



A Wolf's Eyes

Emma Sinclair

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Chapter One

The sound of flesh slapping against flesh echoed through the cavernous room only interrupted by the grunts and moans of the two people writhing on the floor.

“Are you going to give up yet, Van?”

Donovan “Van” Wolfe shifted to the left, throwing his beautiful opponent off balance, giving him ample opportunity to escape from her grasp. He jumped to his feet, landing in a crouch. She quickly spun around, her long black hair twirling in an arc behind her.

They circled each other like animals stalking their prey.

Van’s body ached but he’d never let Kalista think she could get the better of him.

“I’ll never give up. You should know that about me by now.”

She struck out with her left leg, arcing it high in the air towards Van’s head. He swung his arm up and deflected her blow. But he was tired. He and Kali had been sparring for a bit over an hour, and his balance wasn’t what it had been an hour ago. He stumbled, and instantly Kali was upon him. Before he knew what happened, she had him pinned to the mat.

“Checkmate.”

Van’s back was on the floor and Kali’s razor sharp teeth were poised at his jugular.

He sucked in a deep breath.

Their attention was yanked towards the door where a lone figure stood in the shadows clapping slowly. Van took the opportunity to flip Kali onto her back, reversing their positions.

“Damn you, Aiden,” Kali complained from her position underneath Van.

Both men only laughed. Van stood up and stuck out his hand, helping her to her feet.

“Thanks, little brother,” Van said.

“We werewolves have to stick together against those evil vampires, you know.”

He threw them each a towel from the bench just inside the room.

“Bite me, Aiden.”

“Come on now, Kali, that’s your job, not mine.”

His brother and his best friend had been sniping at each other for as long as Van could remember. Why they didn’t just break down and fuck, he’d never know.

“All right now, children. Play nice.”

“Play? What about it, Aiden? You want to take me on next?”

She angled her eyes towards the mat and then back at Aiden. Van had to laugh. He was just barely able to hold his own against Kali. As much as he loved his brother, he knew that Kali would wipe the floor with him. Aiden knew it, too.

“I don’t think so.”

“Oh, darn.” She patted Aiden on the cheek and ran a single blood red fingernail down his cheek. “I guess I’ll hit the showers then.”

She picked up her bag to head out of the basement gym, but paused at the door.

“Oh, hey, Van,” she said digging through her bag. “I picked this up for you. I thought you’d like it.”

The book arced through the air before Van caught it. He looked down at it.

“Thanks, but I thought only thirteen year-old girls kept diaries.”

“Turn it over, smartass.”

As soon he turned it over, he realized why she’d bought it for him. The picture on the front was hand painted. It was a wolf with a coat the color of fine whiskey and honey-touched brown eyes. They were the same eyes he saw every time he looked in the mirror.

“Uncanny,” Aiden muttered over his shoulder.

“I thought you’d find it interesting.”

With one last toss of her long black hair over her shoulder, Kali left the room and headed into the bathroom. A few moments later the pipes in the old basement rattled as water coursed through them.

But Van’s eyes were riveted on the book he held in his hands.

“Where did she say she found it, again?” he asked his brother.

“Dude, she was wearing a sports bra and booty shorts, and you expect me to pay attention to what she says?”

Leave it to Aiden to only be interested in sex.

“What are you doing here? It’s not like you to be up before noon.”

“Tell me about it.” Aiden walked over to the punching bag on the other side of the padded room. He swiped at it a few times before replying. “You weren’t responding to Dad’s summons, so I was sent to find you.”

“Damn it. Didn’t you ever stop to think there might be a reason I wasn’t answering the summons?”

Mainly because his father had totally flipped off the deep end.

“Well, yeah, Van, I did stop to think about how you would feel.” He stopped playing with the gym equipment and stared at his brother. “But when a three hundred pound beast pounced on my bed first thing this morning, scaring away my date from last night, I might add, your feelings weren’t really the first thing on my mind.”

“He sicced Thor on you?”

Aiden didn’t answer, he simply nodded. No words were needed. This was really bad.

“I guess he didn’t say what he wanted.”

Van knew it was too much to ask for, but well, he was out of options.

“Sure, he might have, if you speak snarling beast.”

* * * *

“Janie, I’m going to lock the door behind me, all right?”

“Sure, Susie. See you tomorrow.”

Jane Applebottom didn’t pay too much attention to the departure of her assistant. She was too busy looking for her diary. It was an old thing, one she’d made herself many years ago. It had sentimental value more than anything, and she couldn’t find it anywhere.

Tearing apart the area behind the counter of her small downtown used bookstore, she struggled to allay her panic.

“Well, where in the heck is it?”

She was hesitant to write the book off as a lost cause quite yet. It was locked with a fairly sturdy lock so she knew she didn’t have to worry about anyone reading it, but the diary was where she’d hidden some of her deepest desires and most private fantasies.

How embarrassing would it be if someone read them?

She assured herself the tingle that traveled up her spine was simply out of annoyance, not excitement.

And while the key was safely tucked away on a chain around her throat, she still shuddered at the thought of the diary in anybody's hands but her own.

* * * *

Van stalked into his Queen Anne, Washington home. He didn't bother looking at the mail piled by the door in the front hallway, he didn't press the button on his blinking answering machine, nor did he respond when Clifford, his trusty butler, greeted him. He stalked directly to the kitchen, pulled an imported beer out of the refrigerator, opened it with his bare hands and chugged half of the malt liquid in one gulp.

"The meeting went that well?"

"Yeah, it was great considering I didn't really give a good Goddamn about the customer's computer security issues."

His brother's voice from the kitchen table didn't surprise him. His senses were a hell of a lot better than that.

"Don't you have a home to go to?"

"You know, just because I haven't had the luxury of turning into an animal yet doesn't mean I'm not on your side."

The venom in his brother's words surprised him.

He reached into the fridge and pulled out two more beers. He carried them over to the table, passing one to his younger brother.

"I know. I'm sorry."

"Is there anything I can do?"

He knew his little brother would give his life for him and that scared the hell out of him.

Van simply shook his head. There was a war brewing in the paranormal community and as much as he wanted to, there was nothing he was going to be able to do to stop it.

He desperately hated feeling helpless.

"No."

"Will you let me know when there is something I can do?"

His brother's sincerity hurt Van. There was no way he could ever help. He'd never put Aiden in that kind of danger.

"Absolutely."

An understanding passed between the two brothers.

"So, you want to hit Pioneer Square with me? I, for one, could use some female companionship, and I'm pretty sure I won't be hearing from last night's date again."

Ah, to be that young and carefree again. Van felt like an old stodgy at a mere thirty-three years old.

"Nah, I think I'm just going to hit the sack."

Aiden drained the last of his beer before he stood up.

"Your loss."

A few moments after he left the kitchen, Van heard the front door close.

"Master Wolfe, if there's nothing else you need, I'll be retiring for the evening."

Clifford was his mother's butler before he'd become Van's. He'd known the man practically his whole life. When had he become so old?

“Sure thing, Clifford. And don’t ever think you have to stay up to entertain Aiden. He’s a big boy. He can find ways to entertain himself.”

The ways his brother could find to “entertain” himself in Van’s house made him a little bit nervous, but it was becoming clear that Clifford wasn’t as spry as he used to be.

“Yes, sir. Good night, sir.”

There was an obvious slump in Clifford’s posture as he tottered off to his suite in the back of the large house. Maybe Van needed to think about getting the older man some help around here. Of course, the stubborn old fool would probably refuse.

He thought briefly about getting another beer, then decided against it. He wandered aimlessly through his large living room, stopping briefly to look out over Puget Sound from the large picture window in the dining room.

It was dark, but with his enhanced senses he could make out the shapes of the large tankers lined with lights, as well as the smaller boats bobbing on the waves.

He stared out the window for a long while, lost in thought. He had a bad feeling about things, but staring out this window always seemed to relax him.

The world below his Queen Anne home always seemed so peaceful. All the humans tucked in their beds, secure in the knowledge there was no such thing as a werewolf.

That’s why he chose to stay inside as much as possible. It was less upsetting to others.

Eventually, he switched off the light and headed upstairs. Before he went up, he grabbed the stuff off the hall table, flipping through his mail as he went up the stairs.

Bill, bill, crap, crap, another bill.

When he got to the bottom of the pile, he was surprised to find the wolf on the cover of the diary staring back at him.

Damn, the resemblance was uncanny.

These days, Van spent the majority of his time as a human, but when he did turn into a wolf, he looked exactly like the one staring back at him.

A shiver coursed its way up his spine causing him to drop the diary.

Damn, he was turning into some scared old woman. To a human, most wolves looked the same. There was no way the painting on the front of the diary could be of him.

He bent to pick up the book, noticing idly when he walked into his bedroom that the lock had broken when it hit the hard wood of the floor.

He tossed it on the bed along with his shirt. Peeling the rest of his clothes off and tossing them to the side, he made his way to the master bathroom.

There was no way in hell he needed a house this big—seven bedrooms was big for a family, let alone a guy who lived alone and probably always would. But he loved the view, he loved the privacy, and even more than that, he loved the master bathroom.

There was a large Jacuzzi tub, big enough for two, or more, outset slightly in a windowed alcove. It was like taking a bath in the Sound—only a hell of a lot warmer.

But the shower was what he loved the most. He reached in and cranked on the hot water, sending a cloud of steam billowing towards the ceiling. When he stepped under the spray, he turned on the three other nozzles so that water pounded him from above and on his front and back.

When he bought the house, he figured the shower, with its long bench seat, would become one of his favorite places.

Of course, that was before his fiancée found out what he was and left in disgust.

Dismayed by his train of thought, he washed quickly and wrenched off the faucet. He dried himself off as he walked back into his bedroom, tying the towel around his waist.

He plopped down on his bed and picked up the remote. There had to be some sports or something on, or maybe he'd just order a movie from an adult movie channel. That was the most action he'd been getting in a long time.

Deciding on the porno flick, he turned to the channel and pressed the code on the remote to unlock the movie. Almost immediately, two buxom blonde girls appeared on the screen.

Immediately, the tallest blonde woman's top disappeared and the other one was on her knees licking and sucking her crotch. Van figured it was time to get himself comfortable.

When he stretched his legs out, his foot bumped the diary that he'd tossed there on his way into the bathroom. He reached towards the bottom of the bed and was surprised to see writing inside.

He looks deep into my eyes as his mouth latches onto my clit.

What in the hell had Kali bought him?

* * * *

Jane was still fretting about her diary. She didn't have any luck at the store, and she wasn't having any luck at home either.

Where could the darn thing be?

She certainly didn't want anyone else ever reading the stuff in there.

She continued to fret as she changed into her blue flannel cloud pajamas and slipped her aching feet into her pink fluffy slippers. She pushed her blonde hair back with a headband and headed into the kitchen for a snack.

"An apple or a bowl of ice cream?"

Wasn't this the same decision she'd been faced with her entire life? She put her hands on her ample hips. Why bother? She knew what decision she was going to make.

She reached into the freezer and pulled out the remaining half of a pint of Ben and Jerry's. Grabbing a spoon and a romance novel off of her bookshelf, she headed into the bedroom.

Two hours later, she had finished her ice cream, and her book, but she was more depressed than ever.

The heroine had gotten her man—just like always.

She sighed as she got out of bed and went to stand in front of her father's old mirror.

"When am I going to get my man?"

She wasn't repulsive, at least she didn't think so, but she was lonely. No man had ever shown even the slightest interest in her.

She definitely needed to lose a few pounds, okay maybe like thirty to forty pounds, but she'd read on the Internet that some men liked curvy women. Okay, so maybe she was a little bit more than curvy, too.

Her light blonde hair was cut in a bob that ended just below her chin. Her mother had always told her that she had a pretty face—isn't that one of the worst things a fat girl can hear? Her favorite feature had always been her bright blue eyes.

Turning to the side in front of the mirror, she pulled her pajama top tight against her

body. She studied the lumps critically before sucking in her stomach, trying to make herself as thin as possible.

She sighed.

Who was she kidding? She'd be lucky if someday someone considered her average.

Time to stop wishing for things that were never going to be and get back to reality.

"I really wish I could find my diary."

As she spoke, the mirror in front of her turned opaque.

"What the..."

Jane rubbed her eyes as the mirror changed colors, blues and pinks started to swirl in front of her eyes.

What had been in that ice cream?

She wanted to step away, go throw some cold water on her face, anything to prove to herself that she wasn't going crazy, but she couldn't seem to move.

Her fuzzy pink slippers felt like they were super glued to the carpet.

Slowly, the room in the mirror came back into focus. It took her a second to realize that it wasn't her room that she was looking at. Her room was white. She had a white comforter with small colored flowers. The room reflected in the mirror was dark. Green, she thought. There was a large dark four-poster bed in the middle of the room, covered with a sable covering.

She was about to look away when she did a double take.

There was a naked man on the bed, his penis in his fist, and he was reading her diary!

She knew she should turn away, she should do something, but she was stuck in one spot.

What in the heck was she looking at?

Well, she knew what she was trying very hard not to look at, but she couldn't tear her gaze away. He was huge.

She couldn't believe it, but she was standing in her bedroom watching some gorgeous man do ... things as he read her diary.

She was mesmerized as his hand slid up and over his large shaft. It was the biggest one she'd ever seen.

Echoes of 'you're a virgin, you've *never* seen one' played through her mind, but it was easy to ignore as she concentrated on the Adonis in the mirror.

He held himself in one hand and the book in the other. *Which one of my fantasies is he reading?*

He squeezed tighter, causing the head to turn an even deeper purple and a small bead of moisture to appear, glistening in the low light of the room.

She found herself licking her own lips, wondering what the moisture would taste like.

As if on their own accord, her hands inched up her pajama top, unbuttoning buttons as she moved. She trailed her fingers lightly up over her stomach to her breasts, ever so gently brushing the backs of her fingers over her nipples.

She gasped as the sensation flowed directly between her legs. Oh, how she wanted to lay down on her bed and take care of the ache growing there, but she knew she couldn't. She couldn't bear to lose sight of the man in the mirror.

She was shocked when he looked up and met her gaze in the mirror. His amber eyes

connected with her blue ones.

Her eyes widened in shock.

What had she been caught doing?

Could he see her?

Was there a mirror on his side as well?

Oh, no, what should she do?

When one corner of his mouth tipped up in a slight smile, she knew that there was nothing she could do.

Their eyes stayed locked as he continued to palm his shaft. Spurred on by his obvious interest, she slid one hand slowly down her body and under the waistband of her pants. There was no way she was about to pull her pants off. Even in an ice cream induced fantasy, she didn't want her mirror man to see her body.

He slid his thumb up over the head of his shaft, spreading the liquid that had gathered there. He continued the up and down motion, but rather than paying attention to her diary, he stayed riveted on Jane in the mirror.

"Mmmm," she moaned, as she rubbed herself through her panties. She knew her body well enough to know what would send her over the edge, and she was quite close.

She was just waiting for him to go first.

As he pumped his hand faster and faster, it seemed as if it was getting more difficult for him to keep his eyes focused on her.

A few more strokes sent his head flailing back and his seed spurting out, covering his stomach and chest.

Jane fingered herself through her panties, knowing that she'd make herself climax. She shuddered her own release only a few seconds after him.

Now what?

Jane expected to open her eyes and see herself staring back in the mirror, but he was still there.

He lifted his hips up off the mattress and pulled a towel out from under him. He cleaned himself off, still never taking his eyes off of hers in the mirror. Once he was clean, he tossed the towel on the floor.

He lay back on the bed, crossed his legs at the ankle, and once again picked up her diary.

He looked in the mirror and winked at her one last time before he went back to reading.

The mirror swirled, and before she knew it, she was staring at her own reflection in the mirror again.

She walked over to her bed and plopped down, pulling the covers around her.

What had she just done?

Who was the man in the mirror?

And how did he get her diary?

And why did he have the exact same eyes as the wolf on the cover of her diary?

Chapter Two

Van woke up when he heard the basement door slam shut. He peered at the clock on his nightstand. Almost six thirty in the morning. It must be Kali, stuck out without enough time to safely get home. He'd heard the news report and the morning was supposed to be sunny, turning to rain in the afternoon.

He turned over to go back to sleep, but soon realized it was pointless. He tossed and turned, his mind whirling with visions of the woman who appeared in his mirror last night.

She wasn't really the type he normally went for. Usually he'd go for the tall, dark, skinny women, a lot like Kali actually, but last night, he couldn't deny he was disappointed that he didn't get to see more of his blonde witch.

He assumed she was a witch, anyway.

As a werewolf, he'd learned not to be surprised when odd things happened, like strange women masturbating in your mirror in the middle of the night.

He could feel his cock twitching as he remembered what he'd done last night.

