him as he fell. Cardin's weight knocked the breath out of him. Losing ground in the battle of tongues, Roger grabbed his lover's ass. Pulling the tight flesh apart, his fingers delved into the crack, circling Cardin's tight hole.

The grunt and moan gave him an opening and he pressed his advantage. Rolling Cardin onto his back, Roger straddled his hips. With fingers twined, Roger pushed Cardin's hands over his head and held them to the mattress.

Biting the kiss-swollen bottom lip, Roger growled. "Maybe I'll be the one doing the fucking."

Cardin's neck strained to keep contact with Roger's lips. "Maybe. And maybe not." The low tone should have warned Roger.

Overconfident with his newfound strength, Roger didn't think about the other man's greater experience with the powers granted them by their dark birth. Once again on his back, Roger found Cardin's forearm across his throat. The pressure held him in place.

The free hand grabbed his aching cock. Long, rough strokes did as much to immobilize him as Cardin's strategically placed arm.

"I *will* be doing the fucking. But first, I'm going to suck your brains out through your cock."

His hips arched into the strong hand encircling his cock. "Yes. Suck me..." Resistance bled out of him like blood from a battle wound.

Cardin's arm eased off his neck. A hot mouth traced his neck then down his chest. Teeth and tongue tortured his nipples. The hand on his cock never lost the constant unrelenting beat.

Roger reached for Cardin's head only to have his hands batted away. Giving in to the warm, wet mouth teasing across his stomach, his hands clutched the pillow under his head. Cold plastic glanced against his fingers. Grabbing the container of lube, Roger handed it to Cardin.

A soft chuckle vibrated against his stomach. "You really want it, don't you?" Cardin licked the tip of his cock.

"Yes..." Roger wasn't sure why the man's touch aroused him so much. Maybe the bond was valid. And right now, as warm, wet lips circled his cock, he didn't care. The snap and squeeze of lube warned him of what was next. He bent one knee to give his lover easier access to his ass. He didn't have long to wait.

Cold lube and warm fingers circled the tight ring of muscle guarding his anus. A hot mouth engulfed his cock. An ache deep in the pit of his stomach made him arch into

the willing heat. Pressure pushed against his entrance. Roger pressed back and the thick finger breeched him.

Cardin went unerringly for his prostate. Sweet pleasure spiked through his body.

A second finger pushed in beside the first. Roger arched his hips, pushing his cock deep into Cardin's willing mouth. Then he pulled away, impaling himself on the slick fingers teasing his ass.

Cardin accepted the slow steady pace, taking each stroke. His tongue worked from tip to base with each long slide.

Slow pressure built in Roger's balls. The maddening pace faltered when a third finger pushed into his tight passage.

Fingers curled into his prostate with constant stimulation. Cardin's mouth released him to whisper, "Come for me."

Engulfed again with Cardin's throat working the head of his cock and fingers pummeling his ass, Roger obeyed. His body shook with release. Tight tension dissipated into a languid sea of warmth.

Cardin's hungry mouth took all he had to offer. His fingers never stopped tormenting his passage.

His limbs weak with the aftermath of a battle lost, Roger couldn't move when Cardin released his cock. His body was pliable and limp when Cardin rolled him over on his stomach.

Rough hands pulled his hips up then stuffed a pillow under him. His legs pulled apart like a wishbone, he didn't even twitch when the lube cap popped open.

Blunt, slick flesh prodded his ass. With the loosened ring and Roger's completely relaxed body, Cardin pushed deep with one long, hard stroke.

The pillow under his head muffled Roger's groan. The slight burn couldn't compete with the exquisite feeling of fullness and hard flesh pressing against his oversensitive gland.



With a groan and a growl, Cardin pulled almost free. Before Roger could protest, his lover rammed back into him. Rough pounding pushed Roger deep into the pillows. Calloused hands held his hips tight. Fingers dug into his flesh.

“Harder...” He didn’t know if Cardin heard the muffled plea.

Deep strokes plowed his ass. Faster and harder until with a shout of victory, Cardin slammed against him and held tight. His hips jerked with each spurt as he filled Roger’s ass with hot bubbling seed.

Cardin fell forward, his full weight pinned Roger to the bed. His sweat-slicked arms slid under Roger’s chest.

“You...feel...so good.” Cardin’s breath panted in Roger’s ear.

“Hmm... You too,” Roger moaned. “But next time, I do the fucking...”

\* \* \* \* \*

*Darkness threatened as Adria approached the manor outside of Lourdes. A rush of adrenaline almost overwhelmed her. Sharp pain stabbed the base of her skull. Leaning against a tree, she gasped for air.*

*For more than a year she’d been plagued by dreams of evil, a blood-drinking demon sucking the life out of hapless victims. One of who might be her mother.*

*The dark-haired woman pleaded for her child and Adria was alive. Maybe her mother was as well. If not, then Adria knew what she had to do.*

*The intense need for revenge overcame the weakness threatening to consume her. Memories not her own confirmed the location. If only someone were there...*

*Dreams and visions taught her what she needed to know. A belt hidden under her skirt held a short sword. Concealed in the folds of material, a hole gave her access to the hilt. First she had to get her trembling legs to move. But before she sent the demon to his final rest, she wanted answers...about him, about her and most of all, about her mother.*

The shout from the other bedroom yanked Adria from her dream. Falling out of the bed, she scrambled to the doorway.

Estefan was already there. Roger thrashed against Cardin and Estefan's combined efforts to calm him.

"What's wrong?" She rushed to the foot of the bed, staying out of the way of the flying limbs.

"I don't know. He was restless in his sleep but then he started convulsing." Cardin's worry bled through his voice.

Cardin held his hands, his naked body stretched across Roger's chest. Estefan pinned his legs down through the blankets.

Adria moved around to the head of the bed. Holding Roger's head between her palms, she spoke softly. "Roger, wake up. You're here with us and you're safe. Wake up."

Her voice or the tone seemed to help. His struggle continued but the violence eased.

She kept speaking nonsense, assuring words, anything to calm him. His body finally relaxed. His eyelids fluttered and opened. Bloodshot, glassy and with no light of recognition, he stared at her.

"Roger?" She wiped sweat from his face with a corner of the sheet. "Talk to me, Roger. What's wrong?"

The dark eyes darted from her to Cardin then to Estefan. "What happened?" His voice was hoarse and weak but he seemed to be himself again.

"I don't know. You tell me."

"Dreams? MacKenna..." he whispered.

"What about him?" Adria caressed his cheek. "Did you dream of him?"

"It didn't feel like a dream." Roger struggled to sit up. Cardin slipped an arm under his back and helped him. His eyes focused on him. "More like... I don't know how to

describe it. He was talking to someone. A blonde woman." Roger stared at Adria. "It was like I was the third person in the room but I wasn't me."

Adria took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. "Could you see any part of the man? Did they say his name?"

"I didn't see anything of him, no. Not this time."

"This time?" Adria's heart raced. This was the moment she was waiting for. Now Roger would finally understand the truth.

"I dreamed about them on the plane—the woman and I thought me until I heard his voice and saw his hand."

"What about his hand?"

"He was black. And he had an accent..." A frown creased Roger's forehead as he squeezed his eyes shut. "African... It sounded African."

"Did you ever hear a name?"

Roger's eyes popped open. "Zaki. MacKenna called him Zaki."

"Zaki?" The name surprised her. She knew vampires had different levels of depravity but Zaki was the last demon she'd think would turn a pregnant woman. She'd know more soon enough. Roger's dreams had started.

"Who is he?" Roger's face showed no emotion.

Cardin rubbed a hand across Roger's shoulders. "The vampire who turned your mother."

Roger turned to face him. "Like you told me last night."

Cardin just nodded though his hand paused to squeeze the back of Roger's neck.

"I couldn't stop thinking about what you said about how we were...born." A visible shiver passed through Roger.

A flare of anger shot through Adria. "You told him." Her anger colored her accusation.

Cardin shrugged. "He asked."

“Did you think he might not be ready?”

“Back off, Adria. He asked. I won’t lie to him.” He rolled off the bed. “He’s different from the others, from us. He’s growing too fast. He needs all the information he can get.”

Cardin’s words sunk in and the hair on the back of her neck rose. Cardin was right. Spoon-feeding Roger the things he needed to know wouldn’t work. MacKenna was here and evidently so was St. James. Roger needed to know what was required of him.

Roger watched two of his lovers face off. Estefan stayed out of the argument. The situation was almost humorous. Cardin stood there in all his naked glory glaring at Adria dressed only in a T-shirt with her well-formed bare ass showing. If not for the residual fear from his nightmare, Roger would laugh. Instead he asked, “What information?”

They both turned to stare at him as if they’d forgotten about him during their heated exchange.

“And, Cardin, please put some clothes on. You’re a little distracting.” To emphasize his point, Roger reached out to tug his flaccid cock.

The limp flesh twitched and Cardin laughed. “Keep that up and we’ll see how distracting I can be.” He pulled away and reached for his discarded jeans.

Adria’s musical laugh joined the three men. She crawled up on the bed beside Roger. “Okay, the whole story.”

Cardin stopped with just the jeans and sat on the foot of the bed, his long legs stretched out toward Roger. Estefan pulled a chair near the bed and propped his feet up on the edge.

“You already know the basics, about us and about them. And I guess Cardin told you how we’re created.”

Cardin nodded. "I still don't understand why the memories are so late coming to him. Everything else is far ahead of the normal timetable."

"Everything else?" Roger played with Cardin's toes. His foot twitched under Roger's fingers.

"Your strength for one," Adria said. "Your speed and your ability to sense a vampire. Normally these take weeks. It's only been a couple of days."

"But the memories?"

"Those usually come first and fast." Adria twined her fingers through his. "Have you had any other visions?"

Roger thought carefully before answering. Adria, Cardin and Estefan as well as Kevin and his dark lover had filled his dreams. "Just on the plane." Roger was reluctant to go into detail about that dream. It seemed so intimate, so personal.