Knowing sleep was out of the question now, he got out of bed. He pulled on a pair of flannel pajama pants and headed down to the kitchen.

It'd be a few more hours until Clifford awoke, so he measured and ground some beans, and made himself a pot of extra strong coffee. He poured himself a cup, savoring the aroma. He debated pouring a cup for Kali, but decided she probably would just want to sleep.

Well, too bad; he needed to talk to her.

He refilled his mug, then filled a thermos, just in case she did want some, before heading down to the basement.

She must've heard him coming.

"Damn, Van, it's early, I came here to sleep."

He walked into the sparsely decorated but comfortable room. Kali was known for staying out to late and not giving herself enough time to get back home before the sun came up—eventual suicide for a vampire. After a few too many close calls, he'd provided a place for her to stay in his basement.

"How are things in the vamp world?"

She gave off the impression to most people that she was only out to party. Van was one of the few people who knew how powerful Kali actually was in Seattle's paranormal community.

"Same old, same old."

Kali lay cuddled up on her side, in the double bed Van had installed in his basement.

"No major catastrophes last night?"

She seemed to realize that Van wasn't going to let her sleep because she sat up, pulled her knees up to her chest, and covered herself securely in the blanket. She motioned for him to pour her a cup of coffee.

"Nothing in my neck of the world, but I hear there's some excitement brewing for you."

He didn't even want to know how she knew things that he was just starting to hear.

And it was his job to know these things.

He didn't speak, just poured her a cup of coffee and handed it over.

"Do you want to talk about it?"

No, he didn't. But at the same time, he knew that he wasn't going to be able to represent the council without her help.

"What do you already know?"

She took a big sip of the strong brew and then flipped her long black hair back over her shoulders, leaving her milky white shoulders completely bare save for a the slim strap of a tank top.

There was no doubt that Kali was incredibly beautiful, but he didn't feel a thing.

"I heard there's somebody in the city killing werewolves. Powerful werewolves."

He nodded, impressed with her ability to learn things that were supposed to be kept a secret.

"Do you have any idea who it is?"

"The council has some ideas, but no proof." She took a sip of her coffee, and Van could tell that she chose her next words carefully. "I heard you saw your father this afternoon."

Van nodded his head.

"He pointed me towards a book called *How to Hunt and Kill Werewolves*."

"Attractive title."

"Yeah. He directed me to a bookstore called *Magical Treasures*."

Her face brightened at the mention of the store.

"I've been there. I love that store. It's an untapped resource for paranormal research."

Van jumped on the chance to change the subject. He couldn't think of many things that he'd rather *not* talk about than his father.

"You've heard of it?"

Actually, he couldn't say it surprised him in the least.

"Yeah, I go there all the time. I know a girl that works there. She'll keep the store open late for me in the summer."

As a vampire, she had to keep her exposure to the sun a minimum. If the sun hit her, she didn't instantly burst into flames like legend would have people believe, but it was painful to her, and it would gradually kill her over time—hence the fact she was currently conked out in his basement. Luckily, one of the benefits of living in Seattle was that she didn't have to worry about too much sunlight in the winter.

"I got the wolf journal at *Magical Treasures*."

The journal.

"Yeah, about that journal. Um, did you know that it was, well, used?"

"What do you mean it's used? It's locked. I couldn't get it open."

Her vampire strength was pretty much on par with, if not better than, his werewolf strength, so if she said she couldn't open it, that meant it was stuck. Hard.

"Well, I dropped it on my way up the stairs yesterday and it fell open."

Kali loved nothing more than a mystery, especially when it involved one of her friends.

"Van, I swear to you, I tried everything to open it before I bought it, and then when I got home. I even took it to a friend of mine who tried some other, uh, unconventional

methods.”

She was getting too excited about this. Time to put a stop to it.

“Oh well. I guess it just hit the right way when it fell.”

He never thought for a second that Kali would let him get away with that, but he had to try.

“Come on, Van, there’s more to the story than that. You know very well that the only way I wouldn’t have been able to open the lock is if there were some kind of curse on the darn thing.”

“Like I said, it must have just been lucky for me.”

Sometimes he would give his right arm to go back to the days before he believed in werewolves, let alone before he found out that he was one. Or that he had a vampire for a best friend, and didn’t bat an eyelash when she said something was cursed.

“You’d hate a boring life like that.”

“Stop that,” he jumped up, nearly upending his coffee mug. “You know how much it creeps me out when you read my mind.”

“Sorry, I can’t help it,” she said, but the twinkle in her eyes told him that she was anything but. “You’re an easy target when you’re distracted.”

“Well try to help it, all right?”

“So, are you going to talk to me about what happened last night, either with your dad, or the mysterious book, or are you going to let me sleep?”

She punctuated her statement with a long yawn. Van felt slightly guilty for keeping her awake.

He was going to let her sleep.

“G’night, Kal.” He leaned forward and gave her a chaste kiss on the forehead.

“It’s never been more than that, has it?”

He knew what she was really saying. She felt absolutely nothing, either. Everyone knew that if he and Kali were to become an item, they could probably rule the paranormal community. But, there was nothing between the two of them except friendship.

“No, it hasn’t.”

“Good, that means there will be nothing keeping you from going after the blonde in the mirror.”

She flicked off the lamp next to the bed. Van walked back upstairs to the kitchen to the sounds of Kali’s chuckle. Even after four years, she still had the ability to astound him.

* * * *

Jane awoke to a strange feeling. It was contentment. She hadn’t felt that way in a long time, if ever. She was an almost thirty-year-old virgin. She was pretty sure that the word contentment was no longer in her vocabulary.

Unfortunately for her, her contentment only lasted as long as it took for her legs to rub together. Since she was rather ample in the thigh department, that didn’t take too long at all.

It was beginning to look like another morning spent with her showerhead.

As she got out of bed, she couldn’t help catching a glance of herself in the mirror on the wall. She fell backwards on to the bed again, as memories of what she’d done last

night in front of that mirror came rushing back to her.

“What the...”

Slowly, cautiously, she got up from the bed and tried to sneak up on the side of the mirror, making sure not to catch her reflection, or anyone else’s.

She stood next to the mirror, taking deep breaths in and out. She was terrified by what she’d see when she looked into the mirror.

All right. It was down to the moment of truth.

She jumped out from her hiding spot, landing with a thud directly in front of the mirror.

The only thing that stared back at her was a tubby, blonde with bed head.

“The whole thing was a dream, Janey,” she admonished herself as she started in on her morning routine. “You’ve been reading way too many paranormal books lately.”

As much as she tried to convince herself that what happened last night had been a dream, she couldn’t help feeling uncomfortable each and every time she walked past the mirror.

Questions stayed with her through her shower, and she decided to forgo any morning pleasure. Her brief interlude with the dream man seemed to carry over into morning and while she ate her morning bowl of oatmeal.

Who was the man in the mirror?

Or, the more logical question should be, who was the man that she dreamed in the mirror? He was familiar to her, somehow, though she didn’t know that she’d ever seen him before. Of course, isn’t that how most dream men were?

She was startled out of her reverie when the teakettle boiled. Without thinking, she reached for it, clasping her hand around the metal handle without a tea towel.

The pain radiated from her fingers all the way up her arm. She dropped the kettle back on the stove. It clattered loudly, and sent up a plume of steam when the water sloshed out of the kettle and landed on the still hot burner.

She cranked off the burner and stuck her hand under a spray of cold water.

It was going to be a really long day if she didn’t pull herself together soon.

Jane decided to skip her morning cup of coffee at home and stop at a coffee shop on the way to work. She did live in Seattle—home of fancy coffee—after all.

Only a few minutes later, venti white chocolate mocha, extra shot, no whip in hand, she was opening the door to her little shop. The smell of old musty books assaulted her senses as she stepped inside, flipping the closed sign to open.

She loved her old bookstore. She’d worked here since she was sixteen. When her mother passed away, she was sent to Seattle to live with the father she’d never met. While he had no idea how to react to a sixteen year-old girl who’d just lost her mother, he’d welcomed her with open arms. They’d never had a father-daughter relationship, but they’d become fast friends when they discovered they shared a love of old books.

She still felt his loss, deeply. He’d passed away a little more than two years ago. It wasn’t fair that she’d only gotten to spend eight years with him.

Shaking off her melancholy mood, she opened the register, and sat down at the small desk behind the counter. She pulled out a book that a customer had dropped off the day before.

She took a thorough look at it and wrote up an estimate for the client who was supposed to be coming back in this afternoon. The woman had dropped it off yesterday,

saying that price was no object. That was Jane's favorite type of client.

She looked outside to another dreary day of Seattle weather. It was going to be a slow day in the bookstore. Nobody wanted to go outside in the rain with already damaged books.

Darn it, she'd given Susie the day off, too. She was going to be stuck there all day by herself? It was going to be a really super long day.

Turning back to her client's book, she decided to get started. If price was really no object than she could get a jump on things. Reattaching the binding shouldn't be a hard job. Actually, for being as old as the book seemed to be, it was in remarkably good condition.

The book was called *Paranormal Entities and how to Manage Them*. It was handwritten. It was actually very similar to a lot of the family Bibles that were brought to her. She opened the book and read the first page.

On the left, the pages were written in what she thought might have been Russian. She assumed the English on the right facing page were translations.

She was so enthralled in the book, she didn't even notice the passage of time.

She grabbed for her coffee, surprised to find that it had gone cold. She'd spent longer working on the book than she'd thought.

She made her way to the small backroom to heat up her coffee, and try to find something for her grumbling stomach.

"Hello?"

The bell over the door tinkled, and a feminine voice called out to her.

Drat, food was going to have to wait.

"Coming."

Whoa, talk about feeling inadequate, she thought when she saw the gorgeous woman standing inside the door.

She was tall and pale, with long black hair. She was dressed in black pants, and a long black leather trench coat. A flash of red showed at her throat—she must have had a red sweater on under the coat. She was holding a dripping umbrella and was wearing sunglasses.

Jane felt utterly frumpy in her baggy jeans (that weren't so baggy anymore) and plain white collared shirt. She forced down the feeling of wanting to go home, crawl into bed and pull the covers up over her head.

"Welcome to *Magical Treasures*. How can I help you?"

"Hi," the woman's smile was breathtaking. Jane shrank back further into herself.

"My name is Kalista Sutherland. I dropped a book off yesterday, and I was told to come see Jane Applebottom today to get a quote for repair."

"Oh, right. You're Susie's friend. I'm Jane."

She stepped forward and shook the beauty's hand. Of course she was Susie's friend. They probably went to clubs and stuff together. They did stuff on Friday night. They didn't sit at home on weekends watching TV and reading romance novels.

"Nice to meet you, Jane. This is an awesome bookstore you've got here."

"Thanks. My Dad started it years ago. He left it to me when he died."

Yeah, most people thought she was weird for running an old bookstore that ran mostly to the occult, but she loved it, and she did surprisingly well. She didn't have a ton of clients, but the ones she did have were loyal. And now that she'd started doing repairs

as well, she was even more successful.

“Well, I can find stuff here that I can’t find anywhere else.”

“That’s what I’m here for.”

Jane could feel herself swelling with pride that a worldly woman like the one in front of her appreciated her bookstore. Swelling with pride was a dangerous thing. She didn’t really need to be any bigger than she already was.

“Actually, I’ve got a friend with me, he’s parking the car. He’s looking for a book on werewolves. Do you have anything for him?”

“Sure. Can you be any more specific?”

“Not really, I’m afraid. He should be here any moment though.”

*

Kali was having a hard time keeping a straight face. She’d only gotten a quick glimpse into Van’s mind this morning before he shut her out tightly, but she was pretty sure that Jane Applebottom was the blonde he’d been thinking about.

How’d he know her? He told her this morning that he’d never heard of this place. It was a little out of the way, but it was a great place. It’d been a lot of years since she’d seen anything like this bookstore, so she was thrilled when she’d stumbled upon it.

She watched Jane as she walked behind the counter. If Kali read her right, which she knew she was, she was nervous. Did Jane know more about her than she was letting on? Why would anyone be nervous around her if they didn’t know she was a vampire?

She opened her mind briefly, sending out a probing thought.

...fat ... ugly...

Jane’s thoughts drifted through her head as clearly as if they were her own. Jane thought herself plain next to Kali? Huh?

Kali felt an instant kinship with the other woman, though she knew she could never say anything. What she wouldn’t give to be considered plain and average. That’s why she’s always liked the Wolfe boys so much. They treated her like just one of the guys, not some fancy woman who should be put on a pedestal.

While she was on the subject of the Wolfe’s...

“I was in here the other day when Susie was working and she sold me a journal with a picture of a wolf on the front. It was locked and I couldn’t get it open. You wouldn’t have a key by any chance, would you?”

Jane was cool, but Kali didn’t miss the shock in her eyes, not the paper trembling in her hands.

“No, I’m afraid I don’t. But if you’d like to return it, I’d be happy to refund your money.”

Kali played it cool as a cucumber, even though she was bursting inside, thinking about what was going to happen when Van walked in the door.

“Oh, no, that’s okay. I really just bought it for the art on the cover anyway. Who’s the artist? Anyone local?”

Kali was pretty sure she already knew the answer, but if she didn’t keep Jane talking, she’d probably start jumping up and down with the excitement of Van’s impending arrival.

She may never get to experience true love herself, so she had every intention of making the most of watching her friends’ love lives.

“Actually, I painted it.”

“Really,” Kali was afraid that her mock surprise wasn’t going over very well, but Jane didn’t seem to notice. “May I ask what your inspiration was?”

She couldn’t miss the shock that went through Jane’s system at her question, but Jane was strong. Somehow, Kali guessed unknowingly, she was hiding her thoughts from Kali’s gentle probing.

“I can’t say that there was any particular inspiration.”

She was lying through her perfectly straight teeth, Kali thought with a smile.

“Oh, I have a, uh, friend, that has a dog that looks just like the picture on the front of the journal.”

“How fascinating.” Jane was an expert at changing the subject. “Here’s the quote for the book you wanted repaired. Let me know if there’s anything you don’t want done. Repairing old books is a costly and painstaking process.”

Kali didn’t even bother to look at the paper.

“That’s fine. Whatever you think it needs.”

Even if the tinkle of the bells on the door hadn’t alerted her that someone was entering the store, even if she weren’t able to feel Van’s presence in the store, the look on Jane’s face would’ve told her all she needed to know.

“Sorry it took me so long, I couldn’t...”

Kali had to hold in a giggle as Van stopped speaking. She turned to see Van sporting a deer in the headlights look she’d never seen before.

Oh, yeah, this was going to be lots of fun.

Chapter Three

It was hard enough to find a parking spot in downtown Seattle on a good day. On a rainy day, it was damn near impossible. This was why he preferred staying at home. In an attempt to limit Kali's exposure, he'd offered to drop her off at the front door of the store.

By the time Van had parked and walked the six blocks to *Magical Treasures* he was cold and soggy. The prospect of hunting through this musty old bookstore for a book that they may or may not have wasn't his idea of an entertaining evening. He'd much prefer being in bed with a willing woman.

Damn, maybe he should've gone clubbing with Aiden last night. Ah, who was he kidding? He couldn't even remember the last time he went to a club. But, if he had, at least maybe then he'd have found his release with someone other than himself.

Thinking about that naturally brought him back to the same place his thoughts had been all day—the blonde in the mirror.

How freaking pathetic was it that the best sexual experience he'd had in months had been all by himself.

Magical Treasures was easy to miss; in fact Van almost did miss it. It was set back slightly between a pizza shop and an upscale clothing store. A blue awning stuck out over the street, with scrawling writing noting the name of the store.

The words on the door said, Jane Applebottom, proprietor. Applebottom? Boy, did that girl get made fun of when she was in grade school.

Of course, what kind of woman ran an old occult bookstore? The woman was probably about a hundred years old with thick glasses and a hump from bending down over books all day.

Biting the bullet, and to get out of the sopping weather, Van stepped inside. The lights were low, but hell, he was used to that. He could see almost as well in the dark as he could in the daylight.

Nothing could have prepared him for the woman standing in front of him, though.

It was the woman from his mirror.

"There you are, Van."

Luckily Kali pulled him out of his shocked stupor before he said something stupid. Or before he crossed the room and kissed his mirror woman to see if she tasted half as good as he thought she would.

"Hi."

Good God, could he sound any lamer?

"Van, this is Jane; she owns the store. Jane, this is a very good friend of mine, Donovan Wolfe."

He couldn't help but be disappointed by the distance she put between them. While most people would have shaken hands, she moved to stand behind the counter.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Wolfe," her voice was quiet, but the huskiness of it flowed over him like warm maple syrup.

"Oh, you can call him Van. Everyone else does."

How long was Kali going to keep answering for him?

He sent her a look that very clearly said, "That's enough," before greeting Jane

himself.

"I hope that you don't mind if I call you Jane. Miss Applebottom doesn't really seem to suit you."

He thought back to his impression before he walked into the store. His day was definitely taking a turn for the better.

"Yeah, mine's more like a watermelon; I've heard 'em all."

Was she serious? Her ass was, well, from what he saw of it, it was pretty damn near perfect.

There was no time to expound on the virtues of her ass, though, because Kali hit him upside the head.

"Ouch! What the hell, Kal?"

"I can assure you that is not what he meant," Kali rushed to assure Jane.

He heard the rest of her statement in his head, as clearly as if she's said it aloud.

"And if you did, I'm going to kick your ass."

"It's not," Van confirmed. "I was just thinking before I opened the door that Applebottom kind of sounded like an old spinster name. You're young and vibrant, definitely more like a Jane."

She simply continued to stare at him until he wondered if she knew more than she was letting on. After all, it wasn't every day that you encountered a werewolf and a vampire shopping together.

"Jane's fine," she finally said.

Van wanted to exhale a huge sigh of relief, but he had a feeling that he was going to have to try his best to stay on his toes around Jane Applebottom.

"We're just going to look around if that's all right with you?"

*

Good, Jane thought, then she didn't have pay attention to them, not that she could help it. She had no problems believing that Kali and Van attracted attention wherever they went.

Jane didn't know what to make of the two people taking up a lot of room in her small shop. It didn't really appear that they were a couple, at least not any kind of lovey-dovey couple—she gave him quite a whap on the back of the head.

Not to mention the fact that Mr. Hottie, Van, was the one pleasuring himself in her dream last night. Oh, how freaking embarrassing to have dreamt about one of your customers. How was she supposed to look him in the face?

Good gosh, and what a face it was.

Van Wolfe would be any woman's fantasy. His dark brown hair was too long, it just brushed the top of his collar and the wet strands sparkled gold in the overhead lights. His eyes were amber brown, and it seemed like he could practically see through you.

He was in need of a shave, had slight stubble in the shape of a goatee around his mouth. And what a mouth it was. When he smiled at her, she thought she might melt into a puddle, like the wicked witch of the west.

But, oh, what a way to go. Her panties were getting wet just thinking about him.

She didn't realize that a monstrous sigh escaped until Kali turned to her.

"Is everything okay, Jane?"

"What? Sure, fine."

Could she make a bigger fool of herself? When her stomach rumbled, loud enough

for her patrons to hear, she realized, yes, she could make a bigger fool of herself.

"Can I help you find what you're looking for?"

Good one, Janie, yell, 'cause then they won't realize that it was your stomach rumbling.

Pathetic.

"Sure." She could see the smile that Van was trying hard to hide.

"And then maybe you'll come out to dinner with us." Kali looked at her watch.

"After all, we are keeping you here after closing."

Yeah, like they really wanted to be seen carting Jane around with them. Plus, Kali probably ate stuff like salad. She'd look like a pig eating with them.

"Well, I'll gladly help you find what you're looking for."

"Great. I'm starving," Van said. "We're looking for a book called," he paused as if he didn't really want the book he was looking for, "*How to Hunt and Kill Werewolves*."

Oh my gosh. If Van was hot before, it was positively to die for with the faint blush staining his cheeks.

"Jane?"

She'd been caught staring!

"Oh, right. Actually, that seems to be a popular topic lately." She excused her self past both of them and walked down the narrow stack of books until she came to the W's. "There was a guy in here not a week ago looking for a book on the same subject. Is there an infestation of werewolves in Seattle that I should know about?"

She didn't miss the look that passed between Van and Kali.

They didn't actually believe in this mumbo-jumbo, did they?

She continued on, not waiting for an answer.

"I've got plenty of general werewolf books, but none on hunting and killing specifically."

"Do you happen to know the name of the guy who bought the book? I kind of really need to know."

It was a darn shame for someone who looks that good to believe in werewolves.

"No, I'm afraid I don't. He paid in cash so I never got his name. I don't remember ever seeing him in here before."

"Jane..."

The intensity in Van's voice would have scared her had Kali not interceded.

"That's okay. Why don't we head off to dinner? Van, can you go bring the car around while Jane locks up?"

His features were strained, but he smiled and relented.

Once he was gone, Jane relaxed a little, but just a little.

"If the book really means that much to you, I could send out a few emails to colleagues and see if maybe I can find another one?"

"That'd be great. Now what can I do to help you close up?"

Well, it was after five, and she hadn't eaten all day but she still couldn't say that spending the evening with Van and Kali would be her idea of a good time. They were way out of her league.

"Oh, really, you can go ahead. I don't need any help here. I was, uh, going to stay and get some work done on rebinding your book, anyway."

Kali simply laughed.

“Honey, that book’s been waiting for a long time. Another night isn’t going to hurt it. Please come with us?”

They’d probably pump her for more information about who bought the book, and well, she was hungry. And was there any better way of starting a diet than going out to dinner with two very fit people?

“All right. I’ll go with you. Let me just grab my coat and purse.”

By the time she came back, Kali was by the door and there was a car out front.

She shut out the lights and followed Kali out the door, setting the alarm and locking the door behind her.

She climbed into the back of the Lexus SUV while Kali climbed in the front seat.

The car was gorgeous. She ran her hands over the seat next to her, feeling the butter soft leather. She peered into the front seat, noting that the car had all the bells and whistles she could imagine, and even some that she couldn’t.

Van put the pedal to the floor and they took off into the Pacific Northwest drizzle.

“Do you like red meat?” Van asked?

“Sure.”

“Good, my brother told me about a new steakhouse.”

Kali moaned in her seat.

“I’m starving.”

Right, and she’d probably eat a piece of lettuce for dinner.

They arrived in a few minutes, and were seated almost immediately. Their waiter appeared seconds later.

“Can I start you off with drinks?”

Kali ordered the special drink of the day, some kind of vodka and juice concoction that looked a lot like blood, Van asked for a beer, and Jane stuck with a glass of water with lemon.

“Oh, and can we have one of those fried onion thingies, too?” Once the waiter had disappeared, Kali turned to Jane, “Are you sure you don’t want something more than water? Van’s buying, so make sure you get whatever you want.”

She could feel the heat radiating to her cheeks and she knew she must be blushing beet red. How pathetic that this was the closest she’d been to a date in years and there was another woman along.

“That’s okay, I mean, you don’t have to buy me dinner.”

“Sure we do,” Van reached over and put his hand on hers, squeezing slightly. She felt the zing all the way up her arm and straight into her panties. “After all, we practically dragged you here. The least you can do is let me buy you dinner.”

*

The blush nearly did him in. He was finding it hard to keep his hands off of her anyway, but she looked so Goddamn adorable when she blushed, it took all of his energy to stay seated in his own seat—and leave her next to him in her own seat.

When she mumbled her “Thanks,” he thought that his cock might have grown another three inches.

He forced himself to turn back to the menu.

While this place was new, rumor was, it catered to the more, uh, unusual members of Seattle society. Aiden had told him about the place, and apparently his brother was right on. He could sense a plethora of other were-animals, and a few vampires as well.

Van caught a quick glimpse of the man behind the bar before they were seated, and he was obviously a warlock. No one could mix things as quickly as he seemed to be. And every time their waiter came to their table, he stepped through the portal right behind Jane's chair.

Van was pretty sure he was going to like this place.

Before he could start quizzing Jane about the man who bought the book, their waiter returned through the portal with their appetizer, ready to take their order.

"What can I get you this evening?"

There was no need for the waiter to write anything down. He felt the man gently probing his mind for his dinner order.

But, for appearances sake, he started with Kali.

"I'd like the sixteen ounce t-bone, bloody rare, with some caramelized onions on top, loaded baked potato, the cheesy cauliflower and a side salad with blue cheese dressing."

Van couldn't help but smile. He loved to hear Kali order, and when they were in normal restaurants, she always managed to get a surprised look from the waiter. In here though, her order was probably tame.

"Uh, I'll have a side salad with oil and vinegar on the side please."

"And?" The waiter prompted.

Jane had opened her mouth to speak, to say that was all she wanted, but Kali spoke for her.

"She'll have the filet mignon, regular, not petite." She turned away from the waiter and spoke to Jane next, "You can take what you don't eat home for leftovers." She turned back to the waiter and continued the order, "Steak done medium well. She'd also like a baked potato with sour cream and butter, a side of steamed broccoli and the aforementioned salad."

"But..."

Van covered his laugh with a cough. He was pretty sure that Jane was about to argue, and one of the very first things he learned when he met Kali was don't argue. And how was it going to look when the waiter showed up with the exact thing that Kali just ordered for her? Dealing with mind reading beings definitely kept him on his toes.

"I'll have the 20 ounce Prime Rib, rare, with garlic mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables and a bowl of the soup of the day."

The waiter collected their menu with thanks and disappeared once again.

"But," Jane started once again.

Van leaned over towards her to whisper, "Trust me, don't argue with her, just eat what you want and take the rest home."

He wasn't prepared for the jolt to his system that being so close to her would give him. She smelled like flowers. He found himself wishing he knew more about flowers so that he could figure out what kind.

It was difficult to shift away from her and settle back in his chair.

"So, Jane," Kali asked digging into the appetizer. "I got the impression back at the store that you don't really believe in the paranormal. Why own an occult bookstore?"

She shrugged, the action causing her hair to swirl around her face, and emphasizing, at least for a second, her rather bountiful cleavage. Yeah, those beauties would be way more than a mouthful.

As Jane answered, Kali elbowed him and passed him a plate heaping with the

onions. She was shaking her head at him. Damn it, now she knew what a hound dog he was.

"Like I didn't already know that."

He hated when she did that, and there wasn't a damn thing he could do about it here at the table while Jane expounded on the reasons she didn't believe in her dinner companions.

"It was my Dad's store, and well, to be honest, the occult part of it kind of runs itself. I'm mostly into the repairing of damaged and old books. Susie handles most of the occult business."

"Susie really knows her stuff," Kali said, mostly for his benefit, he knew.

"But you didn't answer my question," Kali pressed, "Why don't you believe in the paranormal or the occult?"

Jane looked taken aback by the question, and for a minute, he thought Kali had gone too far. She was a tough opponent for him, and Jane was more like a delicate flower.

She rallied though, and Van swelled with pride.

"Don't you think it's just a little too easy? Bad things happen? Oh, well blame the witch?" She became very animated, flapping her hands and gesturing. Van knew he had a dorky smile on his face. "Your entire village is wiped out. Oh, I'm sure it wasn't disease, it must have been vampires, or werewolves."

He choked on his beer as he tried to take a sip. Last he checked, he hadn't destroyed any villages. And he could guarantee that she wouldn't be saying that if she had any idea who surrounded her in the restaurant.

Kali challenged, "Don't you think it's a little easy to blame disease rather than opening your mind?"

"No. I have proof of disease. I've never seen, nor read, any definitive proof about witches, or vampires, or the boogeyman."

"All right."

It wasn't like Kali to give up so easily. He hoped she didn't have a show of her powers planned. Things could get ugly if she did that.

"You're not eating any of the appetizer."

He took advantage of the brief lull in the conversation to change the subject.

By the way, you're eating dinner with a vampire and a werewolf, wasn't his idea of good dinner conversation.

They talked about innocuous things for a while, mostly books, since that seemed to be what Jane was most into, but movies, music and television, too.

He was surprised to learn that they both shared a fondness for true crime stories, James Bond films (especially the Sean Connery ones), and the Rolling Stones.

"Well, of course we both like the Stones. They're only the greatest band in the Universe."

She held up her water glass to be clinked against his beer bottle.

"Amen to that," he replied.

They were all laughing by the time their plates had been cleared away, a lot of Jane's wrapped up to take home. He and Jane passed on dessert, but Kali ordered a Fudgy brownie sundae.

Jane looked onto the dessert wistfully.

"Where do you put it all?"

Kali simply smiled and said, "Fast metabolism."

Van nodded, "She'll be hungry again in a few hours."

It was the curse of a vampire who really didn't like blood.

"Hey, you know you were asking about that book earlier? What was it, something about werewolves and how to kill them?"

"Yeah."

He'd tried desperately to put it out of his mind, and almost succeeded in Jane's presence.

"It's a small world, but I think the guy that bought the book just walked in."

Van's heart increased its rhythm, pounding a heavy cadence in his chest. He turned his head to see a group of people standing by the door. Unerringly, he was able to pinpoint the only person in the group who could've possibly purchased the book

But how?

"It was the tall one, with the dark hair. The one wearing the green polo shirt."

He knew exactly which one. Hell, it was his shirt.

"Aiden?"

Chapter Four

Wow, Jane made a mental note never to get Donovan Wolfe mad at her. His face turned an evil shade of red, and the veins on his neck popped out prominently.

“You know him?”

Why was he so concerned about who purchased a book called *How to Hunt and Kill a Werewolf*?

“Yeah, he’s my brother.”

Van stood up, knocking his chair backwards into the table behind them, causing it to wobble precariously. He stalked over to the other side of the room towards his brother.

Even from across the room, the similarities between the two men were obvious. They had the same dark hair with flashes of red, the same brown eyes, and the same regal looking facial features. But Van was slightly taller and broader than his brother.

While Aiden seemed to smile often and easily with the group he was with, Van hadn’t yet smiled a real smile that reached the whole way to his eyes. Compared to his brother, Van looked like he had the weight of the world on his shoulders.

“Van, don’t make a scene,” Kali warned.

She jumped up to go after him. Jane simply continued to sit in her chair and watch events unfold in front of her.

Even from across the room, she could tell the exact moment Aiden realized his brother wasn’t greeting him in a good way.

“Van, what’s wrong?”

“How could you do it, Aiden? What in the hell were you thinking?”

Van’s raised voice carried across the restaurant. It sent shivers down Jane’s spine.

Kali stepped between them, and almost immediately both brothers stepped down. Albeit reluctantly.

What was the power that she had over the two men?

And where could she get a little bit of it?

“Van, go back to the table with Jane.”

“Don’t do this to me, Kali, please.”

The pleading tone in his voice tore at Jane’s heart. “I’m going to deal with Aiden. You need to see Jane gets home safely.”

“Deal with me? What the hell did I do?”

This was definitely getting out of hand. Jane got up and walked over to where the confrontation was centered, just inside the front door. As she neared the epicenter, she noticed that the gazes of everyone in the restaurant were centered on the two brothers and Kali. The tension in the place was as thick as the chocolate sauce on Kali’s dessert.

“Uh, I can find my own way home if you need to, uh, deal with this.”

What in the hell did she know about family dynamics? She didn’t have any.

Kali looked at her, a big smile plastered on her face.

“That’s okay. Van is going to take you home. In fact, both of you should go back and finish my dessert, no use it going to waste.”

She grabbed Aiden by the elbow and pulled him outside. As they left the restaurant, she could hear Aiden asking what he had done.

Jane couldn't help wondering the same thing.

When Van turned back to her, he had a plastered smile on his face.

"Better do what Kali *suggested*."

Why had he put that unnatural inflection on the word suggested?

And how had the tension in the place drained so quickly?

Sitting back down at the table was awkward, to say the least. She wasn't, and never had been, gifted with the grace of making small talk.

Van reached over to Kali's empty spot and moved her brownie sundae over in front of him.

"She was right. No use letting dessert go to waste." He held out an extra spoon to Jane. "Would you like some?"

"No, thank you. I try to watch what I eat."

Yeah, watch it end up right on my thighs.

Once again, they lapsed into silence.

"I'm sorry to have involved you in this," Van said.

"Don't worry about it." She had no idea what "this" way, anyway. She wondered how honest she should be and then decided to just go for it. "To be honest, this is the nicest dinner I've had in a really long time."

He gazed at her, as if he didn't believe her. Eventually, though, he must have taken her for her word and simply said, "I'm glad," before shooting her another one of those killer smiles.

"So, do you want to talk about the book, at all?"

He shut down again when she mentioned it.

"Actually, that's the last thing I want to talk about. If it's okay with you, I'd just like to enjoy the rest of my evening with a beautiful woman."

Even though she was pretty sure he was just saying that to shut her up, she warmed at the compliment.

"So, Jane Applebottom, what would you like to do for the rest of the evening?"

The waiter had left their check. Van scanned it quickly before pulling out a credit card and returning it to the man. He disappeared once again.

"Oh, well, I don't know, I mean, you can just take me home. Don't feel obligated to spend the evening with me, or anything. You can do, I don't know, whatever it is you usually do."

Once she stopped babbling, she noticed he was staring at her.

"What, do I have something on my face?"