"So you are now armed with everything except that. As the memories deepen, you'll know more about the sacrifice. Without them..." She paused and drew a deep breath.

The word "sacrifice" made him shudder. Her fingers tightened on his.

"The *Rememdiu* is supposed to offer himself to a vampire. Allow himself to be drained and transformed. Nothing in the old manuscripts explain the actual transformation or the results in any detail. The only thing clearly defined is the need for an equal exchange of blood. Unfortunately, our memories come from our mother's creator only. We can't know anything more than they did. None of us have the same creator and each of them had different knowledge. Estefan's didn't know anything about the Watchers at all. Cardin's had heard of them but scoffed at the idea, thinking it was just old wives' tales. Mine however, believed and knew the threat we posed."

"Why would he create you then? If he knew you could kill him?"

"He didn't plan on letting me live. Or my mother. He wanted a plaything, a toy to torment. He planned for me to be my mother's first kill." Adria's eyes softened with

moisture. "She managed to escape, to resist the urge to drink from me. She left me at the first place she could." Her eyelids batted back the tears. "He found her but not me."

"How do you know this? Do you still see your...creator's memories after you're born?" Roger's own few experiences didn't show anything to indicate a continued connection.

Adria shook her head. "He told me all about it right before I killed him." Her stare held his gaze.

Roger wanted to wrap her in his arms and hold her, kiss away the nightmares. Her conviction almost killed his doubts but not quite. "And I'm the only one of us who can do this?"

"Yes."

He expected Adria's answer. His gaze locked with Cardin's. The man nodded.

"Why? Why me?" Roger nearly laughed at the question. Between Kevin's abduction and disappearance, the senator's death, his professional disgrace and now this strange threesome, those two little words haunted him.

"We've all tried." Adria lowered her head. "It didn't work. I escaped."

Cardin's voice was low. "I lived but nothing changed. The demon only wanted to toy with me. If Adria and Estefan hadn't been nearby..."

With their legs touching, Roger shared his shudder of revulsion. He glanced from Cardin to Estefan.

"Mine refused to change me." Estefan's face drained of color. He didn't say any more but Roger didn't miss the darting gaze between Cardin and Adria.

Roger was sure there was more to his story than he said, maybe more than his companions knew as well. He filed his questions away for later.

"I don't understand how the exchange of blood is supposed to destroy all vampires." Roger looked at Adria. "Wouldn't it be easier to attack them one by one and kill them? I mean how many of them can there be?"

"I'm not sure how the process is supposed to work. The manuscripts don't go into detail. And worldwide, I've tracked a little over two hundred vampires." Adria squeezed his hand. "I've always hoped the memories would tell us but no one has had the answer before. We're not certain who your creator was. You just popped up on the radar in Brooklyn two years ago."

"How can you be sure all vampires are evil?" Reluctance settled in the pit of his stomach like a heavy meal on a hot afternoon. The scene between the blonde woman and Zaki was so tender and loving. If Zaki were pure evil, why would Roger have felt love for the woman flowing through him? He'd seen the same abiding affection between Kevin and MacKenna.

"Every Watcher we've met has the same memories of evil and terror. As the visions solidify, so will you. Some vampires seem to do less harm than others but they all feed on human blood. They've all killed at some point."

Roger looked up at Adria. Her eyes held a sadness and terror he couldn't understand. She'd lived for centuries with the knowledge of vampires. How could he contradict her vast experience?

"So when do we do this?" Roger's throat tightened. His need to vindicate his career had evaporated yesterday. He could never go back. His reason for finding MacKenna was gone. Still, he wasn't sure he wanted anything to do with destroying him or Kevin. Then the image of MacKenna with the blonde woman and Zaki wavered in front of his eyes. MacKenna should know who they are.

Cardin leaned forward, his hand warm on Roger's thigh. "I wish you could remember the things we can't tell you. Since we don't remember the same things, we are missing vital information."

His words didn't reassure Roger.

Adria didn't sound any happier but her voice didn't quaver. "Tonight." Her arm slipped around him and hugged him. "We can't go with you. You have to go alone. We'll be nearby but..."

"I understand." Roger wrapped his arms around her, savoring the warmth and comfort her body provided. Tonight could end the closeness and camaraderie he found with these three people. His chest tightened at the thought of losing them. All his previous relationships paled against the vibrant feelings his lovers caused. "If this works, will we continue afterward? The four of us?"

She leaned in and rubbed her nose against his. "Maybe, like we three have. Some fled before they got that far." She nuzzled her cheek against his. "Some didn't survive."

"So there are others out there, like us?"

"No. The vamps saw to that." Cardin moved up on the bed next to him.

"So we can die even though you claim we're immortal."

Adria nodded. "The quickest death is the same as the demons, beheading. We recover from most injuries quicker than humans do but extensive ones can be fatal. Barring serious injury? There's no telling how long we'll live. I've aged some in the last four hundred years. I probably look ten years older than I did at my bonding."

Wrapped in the heat of two bodies, Roger relaxed a little. For now he felt safe and warm. The idea of hundreds of years with his little clan helped calm him. The chill in his soul from his dreams, from the nightmare still to come, eased.

Adria and Cardin vied for his lips. A soft, full mouth switched to a rough-bearded one and back again. Fingers, some slender, some thick, roamed his bare chest, teasing his nipples.

The bed dipped and covers shifted. Cool air circled him then a warm body replaced the soft blankets. Warm breath washed over his balls before a moist tongue bathed them in heat.

Roger let his lovers drive away the darkness in his mind. For now.

The warmth disappeared then hands pulled him from his sitting position. Sprawled across the bed, his will to move fled. Hands, mouths, fingers caressed and teased. All



the sensation pooled in his groin. A wet mouth engulfed his thickening cock. Gentle sucking pushed him from slow arousal to hard and aching.

A bearded chin scraped his cheek. Hard, thin lips covered his mouth. A wet tongue sought an opening Roger willingly gave.

Soft lips teased a sensitive nipple. Sharp nails scraped his stomach.

His body felt like molding clay, changing position according to prodding fingers and curious hands. His legs were pushed open, his knees bent. A wet finger found his aching hole. Still stretched from Cardin's rough fucking, the ring of muscle gave no resistance to the latest invasion.

Roger moaned when Cardin pulled out of the deep kiss. He didn't have time to voice his loss before Adria's mouth replaced Cardin. Softness where roughness had been, her silky skin soothed the sting of beard burn. Her fingers pinched his nipples to hardness.

Wet heat sucked his cock in slow, deep caresses. Estefan swallowed around the tip with each stroke. Three fingers pumped Roger's sensitive passage.

The bed rocked as Cardin shifted. The blunt tip of his cock replaced Estefan's fingers. Cold lube eased the stinging breach by Cardin's thick flesh again so soon.

Estefan never lost his rhythm. Soon Cardin matched his pace. Hard cock filling him, a hot mouth sucking him and Adria's sweet mouth on his... Whatever fate was in store, it was worth it for the feelings of love and ecstasy his lovers gave him.

Adria moved away and he struggled against the innervating feeling holding him still. Estefan released his cock with a sucking pop.

"No... Don't stop..." Roger took some measure of relief in Cardin's flesh still impaling him.

Cardin held still while Adria straddled Roger. Her back to Cardin's chest, Roger's cock slid into a different heat. Adria's wet, slick channel claimed him. Adria and Cardin settled into a slow-measured rhythm. When she raised up, he thrust.

Roger gasped at the sensation of getting fucked and fucking at the same time. His open mouth didn't have time to say anything before Estefan straddled his face.

He didn't know how hungry he was for the man's flesh until his leaking tip brushed his lips. Sucking hard, he let Estefan set the pace.

His body still unwilling to move, he let his senses roam free. The taste of pre-come on his tongue, the sucking sound of wet pussy impaled on his cock, the fullness of each stroke of hard flesh in his ass. Skin on skin, flesh in flesh, heartbeats merging, panted breath and soft moans.

The world around him dissolved into only this moment. His climax surprised him. As slow and languid as the rest of his body, his cock released into warm depths. Adria's cream mixed with his, leaking a tickling trail down his balls.

Cardin's strokes faltered. Short, awkward jabs of his hips and his hot seed erupted. Estefan lasted only seconds longer. As Cardin filled his ass, Estefan spurted thick jets of come across his tongue and deep into his throat.

Roger swallowed as much as he could but some escaped. With come dripping down the side of his mouth, teasing down his balls and leaking from his ass, Roger gave in to whatever fate had in store for him.

Estefan eased his cock from Roger's mouth.

"Tonight," Roger whispered to the sated trio. "Tonight..."

\* \* \* \* \*

Roger woke with the memory of another dream fading fast. All he managed to retain was a vague image of MacKenna, Zaki and Serena huddled over a table, looking at documents.

Cardin's snores echoed from the other side of the bed. Adria's body snuggled against Roger's back. The sound of bare feet pacing the wooden floor came from the other room. Estefan...

Roger slid out of the bed and grabbed his jeans. Sliding them on, he moved to the door joining the two rooms.

Estefan paced the length of the small room. The bed hadn't been slept in although Estefan had left the other bed before Roger fell asleep. His lips moved with silent muttering.

"Estefan?"

The slender man jumped at the sound of his name. "Roger..." Indecision clouded his dark eyes. "Do you need something?"

"What's wrong?"

"I'm tired, that's all." Estefan walked to the window. His hands gripped the windowsill until his knuckles turned white.

"You couldn't sleep?"

Keeping his back to Roger, Estefan shook his head.

Roger moved closer, his chest almost touching Estefan's back. Running his hands down Estefan's arms, he felt the tension radiating through the man's trembling muscles.

"Are you scared?" Estefan's words were almost inaudible.

"Yes. Weren't you?"

Estefan nodded. "At first..."

"What happened?" Roger slid his arms around Estefan and pulled him tight against him.