She wiped frantically with her napkin.

Van laughed, for the first time today. It was a warm masculine sound that woke up all the nerve endings in every erogenous zone in her body.

"You don't have anything on your face. I'm really enjoying the evening with you, Jane."

*

Damn, double damn.

He was having a really good time with Jane, and he was pretty darn sure it had something to do with Kali messing around in his brain. He'd never gone for the shy bookish type before, so why in the hell would he think about starting now?

But damn if that wasn't exactly where his thoughts were headed.

The waiter reappeared at his side. Van filled in the tip part and signed his name in a flourish. He reached across the table and grabbed Jane's hand, ignoring the shock that traveled all the way up his arm and straight down to his crotch.

"Let's get out of here."

She tried to pull away, but he kind of liked the feel of her small hand in his and wasn't about to let go.

When they reached the parking lot, he pressed the button on his key chain to open the doors. He followed Jane around to the passenger side, opening the door for her to climb in.

"Oh, did you need something from this side?"

She stepped backwards, motioning for him to go ahead and do whatever it was he needed to do.

"No, I was opening the door for you."

That adorable blush crept its way up to her cheeks again as she climbed in.

"Thanks."

He should've shut the door, walked over to his side of the car and asked her where she lived. He should take her home and drop her off at the curb, and never see her again. He had to go find Kali and Aiden, and deal with that mess.

That would have been the intelligent thing to do.

But what did he do?

He kissed her.

When Jane reached across herself to buckle her seatbelt, he pounced. He managed to secure both of her tiny hands in one of his, and used the other to position her chin exactly where he wanted.

Then, he leaned down and pressed his lips to hers. It was soft at first, just a slight pressure of his closed lips on hers. But when she made a sound, deep in the back of her throat, any thoughts he had of being gentle flew right out the window.

He deepened their kiss, licking her lips, urging her to open up to him. She did and he took immediate advantage.

His tongue plunged into her mouth, desperately tangling with hers. She tasted of the spiciness of her steak, but also of an essence he assumed was naturally Jane. He was pretty sure that he could survive on nothing more than her taste for the rest of her life.

When a horn sounded on the street behind them, he reluctantly pulled away.

God, she was beautiful.

Especially now, with her lips looking thoroughly kissed, her skin flushed, and her eyes heavy lidded with desire.

"We should probably get you home."

"Okay."

He closed the door and did all of those things he was supposed to before kissing her.

Once he got her address, they drove in silence. He parked outside her apartment building, but neither of them made any move to get out.

"Do you want to come in?"

If it weren't for his heightened senses, he probably wouldn't have even heard her.

She sat in the passenger seat, wringing her hands like he imagined an old woman would do.

"Yeah, I'd like that."

He was pretty sure he was going to get lucky tonight.

But was he going to get lucky because of his own merits or some suggestion Kali had planted in their minds?

He hopped out of the car and rushed to her side, but she was already getting out.

“Hey, you’re supposed to let me help you get out of the car.”

She blushed again and his cock hardened.

“Well, I’ve been doing it myself for a lot of years, so I don’t really need the help.”

“Still, it gives me a chance to touch you.”

She giggled. It was a beautiful sound from a beautiful woman.

He followed her to the door. He kind of felt like a puppy following a little girl home in search of a good home. Of course he was more of a hound dog in search of a good time.

She lived on the second floor of a three-story walk-up. When he walked into her apartment, it was like walking into some kind of fairyland.

The place suited her to a tee. It was decorated in pastel shades, but for some reason it didn’t make him feel uncomfortable. Just about every available surface was covered with plants, from the most exotic orchid to the daffodils that could be found on the median of just about every highway.

“Do you want something to drink? Soda? Orange Juice? Hot chocolate? I have some instant coffee if you’d like some. I don’t have any beer or wine or anything like that.”

He shrugged his shoulders.

“I’ll have whatever you’re having.”

It was clear that she was nervous.

“Okay. I think I’ll have some orange juice. Tea sounds good, but I had a run in with my teapot this morning.”

“What happened?”

She paused just before walking into the kitchen. Her blonde hair encircled her head like a halo when she spun around to answer him.

“Oh, stupid really,” she held up her hand where a large red welt had formed. “I picked up the kettle without a tea towel this morning.”

He closed the distance almost instantaneous. The welt looked even angrier against her creamy white skin. He grabbed her hand, and brought it to his lips, placing a gentle kiss on the palm of her hand.

Her breath caught at the contact of his lips on her hands. He knew, because he had the exact same reaction.

“Better?”

She didn’t speak, but she did nod.

He released her hand and she fled into the kitchen.

Good Lord, when was the last time he kissed something to make it better? Had he ever?

He gave her a few minutes in the kitchen before he followed her. Hell, if she was half as worked up as he was, she needed some time to cool down.

When he finally followed her into the kitchen, she was pouring one glass and was about to start pouring the second when he stopped her.

“Why don’t I just share yours?”

“Ah, well, okay.”

He picked up the glass and took a sip before handing it over for her to drink. His eyes stayed glued to hers the entire time. She took the glass from his hands and took a sip. Knowing that her mouth was now drinking from the same place his had just been was fairly erotic.

“Are you going to give me the grand tour?”

Preferably ending in the bedroom.

His lust was getting hard to control.

“Sure, okay.”

She led him from the small kitchen into the living room.

“How long have you lived here?”

“Two years. I moved in here after my father passed away. I didn’t really need a whole house, but I did bring most of this stuff from the house.”

For not believing in the supernatural, Jane’s house was full of magical stuff. If he wasn’t mistaken, that urn she was using to hold her pansies was a genuine witch’s cauldron, and he’d be surprised if the only lamp in the corner didn’t hold an honest to goodness genie.

And he had no doubt that when he walked into the bedroom he’d see a magic mirror hanging on the wall.

She kept talking and Van kept walking, not really paying attention to anything that she was saying until he bumped into her. The glass of orange juice in her hands wobbled. Before either of them could catch it, it tumbled to the ground, but not before it covered them both liberally with the sticky juice. Luckily, the glass caught the edge of a throw rug and didn’t shatter.

“Oh my gosh. I’m such a klutz. I’m so sorry.”

He wasn’t sorry. The sticky chilled beverage soaking through his pants was the only thing putting a damper on his raging libido.

When she started blotting at his pants, his libido started climbing right back up.

“Uh, Jane, the OJ is fine, but you really need to stop what you’re doing.”

Unless she wanted to end up flat on her back on an orange juice soaked throw rug.

She pulled her hands away like she was being burned. Almost instantly she blushed.

“Sorry about that.”

She rushed to the kitchen, presumably to get some paper towels. Van took the opportunity to try to get himself under control. He was pretty sure where the evening was leading but he hoped to get there with a little more finesse. At the rate they were going now, he was liable to embarrass himself like a thirteen year-old kid when he found his daddy’s stack of Playboys.

Van took a few deep breaths until Jane came back into the room. She tossed him a dishtowel while she bent down to clean up the juice on the floor.

“If you want to take off your wet clothes, I can throw them in the washer for you.”

She didn’t look at him when she spoke.

“You know if you wash my clothes I’ll be stuck here for at least an hour and a half.”

Her voice squeaked a little bit before she actually got any words out.

“I think we’ll probably be able to find something to do.”

He took two steps that took him mere centimeters from Jane. She still wasn’t meeting his eyes.

“I’m going to kiss you again, Jane.”

He was surprised by the huskiness in his own voice.

She still didn't speak, but she did raise her head, making her lips available to his questing mouth.

He lowered his head slowly. He smiled, and would have laughed, when Jane stood up on her tiptoes, throwing her arms around his neck and pulling his head down to hers.

She pressed her closed lips against his, hard. He did laugh then, well, as much as he could be laughing with Jane's body pressed against his.

He tried to disentangle himself, but her arms were locked securely around him. He was troubled. She felt damn good in his arms, but if she kept up the pressure on his lips, he was pretty sure they'd both end up bruised.

"Jane," he managed to get out, though it sounded more like "Gmeen".

She didn't relent.

Finally, he managed to wriggle his way out of her arms.

"Janie, slow down."

He removed her arms from around his neck, and ran his hands up and down her arms. He could feel her shiver underneath his palms and he wanted desperately to pull her back into his arms, only this time, he'd be in charge.

She blushed a bright red.

"I'm sorry, I mean, I thought you wanted to, but if you don't want to, that's okay. Do you want any more juice?"

She was rambling and Van couldn't help smiling.

When she hustled her way past him, he stopped her with a hand on her arm.

"I don't want any more juice, and Jane, I do want to." He saw the brief flash of fear in her eyes, and made himself slow down, again. "But I'd also like to get out of these sticky clothes, if you don't mind."

She nodded, and he noticed that it was hard for her to swallow.

"But let's just take it slowly, okay. Whatever happens is what happens, all right?"

Damn, now he knew that Kali had put something weird in his brain. He wasn't the kind to take a skittish woman to bed. No, he much preferred women who knew the score and only wanted an orgasm before they climbed out of his bed.

She seemed to breathe a little more easily. Nodding, she turned back to kitchen, and disappeared.

"Damn," Van muttered.

He turned his back on the kitchen, running his fingers through his long hair.

He was rapidly getting the impression that she was much more innocent than the women he normally went for. A part of him wanted to hightail it the hell out of there, but another, bigger part of him knew that he would regret it forever if he left now.

"Van, did you want me to put your clothes in the washer for you?"

God, she was beautiful. She stood in the doorway, the light from the kitchen illuminating her blonde hair so she looked like she was wearing a halo.

"You look like an angel."

She didn't believe him.

"Yeah, a tubby angel, maybe."

He stalked towards her.

"Why do you do that?"

There was definitely an edge to his voice.

“Do what?”

He reached out and ran his hand down her cheek. She was so tiny and pale next to his large hand.

“Belittle yourself.”

She shrugged, and her gaze wouldn’t meet his eyes.

“Come on, Van. I know I’m not anything special to look at.”

When she would’ve continued, Van stopped her with his lips upon hers. It was almost impossible to pull back.

“You’re wrong, you know. You’re something very special.”

He ran his finger down the front of her sweater, stopping when his finger was over her heart, between her breasts.

Van was pretty sure neither of them were breathing, both knowing what was going to come next, but neither of them really sure they were going to come out the other side in one piece.

“Why don’t we get these clothes in the washer now.”

Chapter Five

Jane thought that she might have passed out. Maybe she hit her head on the table when she bent down to clean up the orange juice. She was having a lot of trouble believing a man as god-like as Donovan Wolfe found her the least bit attractive.

"You've got juice on your shirt."

His fingers walked up to the top button of her white button-up shirt. When the button popped free, her knees almost buckled.

"So do you."

"Maybe you could help me out of my shirt, then."

Maybe she could.

She forced her hands to his waist just as he popped another of her buttons free.

Her fingers found their way up under his shirt. His skin was taut over his muscles.

Another of her buttons popped free. She glanced down and realized that the pale pink of her bra was showing. Suppressing the urge to cover herself with her arms, she began raising his shirt. She chickened out though, and lowered his shirt again.

Van popped another one of her buttons free.

"Don't be scared." He must have noticed her hesitation. "I'd like to get out of my sticky shirt."

Jane took a deep breath and pushed his shirt up over the hard planes of his stomach, up over his head. She wadded the material in her hands and tossed it aside.

Her second to last button popped open.

Van's chest was hard and muscular; muscles rippled each and every time he moved. His chest was tan with a light dusting of hair, a prominent patch leading down below the waistband of his pants.

Van opened her last button.

The cool air teased her exposed skin as he pushed the shirt down over her arms. As soon as he shoulders were bared, he leaned down and kissed each arm. Tingles skittered up and down her spine.

"Do you have orange juice on your pants, too?"

Who the heck cared, just take the darn things off.

"Uh, I don't what?"

Van laughed.

Jane thought she might catch on fire. Darn it, he was hot. He was hot with a capital H and two T's hot.

He stepped back a step, but didn't remove his hands from around her waist.

"I'll tell you what, why don't you head into the bedroom and if you point me in the direction of your washing machine, I'll throw our stuff in."

What was he doing? Did he not want her? Well, he was sending her into the bedroom so that was a promising sign, but he was going into the kitchen, which wasn't so promising.

"Stop thinking so much." He kissed her on the forehead where she knew her face was all scrunched up. "Toss your pants back here."

"Okay." She felt like a robot, doing whatever he said, but she couldn't have stopped

herself if the world depended on it.

“Is the washing machine in the kitchen?”

She nodded and headed back into her bedroom.

What in the heck was she supposed to do now? She was supposed to toss him her pants. Could she do that? What if he happened to look inside and see the size? She didn't want anyone, let alone the hottest guy she'd ever had in her house know she wore a size 18 pants.

Wait, she was pretty sure she had a size 12 around somewhere from her days of wishful thinking. Maybe she could throw those out instead.

Liar!

Yeah, she was a big fat liar. She didn't want to be a fraud. And he'd already had his hands on her so maybe he liked larger women. Yeah, and that's why he'd been with Kali earlier today.

Kali.

What was that relationship? Was she his girlfriend? If so, no matter how much she wanted to, there was no way she'd be able to go through with this.

“Jane, toss me your pants.”

She took off her pants but decided that she didn't want Van in her room just yet.

She pulled her big pink fluffy robe off of the bathroom hanger and walked back into the living room.

Whoa, was that a mistake?

Van had also removed his pants and was now clad in nothing more than a pair of snug grey boxer briefs.

Whoa, mama!

“Uh, I brought my pants.”

He looked at her with a critical eye.

“I'm feeling a little bit underdressed now.”

Good lord, he was hot. She picked up a blanket from the back of the sofa and tossed it at him.

“Here you go, you can cover yourself with this.”

He smiled and wrapped the pink blanket around his waist. How did it not make him look foolish?

He gathered all the orange juice soaked clothes and headed into the other room.

But the kitchen remained silent.

“Jane.”

She giggled as she walked into the kitchen.

“You really don't know how to do laundry, do you?”

At least he had the grace to look sheepish. A red blush started under the waistband of his underwear and quickly traveled the whole way up to his face.

She had to hold onto the doorframe because her knees had turned to jelly.

“Go ahead,” she shooed him out of the kitchen, needing a few minutes to calm herself. “I'll do it.”

“Okay.”

He hung his head as he left the kitchen.

As soon as he left the room, Jane sagged forward against the top of the washer.

Man, was he intense.

“Jane, are you all right in there?”

“Yeah, be right out.”

So much for her reprieve, but she couldn't ignore the anticipation flowing throughout her body.

Jane clicked the knobs and soon water began filling the washer. She turned and headed back to the living room.

Van was standing over by the window, his legs straddling the orange juice stain on the carpet.

“So, uh, what do you want to do?”

Strip those boxer briefs off of you, cover you in chocolate sauce and lick every inch of that tanned skin.

She was in so much trouble.

He stalked towards her once again. This time he didn't stop until he was touching her. Even through the thick fabric of her bathrobe she could feel the evidence of his arousal.

“What do you want to do, Jane?”

He pressed his crotch harder into her, making it crystal clear what he wanted to do.

Jane walked away, gaining her distance, across the room, stopping in front of the picture window he'd just come from.

“Is Kali your girlfriend?”

His voice was completely flat when he spoke.

“Do you think I'd be here with you if I had a girlfriend?”

“I really don't have any way of knowing, do I?”

She'd hurt him. The fact that anything that she could say could hurt this big strong man floored her.

“Well then, why don't you head off to bed? I'll just entertain myself in front of your TV until my clothes are dry.”

He stomped over and plopped down on her couch, grabbing the remote control off the coffee table. He pressed the button so hard on the remote it was a wonder that he didn't break it.

She couldn't help laughing at him.

“Now you're laughing at me? Could you please make my humiliation a little more complete tonight?”

“You're pouting.”

There was anger in his words, but laughter in his eyes.

“I don't pout. Only children pout.”

Jane gathered her courage and walked towards the couch. Was she really willing to risk a night in Van's arms for anything?

“That's what I thought too, but lo and behold, there's a grown man, a very large and sexy grown man, sitting on my couch pouting.”

She stopped right in front of him, blocking his view of the television. He'd stopped on some sporting event and cheers of victory echoed through the room.

“You do realize you're asking for trouble, don't you?”

Didn't she know it!

Getting herself involved with Van was probably going to be the biggest trouble she'd ever gotten herself into.

“You don’t scare me.”

He stood before her, towering over her. His erection still extended out in front of him.

“Really? Then you might want to stop picking at the threads of your bathrobe.” He held up her arm where the cuff of her bathrobe was shredded. “You’re going to ruin it.”

“Maybe I should, uh, take it off.”

Maybe she shouldn’t have said that.