Estefan released his death grip on the windowsill. Moving his hands up, his fingers dug into Roger's forearms. "He didn't hurt me. He didn't even try."

"The vampire?"

The dark-haired man nodded.

"What did he do to you?"

"He...he made love to me." Estefan's trembling turned into violent shaking. "He made me feel good. Even the bite...the blood...even that felt incredible. He said he, like

some vampires, didn't like the taste of terror. He preferred the flavor of sex." A soft chuckle slipped out in spite of his anguished tone.

Roger kissed the side of Estefan's neck. Although he knew Estefan was over a hundred years old, he seemed so young and almost fragile. "So you have your doubts about what Adria wants to do."

Estefan leaned back into Roger. The tight grip of his fingers eased into a caress. "I didn't want to kill him even though Adria said we had to."

With his heart in his throat, Roger whispered, "Did you?"

His head shook slowly at first then harder. "I couldn't. I warned him that he had to leave. He wanted me to come with him."

"But you didn't."

"Vampires are evil..." He spoke the words with a total lack of conviction. "My dreams tell me they are...except..."

"He wasn't."

Estefan turned within the circle of Roger's arms. "I never told Adria or Cardin what I did." His eyes pleaded with Roger, whether to keep his secret or condone his actions, Roger didn't know.

"I don't think they're all evil either. So far none of the visions or dreams show anything like Adria described." Roger brushed his lips against Estefan's. "You did right. Sometimes you have to follow your instincts."

The self-doubt in the dark eyes turned to gratitude. The full lips pressed against Roger's and a moist tongue teased his mouth.

Sounds from the other room indicated Adria and Cardin were awake.

"We'll talk more later, okay?" Roger whispered.

Estefan nodded as they pulled apart. "Roger, nothing in any of Adria's research shows MacKenna likes to kill."

Roger nodded. If MacKenna didn't like the taste of fear... Estefan's doubts helped Roger settle on his own course of action. He'd go to the manor tonight but not for the reasons Adria wanted. He had too many questions to follow her blindly. Questions that maybe MacKenna could answer.

## **Chapter Six**

Whatever the power now coursing through his body, it made scaling the six-foot stone wall a breeze. Roger crouched in the brush near where he landed. The cloudy sky blocked any light. The flashlight he'd insisted on remained in the small backpack draped over his shoulder.

Adria was right again. His eyes focused on the surrounding scenery without any trouble. Everything was limited to shades of gray but he could make out single blades of grass hidden under the thickest shrubs.

His speed as he moved through the forest surprised him. The last time he made use of his new powers, Kevin had pursued him. Fear blocked out his astonishment at the time.

Kevin was out there somewhere now. As he sped farther away from his friends, his sense of them weakened. But Kevin's thoughts darted out to greet Roger. Nothing fully formed, just a word or two, here and there, but definitely Kevin. The young man's worry for MacKenna was clear.

Something else was there as well. Almost a weak echo of Kevin. MacKenna?

His job would be much easier if he could sense both vampires. Some of his worry eased as Kevin's thoughts grew clearer.

His sense of the other vampire strengthened. The image was darker and somehow older. Must be MacKenna.

The brighter edge of the forest beckoned. He stopped to check his surroundings. The old manor house stood quiet. No lights, no movement. By all appearances empty except for the two figures standing in a second-floor window.

Roger's gaze darted toward the window as he ran for the cover of a nearby hedge. He kept his speed down to a normal human pace. No sense in giving away any limited

advantage. He didn't know if Kevin recognized him in the woods. If he didn't, he might be able to hide his own transformation until he needed it. Movement distracted him and he almost overshot his mark. A quick glance showed an empty window.

He took a deep, calming breath. He'd hoped he could get to the house before anyone realized he was here. So much for Plan A. Of course the whole plan revolved around him getting caught.

Estefan's description of his encounter with his vampire both terrified and excited him. Vampires needed more than just blood. He wondered what the difference was.

*Endorphins...* Something in his mind whispered the answer. If Lorcan MacKenna preferred sex over fear...

Roger's blood took a detour south at the thought of the dark man's body against his. "Stop that," he hissed at his crotch. The idea of sex with MacKenna or Kevin shouldn't excite him.

He drew in a deep breath. Time to get on with the charade. Loping forward toward the next available cover—a statue near a fountain—Roger willed his unruly cock to behave. The closer he got to his inevitable capture, the harder it was to keep his thoughts in line.

Kevin's blond good looks attracted him from the beginning. The idea of touching him, tasting him, wouldn't leave him. A picture of Kevin's lean body laid out for him was almost as good as one of Roger impaled on Kevin's dick.

One more stretch of lawn and he'd be at the front door. His dark jeans grew tighter with his erotic thoughts.

In spite of Adria's conviction, Roger couldn't believe Kevin and Lorcan had to die. Roger had spent years in New York at the same time as MacKenna. He would have heard about bodies turning up mutilated and drained of blood. Roger needed more information and maybe MacKenna could provide it.

Another vision of the blonde woman, hair matted in blood, her pregnant stomach still showing, rooted him to his hiding place behind the statue. Leaning against the cold

marble, Roger gasped for breath. Pregnant woman... Roger gasped for air but his lungs wouldn't fill. Visions of his vampire father with a pregnant woman...his mother.

"Oh God..." Had Zaki killed his mother? Roger shook his head. "Not possible," he whispered.

The love and adoration he'd felt in the vampire was too real, too genuine. Zaki could never have harmed his lover. From the core of his soul, Roger knew that to be absolute truth.

And Lorcan only killed to protect Kevin. Estefan said Adria admitted her records showed he rarely killed. Could he be the evil demon she painted him if he didn't kill?

And Kevin? The fierce blond Adonis who faced him down over his lover's health? Was he evil?

Adria was convinced all vampires were demons in need of destroying. Now he knew better. His conversation with Estefan only confirmed his belief.

But what if Adria's theories about his nature were true? If Kevin or Lorcan drank from him, what would happen to them? He couldn't chance the risk. There had to be another way to get the answers he needed.

He pushed away from the statue to head back the way he'd come. He couldn't risk harming Kevin or Lorcan. A sharp wave of dizziness made him stumble back into the marble for support. Rough hands grabbed him. Even with his newfound strength, he couldn't break the man's hold.

"Welcome to my humble abode, Special Agent Malloy," MacKenna's voice whispered in his ear.

The arm around his neck tightened. Between the overwhelming presence of two vampires and the arm choking off his breath, Roger fought the blackness narrowing his sight. Kevin's concerned face was the last thing he saw.

\* \* \* \* \*



“We’ve got him. Now what do we do with him?” MacKenna’s voice seemed far away.

Roger couldn’t force his eyes open. Rough wood rubbed against his throat, still tender from MacKenna’s not-so-gentle embrace. A table or bench supported the lower half of his torso. His legs draped off the edge and his feet barely touched the floor.

“What did Zaki say about the process?” Kevin’s voice was closer, clearer.

“We have to drink from him but it sounds like we have to transform him. An equal exchange of blood.”

The slight bile of panic in Roger’s throat killed the excitement of hearing Zaki’s name. They not only knew Zaki, they knew about the legends. Why wasn’t he dead already?

Kevin chuckled. “He’s awake, you know. Listening to us.”

Roger’s eyes opened in time to see Kevin walk in front of him.

The blond man knelt in front of him. “Are you hurt?” His dark blue eyes shone with genuine concern.

“Throat aches.” His voice was hoarse.

“I told Lorcan to take it easy. Sometimes he doesn’t know his own strength.” Slender fingers traced a line down Roger’s face.

In spite of the pain and discomfort, his cock swelled at the blond man’s touch.

“He’s aroused.” Lorcan’s dark visage didn’t show any emotion.

Kevin smiled. “Does my touch excite you?”

Slender fingers slid across the seam of his lips.

“What if I did this?” Kevin leaned forward and his tongue traced the path his fingers had taken.

Roger couldn’t resist opening for the moist warmth. Teeth pulled at his lower lip before Kevin’s tongue slipped into his mouth.

Lorcan's scowl couldn't stop Roger from falling into the deep kiss. "Why are you here?"

Kevin pulled away from Roger, leaving him moaning for more.

A rough hand grabbed his jaw. "I asked you a question. Why are you here?" Lorcan's snarl pulled him back to the reality of his situation.

The aftertaste of Kevin jumbled Roger's thoughts. "To find out the truth." His cock strained against his jeans. He ached for Kevin's touch again.

The hand tightened. "You're lying. You know what we are and you've come here with another purpose."

"Ease off, Lorcan." Kevin's fingers tugged at Lorcan's wrist.

The painful grip released then Lorcan stormed across the room and out of sight behind him.

Kevin knelt in front of Roger and ran his hand across his sore cheek. "What truth?"

"About you, about Lorcan...about Zaki and Serena...and about me." Until he spoke the last two words, he hadn't thought about himself. Saying Zaki and Serena's names together created a thread of an idea he hadn't previously considered.

Lorcan's footsteps came closer. "How do you know about them?" His voice came from Roger's left though he was still out of his line of sight.

"I...dream about them..."

Kevin's eyebrow arched and his gaze darted toward the location of Lorcan's voice. "What kind of dreams?"

"About a blonde-haired pregnant woman and an African man who loved her." Saying the words aloud solidified Roger's conviction that Zaki would never have harmed Serena.

Kevin nodded at the still hidden Lorcan then walked around Roger and out of sight.

His eyes more able to focus, Roger glanced at his surroundings. Candles hanging from brackets on the walls lit the room with overly bright light. Stone walls and no windows, the large room was filled with old implements of restraint. The walls were lined with whips, shackles and paddles. Other implements weren't identifiable but they looked painful.

Whispers carried through the damp air. Closing his eyes, Roger focused his hearing on the almost sibilant sound.

"You can't go through with this." Lorcan's worry bled through.

"We have to. We can't feed every day to stave off killing each other. If their research is right, we won't have to worry about it."

"No, I won't risk your life." Lorcan's tone rose to a normal whisper. "I've been through too much keeping you alive. We'll have to make do with seeing each other once in a while like Zaki and Serena."

"Lorcan, he said he dreams about them...Zaki and Serena."

Someone sighed but Roger couldn't decide who.

"You know what that means." Lorcan's voice sounded resigned.

"Yes, and I know he's the best chance we have. He wasn't like this a week ago. He's found a Watcher in the last few days. He has to be the *Rememdiu*."

Lorcan didn't respond but soft wet sounds of kissing seemed to seal Roger's fate.

Kevin wandered back into view, his fingers twined with Lorcan's, pulling his lover along behind him.

Roger's current restraint captured his neck and wrists, forcing them forward. His legs weren't bound but the high bench supporting his waist didn't let his feet get any traction. His vulnerability didn't diminish his arousal. If anything, his cock found the whole situation fascinating. Leaking pre-come glued his briefs to his lower stomach.

“Lorcan, I need to feed and he’s here. Ready and obviously willing. He’s so aroused I can smell him. So let me do what I need to and we’ll see what happens.” Kevin’s reasonable voice calmed Roger if not Lorcan.

“I can’t lose you. I’d rather live alone than see you die.”

Roger envied Lorcan’s gentle strokes along Kevin’s face. He ached to trade places with the dark-haired man. The display of tenderness for his lover brought Roger’s earlier worry back with a fury. How could he live with himself if he killed Kevin? Even Lorcan’s crimes were because Chandler and his men threatened Kevin. But if he said anything now, what would happen to Adria and the guys?

He bit his tongue to keep from warning them. His trio meant more to him than Lorcan or Kevin. The need to keep them safe overwhelmed his sense of right and wrong. Kevin wouldn’t take enough to kill him. Of that, Roger was certain. Cardin said a victim had to be drained to the point of death in order to be transformed. He’d be like the other Watchers and live to tell of his encounter with vampires.

Adria would think he wasn’t the *Rememdiu* and keep searching. They could stay together.

“Their research says nothing about dying. Only the need to drink.” Kevin’s tone tightened. “I have to try. I don’t want to live without you. We agreed we’d try whatever was necessary to stay together. Feeding every night isn’t possible. And even if we could, how long will the temporary relief last?”

Lorcan started to speak but Kevin cut him off.

“Already it isn’t lasting more than a few hours. I want to try.”

Nodding, Lorcan cupped his lover’s cheek. “Okay, but we both drink. We can’t sate ourselves or we’ll kill him. But if he’s somehow deadly, we go together.”

Relief flooded Roger along with anxious anticipation. Lorcan and Kevin would live and so would he.

The memory of his conversation with Estefan sent excitement racing through his body. His cock was painful in its tight confinement. Both men would feed. Would both...

Both men began removing their clothes, answering his unspoken question. They moved out of his view. The soft swoosh of cloth hitting the floor and gentle moaned kisses increased Roger's burning desire.

Kevin walked past him naked, his cock jutting proudly at the ceiling, his golden body lean and smooth.

Lorcan followed his younger lover. The darker man's cock was thicker, longer than Kevin's but just as aroused. The bulbous crown glistened with moisture.

Kevin reached Roger first. He stood feet apart in front of the stocks, his erection inches from Roger's hungry mouth.

"Do you want this?" Kevin stroked the hard flesh, pointing the long shaft at Roger. "You have to ask. We won't rape you."

Roger's "yes" came out as a moan but his nod gained the results he wanted.

Warm, wet flesh teased his lips then pulled back. His tongue stretched to taste the swollen head.

Kevin shuffled forward. His hand circled the base of his cock as he guided the silky crown into Roger's anxious mouth.

Heat spread through Roger's body. Sweat dampened his shirt. Kevin's taste was lighter, sweeter than Cardin's or Estefan's. With the stocks immobilizing his head, Roger could only wait for Kevin to move. He was limited to circling his tongue around the tip or sucking the leaking head.

Kevin flexed his hips, pushing forward.

Moaning his approval, Roger savored the hot flesh pressing against his tongue. Kevin's slow rocking motion pressed his cock deeper on each gentle thrust. Lost in heat

and the flavor of Kevin, Roger's mind almost blanked out the other occupant of the room.

Arms wrapped around his waist and slid between him and the bench. Fingers fumbled with his belt. The rip of the zipper rubbed down his aching cock, sending a shock of desire through his body. Restrained, he couldn't push back into the man behind him. He couldn't do anything but wait for what was coming. And suck on the glorious cock filling his mouth.

Kevin's hands cupped his head. His hips arched forward and pulled back in slow, short strokes. The leaking cock spread his sweet taste across Roger's tongue.

Rough hands yanked at Roger's jeans. Cool air caressed his ass then calloused hands quickly moved to warm him. Thumbs parted his cheeks. Without warning, one thumb pressed into his hole.

Hanging down with no contact, nothing to rub against, his cock ached for relief. He wanted to ask for more, beg someone to touch him. All he could do was moan around a mouthful of hot flesh.

Kevin pulled away. In spite of Roger's efforts to suck harder, to hold on, the thick flesh slid past his lips. Before Roger could plead for its return, Kevin knelt in front of him. Warm lips teased his. A soft tongue searched his mouth.

Two fingers then three plunged into his passage, rough and hard compared to the tenderness of Kevin's mouth. The contrast made his aching cock weep for more.

"I'm going to fuck you now." Kevin's tone sounded as if he were talking about the weather. "Do you want that?"

"Yes..."

"I want you to suck Lorcan while I'm fucking you." Kevin brushed his lips against Roger's. "Will you do that for me?"

“Yes...” Roger’s heart beat so hard he thought it would pound through his chest. Something about Kevin, about the ethereal glow of his blue eyes, would make him do whatever the man wanted.

Roger had to force himself to keep from telling him everything. Adria hadn’t mentioned the mesmerizing hold a vampire could have over him. Why hadn’t she warned him?

After a long kiss, one full of tongue, deep and searching, Kevin stood up. Running his cock across Roger’s lips, he left him a final taste of sticky pre-come.

Roger closed his eyes and listened to the soft pad of bare feet on the stone floor. The pumping fingers disappeared. The sound of kissing, wet and hungry, washed over him.

His mind struggled with his purpose here. Right now he wanted only the burning push of Kevin’s cock inside him. But how could he let them die, let Kevin die?

Before he could speak, Lorcan appeared in front of him. His thick cock stifled any attempt at words.

Kevin’s hands caressed his ass, much gentler than Lorcan’s treatment. Fingers traced teasing trails through the crevice but stopped short of his aching entrance. Fingernails ran up his spine under his shirt then warm palms ran down his sides.

The thick cock stuffing his mouth pressed deep, almost to the point of gagging. Kevin’s curious hands distracted Roger. He wanted to scream “fuck me” but his words muffled around Lorcan’s shaft.

Once again the gentle hands spread his cheeks. A blunt tip covered in cool lube brushed his entrance.

*Please, now...*

As if Kevin heard his thoughts, his hard dick shoved deep in one fast motion.

A muffled cry of relief followed another when the hard flesh pulled free and slammed home. Each long stroke pulled out completely then plowed deep on the return.

Roger's cock ached with each punishing blow. His shoulders shoved into the rough wooden stocks and the tip of his cock brushed the bench below him. If he could have yelled for more, he would have.

With his body caught up in the bliss of Kevin's hard strokes, Roger took Lorcan's shaft deeper with each movement. His throat and ass joyfully abused with equal force, Roger's cock strained for attention.

"Release him," Kevin growled.

Lorcan's cock didn't lose a beat as the wooden stock flipped open. Hands grabbed his head and kept him immobile. Two final strokes and Lorcan pulled free.

Roger couldn't form coherent words. Kevin still plowed his ass at a furious pace. Shorter strokes, each bumping his prostate, kept Roger on the edge of climax. One touch, one brush of skin against his cock, and he'd explode.

And then Kevin was gone.

Like a wounded animal, Roger howled his frustration. "No!"

Shackles clanked on his wrists. He fought to get free but the two sets of hands were stronger. Lifted from the bench and carried to the middle of the room, his hands were raised above him and the chain connecting his manacles caught on a strong hook. His feet barely touched the ground.

A warm body moved behind him. Rough hands grabbed his waist. He whimpered his relief when hot flesh filled his empty passage again. Arms slid around him and the pounding torment began again.

Kevin came into view in front of him. A small smile curved his full lips. Fingers teased his nipples, pinching and rolling. Kevin moved closer. A bruising kiss left Roger tasting blood. Kevin pulled away, licking his lips. His eyes narrowed with hunger and lust.

"Don't... Don't..." Roger spit the words out in time to the hard pounding in his ass.

Kevin smiled before he dropped to his knees with fluid grace.



Moist heat engulfed Roger's cock. The force of Lorcan's strokes pushed Roger's flesh deep into Kevin's mouth.

Desperate for release, two strokes was all Roger needed. Screaming as he erupted into the willing depths, darkness threatened to overcome him. Specks of light flashed behind his closed eyelids. Kevin's mouth pulled away but his hand continued to milk him.

A muffled cry behind him and jerking hips warned him of Lorcan's orgasm. Needle-sharp fangs stabbed the left side of his neck.

In front of him, Kevin's mouth opened to reveal sharp jutting canines. Before words could form in Roger's mind, Kevin leaned forward and sank his teeth into his neck on the opposite side.

\* \* \* \* \*

Adria looked at her watch again. She hid her worry for Roger from the others. Unfortunately she couldn't hide it from herself. All the "what ifs" kept rushing through her mind. And none of them ended well.

"It's been too long." Cardin's words echoed her thoughts.

"We can't go in until daylight. We can't risk running into MacKenna and St. James." Her voice sounded more confident than she felt.

Estefan hung over the front seat. "Can you still feel him?"

"Yes. I can." The vague sense of Roger's consciousness was the only thing keeping her in the van.

"I can too." Cardin's whisper was almost an afterthought.