Maybe that was too forward?

Did men like forward women?

Did Van?

“I think that’s a very good idea.”

His eyes remained glued to hers while he untied the sash of her robe. She had to subdue the urge not to jump away when his fingers found their way inside the terrycloth. His hands felt cool against her overheated skin. God, she hoped she wasn’t sweating.

“Do I make you nervous, Jane?”

She lowered her eyes then, unable to meet his probing gaze. He already knew the answer to that question, didn’t he? He scared the heck out of her.

So did she lie, with the certainty that he’d know she was lying, or tell the truth and risk him pulling away?

“I’m afraid that no matter what answer I give you you’re going to stop what you’re doing.”

Much to her dismay, he did stop. He removed one of his hands from her waist and grasped her chin between his fingers. He forced her to meet his gaze.

“The only thing that’s going to make me stop is if you say stop, all right?”

She tried to nod, but her head was still held firmly in his grasp.

“Okay,” she said, but it was barely a whisper.

Almost as soon as the word left her mouth, his mouth claimed hers.

He tasted like—man. He was warm and musky, and she could smell and taste the sweetness of the orange juice. If you could bottle the way Van tasted, she was pretty sure she’d never drink anything else again.

“Damn, you taste good, Jane.”

She giggled an actual honest to god giggle.

“I was just thinking the same thing about you.”

His smile was devastating.

Then he leaned down and kissed her again. As they kissed, he slid her bathrobe down off of her shoulders, leaving her clad in nothing more than a baby pink bra and panty set.

His mouth left hers, his lips running down her neck and down her shoulders. They traveled down further still until he was once again sitting on the couch in front of her. He was tall and his head was at the same level as her breasts.

Reaching behind her, he unhooked the clasp of her bra. Reflexively, her arms came up to cover her chest.

“Don’t hide from me.”

“But...”

“Jane, I want to see all of your beautiful body.”

He sounded so sincere, she almost believed him.

She lowered her arms, and her bra strap slid down, baring her completely to his gaze.

He smiled before leaning forward and taking a nipple in his mouth.

"Van," she gasped, when his teeth lightly nipped her skin.

His other hand came up to play with her other breast, kneading and tweaking along with his suckling.

She lost all concept of time. He could have been playing with her breasts for minutes or for hours and she wouldn't have known the difference.

The area between her legs was getting heavy with arousal, and her panties were probably drenched. She even started to think that maybe she could orgasm with Van simply sucking on her breasts.

When he moved his hand from her breast, down the bumps of her stomach to investigate between her legs, her knees threatened to give out on her.

"Van, I don't know..."

She *did* know. She wanted this more than she ever remembered wanting anything in her life, but she was scared out of her mind.

"I told you I'd stop if you said the word, Jane."

He slipped his fingers into the waistband of her panties, pulling them down slowly. Oh, God, did they really have to be doing this here in the harsh light of her living room? Okay, so only one small lamp was on, but couldn't they be in the pitch dark?

"You know what you have to say to get me to stop."

When her panties reached her knees, he let go and they fell to the floor.

Oh my gosh, she was standing in front of a man, bare-tushed, naked!

He leaned forward again, this time his nose went directly into the V of her thighs. His tongue snaked out and licked her, quickly, teasingly.

When he pulled back, he had an odd look on his face.

Oh no, did she taste gross? Did she smell funny? Was he finally realizing that she wasn't what anyone would call beautiful?

"Jane, you've never been with a man before, have you?"

*

He was sure of it, he didn't need her confirmation. She smelled so sweet and innocent.

Her reaction wasn't what he expected. She crossed her arms over her breasts, but more in an offensive manner than a defensive one. She stared down at him.

"Is that a problem for you?"

He didn't know.

Was it a problem for him? He didn't think he'd ever been anyone's first time before.

Why hadn't she been with a man before, and why did she suddenly want to be with him.

"I'll be in the bedroom. Maybe you'll want to join me when you figure it out."

She bent down and picked up her tattered robe, giving him quite a view of her delectable cleavage. Slipping the tattered terrycloth over her shoulders, she didn't even look at him as she walked into her bedroom.

Damn it, he had no idea what in the hell he was supposed to do. He wasn't really a playboy. For the last few years his sexual exploits had been few and far between.

He briefly thought about calling Aiden for some advice, but he wasn't a teenager, and there was no way in hell he was going to call his little brother. Especially since he wasn't quite sure if his little brother was trying to kill him.

Damn it.

He rose from the couch and followed her towards the bedroom. If he had any doubts about whether or not Jane was the woman in his mirror the night before—which he didn't—those doubts would have been erased the second he stepped into her room. It was the same white room, and there was no way he could miss the magic mirror hanging above her dresser.

He smiled as he remembered their encounter from the previous evening. He just hoped like hell he'd be getting up close and personal with Jane this evening.

Crossing his arms over his chest, he leaned against the door jam and crossed his legs.

"Why me?"

Jane hadn't heard him enter the bedroom. She was standing in front of the window, gazing out into the Seattle evening.

"What?"

"If you've never been with a man before, why me?"

She started out the window a long while before answering.

"Do we really have to talk about it?"

Did they? Could he just have sex with her without knowing more? Damn his morals, no, he couldn't.

"Look, I don't do one-night stands Jane, so I'm sorry you need a cock, but unfortunately mine comes attached to the rest of me. If you want to come, maybe you should just get a dildo."

"Been there, done that."

He was surprised and knew that he didn't hide his surprise well at all.

"What, you think just cause I'm 'technically' a virgin, I know absolutely nothing about my own body?"

Well, yeah.

"I've never actually had sex with a man, Van, but any barrier ever there is long gone."

So, basically, she was saying that he didn't have to feel guilty for deflowering her?

He crossed the room in two strides, and almost before he could think, she was in his arms. His mouth descended to hers in a hot, wet kiss.

"Are you sure about this?"

He pulled his mouth away from hers just long enough to ask the question.

Anticipating that she'd answer, he lowered his mouth once again, this time to nibble her chin, and down her neck.

"Yes, I'm sure."

The scent of her arousal had begun to dampen, but when his hands snuck into her robe to stroke her soft skin, it rose again.

She whimpered when he pulled his hands out of her robe, but sighed when he untied the sash and pushed the pink fabric off of her shoulders. Once again, she stood naked before him, this time illuminated by the soft light on the corner of her nightstand.

"God, you are so beautiful."

She chuckled, but it was a humorous sound.

"That's okay, I think you already know that I'm a sure thing. You don't have to compliment me."

She didn't know how hot she was?

“Are you crazy?”

“Please, Van, I’ve looked at myself in the mirror before.”

She wouldn’t meet his eyes, and he couldn’t keep his hands off of her.

Maneuvering her over to the bed, he tried to convince her just how good she actually looked to him.

“So, if you’ve looked at yourself in the mirror then you know how incredible your breasts are. They’re like peaches and cream with your light skin and peach-colored nipples.” He lowered his head and delivered a lick to each one. “And your skin is so smooth and silky.” He pushed her down on the bed, not hard since she went quite willingly. “And just look at that pretty pussy. I can’t wait to taste it.”

“Van,” she gasped.

“Yes,” he asked as he stretched himself out beside her on the bed.

“I ... I don’t know.”

She laughed, and tried to hide herself in Van’s chest.

“Hey,” he tried to sound stern but knew he failed miserably—he was just too happy.

“No hiding, all right? We’re going to go into this with our eyes wide open, got it?”

With eyes as wide open as they could be when a vampire messed with your mind, he reminded himself.

She chewed on her lip before she answered.

“Well, what if my eyes happen to close when I—uh, you know.”

“When I make you come?”

He had to give her credit for not hiding but she did start to turn pink again.

“Is that a promise?”

Damn, was she going to stop surprising him?

When he leaned down to kiss her again, the buzzer on the washing machine buzzed.

“Damn it.”

He would have hit something if Jane weren’t the only thing nearby.

She just giggled the adorable sound he was starting to crave.

“I’ll get that.” She leaned down and kissed him hard. “Why don’t you get a little bit more comfortable?”

She ran a fingernail along the bottom edge of his boxers leaving no question as to what she really meant. Van wasn’t an idiot. As soon as she walked out of the room he jumped up and tore his boxers off.

He debated on what to do next? Should he strike a provocative pose on the bed? Nah, that was too girly. Maybe hide in the bathroom until she came back in and then make a grand entrance? No, that was stupid. Maybe he should strike a pose over by the window so the moonlight enhanced his butt. Too cliché.

She was back before he had a chance to decide.

There he was, simply standing by the bed bare-assed naked.

When she walked into the room, she swallowed hard.

“The dryer takes about an hour, so your clothes should be ready then.”

“Great, thanks.”

This was so not the impression he wanted to make.

Chapter Six

Jane didn't have any idea how she managed to stay standing when she walked back into her bedroom. Van was standing next to the bed, partially illuminated by the moonlight, naked as the day he was born.

Good gosh, he was hot.

And she was scared to death.

A part of her wanted to jump across the room and straight into his arms. The rest of her, the sane part, wanted to run screaming out of the room.

This was a little bit awkward. Okay, a lot awkward.

"So, the laundry is going well?"

At least he sounded as nervous as she was.

"Very well."

She was in her bedroom, feet away from her bed with the hottest guy she'd ever laid eyes on and she was frozen in place. On the plus side, he didn't seem to be any better of than her.

"Come on over," he said as he motioned to the bed.

Before she could cross the room, he had taken up a position on the bed.

"This is kind of weird, isn't it?"

He laughed with a sheepish look on his face.

"It wasn't before, but it is now."

She desperately wanted this to happen, but not if it had to be forced. So, she did the only thing she could think of to do. She leaned forward, looped her arms around his shoulders and thrust her tongue into his mouth.

He eagerly kissed her back. Shifting slightly, he cradled her in his arms as he leaned her back onto the bed, bringing himself to lie half on top of her, half next to her.

His weight pressing her down into the bed felt wonderful. It was a much better sensation than she'd ever gotten with a vibrator.

While one of Van's hands—and what large and wonderful hands they were—stayed locked on the back of her head, teasing the back of her neck, the other hand went exploring.

As he kissed her, his large palm found her breast, kneading and squeezing. The pad of his thumb ran over her nipple, once, twice, before he squeezed the pebbled nub between his fingers.

She arched her back up off the bed, pressing her breast more fully into his hand. He apparently got her message because he moved his kisses from her mouth, down the column of her neck, over her shoulders, and down further until his mouth latched onto her nipple.

Whoa, baby.

If that sensation wasn't enough, his hand slowly stroked down the side of her body. She gave a brief thought to the hills and valleys his hand had to travel as he touched her body, but if he didn't seem to mind, she wasn't about to bring it up.

Eventually, his hand found its way to the apex of her thighs where his fingers tangled in the short hairs. Thank god she'd taken to waxing, leaving nothing but a small triangle

of hair down there. Sure, it hurt like heck at the time, but it was all worth it right now.

His finger probed at her core. Instinctively she opened up to him. His fingers found her clit unerringly.

Van was really darn good.

As his hand continued its ministrations between her legs, his mouth switched from one breast to the other, making sure both got the attention they deserved.

At first, she was frozen in place, but with the intense feelings he was strumming from her body, there was no way she was able to keep her hands to herself.

She started at the top and figured she'd work her way down. His hair was smooth and silky, perfect for running her fingers through.

When he pressed the tip of one of his fingers into her tight channel, she accidentally pulled his hair.

Her hands slid down the long expanse of his back, over sinewy muscle and hot skin. She ached to run her fingernails up and down making him groan out in pleasure.

When she reached the small of his back, she debated about moving her hands any further. There was no denying the fact that she wanted to feel his tight, toned tush in her palms, but well, did women do things like that?

When he slid the rest of his finger deep inside of her, she didn't really care. She grabbed his tush and pulled him towards her.

Darn it, if only he were laying between her legs.

"There's no need to rush," he left her breast and raised his head to kiss her again. "We've got all the time in the world."

"Not if you don't want me to explode, we don't."

He laughed at her.

He was the sexiest thing she'd ever seen in her life.

"Well, we wouldn't want you to explode without good reason, would we?"

He levered himself up and moved slowly down her body, kissing and licking a path downward. He paused when he reached *there* and smiled up at her.

Her heart jumped into her throat.

He used his considerable bulk to push her legs farther apart and settled himself between her legs. He leaned to the right and nipped her inner thigh. She didn't even bother hoping that it didn't wiggle too much.

He leaned to the left and licked a path from her thigh to the inside of her knee.

"What are you waiting for, an engraved invitation?"

"In a bit of a rush are we?"

As he spoke, his hot breath flamed over her naked flesh. She arched up, desperate for his mouth to touch her.

He didn't disappoint her.

*

Damn, she was responsive.

He just touched his tongue to her clit, and already he could feel the answering quivers throughout her body. He licked again, and was answered again by more quivers.

She tasted like heaven.

She was sweet and salty and tasted like all of those things the doctors said were bad for you, but you continued to eat anyway.

And if the soft moans and thrashing were anything to go by, she was really close to

coming.

He moved his finger to the entrance of her tight pussy, and as he latched on to her clit with his mouth, slid his finger inside of her.

She erupted, thrashing around him, moaning breathlessly, and eventually, clamping her legs together hard, his hand still nestled between her legs, his finger still inside of her.

He wiped his face off with the back of his hand-the free one-and moved up so that he was once again lying next to her.

She was beautiful after just coming. Her blonde hair was disheveled, and stuck up in places, and her normally pale skin was flushed red. When she opened her eyes and looked up at him, it was like a sucker punch to the gut. Her light blue eyes were completely sated, and they shone with absolute contentment.

Without thinking, he leaned down and kissed her. Almost immediately, he pulled back.

“What?” She asked.

“I’m sorry. You just looked so good, and well, I didn’t really think before I kissed you.”

“And somehow there was a problem with the kiss?”

Hell no, there was nothing wrong with the kiss.

“Well, I mean, I’ve been with some women in the past who don’t like it when I kiss them after, you know.”

“Oh.” She was silent for a moment. Then added, “Well, I don’t mind.”

He didn’t have to be told twice. He leaned down and kissed her once again.

He had almost forgotten the fact that he still had one finger buried inside of her, until tiny contractions started again.

He pulled away and smiled at her as he removed his finger slowly.

She blushed, and would have looked away had he not kissed her again.

“Van, can I touch you now?”

Hell, yeah is what he thought.

He said, “If you’d like to.”

He fluffed a pillow and lay back on the bed. She instantly rose up over him.

She leaned over him and licked, a quick lap of her tongue against his skin. She slowly slid down his body, laving laps and nips against his skin.

Until she reached his crotch. She stopped then. He was hard as iron, his cock standing ready for attention.

Tentatively she reached out a finger and ran it over the tip. She pulled her finger away, a drop of pre-come glistening on the tip. She put it in her mouth, sucking his essence off of her skin.

His head fell back and he moaned.

She might as well be sucking him that was so damn erotic.

She made herself comfortable, curling herself in a slight ball so that her head was level with his cock.

She didn’t just look at him, she studied him.

Damn, if she didn’t touch him soon, he might cry.

As if she heard his unanswered plea, she reached her hand out. She touched him tentatively at first, slowly running one finger up the length of him, from the base, over the top and then down the other side.

“Baby, that feels so good.”

She looked up at him, and smiled. Their eyes locked, she wrapped her hand around his cock and squeezed.

He couldn't help it. His hips lurched off of the bed, impaling him even further into her closed fist.

“Fuck, Jane,” he gasped.

She just giggled.

“We'll get to that, but I'm not finished playing yet.”

He didn't know if he'd live through her “playing.”

She leaned down over him and lapped at the small opening on the tip of his cock.

He wanted to scream, “Suck me, woman.”

Thank god, she did.

She opened her mouth and took him deep into her mouth.

Good. Freakin'. Lord.

She was a master at sucking cock.

Her tongue applied just the amount of pressure and with the added pressure of her hand, he had to pull away in a matter of moments.

“Hell, you're good, woman.”

His breath came heavily and his heart felt like it was about to pound through his chest.

“But I want to play some more.”

She pouted. He laughed.

“If you play some more, I'm afraid that's going to be it.”

“Really?”

She looked so earnest in her question. Was she really that concerned about how she made him feel? Did she doubt for a second that he was more aroused than he could ever remember being in his life?

Maybe he was going to have to thank Kali for putting these suggestions in his brain after all.

“Yes, really, Jane.”

Feeling somewhat ready to continue, he grabbed her around the waist and flipped her over. He balanced on his arms, his cock poised at her entrance.

“Ah hell.”

That was the mildest thing he could think of to say. He pulled back, kneeling between her legs. Maybe they were going to have to go back to what she wanted to do originally after all.