Adria frowned. Of the few they'd found like Roger, only she could sense their presence. But then those others hadn't bonded with Cardin or Estefan.

"It's almost dawn. We can go find him then." She glanced at her watch again.

"I don't think it worked." Cardin took a deep breath and released it slowly.

“Why?” She didn’t intend for her tone to come out so sharp.

“I never lost the sense of him. If he’d been drained to the point of death, the connection should have at least weakened.” Cardin rubbed his eyes with the heels of his palms. “It never did.”

His words sank in, leaving despair in the pit of her stomach. What had she done to him? She was responsible for what happened to him, to all of the ones who died. Her obsession with ridding the world of the demons had caused many deaths. She’d walked away from each of them with regret but not this aching pain of loss.

Roger had been different from the beginning, his resistance to the bonding, his powers erupting too soon and his inability to access the memories. Everything including the feelings of tenderness he evoked in her. He could be lost to her forever.

The darkness had faded to gray. Clouds still covered the sky but technically dawn had arrived.

“Let’s go.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Adria waited impatiently as Estefan jimmied the gate lock with a tire iron. Cardin’s hands clutched the steering wheel in a death grip. As soon as the gates were open, Cardin started through, slowing down only to let Estefan jump in the open back door.

The two men were just as anxious to find their missing lover as she was. The tension in the van was so thick she could taste it.

Graceful trees lined the twisting driveway through the property. A final turn revealed the stately old house. No sign of activity. MacKenna didn’t employ many people according to Adria’s research.

Cardin stopped the van near a copse of trees. Backing into an opening between two, he threw the parking brake on and cut the engine.

Estefan opened a trunk in the back of the van. By the time Cardin reached the back door, Estefan had retrieved several long-bladed weapons.

Adria nodded as Cardin handed her a light machete. Cardin's choice of weapon was a short Samurai sword. Estefan preferred an old Calvary weapon.

Each hefted their choice to settle the weight into the palm of their hands.

"If there are any humans left in the house, try not to kill, just incapacitate. But whatever happens, we get Roger out."

The two men nodded at Adria's words.

Clouds kept the sunshine at bay as they crossed the open space to the door.

At least the rising sun would incapacitate the two vampires. Adria waited to one side of the double door entrance while Estefan took the other.

Cardin tested the doorknob then shook his head. "Too heavy to kick in. And it might be barred. Too noisy."

Adria led the way around the house. Peering through a window, she examined the well-appointed room. A closed door was opposite her vantage point. "Stand back." She yanked off her jacket and wrapped it around the hand holding the machete. Using the hilt of the weapon, she knocked a hole through one of the panes. She brushed aside the shards from the windowsill and cleaned the lower pane of jagged edges. "Lift me."

Estefan handed his weapon to Cardin before he leaned over and cupped his hands.

Adria stepped into them and he boosted her through the window. Checking the room quickly, she released the latch on one of the other windows and flung it open.

Cardin and Estefan climbed through and followed her across the room.

Her ragged breathing almost obscured any sounds. Her heart raced with adrenaline. The sense of Roger was stronger now that she was inside the house. So was the presence of the others.

"MacKenna and St. James are still here," she whispered. Deep inside her hope died. On some level, she'd hoped Roger had been successful and the two demons were dead. At least Roger was still alive and she planned to keep him that way.

She turned the doorknob slowly, the click of the mechanism loud in her mind. The creak of the door's hinges screamed and echoed in the corridor.

They automatically formed a point formation with Adria in the middle leading and the two men several steps behind and to each side. Their soft steps echoed loud in her ears.

Following the vague sense of Roger's thoughts, she paused near the wide stairway to the upper floor. She concentrated on Roger. Glancing up and then at Cardin, she canted her head up the stairs.

Cardin nodded his silent agreement.

The staircase was nearly six feet wide. More than enough room if a skirmish was required. Cardin hefted his blade and moved to the right side. Estefan mirrored his position on her left. Adria started up the middle of the stairs, slightly ahead of the two men.

Suddenly two men appeared at the top of the stairs as if from thin air. Adria had seen it before but the show of speed never failed to impress her. She clutched the hilt of her machete. Two vampires against three immortals weren't good odds. She'd never faced two. The natural animosity between the demons kept them from uniting for any reason.

Obviously these two were different.

"Leave now and no one will get hurt." MacKenna's growled order made her hesitate.

Adria shook her head. "We've come for Roger. Give him to us and then we'll go." Unnerving dark green eyes glared at her.

"He's staying here but you three will be leaving."

The lean blond standing next to him smiled an indulgent smile. As if his lover's overconfident attitude amused him.

Adria hesitated under the effect of the disarming smile. Mesmerizing blue eyes met hers.

“He’s like this when he doesn’t get enough sleep.” The man’s wink just added to her confusion.

“I’m Kevin St. James.” His eyes narrowed but his smile didn’t fade. “But you already knew that.”

Estefan and Cardin stepped up beside her.

“Where’s Roger?” Cardin’s snarl almost matched MacKenna’s.

She wanted to tell them to back off. With them so close, swinging a blade would be difficult.

“Roger’s fine. He’s sleeping. If you’d like to check on him, you’re welcome to do so.” Kevin swung his arm toward the hallway. “He’s up here.”

Cardin glanced at her. “We can’t trust him.” She barely heard the whisper.

Kevin laughed. “Obviously we can’t trust you either.” The fascinating blond man stepped down a couple of steps. “Especially with you threatening us with sharp objects.”

MacKenna reached out to grab his lover’s sleeve. “Not too close, Kevin.”

With a blinding smile, Kevin turned toward MacKenna. “I won’t. But we can’t stand here all day and I’d prefer to negotiate.”

“Negotiate with demons?” Adria spit the words out.

“We’re not demons.” The blue eyes turned back to her. “We just want to be left in peace with each other.”

“Bullshit. You feed on the blood of innocents. You wreak death on those in your path.” She clutched her machete with a renewed strength.

“We didn’t kill Roger. And I don’t want to kill you.” Kevin’s disarming smile and soft voice tugged at her soul.

She wanted to believe. Exhaustion threatened to overwhelm her. Tired from centuries of chasing her nightmares, she wanted to rest. To live in peace with Roger and the boys. But she couldn't believe a demon. "No. I have to do what I came for."

"And let Roger die?" MacKenna's voice cut her soul. "Because he will if any harm comes to Kevin. I don't kill lightly but for Kevin..."

She stared into the deep green eyes practically glowing in the sunlight. No anger, no fear, just solid determination.

"Sunlight!" Adria stopped suddenly. "You're standing in sunlight. How?"

MacKenna's laugh was almost musical compared his earlier snarling. "You evidently know about us. Do you really think the sun causes us to ignite?"

"No. I mean, I know you don't. But it's not affecting you at all. Either of you. My research says it weakens you." She knew fledglings were more affected by the sun. Kevin didn't seem to react at all.

Kevin shrugged. "Maybe your research is faulty. And if that's wrong, maybe all of it is."

"All of it?" Pain seared through her heart. "I've spent four hundred years on my research." She tightened her grip on the machete. "Do you know what that's like? Hundreds of years chasing one goal?" She took a step up the wide staircase. "I've been over the records meticulously." Another step. She didn't need to see Cardin and Estefan to know they mimicked her slow pace. "Demons walk the earth." Step. "Drink the blood of their victims. Kill indiscriminately." Her voice rose with each step, each point. "And leave children motherless and alone for eternity."

Kevin held his position but MacKenna moved down next to him. The darker man's face was unreadable but intense sympathy shown in Kevin's blue eyes.

"Maybe they do. But we're not them." Kevin's soft words made her hesitate.

"He's right, Adria." Roger, pale and trembling, appeared from the darkened hallway. "They aren't the ones we seek."

“Roger?”

“We need to talk.”

“Are you okay?” Tears stung her eyes.

“Yeah, tired...” Roger leaned against the wall. Sweat beaded his forehead from exertion.

Kevin leapt up the stairs to Roger’s side. “You shouldn’t have gotten out of bed.” His concern seemed genuine.

“I can’t let them be hurt.” His head dipped toward Kevin’s shoulder. “Please, Adria, I know you won’t believe them, but can you trust me?”

\* \* \* \* \*

Adria hovered over Cardin and Estefan as they settled Roger into the wide bed. Kevin and MacKenna had left them alone in the room.

Confusion warred with her lifelong purpose. The drive to kill the demons sent sharp pain shooting through her head.

Roger settled back against the pillows and patted the empty spot beside him. “Come here. We need to talk.”

Crawling up next to Roger, she ran her hands through his damp hair. “What...what did they do to you?” She grabbed his hand and kissed his knuckles.

“They drank but Kevin said they wouldn’t kill.” His other hand moved to caress her face.

She batted her eyelids to keep tears from flowing but a few fell free anyway.

His thumb smeared the moisture across her face. “We need to leave. Leave them alone. I don’t want to kill them.”

“We have to get out of here first.”

“They seemed confused, Adria. They drank for a long time. Longer than they expected to, I think.” Roger cradled her warm body against his. “They won’t hurt us. Lorcan only wants to keep Kevin safe. That’s all he ever wanted.”

“They’re demons.” Her voice lacked her former conviction.

Cardin and Estefan sat on the foot of the bed. Their silence was almost as unnerving as the look of awe on their faces.

“Or maybe they’re something they couldn’t help being. Even from what you’ve told me, they didn’t have a choice in their transformation.” His mind couldn’t picture Kevin as the demon she painted.

Her hand rubbed across his stomach. The touch wasn’t sexual. Almost as if she were reassuring herself he was still here. “I don’t want to lose you.”

Her change of topic startled him and warmed him at the same time. “Why? I’m just another Watcher. If I die, you’ll find another. You’ll go on.”

“No!” Her body tensed and her arm tightened around his waist.

The two men echoed her word.

“I won’t find another,” Adria insisted.