“Van, what's wrong?”

She sounded impatient.

He ran his hands up and down his face, as if he could somehow scrub away their current problem.

“Since we've already established the fact that you're a virgin, I'm guessing you don't keep condoms around and well, I had one, but it's in the washing machine at the moment.”

She smiled up at him, a cat that ate the canary smile.

“Actually, I've done enough laundry in my life to know to check the pockets before I put stuff in the washer.” She pushed herself up on her arms and reached over the side of

the bed for her bathrobe. She rumbled through the robe eventually pulling out a green foil packet.

"I knew there was a reason I liked you, Jane."

He tried to take the condom from her hand, to get back to where they were originally, but she held fast.

"No, I want to do it."

She still sat spread-eagle on the bed; he was perched on his knees between her legs. Leaning forward, she wrapped her hot mouth around his aching cock.

He hissed through his teeth.

She pulled back, a twinkle in her eyes. There was no nervousness about this being her first time. It was quite obvious that she was excited.

She ripped open the condom wrapper and positioned it at the end of his cock. Aching, slowly, she unrolled the latex down his shaft, maximizing contact the whole time.

When he was snug inside his wrapper, she leaned backwards, pulling him towards her so that once again he was poised at her entrance. Even through the latex, and not even inside her yet, he could feel her heat.

"Are you sure you want to do this?"

God he hoped she said yes, because if she didn't, he might actually cry.

She didn't answer in words, but she grabbed him by the ass and pulled him into her.

"Van," she gasped as he breached her entrance.

"God, baby. You're so damn tight."

He was afraid that he wasn't going to last very long at all. And he wasn't even halfway in yet.

"More," she murmured, pulling him closer once again.

He wasn't one to disappoint a lady. He pushed into her, relishing the feeling of every centimeter of his cock slipping deep inside of her.

"Move," she said.

He slid out of her quickly.

"I'm sorry, baby, did I hurt you? I should've gone slower."

"No, move."

She grabbed his ass and once again impaled herself with his shaft.

Oh, that's what she meant by move.

"So, I take it you're enjoying yourself?"

He slowly slid out of her, before pushing back in again.

"Excuse me if I don't take the time to stroke your ego right now."

She had trouble getting the words out. Good, that meant that she was having a good time.

He was having a damn good time, too and he was pretty sure that he wasn't going to be able to last much longer.

He reached down between their bodies and thumbed her clit.

After only a few flicks, with his thumb, he could feel the contractions start pulsing through her pussy.

Her breathless moans increased as she came.

His climax followed. Shuddering he collapsed against her.

*

She had no idea how long he lay on top of her, it could have been seconds, it could have been days for all she knew. Eventually, though, she had to move.

“Van, I can’t breathe.”

“I’m sorry, but I don’t think I can move. I might crush you, but what a way to go, huh?”

He laughed when he spoke, but shifted slightly so that his weight was no longer crushing her.

“Are you still looking for me to stroke your ego?”

He moved for real this time, rising from the bed and disappearing into the bathroom.

Uh, oh. Did she say something she shouldn’t have? Did she offend him in some way?

“Honey, you can stroke anything you like.”

He walked back into the room, still naked, a big grin on his face. Jane breathed a huge sigh of relief.

But, now what?

“I could use another drink of orange juice. Do you mind if I invade your kitchen?”

“No, no, make yourself at home.”

After all, you’ve already had sex with me.

Jane started to think that maybe this was the reason she’d avoided any sexual content up until now. What in the hell did you do after you were done?

Once Van had left the room, she became acutely aware that she was naked. She jumped up and put her robe back on, before following him to the kitchen.

As she walked through the doorway, she could see that he’d tied the pink blanket back around his waist. Well, she thought, at least there wasn’t a naked man in her kitchen.

Jane was thinking of something to say, something that didn’t sound totally stupid.

Was it as good for you as it was for me?

No, that was cliché.

Should she ask him to stay the night? Kick him out?

He whirled around from the refrigerator obviously surprised to see her standing there.

“Hey,” he said sheepishly, her steak from dinner in one hand, a glass of juice in the other, “I hope you don’t mind, but sex makes my hungry.” He walked towards her until they were almost touching. “Especially good sex.”

“I ... I don’t know what to do now.”

The puzzled set of his brow said everything that needed to be said.

“I don’t know what happens, you know ... after.”

She was bringing the mood down and she knew it. He was trying desperately to remain flippant.

“Well, like I told you, I needed something to eat.”

“Come on Van, you know what I mean. What happens after a, you know, a one-night stand?”

Uh-oh.

She had no idea what she had done, but it wasn’t good.

Van started pacing the small area that was her kitchen. Since it was a tiny space and Van was much larger than the average man, it meant he took two small steps before

turning and taking two more small steps.

If she weren't so worried about what was going to happen next, she probably would have found the whole situation humorous.

"This was just a one-night stand?"

Van continued to pace.

"Uh, well, I, wasn't it?"

She spoke so softly that she wasn't convinced that he'd hear her. Especially over the slapping of his bare feet on the linoleum.

Before he could answer, two things happened simultaneously. The dryer buzzer buzzed and music started wafting from Van's cell phone on the kitchen table.

"Hey there, little red riding hood?"

"I don't really think now is the time to be making fun of my cell phone ring," he spat out.

Okay, now she was really sure that she didn't want him on her bad side.

"What?" He answered the phone. "Oh, hey, Kali."

Oh, no, not Kali.

Not super gorgeous, toned, every man's wet dream fantasy woman Kali. She was so out of her league when it came to Kali.

"What do you mean gone? Kali, I trusted you..."

Van noticeably paled, and if it was possible, he seemed to get bigger.

As he listened to Kali on the other end of the phone, he stalked to the dryer to remove his clothes.

"Yeah, I'll meet you in a half hour."

That was it. He was leaving. She couldn't say she was surprised.

"Kali, wait."

Just when he was about to hang up the phone, he called to her.

Jane jumped when he yelled.

"I think I'm going to need you to do me a favor ... no, I'm not at my house ... Jane ... yes, Jane from dinner."

He blushed when he started to talk about her, and then she noticed what had him starting back to the phone.

"Van, I'm so sorry," she said as she rushed to see the damage. She held up his jeans, which now looked like they could fit a child.

"Kali, I'm going to need you to go by my house and pick me up some clothes."

Jane didn't really know how he got the words out his jaw was clenched to tightly.

"Mine shrunk."

Even though she was standing a few feet away she could hear Kali's laughter echoing through the phone.

Jane reached over and pulled out Van's shirt. The black pullover he'd had on earlier was now a gross shade of green and had two big holes. If he wore this shirt, his pecs would be bare for the world to see.

She pulled her own clothes out, but they didn't really seem to be any worse for wear. She started when Van smacked his cell phone closed.

"Van..."

He stopped her with one hand up.

"I think it's best not to talk about this anymore."

Did he mean the clothes or *everything*?

She was afraid to ask, so she simply watched him walk slowly and controlled out of the room.

Chapter Seven

Van wanted to hit something and he wanted to hit something hard.

Damn Kali and her interruptions.

Damn Kali in general.

This was all her fault. If she hadn't planted those suggestions in his head, he'd never have brought Jane home. He wouldn't have had sex with her and she damn sure wouldn't be clouding his brain now.

"Van, is there anything I can do? I'm really sorry about shrinking your clothes. I'll pay you back."

She turned from him and walked over to a small desk in the corner. She walked back into the living room pen and check book in hand.

"How much to I owe you?"

"Don't worry about it."

He waved her off with a flick of his wrist.

A part of him wanted to smile at her, but he just couldn't bring himself to do it.

"I insist. After all, it's my crappy laundry skills that have you stuck here in the first place."

"Damn it, Jane, I said don't worry about it!"

He hadn't meant to yell at her.

She paled, somehow even more pale than she already was.

"Look Jane. I'm sorry."

He wanted to go to her, take her in his arms again, but he didn't. One, he knew it would be a really bad idea, and two, her body language had "stay away" written all over her.

"I'm going to go to bed now. Please make sure the door is locked behind you when you leave."

She walked into her bedroom and shut the door firmly behind her. The lock clicking into place echoed through her small apartment.

Van, you are one first-class dumbass.

He thought about going after her, but before he could there was a slight knocking on the window leading to the fire escape. He opened it, letting Kali slide through the window.

"Do I want to know what happened to your clothes?"

Just wait until the next time they got in the sparring ring. He wasn't going to forget this one for a long time.

She obviously read his mind, because she laughed at him.

"Shut up, Kali. I'm not in the mood."

He grabbed the plastic sack she brought in with her and headed into the kitchen to quickly change. The clothes Kali brought were almost identical to the ones Jane ruined, a pair of black jeans and a black pullover. Maybe he should start thinking about adding some color to his wardrobe.

He decided his old clothes weren't worth keeping and headed back to the living room.

“Let’s get out of here.”

As soon as he said the words, the hair on the back of his neck stood still. A piercing howl ripped through the night air. It was way to close for his comfort.

“Kali, is there something that you want to tell me?”

“I think you’ve already figured it out. It seems as if you’re being hunted.”

“Does Aiden have something to do with this?” As soon as the words were out, he decided that now wasn’t the time. He wanted to be alone when he found out the answer to that question. “Never mind. We just need to get the hell out of here.”

“We need to take her with us.”

Damn it.

He knew Kali was right, but he had no idea how in the hell he was going to make her go with them.

And to be honest, he didn’t want her going with them. She was better off with a one-night stand from him.

He knocked on the bedroom door.

“Jane?”

Nothing.

“Jane, open the door.”

“Go away, Van.”

Kali was busy mumbling under her breath, Van didn’t really want to know what about.

He didn’t want Kali to see him eat crow. It was hard enough to do without having an audience.

“Jane, I’m sorry.”

“Fine, now leave.”

This wasn’t going to be easy.

“Look, Jane...”

When another howl sounded, this one even closer than the last, he decided he didn’t have time to wait.

Kali was in complete agreement.

“Van, just open the damn door.”

He did as Kali said. He turned the knob, barely exacting any strength to break the lock.

“You should really get a better door knob.”

“What in the...”

She was clearly outraged, as any woman should be whose bedroom is broken into in the middle of the night.

“Sorry, but I think it’s going to be safer if you come with us.”

“Van, I don’t know who in the hell you think you are,” she broke off to look at Kali who was busy going through her drawers and closet packing her a small bag. “I don’t know who either of you think you are, but I’m calling the police.”

She grabbed for the phone.

Van didn’t know what happened on the other end, but Jane’s face turned as white as a sheet and her eyes got really wide.

“The phone’s dead.”

Damn it. This was what he was afraid of. Someone was after him and whoever it was

wasn't above going through Jane to get to him.

"Come on, we've got to get out of here."

"Oh my god, you're going to kill me, aren't you?"

"We're not going to kill you, Jane."

He pulled her from the bed. When another howl split the air, he realized that they had no time to waste. She wasn't even going to get a chance to change out of her pajamas.

"I'm suddenly seeing my whole life flash before my eyes."

Kali opened the front door, scanning the hallway and proclaiming it safe before they left the apartment.

"This is some weird sex thing isn't it? I'm going to be a plaything for the two of you before you decide to murder me."

She started struggling now, and Van picked up the scent of a pack. It wasn't anyone he could overtly identify, but the smell was familiar. They were part of the Seattle community.

"I'm not going down without a fight."

She opened her mouth to scream, but Van was quicker. He silenced her with his mouth over hers.

Even outraged and scared out of her mind, she tasted good. All he wanted to do was silence her, really. But one taste wasn't enough. He found himself trying to deepen the kiss, probing the seam between her lips with his tongue.

"We don't have time for this."

If Kali hadn't interceded, he might have considered taking her in the hallway.

"Please let me go," she asked when he removed her mouth.

Damn, he really didn't want to have to get into the whole *I'm a werewolf* thing right now.

"Jane, trust me, I'm not going to hurt you, and I'll explain everything once you're safe, but for now, I need you to come with me."

He looked deep into her eyes, urging her to trust him. He wasn't used to this kind of thing. Why didn't he just haul her into his arms or toss her over his shoulder? When had he started caring about a woman's feelings?

When Kali started putting thoughts in his brain, that's when.

"Van, we need to get out of here now," Kali called.

"But I'm in my jammies," Jane protested.

At least that was a weak protest.

"You can change when we get back to my place."

They got to the door of the apartment building.

Van looked to the left then to the right.

"It's too still out there."

"What is going on?"

*

Van and Kali didn't pay any attention to her question. So, here she was, standing at the door to her apartment building, middle of the night, in her jammies with a couple of obvious lunatics.

And why?

All because she couldn't keep her legs together and now found herself with *feelings*

for the guy. What a typical woman.

Stupid.

“What now?”

“I don’t know.”

“Do you know who they are?”

“They’re familiar, but no one I’m close to, I can tell you that.”

“Can you tell, you know, if Aiden is involved with them?”

Jane’s gaze bounced back and forth between the two of them like she was watching a tennis match.

What in the hell had she gotten herself into?

“I can’t detect him, but that doesn’t mean anything.”

“Should we send Jane out first? They wouldn’t attack an innocent woman.”

“No,” Van shook his head. “They’ll be able to smell me on her.”

Ew.

“Should I have taken a shower?” Jane asked.

She knew it was a stupid question, especially after all the nonsense they just spouted at one another, but it was all that came out of her mouth.

At least it broke some of the tension in the small hallway and both Van and Kali laughed.

“Here,” Kali said, shoving the bag of clothes in her hand. “Whatever happens, just run to the car.”

“What?”

Van pushed his key ring into her hand.

“Lock the door, and if anything happens to me push the home button on the dashboard and the car will give you directions on how to get to my house. Pull into the garage there and you’ll be safe. My butler Clifford will get you anything that you need.”

“You have a butler?”

“I promise I’ll explain everything to you once we’re safe at my place, all right?”

She had no problems agreeing because she had it all figured out. This was obviously a dream. Real women didn’t get ushered out of their apartments in their pajamas with the hot guy she’d just slept with and the woman who may or may not be his girlfriend.

Heck, she’d agree to anything in a dream.

Maybe she’d step outside and realize she can fly or something.

“As soon as I open the door, run for the car, all right?”

Van shook her, his fingers digging into the skin of her arms. She shouldn’t feel pain in a dream, should she?

“Jane?”

“Yeah, I get it, run for the car, the boogeyman is after us.”

He took one last peek down the road and put his hand on the door.

“Trust me, this could be a hell of a lot worse than the boogeyman.”

He opened the door, and Kali immediately ran outside. Jane followed. She felt like a moron dashing across the sidewalk in her cloud pajamas and fuzzy pink slippers. When she reached Van’s SUV, she wrenched open the door and jumped inside.

She turned back. Kali was nowhere to be seen but Van was crossing in front of the car. The only thing on the street was a pack of dogs rounding the corner around her building.

Van jumped into the car, Jane instantly passed him the keys. He sped off leaving skid marks in their wake.

“Did you know that dreaming about a vicious dog symbolizes some inner conflict within yourself?”

“Sorry, sweetheart, but this is no dream.”

He drove much too fast for her comfort, especially on the city streets. He swerved in and out of traffic, and what would have normally been a ten-minute drive to get to Van’s Queen Anne neighborhood, took them only five.

Van drove into the garage, like he’d told her to do, shutting off the engine.

“I owe you an explanation now, don’t I?”

“Actually, I’d rather not talk. If it’s all right with you, I’d like to have sex again. I mean, if this is a dream, I’d rather have a sexy one than a crazy one.”

Van smiled and shook his head as he got out of the car.

She was only slightly surprised to see Kali come out into the garage door. Why would she be this was a dream.

“Did you get to fly here?”

“What? Well, yeah.”

Kali seemed uneasy about the question.

“That’s not fair. It’s my dream and I didn’t get to fly.”

“What’s going on,” Kali asked.

“Don’t ask.” Van replied.

Kali listened to him and changed the subject.

“Did you know any of them?” Jane heard Kali ask as she left the garage and entered the foyer.

“No and I didn’t want to stick around any longer than I had to.”

*

Jane was really starting to scare him. At first he had thought that she was just being funny about thinking she was dreaming. Unfortunately, that comment about her wanting to have sex, as tempting as it sounded, also proved to him that she really had managed to convince herself that she was dreaming.

Plus, there was that whole flying thing.

“What do you want to do?” Kali asked.

He looked at Jane who was wandering around his over decorated living room. She still clutched the bag holding her clothes tightly in her arms.

“Jane, come on, let’s get you settled.”

He shot one last glance Kali’s way before taking Jane upstairs.

He ushered Jane out of the living room and up the wide stairway. He was very nervous about the way she was following him so quietly. He had a feeling that she was going to erupt when she finally accepted that this wasn’t a dream.

Van figured he’d put her in the guest room with the best view. Actually it was one of his favorite rooms of the house. It was three doors down from his room.

“Here you go, Jane. There’s an attached bathroom if you want to shower and change.”

He stopped speaking when he realized that she had stopped at the top of the stairs.

“Jane?”

She was standing at the doorway to his room, mouth agape.

“Janie, sweetheart, are you all right?”

He walked back towards her, only gaining her attention when he touched her gently on the shoulder.

“I had a dream about this room?”

“What was it about?”

Would she bring up their encounter in the mirror?

“Nothing. What were you saying?”

Apparently she wasn’t going to bring it up.

He led her down the hallway again, stopping at the door to her room.

“This’ll be your room for as long as you’re here.”

“Ok. Thanks.”

Her face was expressionless as she walked into the room. Van had to admit that it scared the hell out of him.

“Why don’t you get changed and then come on downstairs and we’ll talk, all right?”

“Okay.”

The sing-song way she spoke would have made him laugh if the poor girl’s world wasn’t going to suddenly come crashing down around her.

He closed the door as she headed into the bathroom.

Damn, he remembered what it was like for him. For twenty-nine years he’d gone about with his merry life and then suddenly he was smacked with the fact that not only did werewolves exist, but he was one.

Full-blooded werewolves did exist, but in this day and age they were rare, and mostly inhabited unpopulated areas. Most major cities had populations of hybrid werewolves, meaning one were-parent and one human. His father was Were and his mother had been human.

He missed his mother still. She had been so bright and loving. She studied folklore at the University of Washington, which is how she met Van’s father. What a shock it would have been for her to have studied folklore all her life, never really believing things had a less than scientific basis, and then learn that her sons were werewolves.

Maybe it was for the best that she was gone.

Pulling himself away from his train of thought, and from Jane’s door, he headed back downstairs.

“Is she all right?” Kali asked as soon as he entered his study.

He knew that’s where she would’ve disappeared too. She sat behind his huge mahogany desk working furiously on her laptop. She spoke to him, but never actually looked his way.

“No, she’s not all right. She’s practically catatonic.”

“What’s the matter?”

“She’s convinced herself that’s she’s dreaming, that’s the matter.”

“Well, have you told her she’s not dreaming?”

“Yes, thank you, Doctor Phil. She says that it’s just the dream me that’s saying that.”

Kali laughed, but Van refused to see the humor in the situation.

“So she didn’t think I was able to fly here because I was a vampire, she thought I was flying because this is a dream?”

“Yeah.”

“This is quite a conundrum you’ve got yourself into, Donovan.”

“You can say that again.” He was desperate to change the subject. He crossed behind the desk to look down over her shoulder. “Have you found anything, yet?”

It looked like she had a dozen web pages open, was instant messaging with at least five people, and was furiously writing an email.

Unfortunately, she shook her head.

“Nothing. I’ve got a patrol out looking for Aiden.” When he would have argued, she held up her hand to silence him. “Strict orders to detain without harm.”

As much as a pain in the ass his brother could be, he didn’t want to see the guy hurt.

“Any leads as to who was out to get us tonight?”

She shook her head again.

“No, at least nothing more concrete than you got yourself. Familiar, but no one can quite place anything.”

“God damn it, Kali, what do we know?”

He slapped the palm of his hand against the desk. Kali didn’t even flinch.

“We know that your father’s losing his mind, there’s something or someone targeting and killing the city’s werewolves. You slept with a completely innocent girl tonight who is our only link to a book that may or may not help you. Your bother is missing, and tonight you were stalked by a pack of rabid wolves that you may or may not know. Is that enough for you, Van?”

Damn it, he’d hurt her feelings.

He wished he could try to send her away like he’d sent Aiden away, but she was a part of this. It was her job, her destiny, to help other paranormal creatures.

“I’m sorry, Kal.”

“I know. And I shouldn’t have thrown all of that stuff at you. I’m just so tired.”

He pulled her away from the computer, she came with him reluctantly.

“Why don’t you go get a few hours of sleep? I can take over here for a while.”

“No, Van, I can’t.”

“Yes, you can, Kal. The entire world isn’t going to fall apart while you take a nap.”

She sighed against him and he held her in his arms. It was nothing like holding Jane. He was merely offering Kali comfort, which she desperately needed.

Funny how he was the only one she’d show this side of her and no matter what he tried he couldn’t get Jane to open up to him.

“You shouldn’t let her stay up there too long, you know.”

He leaned down and kissed the top of Kali’s head. It was nothing more than a brotherly gesture.

“I know, now go sleep.”

They were both shocked when they turned towards the door and saw Jane standing in the doorway.

“Jane.”

He didn’t know why he said her name, nor did he know why he felt guilty. Hell, he had nothing to feel bad about.

Well, unless you counted the fact that he’d taken her virginity, lied to her about who and what he is, and now managed to get a pack of werewolves on her tail. Yeah, he hadn’t done anything bad at all.

She’d changed out of her pajama’s and now wore a pair of gray sweatpants and a pink tee shirt proclaiming that she was “100% Blonde”.

Hell, he could vouch for that fact.
“I’m not dreaming, am I?”

Chapter Eight

When Van shut the door, leaving Jane alone in the guest bedroom, she started to think maybe she wasn't dreaming. When she went into the bathroom and splashed some really cold water on her face, she became convinced that she wasn't dreaming.

Well then what in the heck was going on?

She left the bathroom and plopped down on the bed, falling back on it so that she was staring at the ceiling. Her pajama top rode up a little bit and the soft chenille thread tickled the skin of her lower back.

It was a beautiful room. Heck, from what she'd seen of it, the entire house was gorgeous.

Deciding it was pointless to mope any longer, she was a strong woman, and she could take control of the situation, she changed her clothes.

She dumped the bag of clothes Kali had packed for her out on the bed. It was all of her favorites. Deciding comfort was going to be her key objective, she chose a pair of gray sweats and an old tee shirt. While she'd ideally like to go into every situation with Mr. Van Wolfe looking her best, it was the middle of the night, so sweats were going to have to do.

She walked back into the bathroom, combed her hair and brushed her teeth. Faint red marks marred her skin, and she quickly realized that it was sensitive from where Van's unshaven face had brushed against her.

Quelling her train of thought before it could get started, she left her room, and followed the same path that she'd taken up the stairs. Once again, she stopped outside the room at the top of the stairs.

She had no doubts that this was the room that she'd seen in her dream last night. Of course she'd already decided that it was obvious Van was the man in her dreams.

Well, why in the heck was she dreaming about him and how did she know what his room looked like?

Tentatively, she took a step into the room. Buzzers didn't go off and lights didn't flash, so she figured she was safe to continue on.

She ran her fingers along the low dresser just inside the door. It was clean, no dust at all. She vaguely remembered Van saying something about a butler.

She thought about crawling into the large four-poster bed, snuggling down into the covers, laying her head on Van's pillow, inhaling his masculine scent. But then her attention was drawn to the book laying open on the nightstand.

It was her diary.

She picked up the book, noting that he was reading about one of her most kinky fantasies, about being tied up. She closed the cover and ran her fingers over the wolf she'd painted there.

Those eyes.

Holy Shit!

She ran downstairs as fast as her tubby legs would carry her, trying several rooms before she found Van and Kali. They stood in the middle of the dark study wrapped in one another's arms.

Jane suddenly felt cold and alone.

"Kali was just going to go get some sleep," Van told her.

She didn't really hear him.

Her mind was still on the conversation she'd heard when she walked into the study.

Werewolves? Vampires? Murder?

"I'm really not dreaming, am I?" She asked again.

She wasn't really sure that either one of them were going to answer her. But eventually, Van spoke.

"No, you're not dreaming."

She looked down at the journal she held in her hands. Looking down at it and then up at the man standing in front of her. Staring her in the face, the similarities were staggering.

They had the same whiskey colored eyes, the same dark hair with streaks of blonde and red running through.

"Oh my God," she whispered.

Her knees wobbled and she thought she might collapse.

Both Kali and Van took a step towards her.

"No," she yelled, "stay back. I really need you to take me home now."

She was amazed that her voice came out as evenly as it did.

"It too dangerous for you to go home now, Jane."

She hardly thought anything could be more dangerous than two obviously delusional people.

Van tried to take another step towards her, but stopped when she flinched again. She huddled in the corner of the room. Darn it, she wished she could get a clear path to the door.

As if Kali knew exactly what she was thinking she stood in front of the study doorway.

"You know, there are professionals that can help you, both of you. I have some books on lycanthropy at the bookstore, and I'm sure I can help you find a qualified psychiatrist."

"Jane, lycanthropy is people who think they're werewolves."

And that didn't include him?

Kali answered. It was like she read her mind.

"He doesn't think he's a werewolf, he is one. Just like I'm a vampire."

Jane stayed huddled in her corner of the study.

"Please let me go."

"Would it really be so bad to find out that vampires and werewolves and witches and warlocks didn't only exist in storybooks?"

Yes, her mind screamed, but no words came out.

She cowered in the corner forcing herself to try to think of a way out of her bizarre predicament.

She could've handled an assault, she'd taken self-defense classes. She could've handled a burglar or a pick-pocket, but nowhere, and at no time, had she ever learned about what to do when confronted by two obviously delusional people, both of whom could kick her butt.

"We're not going to hurt you," Kali said.

For the first time, she actually looked at the woman by the door. She wasn't the same Kali she'd had dinner with earlier that evening. Was that really only earlier that evening?

Kali's shiny black hair hung limply around her shoulders, and her pale skin didn't look porcelain anymore, it just looked, sickly. Her eyes appeared to be sunken and had dark circles underneath.

Was she sick?

"No, I'm not sick, but thanks for being concerned, even though I know you're scared."

Kali sent her a warm smile, which brightened her face slightly, before turning to leave the room.

"I think you can handle this from here on out, Van. I need to get a few hours of sleep."

Jane had no idea what happened, but it was as if the tension of the room dropped by degrees.

Her head felt wobbly, and the room started spinning. She could make out the large shape of Van rushing towards her, and while she didn't want him touching her, she'd prefer if he kept his distance, she couldn't get any words out.

She felt herself floating and then she was being nestled down into something soft and warm.

The last thing she heard was the husky timbre of Van's voice, though she had no idea what he was saying.

*

Van kneeled on the floor next to the couch trying to get his breathing back under control.

Damn Kali. Whatever spell she'd tried to put on Jane really packed a wallop. He assumed that she was just trying to help, but she must have been more exhausted than he thought if she knocked Jane out this hard.

She couldn't have done it on purpose, could she?

His attention was drawn back towards the couch, as Jane moaned and pressed her hand to her head.

"Jane, wake up now, honey."

He hadn't meant for the endearment to slip out, but it had.

She blinked her eyes a few times and he could tell the second he came into focus. Her eyes widened and she tried to sit up suddenly. She wobbled a bit though, and it only took a hand on her shoulder to keep her laying flat.

"How are you feeling?"

"What did you do to me?"

Honestly, he didn't know exactly what Kali had done to her, but he could imagine that she was probably feeling a little wonky.

"Kali just wanted to relax you a little bit."

So she manipulated your mind, just like she manipulated mine when I took you home to bed tonight.

But if that were true, it didn't explain why he still felt so attached to Jane, even hours later.

"So she knocked me out?"

He was torn. On one hand he didn't really approve of Kali's methods, but on the

other hand, he couldn't argue with her results.

"How are you feeling?"

Her eyebrows rose, noting that he changed the subject but she answered his question anyway.

"Like someone just knocked me out."

He didn't know how to respond, so he decided to take the manly way out of things and just remain quiet.

"This isn't a dream is it?"

"No."

It was a struggle to keep his hands from roaming over her body. He settled for reaching for her hand instead.

She didn't struggle when he entwined his fingers with hers. He took that as a victory.

"You really are a werewolf?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Yep."

"Can you, like, change for me?"

Apparently Kali had somehow knocked out all of her fear and replaced it with curiosity.

"Now?"

She let go of his hand and struggled to sit up. He helped her with a hand on her back. It took great effort to pull his hand away from her warmth.

"Yeah. Is it, you know, does it hurt?"

Her eyes were wide with interest.

"No, not really."

Was she really serious about seeing him change? He'd never had a woman ask him that before. Hell, he'd never changed in front of any woman before, not even Kali.

He'd only ever told one woman before that he was a werewolf and she certainly hadn't asked him to change for it. She'd hit the road just as fast as her feet would carry her.

"What's it feel like?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"Yes, I want to know. I mean, I have the opportunity to learn about things that most people believe are only fictional. Heck yeah, I want to see you change into a werewolf. And do you think maybe Kali would show me her fangs?"

Van had to laugh at her obvious enthusiasm. But at the same time, he was still a little bit bewildered.

He rose from his crouched position to sit on the couch next to her. She turned to him, her knee on the couch, leaning forward towards him. He couldn't help himself and he grabbed her hand once again before answering her question.

"I think you're going to have to get to know Kali a little bit better before she'll show you her fangs."

"All right, well, will you change for me? Or can you change on command? Do you have to wait for a full moon?"

When she would've continued, her speech was interrupted by a huge yawn.

Well, it was four o'clock in the morning.

"Why don't we talk about this more in the morning? You need some sleep. I'm not

so good for your sleeping schedule.”

He rose from the couch and pulled her to a standing position. She wobbled a little bit when she stood, but he held her steady with his hands on her hips.

Damn, she felt good.

He suddenly found himself forgetting the events of the past hour and a half, and was back in her bedroom, naked. Damn if he didn't find himself wishing that he could be there again.

He turned her around, and hands on her shoulders, directed her out of the office. He turned her directly to the right and started her up the stairs.

“Van, I don't want to sleep. I want to see you turn into a werewolf.”

He smiled at her sleepy but whiny voice. She sounded adorable.

“After you get some sleep, Jane.”

“But I don't wanna get some sleep.”

Her statement was punctuated by yet another yawn.

Van chuckled to himself as he answered.

“Too bad. This conversation is over until you get some sleep.”

They reached the top of the stairs, but rather than walking down the hall to the bedroom Van had shown her earlier, Jane turned right into Van's room.

“Where are you going?”

He paused at his own door and watched her walk into his bedroom. He realized that she must have been in here before since she found the diary.

Did she recognize the room from her mirror last night? He supposed that they were probably going to have to have a conversation about that eventually, too.

She walked over to his huge bed and hopped up on top. She snuggled down into the center of the bed and pulled the beige spread up over herself. She closed her eyes and almost immediately her breath settled into a nice even rhythm.

Van walked over to the bed and leaned down over her. She was sound asleep.

He meant it so innocently. He simply wanted to give her a chaste kiss on the cheek. But as soon as his lips touched hers, she moved her face. His kiss ended up on her lips, and Jane ended up not being as asleep as he'd originally thought.

Her arms crept around his neck, and she pulled him closer.

He wasn't an idiot. He deepened the kiss.

Jane's mouth opened under his and his tongue swept into her mouth. His hands rested on her hips, and he began moving them upwards. They moved up under her tee shirt to caress the bare skin of her stomach.

She arched up off of the bed, her breasts pressing into the hard planes of his chest. Damn, he wished they were both naked.

He moved his mouth down the silky column of her neck, pausing at the juncture where her neck met her shoulders. He watched as her pulse beat wildly, for the first time sensing the appeal of being a vampire.

He lowered his head to her once more, tasting the sweet skin of her neck, going slowly though he wanted nothing more than to ravage her, pound his throbbing cock into her.

His libido came crashing to earth when she let out a soft snore.

She had fallen back to sleep.

Despite his raging hormones, his cock fell limp, but he smiled down at her anyway.

What in the hell was she doing to him?

*

Jane awoke slowly. She stretched her muscles and snuggled down deeper into the soft material of the bed. She realized two things simultaneously.

One, she wasn't in her bed.

Two, she wasn't alone in this bed.

She tried to jump out of the bed, but considering it was twice as large as her own bed, she only managed to roll over a few times. In the process, she pulled the covers off of her bed companion.

Van lay on the bed next to her. Before she had rolled away, he'd lain with his front to her back, his arm draped over her waist. Though he hadn't woken up, he now lay on his back, one arm draped over his naked chest, the other resting on his flannel pajama pants, directly over his cock.

Jane's temperature spiked through the roof.

Van was one darn fine specimen of manhood. Strands of his too long hair fell over his face, covering one of his eyes, making him look like some kind of rakish pirate. His jaw was scruffy with more than a day's worth of growth. Jane had to control herself to not lean down and run her cheek over the roughness.