Roger smiled. “I love you, you know.” His gaze drifted up to Cardin then Estefan. “All of you. I’d have to – to do the crazy things you’ve been putting me through.”

“Really?” Her word caught on a gasp.

“Yeah. Is that possible? To love three people so much?”

Her head nodded against his chest. “Yes. It is.”

“Can we stop chasing demons?” The question went deeper than just the surface meaning.

Estefan found his voice. “There are some out there who are evil. Who kill and take great pleasure in it.”

Roger smiled at Estefan and received a shy grin in return. He didn’t expect Cardin and Adria to give up easily but he could live with vampire hunting if it were limited to



ones who needed killing. "I can accept that. Using our advantages to kill evil would be a good goal. However, Lorcan and Kevin aren't evil."

"I love you too." Her whisper, muffled in his chest, was clear enough for him.

## **Chapter Seven**

Roger jerked awake as the door crashed open with a bang. A vague remainder of a dream fled.

A furious MacKenna burst into the room. Two men, one tall and burly, one smaller and dark, came in behind him. The larger man held a softly moaning Kevin in his beefy arms.

Adria dove off the bed to stand between the furious man and Roger.

“What have you done to him?” MacKenna radiated anger. Long, sharp fangs glistened, adding emphasis to his growl.

Estefan and Cardin rolled to their feet, rushing forward as one.

With one hand, MacKenna deflected Estefan’s raised fist. He caught Estefan’s arm and flung him into Cardin. Both men fell to the floor with a dull thud. Estefan’s head hit the floor with a crack.

Roger mustered strength from deep inside his exhausted body. Lorcan had to be stopped.

A vision of Kevin’s body intertwined with his took what little breath he had. Salty sweat and sweet copper burst across his taste buds. Overwhelmed by the realness of the flavor, he stumbled from the bed and fell to his knees.

Adria’s body wavered between him and the other two men. She finally settled next to Estefan, her position between MacKenna and her lovers.

Roger didn’t understand what was happening but he knew he could help. A niggling idea kept chasing itself through his brain. A memory of something from long ago. No, not a memory...the dream...

Crawling toward his friends, he kept his gaze on MacKenna's forbidding figure. "Please don't hurt them. Lorcan, I can help Kevin. We have to finish what we started when he drank from me. Please let me try. I don't want him to die."

Dark green eyes glared at him, almost glowing in the candlelight. Finally Lorcan nodded. Pointing to the bed, he snarled, "Murtagh, put Kevin over there."

The burly man did what his master asked.

The other man pulled Roger from the floor and helped him onto the bed next to the feverish golden body.

Pain ripped through every muscle as he turned on his side to face Kevin. His hand slid across the damp material of his shirt. Heat radiated through Kevin's body. Roger didn't understand how he could be so hot and not be literally on fire.

Ignoring the fiery sensation and the pain racking his body, Roger scooted closer. One arm slipped under Kevin's neck. The long blond hair dripped with sweat. Still closer until he could pull the young man into a tight embrace.

Burning pain shot through Roger. He was on fire. The flames leapt from Kevin and into his body. Roger forced his mind to ignore the sense of burning flesh. Screams of pain merged into an anguished howl. The limp body against him convulsed. Arms of steel wrapped around him like a vise. Tearing pain ripped through his throat. The copper smell of blood filled his nostrils.

And then the flames began to subside. Cool breezes washed over him. The hands, painful and rough, grew tender. Caresses replaced hurt. Kisses replaced teeth.

A muscled body covered his. A hard cock rubbed against his flaccid one. A slow rhythm of undulating muscles soothed him.

Adria's voice screamed in the distance. Pleading, begging, someone to do something. Cardin's shouts joined hers. Estefan cried sobs of loss.

His voice wouldn't work so he could reassure them. Let them know he loved them. All of them.

A hot mouth covered his. The taste of blood mingled with saliva. His blood. Weakness pinned him to the bed as much as the hard body on top of him.

He wanted to hold him. Kevin. The name echoed in the vault of his mind. Kevin. Did he whisper it? Did Kevin know he was here?

He thought he protested when the sweet lips left his. He couldn't be sure. Darkness all around with tiny pinpricks of light. Stars?

A mouth teased his collarbone. Warm, moist flesh licked a line up his neck. Gentle suckling along his throat and the tiniest needles penetrated his flesh. Warm skin brushed his lips. Hot coppery liquid filled his mouth. A thirst he didn't know he had parched his tongue. Sucking hard at the source of life-giving fluid, Roger drank deep.

"Yes..."

*Kevin? Cardin?*

Who was with him? Cardin's voice sounded distant. Adria's protests joined his. An angel. She was his angel. His way to a new life. One with her, Cardin and Estefan. They would live forever. Love forever.

His body faded away like a fog dissipating in the sunlight. "Yes..."

Adria watched the scene on the bed with horror in her heart. "He's killing him. Please stop. Roger didn't want to hurt anyone."

Lorcan stood as silent and still as a granite statue. All of her pleading fell on deaf ears.

When Kevin bit Roger the second time, Adria and Cardin both struggled to reach their lover. Lorcan had swatted them aside like flies at a summer picnic. Now dazed and horrified, she watched helpless as Roger drank from an open wound on Kevin's wrist.

She underestimated Lorcan's power. Most vampires she'd destroyed in the past she'd taken by surprise. Lorcan and Kevin knew they were coming. She let love get in

the way of her purpose. She'd failed. If they died, there would be no one to carry on. But if Roger died, could she live without him?

"Lorcan, please stop him. Kevin's better. Don't let him kill. Roger said he didn't want that."

The dark-haired man finally acknowledged her with more than a blow. "You wanted this. Your plan was to have Roger drained, brought across. He's doing what you wanted. Don't tell me to stop now."

"But Roger changed his mind. He didn't want to harm Kevin. And Kevin didn't want to kill. Will you let him do something he'll regret later?"

"I'll stop him when I'm ready."

"You mean when Roger's dead." Adria struggled up from the floor. Her back pressed against the wall. "You can't kill him."

"Why not? Why shouldn't I kill all of you?" Lorcan turned on her. Fury flared in his eyes. "You came into my house with the express purpose of destroying me and those I love. Why shouldn't I rip your throat out and let your life bleed away into the carpet?"

"Because it's not what Kevin wants." Adria couldn't stop the tears. Two weeks ago she would have sacrificed anything for a chance to kill the man in front of her. The monster, she would have said. But now, his rage couldn't hide his pain and fear. She understood his emotions completely. All because of Roger. Now she'd do anything to keep Roger alive. Even bargain with the man she'd once called a demon. "My research shows what's happening will kill Kevin. Do you want to take that risk?"

"Do you think you're the only person who can do research? Vampires are too evil to read, to seek the truth?" Lorcan's nostrils flared as he leaned over her. "You have no idea what we know. About Watchers, about the *Rememdiu*, about things you've never had access to. Kevin won't die. That much I do know."

His words shook her soul but didn't stop her from trying to reach him. "You're letting him kill Roger. He said Kevin didn't want to kill."

Doubt narrowed his eyes. She hoped he was considering her words. He turned back to face the bed.

Crimson dribbled down the side of Roger's pale face. The hungry gulps of Kevin's blood were his only motions.

Kevin's body moved over his victim with increasing thrusts. His mouth remained glued to Roger's neck.

"Kevin! Stop!" Lorcan strode quickly to the bed. "Kevin, love. You've fed enough. Remember, we don't kill. He's getting too weak."

The blond head lifted from his feeding. His tongue flicked around the smeared blood on his mouth.

The open wound on Roger's neck trickled with more crimson liquid.

"Come here, love. I need you."

The dazed blue eyes didn't seem to know him. Kevin glanced down at the still figure on the bed and then back up at Lorcan. Recognition dawned slowly and a toothy smile finally greeted him. "Lorcan?"

"Yes, Kevin. It's me. Come to bed with me. I need you."

A frown formed on his brow. "But..." He shook his head and looked down again. His nostrils flared as he sniffed the blood on Roger's neck.

"It's okay. You've had enough. He'll still be here later. Come make love to me again." He held out his hand to his lover and waited.

Adria sighed with relief as the cloud over the blue eyes faded and reason began to reappear.

Lorcan's gentle voice continued to coax his lover. "Come on, love. Let's go to bed. I want to feel you against me, in me."

Kevin pulled his wrist away from Roger and reached out for Lorcan. Their fingers grazed each other then caught. Kevin didn't resist when Lorcan pull him off Roger.

Sliding off the bed and into Lorcan's arms, their lips met hard.

Lorcan wrapped his arms around Kevin's waist and lifted him off his feet. Within a few steps, Kevin had wrapped his legs around Lorcan waist and his arms around his neck. His lover clung to him tightly as he carried him across the room.

Lorcan nodded at the young man standing guard near the door. "Donal, take care of their wounds. And you and Murtagh keep an eye on them." He turned enough to meet Adria's gaze. "If Roger's is the *Rememdiu*, you'd better hope your research really was wrong."

Shock ripped her breath away as Lorcan carried his lover out of the room. She struggled to catch her breath. Roger needed her attention.

"Is he okay?"

The man Lorcan called Donal nodded as he bent over Roger's still body. "He's weak but he's alive. And I've seen worse." Pressing a corner of the white sheet against Roger's wound, he turned to look at her. His dark eyes smiled at her. "You can come here. But only you." His voice was gentle steel.

She pushed off the floor slowly. Murtagh watched her, his body tense and ready. They might not be immortal but both were young, fit men. They could stop her long enough for Lorcan to return.

She paused next to Cardin and Estefan. "You okay?" Her hand swept down Estefan's sweaty face. A bloody stain marred the side of his head.

Pale and shaking, he nodded. "I'll be okay."

Cardin nodded. "The wound's not deep. He'll heal quickly. Check on Roger."

She moved across the room with a heavy heart. Her life changed forever because of her love for Roger, and for Cardin and Estefan as well. She'd lost so much—her mother lost to evil, her childhood to slavery, her virginity to a man old enough to be her grandfather, any chance at a normal life. Even children were impossible for immortals. She couldn't lose any more.

Roger was pale and his skin cold and clammy. She ran her hand over his face. The white cloth on his neck matched the pallor of his skin.

Donal startled her when he touched her hand. "Hold the cloth tight. I need to get some supplies."

She nodded and did as she was told.

The man walked toward the door.

"Thank you."

He paused and turned to look at her. "You're welcome. Lorcan doesn't want to hurt anyone but he's been through hell with Kevin and he will do anything to keep him safe. We all will." A grimace lined his face. "Please remember that." He left the room with Murtagh in tow.

She returned her attention to Roger. "Stay with me, Roger. I'm here and I won't leave you."

Roger's head turn from side to side. Restless mumbling of incoherent words drew her closer. His hand found her arm and squeezed. His eyelids fluttered then dark eyes stared at her. The pupils were wide open as if he were drugged.

"Roger, it's Adria. Can you hear me?"

His tongue darted out to wet his lips. "Adria...love you," he whispered. Then his eyes closed.

Cardin helped Estefan up and moved to the bed. The three of them climbed awkwardly on the bed with Roger. The need to be close to him almost consumed her. From the frantic looks on their faces, Cardin and Estefan felt the same way.

Roger slept peacefully. His heart rate and breathing stabilized into something resembling normal. The chill of his skin eased as well.

Adria sat at the head of the bed, Roger's head cradled in her lap. Cardin and Estefan leaned against the footboard, their legs stretched out on either side of Roger's.



The combined body heat along with the thick blankets probably helped to ease his chills.

“What happened?” Cardin kept his voice lower than a human whisper. Unless Lorcan was hanging outside the door, no one would hear them.

“I don’t know. It’s almost as if they’d both gone into some kind of trance. Once they were separated, Roger seemed to come out of it. I don’t know if Kevin did the same.”

“We need to leave.” Estefan ran his hand along Roger’s leg.

Adria nodded. “But we can’t. I won’t leave Roger and we’ll never get him out of here in his condition. We have to stay. Besides, I doubt MacKenna will let us go easily.”

“So we agree to stay,” Cardin said.

Adria sighed. “MacKenna has no reason to trust us. Maybe Kevin can convince him. He seemed less hostile and genuinely concerned for Roger.”

“If Kevin’s able to...” Estefan voiced Adria’s worst fear.

If Kevin died, none of them would get out of here alive.

“He’ll be okay,” Roger whispered. “He’s sleeping.”

Adria caressed his cheek. “How do you know?”

Roger snuggled into her touch. His eyes stayed closed. “Just do.” A small smile quirked his lips. “We’ll all be okay.” His breath settled back into sleep.

Somehow his words calmed her. She didn’t know how he could be so sure. She glanced up at Cardin and Estefan. Both men seem to accept Roger’s words. Their strained faces relaxed.

She chuckled at her friends’ absolute faith in Roger’s words. They were a strange group but they were hers.

Donal returned with bandages, silencing further conversation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Roger felt him coming. He sensed the turmoil and focused on the cause. Kevin's anxiety coalesced into almost coherent thoughts. Roger eased his arm out from under a sleeping Adria.

She stirred against him then jumped awake. "Roger? Are you okay?"

"Yes, Adria. Kevin's coming."

Confusion clouded her eyes. "How do you know?"

Cardin and Estefan, curled on the end of the bed, grew restless.

"What's going on?" Cardin rubbed the sleep from his eyes.

Stretching hard, a huge yawn split Estefan's face. He looked at Roger.

"Kevin's coming here." Roger stared at the ceiling. "And Lorcan."

The two men rolled off the bed.

"They only want answers. Don't try to harm them." Roger sat up. He expected moving to be more difficult after his last encounter with Kevin but the ache of abused muscles wasn't there. He settled against the headboard just as the door opened.

Kevin's golden-haired head popped around the door. A tentative smile graced his lips. "You're feeling better." It wasn't a question, almost as if he knew what Roger was thinking.

"Yes. And so are you." Roger didn't think to question the strange connection with Kevin. The other man didn't seem to be concerned either.

"We need some answers. Are you able to tell us what's going on yet?" Kevin walked over to the bed.

Lorcan loomed behind him but if he was trying to look dangerous, his attempt fell flat.

"Not yet. But soon. Things are starting to fall into place."

"What things? What are you talking about?" Adria scooted closer.

"I'm getting fragments of dreams, visions. I can't seem to string them in order yet."

“What does that mean?” Lorcan’s voice had lost its growl. He seemed resigned to the situation. Still, he stayed close to his lover.

Adria shook her head. “Usually when a person becomes an immortal, genetic memories activate. All the knowledge of his mother’s creator awakens in his mind. Roger’s memories haven’t solidified.” Adria sighed and glanced at Roger.

Roger tightened his hand around hers. He realized the shift of power even if she didn’t. With a nod, he urged her to go on.

She smiled at him and continued. “With the memories, we know about the vampire who sired us.” A slight wrinkle formed on her forehead. “Except when we bonded with Roger, it didn’t seem to work.” Her free hand caressed his cheek. “Or at least not right away and not in the same order as the others. Normally the memories are first. Then the sense of others followed by the heightened abilities. With Roger, he was, well, backward.”

Roger spoke softly. “Some things are starting to become clear. Some not so much.” His heart in his throat, he let his eyes plead Lorcan to nudge the things in his mind into place. “Tell me about the accident. Zaki did it because he loved her.”

“Yes. Very much.” Lorcan’s gaze wandered over to Kevin. “He loved her too much to lose her.” He turned back to Roger. “Serena and Zaki were returning to their apartment in Chicago after a week at their lake house. A car came out of nowhere, broadsided the passenger side. Serena was cut up pretty bad. Zaki couldn’t stop the bleeding. She was dying. He did the only thing he could.”

“He changed her.” Roger nodded. The vision of bloody blonde hair, of loss and love almost overwhelmed him. He closed his eyes and let his head fall back against the headboard.

Adria’s hand clasped his and squeezed.

“Zaki knew what could happen to the child but he couldn’t let her die.”

“He knew about Watchers?” Adria asked.

“Yes. He and Serena wanted to believe there was a way to spend eternity together. They’d researched it for years. The legends of the *Rememdiu* go back to almost the beginning and Zaki is the oldest among us.”

“I don’t understand. She was pregnant. How?” Cardin shook his head.

Lorcan chuckled. “Zaki wasn’t the biological father but it didn’t make any difference to him how the child was conceived. Serena wanted the baby and Zaki would give her the world if he could.” His smile dropped. “Serena’s pregnancy was because of rape. When she realized she was pregnant, she wanted to keep the baby.”

Roger didn’t have to ask but he wanted to hear it anyway. “What happened to the child?”

“Serena was only a week or two from her delivery date. She went into labor partly from the shock of the accident, partly because of the transformation.” Lorcan stared at Roger, his eyes gentle. “The little boy was injured from the impact. Zaki couldn’t do anything to help him. He left him at the emergency room of a nearby hospital. He couldn’t leave Serena for long.” Lorcan reached over to stroke Kevin hair. “Fledglings can’t be trusted for the first few days or so. The hunger is too strong.”

Kevin ducked his head but not before Roger caught a slight blush.

“The other night in the woods, when you chased me?” Roger now understood the anguish in Kevin’s voice.

“Yeah, sorry about that.” Kevin looked up with a grin. “The way a fledgling feeds determines his path. The taste of fear can be addictive. If left to kill indiscriminately, a vampire will need more of the same.”

Lorcan nodded. “And I didn’t want Kevin to turn into a monster.”

While the two men spoke, Adria’s gaze darted back and forth between them. Her mouth opened several times to speak. “And the child? What happened to him?”

Roger already knew part of his answer but he waited for Lorcan to answer.

“Zaki took the baby to a nearby hospital. He didn’t have time to explain. He just dropped him off and returned to Serena’s side.”

“They never went back to get him?” Roger asked. His throat tightened with emotion.

“They tried, Roger.” Lorcan shook his head. “You have to realize the state Zaki was in when he dropped the baby off. He was disheveled, covered in blood and desperate to get back to his lover. By the time Serena was capable of going with him, the news was alive with the story of an abandoned baby, his mother possibly killed. The black man in a Chicago suburb leaving an obviously white, injured child...” Lorcan paced across the room, his anger showing in his clenched jaw. “The only way Serena would be able to prove the child was hers was through blood tests and showing proof she gave birth.”

“And her blood was no longer human...” Roger inhaled against an ache in his chest.

“And her body healed. No doctor would be able to tell she’d ever had a child.” Lorcan paused near the bed. “In spite of everything they tried, he was lost in the foster care system.”

Adria gasped when the truth finally hit her. “And you were the child...” She turned to Roger, her fingers squeezing tight around his hand.

Returning her grip, Roger nodded. “You could never convince me all vampires are evil, not with memories of Zaki and his love for my mother.” He raised his gaze to Lorcan.

The dark-haired man’s hand rested on his lover’s shoulder.

“And because of them.” Roger nodded toward Kevin and his lover.

“And vampires know all about us.” Adria scowled at Lorcan.

“Only a few. Ones Zaki came to trust. He had to know the information wouldn’t be used for twisted purposes.” Lorcan met Adria’s stare. “He left misleading information

for anyone trying to seek out the *Rememdiu*. And the most vital information, he trusted only to Serena." He glanced at Roger. "Do you know what he left out?"

"But what is the Cure if it's not to destroy the vampires?" Adria's voice rose in anger.

Roger sympathized with her. He knew what it was like to lose his purpose in life. But maybe something could be salvaged.

"The *Rememdiu* doesn't kill, Adria." Kevin's soft voice diverted her attention from Lorcan. "It is what it is. A cure of sorts for vampirism."

Her feet dug into the mattress as she pushed away from Kevin, pressing her back into the headboard. "No. Not after four hundred years..."

"Love," Roger whispered. He pulled her face around to face his. "He's telling the truth."

"How?" Anguish filled the tiny word.

"We become more like you." Kevin's gentle voice answered but her gaze remained on Roger. "Our strengths are the same but our weaknesses are lessened. Although blood is necessary, we have less need for it. Sunlight doesn't affect us."

Still staring at Roger, she asked, "So you are the Cure?"

"No, I'm not the *Rememdiu*." Roger shook his head as she opened her mouth to protest. His fingers covered her lips. "I'm not. It's falling into place."

Adria's hand tightened on his arm.

"I'm only the catalyst. I'm necessary for the first step but I'm not the Cure."

"Then who is?" Lorcan's gaze darted to Kevin then back to Roger.

"Kevin."

The blond man straightened in his seat. "What?" In spite of their tenuous mental connection, Roger's words startled Kevin.

Roger nodded. "You are. But you wouldn't have been if the timing had been off anywhere."

“What do you mean?” Lorcan’s voice supplied the question Kevin’s eyes asked.

“The part Zaki left out. Kevin had to die when he did and be turned. I had to come into my legacy as an immortal within a few days of Kevin’s transformation. And within a very short span of time, we had to find each other.”

“Why were Kevin and I able to deal so easily with the sunlight if you weren’t the Cure?”

“You both drank from me at the same time. I’m not sure because the memories don’t cover our particular situation, but I think because the part of you that transformed Kevin was affected by my blood.”

“We drank until we were sated. Humans don’t have enough blood to satisfy one vampire, much less two. How was that possible?” Lorcan frowning gaze traveled between Roger and Kevin.

“In order for the catalyst to get close enough to the *Rememdiu*, his metabolism has to be different. If the timing hadn’t been perfect, I wouldn’t have been able to feed you both and live. Even immortals don’t have that much blood. The final transformation took place when we exchanged blood. Now however, only Kevin’s blood is required for the process.”

“So Lorcan isn’t cured?” Kevin’s anxious gaze darted to his lover’s face then back to Roger.

“Not yet. He’s only feeling the effects of drinking my blood. The quickest way to ensure lasting effects would be for Lorcan to feed from you.”

Lorcan shook his head. “Vampires don’t feed from each other. The similarities in the blood won’t satisfy what we need.”

“This time it will,” Roger assured him.

Kevin’s eyes lit up with joy. He snuggled into Lorcan’s arms. The whispered “soon” sounded loud in Roger’s ears.

“Why did I never see any of this in my research?” Adria’s harsh whisper drew his attention.

Roger ran his fingers down the side of her face. “Because, love, no one ever wrote it down. Zaki is ancient. His memories go back almost to the beginning. You were on the right track but the information you needed you could never find. It’s too dangerous. A vampire, one who kills for pleasure, with this information could create a race of monsters to command. If you thought the ones you’ve dealt with before were bad, what do you think would happen if they knew this?”

“Four hundred years of my life and nothing I did would have worked or would have made things worse...”

Leaning in, Roger silenced her with a light kiss. “You couldn’t know. We’ll talk more later.”

Her mouth opened as if to argue but quickly closed. She nodded agreement then snuggled into his side.

“One warning though.” All eyes turned to him. “We have to be cautious with what’s happened here.”

Lorcan nodded. “Kevin could be in danger from every vampire in the world if this information gets out.” Lorcan kissed Kevin’s forehead. “And Roger, you could be in as much danger as Kevin. Although you say the timing had to be specific, some might not believe.”

Adria’s head shot up from where it was nestled against Roger’s chest. “He’s right. No one should know your part in this.”

“I think it’s safer that way,” Lorcan said. “Although I’d feel more comfortable if all of you would stay with us. As part of my household, you’d be better protected.”

Roger could feel his trio’s eyes on him. Evidently, the decision was his to make. “For now. Until we see how the transformation affects you and Kevin. I’m not so sure it would be wise long term. If word got out about us, about immortals, others could think you were cultivating a position of power.”



The dark-haired man nodded. "We'll work out the details later."

"And Lorcan?"

"Yes."

"We need to let Zaki and Serena know...and I'd like to meet my parents." Roger's tongue almost stumbled over the last word.

"We will. As soon as the sun sets in Quebec, we'll call Serena together. In the meantime, Kevin and I have business to attend to."

Kevin's grin left no doubt what the business was.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tired beyond words, Roger snuggled into Adria's back, his half-erect cock nestled against her ass. Cardin's flaccid dick took up a similar position with Roger's backside. Both of them breathed the deep rhythm of sleep. Estefan snored softly in front of Adria. The bed wasn't meant for four adults but it would do for now.

Sleep wouldn't come just yet. He had to be sure. His mind ranged out of the room and down the hall. He couldn't really see the things his consciousness whizzed past. Somehow he just knew they were there. A table, a vase of flowers, a painting on the wall and then a door. No barriers could keep him out. Passing through the door, he heard whispered voices, sensed calm minds and an ecstasy that would have been unimaginable a short week ago. His mind merged with Kevin's, turning from voyeur to participant.

Kevin walked over to the heavy curtains covering the bedroom windows. Yanking them open, he tugged at the metal latch locking the solid shutters.

"What are you doing, love?"

"This..." He pulled open the shutters.

The late afternoon sun flooded the room. Light streamed across the wide bed.

He turned in time to see Lorcan shudder. "We don't have to hide from it anymore."

"I know," Lorcan chuckled. "Involuntary reaction."

Kevin moved across the room. His lover opened his arms and Kevin slid into his welcoming embrace. "Ready for eternity together?"

Lorcan nodded as his lips met Kevin's. "More than ready," he whispered.

The sweet rush of excitement flowed through Kevin as Lorcan's tongue slid across his mouth. Gentle teeth tugged his lower lip. Opening his mouth, a questing tongue sought his.

Pulling his lover tight, Lorcan's arousal ground against him. His hands slid down Lorcan's ass, his fingers dug through the material of his slacks to knead the tight flesh. "Too many clothes," he murmured. His hands moved back around to Lorcan's fly.

His fingers tangled with Lorcan's in his haste to remove all barriers. He laughed into Lorcan's kiss and pulled away. "It might work better if we just undress ourselves."

Lorcan's slacks were halfway down his thighs by the time Kevin's words finished.

Kevin rushed to be free of his clothes then grabbed his lover's hand. He pulled him to the wide bed, yanking him down on top of him as he fell into the soft mattress.

"Take me... Like before..." Before the transformation, when he was human. "I loved the feel of you feeding, of being able to give you what you needed."

Lorcan answered his request with a hard kiss. His hands cupped Kevin's face with a tenderness opposite his rough mouth.

Kevin arched his aching cock into Lorcan's hip. Sweet sensation spread through him, a rush of excitement that left him gasping for air. His throat tightened as his need grew.

Lorcan's mouth trailed away from Kevin's lips to his throat. The soft touch over his jugular sent shivers down his spine.

"Yes, Lorcan..."

“Not yet. Soon.” Lorcan twisted off Kevin’s body and rolled toward the opposite side of the bed. Knowing what he was retrieving held Kevin’s impatience in check.

Moving up to the head of the bed, Kevin lay back and watched his lover rummage through the drawer of the nightstand.

Hard muscles played across his shoulders in the sunlight. The olive tint to his skin held an underlying paleness from two hundred years of shadows. Kevin reached across the bed and ran his fingers down his lover’s spine.

Lorcan turned a smiling face toward him, a bottle of lube in one hand. His green eyes glowed with the reflected sunlight. “I love you.”

Kevin lunged across the small distance separating them. Pulling Lorcan down on him, he met his lips with a rough kiss. As much as he wanted his lover’s flesh filling him, he wanted to ensure their future together more. He tilted his head back, baring his neck. “Feed. Make eternity a reality.”

Tiny wrinkles lined the smile in Lorcan’s eyes. “Now?”

“Yes. The rest can come later...”

The dark head dipped into the crease of Kevin’s neck. Moist heat laved a line across his sensitive skin. The razor-sharp points of Lorcan’s fangs slid into his flesh. Gentle sucking intensified the aching need in his groin.

Pushing up into his lover’s body, Kevin encouraged a slow, rolling rhythm. Lorcan’s moan vibrated through the tiny wounds.

Before when Lorcan fed, Kevin could feel the slow encroaching weakness flooding his body. Now only arousal filled his veins.

Kevin arched harder into the tight muscles of his lover’s hip. “I need you,” he whispered against Lorcan’s ear.

The slow suckling mouth moved. Lorcan’s fangs snicked back into his gums. His tongue teased the tiny puncture marks.

“Was it enough?” Kevin asked. His fingers raked through Lorcan’s thick black hair. Grabbing a handful of unruly curls, he pulled Lorcan’s head so he could see his face.

“Yes, love, more than enough.” His sated expression confirmed his words.

Kevin pulled him forward and kissed him hard. The sweet taste of his own blood, the cure from eternal loneliness, mingled on Lorcan’s tongue. He drew back and looked into his lover’s eyes. “So now we have forever...”

Lorcan nodded as his head dipped back toward Kevin’s lips. “Forever...”

*“Forever...”*

Now Roger could sleep.

## **About the Author**

By day, Shayla Kersten is a mild-mannered accountant. By night, she's a writer of sexy romances. Torn between genres, Shayla writes erotic stories about hot heroes and their sexy women as well as hot men and their passionate heroes.

A native of Arkansas, Shayla spent four years in the Army as a missile specialist, stationed in Germany and Oklahoma. After her enlistment was up, she spent eleven years in New York City taking a bite out of the Big Apple. Even her love of theatre and the nightlife of the big city couldn't cure terminal homesickness for the Natural State. In 1995 she returned to her roots in Arkansas.

Shayla now divides her time between her mother, her spoiled-rotten dogs, her dratted day job and her obsession — writing. And no, her mother doesn't know what she writes. That's between Shayla, her dogs and her readers!

Shayla welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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