The hard planes of his chest glistened in the morning sunlight streaming through the windows. She inched her fingers back over to his side of the bed, desperate to run her fingers through the coarse hairs on his chest, the hairs of his stomach leading down to that oh-so tempting place underneath the low slung waistband of his pajama pants.

"See something you like?"

His voice scared her. She pulled her hand back like he was a snake, coiled and ready to attack. Unfortunately, she was too close to the edge of the bed, and went flying, feet in the air, off the bed.

She landed on the plush carpet with a thump.

As she lay there, hoping that the ground would open up and swallow her whole, a smiling Van appeared above her.

"You alright?"

He bit his lip in an effort to keep from laughing at her.

She tested her arms, her legs, which were still up in the air resting against the side of the bed.

"I think my ego is bruised more than anything else."

At least she'd landed on her heavily padded rear end. She just hoped she didn't do any permanent damage to the floor.

"Come on back up here."

Van reached down and grabbed her arms. Using barely any strength at all, he hauled her back up onto the bed. His arms ran up and down her arms and legs.

"What are you doing?"

"Checking to make sure you really didn't hurt yourself."

Well, that was all fine and dandy for him, but what he was really doing to her was setting every single one of her nerve endings on fire.

"Really, Van," she said, trying to pull herself away, and this time remain on the bed, "I'm fine."

"Well," he replied, a mischievous smile lighting his face, "you certainly feel fine to

me.”

“Do you ever think about anything but sex?”

And why was she asking the question like it was some sort of problem?

“Sorry. It’s been a long time since I’ve awakened with a beautiful woman in my bed.”

Yeah, like she believed that for a second. Van probably had a revolving door of women coming in and out of his bedroom.

So, would he mind if she turned into just one more?

After having one night of pleasure, after waiting almost thirty years, she wasn’t so sure she was ready to give up sex quite yet.

No, she was pretty sure that she wanted to spend quite a lot more time in Van’s bed. And heck, she wouldn’t even mind spending time out of Van’s bed. She heard the kitchen could be an interesting place, and maybe the bathroom. The backseat of a car has gotten lots of play.

Waving his hand in front of her face, Van said, “Hello? Where’d you go?”

Her temperature rose as she realized she’d have to answer him.

“Nowhere. I’ve been right here.”

His look was very disbelieving as he got up from the bed. Now that he was standing she could see just how low his pajama pants really fell. And judging from the tent in his pants, he was telling the truth when he said that he enjoyed waking up with a woman in his bed.

“Are you sure you’re okay?”

She noted the smile on his face. She’d be caught staring.

“Yeah, I’m fine. I’m just going to head back to my room and, you know, get dressed and stuff.”

Without giving him a chance to respond, she dashed from the room and didn’t slow down until she’d closed the door of her own room behind her.

Taking deep breaths she leaned back against the door.

“Good lord, he’s intense.”

Her skin was on fire and her mind was awash with the possibilities.

She’d had sex.

That should be enough for her, right? Shouldn’t she be able to take those memories of one night with Van and keep them hidden under her pillow with her vibrator for the rest of her life?

Well, judging from the way she felt from his hands on her again, she was afraid the answer was no.

So, did she have the courage to ask him to have an affair with her?

She walked into the bathroom for her morning shower and heard the water rushing through the wall from Van’s bathroom.

He was in his own shower, water pounding on him, droplets streaking down his naked skin.

Damn it, she was going to have to work up the courage to ask a werewolf to have an affair with her.

Chapter Nine

Van stood under the cold water of his shower, but when he heard the water turn on in Jane's bathroom, he realized that no amount of cold water was going quell his burgeoning erection.

There was nothing more than a little bit of water and a thin wall between him and Jane's naked body.

"Damn it."

He cranked off the water and stepped out of the shower, still dripping. His mind wandered back to the shower down the hall.

He imagined Jane's curvy body, the droplets of water clinging to her nipples, just waiting for him to bend down and lick it off.

"Down boy," he muttered to himself, forcing himself out of his reverie at the same time he forced his iron hard cock into his pants.

It was going to be a very long day.

Van stepped out into the hallway at the same time he heard the water turn off in Jane's bedroom.

If she was anything like the other women he knew, it'd probably be another hour or so before she was dressed and ready to start the day.

He headed downstairs and into the kitchen, pouring himself a steaming cup of coffee. He walked into the dining room and stared out the window.

It was early yet, and the morning fog had yet to burn off the sound. There was no distinction between the gray clouds and the water, and the only texture came from the occasional pine tree sticking up through the clouds.

Van loved his dining room window. Next to his bathroom, this was most definitely his favorite part of the house.

He stood here every morning gathering his thoughts, formulating his plan of attack for the day. This morning though, his thoughts were still back on the evening before.

He was shocked when Jane had decided to sleep in his bed last night rather than her own. He had no idea whether or not she was tired, confused, or if she'd actually wanted him.

After she'd fallen asleep, he'd headed back downstairs for a while, but he just couldn't get his mind off of the beautiful woman in his bed upstairs.

Making no progress in finding his brother, he eventually gave up and headed upstairs. Walking into his bedroom, even knowing what he was going to find, a jolt shot through him when he saw Jane's pale hair spread out over his pillow.

Hell, he even went into the bathroom and changed into his pajama pants. Sure, he wore the pants regularly, but he couldn't actually remember the last time he'd slept in the pajamas. And why in the hell was he afraid to change in his own damn bedroom? She was sound asleep, for Christ's sake, not to mention she'd already seen him naked.

But still, he found himself carrying his pajamas into the bathroom. Once he was changed, he hesitated with his hand on the doorknob. He was freaking nervous. Big tough freaking werewolf was nervous about sleeping in the same bed as a beautiful woman where absolutely nothing was going to happen.

“Good morning.”

The soft voice coming from behind him nearly caused him to spill his coffee. Damn, he’d thought he had at least another half hour before Jane would appear.

“Good morning.”

Turning to look at her was like a shot in the gut.

She looked so bright in his dark home. This morning she was dressed in a light colored pair of blue jeans and a pink sweater that outlined her curves perfectly.

“Can I get you some coffee?”

“Wow, you’ve got some view.”

She walked past him, her breast brushing against his arm as he passed. He ignored the tingle that shot up his arm at the contact. He also ignored the fact that he wanted to toss her down on the dining room table and just take her there.

“Yeah, I like it.”

Van tried really hard to deny the feeling of rightness that coursed through his body at the sight of her standing in front of the window.

“I was just about to eat breakfast. What can I get you?”

She seemed reluctant to leave her spot in front of the window, but she did follow him.

“There are some donuts over there or I could make eggs or something. An omelet, maybe?”

Van searched through the sadly under-stocked refrigerator tossing out options.

“Van, will you have an affair with me?”

*

Whatever it was that Van had in his hands, which she couldn’t see since he was hidden behind the refrigerator door, crashed to the floor.

Maybe the idea she had in the shower wasn’t such a good one after all.

“Excuse me?”

Van stayed hidden behind the refrigerator. His voice was low and he spoke very slowly.

“Uh, well, I just thought maybe, uh, you know, you’d like to have an affair. With me.”

When he still didn’t speak or move, she continued.

“I mean, what guy wouldn’t want no-strings-attached-sex. I know I’m not Cindy Crawford or anything, but you seemed to have fun at my apartment last night and well, there aren’t any men knocking down my door, so I was thinking that maybe we could uh, you know, scratch some itches. Together.”

“So you want to have an affair with me to scratch an itch?”

Okay, maybe her babbling didn’t come out like she’d hoped.

“Well, I mean, I was a virgin for twenty eight years.” Oh, how she hated remembering that fact. “Once you and I part company there’s a good chance that I’ll stay that way for another twenty-eight years. I’d just as soon not have my entire sexual life be one experience.”

She was so caught up in her own admission that she didn’t hear him close the refrigerator or walk over to stand directly behind her.

She jumped when he spoke.

“So we’d be like friends with benefits?”

Oh god, she hadn't stopped to think about Kali. What if he already had the whole benefits thing going with her?

"We don't even have to be friends. I mean, if you don't want to. I don't really have any friends but if you already do then we could just do the benefits thing if you want."

Oh god, she couldn't believe what a huge fool she had just made of herself.

"You know what," she said, "On second thought, why don't I just go home and we can forget this whole horrible conversation ever happened."

Jane ran from the room as if the hounds of hell were after her.

Just as she made it to the stairs, Van called her name.

"Jane."

She paused, but refused to look at him.

"Did you change your mind because of what I am?"

"Huh?"

"Did you change your mind because, you know, I'm a werewolf?"

Was he serious?

"Of course not, although now that you mention it, I do have some more questions about that. I changed my mind because you didn't seem interested."

And he still didn't seem interested.

"Damn it," he muttered.

"What?"

She finally looked him straight in the eye. She was standing several steps above him, yet it only put her a few inches above his head.

"I'm a hell of a lot more interested than I should be."

Jane couldn't help the smile that spread across her face at his admission. Maybe she didn't make a big fool of herself as she thought.

"But I have a condition, too."

"All right."

As soon as the words were out of her mouth, she was pretty sure she was being reckless. When embarking on what was probably going to be the only affair on one's life, one should probably not be quite so careless.

"I want to make all your fantasies come true."

"Oh, well, I don't really have any fantasies."

"Really? That's not what your diary says."

*

By the look on Jane's face, Van was afraid he'd gone too far. Hell, how do you go too far with a woman who'd just propositioned you?

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

If she weren't trying to nibble a hole through her bottom lip, he might have believed her.

He reached out and stroked a finger down her cheek, marveling at the contrast between her soft creamy skin and his thick calloused fingers.

He stepped onto the stairs. Though she was still several steps above him, it brought them to eye level.

"So, you don't know anything about being tied to the bed and thoroughly ravaged?"

She simply shook her head, not speaking.

"And you wouldn't have any interest in what it feels like to *fuck* outside in the rain?"

It took some effort, but eventually she was able to swallow.

"That sounds like you'd just be asking to get pneumonia."

"Really," he took another step up so that she had to look up to see him even though there was still a stair between them. "It sounds like a hell of a lot of fun to me."

"Oh, well, I mean, maybe we could try it if you wanted to."

Hell yeah, he wanted to.

Van knew he should be doing something, worrying about something other than this delectable morsel standing in front of him, but damn if he could remember what in the hell it was.

"Does this mean we're going to, you know, do it?"

He was pretty sure that she wasn't asking if they were going to be doing it but rather if he agreed to their affair, but damned if he didn't want to carry her right back up these stairs and do *it* right now.

"Oh yeah," now that he knew that she was his, there was no way in hell he'd be able to keep his hands off of her. He grabbed one of her small soft hands in his large one. "We are most definitely going to do it."

She swallowed hard, but she didn't speak. Was she thinking about chickening out? Or was he doing the same thing he was doing and marveling over the contract between her soft, pale skin, and his calloused palm.

The silence was only broken by a loud rumbling gurgle.

"Come on," he shot her a smile filled with the pleasure of things to come. "We'd better get some breakfast in you."

*

Oh, God!

How embarrassing.

So, she was hungry. Did her stomach have to go and tell the entire neighborhood? When did she turn into Winnie the Pooh?

Damn, and she was pretty sure she was on the verge of getting some, too. She followed Van back into the kitchen, trying desperately not to notice how well his backside filled out his jeans.

"What can I get you for breakfast?" He leaned towards her so their faces were mere inches apart. "And my ass isn't on the menu this morning."

She could feel her cheeks flaming, but managed to stutter, "I don't know what you're talking about."

He just continued to smile at her as he went to work making his promised omelet. She walked back into the dining room to peer out the window she'd found him standing in front of.

It seemed like only seconds had passed when he walked through the door with two heaping plates. The smell of eggs, cheese and ham wafted over to her position by the window.

"Smells good."

"I hope it's edible," he said setting the plates on the table. "I'm not much of a cook."

"Well, this was sweet, but you didn't have to cook for me." She walked over to the table and stared down at her plate.

He especially didn't have to cook for her if he was looking to poison her.

It was the most revolting looking meal she'd ever seen in her life. She sat down, a

smile plastered on her face.

"Mmmm," she managed as she stuck her fork into the soupy looking eggs. God, was she really going to have to eat this? Maybe she'd go for the toast first, she decided. She picked up the blackened slab of bread.

Maybe if she held her breath it wouldn't be so bad.

It was almost to her mouth when Van lay a thick hand on her wrist.

"This isn't edible is it?"

"No," she lied. "Really, it looks great. I'm, uh, I'm just not as hungry as I thought I was.

Her lie was made more obvious by yet another deafening rumble of her stomach.

"I'll get us those donuts."

Van pulled the plate out from under her and left the room. Silverware clanked against dishes in the kitchen. God, she hoped he was putting the breakfast down the garbage disposal and not leaving it for some poor unsuspecting animal that may go through his garbage.

Only moments later he reappeared, a box of donuts in his hand and a sheepish smile on his face.

"Sorry about that. Clifford usually does most of my cooking, but I wanted to let him rest."

"Ah," she said picking out a powdered sugar donut, "your butler?"

He nodded as he shoved a half a chocolate donut in his mouth.

"So, about this whole werewolf thing. Can you tell me more about it?"

He looked shocked for a moment, but regained his composure quickly.

"What do you want to know?"

"Well, for one, who where those dogs outside my apartment last night? I assume they were really werewolves. Who were they?"

"Honestly?"

She nodded.

"I don't know."

"Is Kali really a vampire?"

"Born and raised."

"But she was out during the day yesterday."

"Yes." He picked another donut from the package and took another bite. "But she wasn't out in the sun. That's what harms a vampire, not daylight."

"Is the only way to kill a werewolf via a silver bullet?"

He paused with the donut halfway to his mouth.

"Why are you asking?"

She had to laugh.

"I'm just curious. Forget it, if that question makes you nervous, no need to answer."

"I'm sorry. It's not that I don't trust you, it just makes me a little bit nervous to talk about ways that I can die. So, to answer your question, yes, a silver bullet will kill me, as will it kill any human, but there are other ways to kill a werewolf as well."

"Hence the book you're looking for."

God, was it only yesterday evening that he came into her bookstore looking for the book *How to Hunt and Kill Werewolves*? And to think, last night she thought he was the delusional one.

“I’m sorry that I didn’t believe you were a werewolf.”

Her statement earned a laugh from him this time.

“Let me tell you, it isn’t the first time it’s happened. Hell, even I didn’t believe it the first time someone told me I was a werewolf.”

“Huh? How do you not know that you’re a werewolf?”

He paused, staring at the donut box, as if he were weighing his options as to how much to tell her.

“I wasn’t born a werewolf.”

Jane jumped up from the table, almost upending the box of donuts. With wolf-like reflexes, Van kept them from falling to the floor.

“Are you going to turn me into a werewolf? What do you have to do, bite me or something? Oh my God, you didn’t bite me last night did you? Is there werewolf blood coursing through my veins right now?”

“Sit down, Jane. Damn, you’re melodramatic. I’m not going to turn you into a werewolf.”

She hesitated with her hand on the back of the chair.

“Do you promise?”

“Yes, I promise,” he said, picking up yet another donut and chomping in to it.

She sat back down and picked up another donut for herself. She had a feeling that she was going to need it.

“Sorry,” she muttered, “You were saying.”

“Like I was saying. Werewolves are born, not made. When one of your parents, in this case my father, is Were, and the other parent is human, or anything else, the Were gene doesn’t really, kick in, for lack of a better word, until you’re thirty years old.”

“So you’ve only been a werewolf for a few years?”

He nodded his head, a smirk on his face.

“It feels like a hell of a lot longer, but I transformed for the first time four years ago.”

“Wow.” She was silent for a moment letting it all sink in. “What was it like?”

It was evident from his stiff posture and the grim smile on his face that he didn’t want to talk about it anymore.

The fact that he remained silent confirmed her assumption.

Okay, then.

She could take a hint.

“When do we get to start the affair?”

Chapter Ten

Damn if the woman didn't intrigue him and damn if she didn't make him laugh. She's asking intimate questions about his rather unusual life, and then she turns around and starts asking about sex.

Damn if she wasn't exactly his kind of woman.

He had every intention of pulling her out of her chair, tossing the donut box on the table and starting their affair right this second. Unfortunately, a disembodied voice interrupted his train of thought.

"Van? I'm hungry."

"What was that? Don't tell me you have ghosts in your house, too."

He laughed, but at least she didn't look terrified anymore. She was taking this whole supernatural thing really well.

"It's just Kali. She's downstairs."

"Shouldn't she be, I don't know, sleeping in a coffin or something?"

"I much prefer a nice soft bed," the voice called out. "And donuts for breakfast,"

"Come on," Van picked up the donuts in one hand and took Jane's hand in his other. "She's not going to leave us alone until she eats."

He led Jane through the kitchen and down the creaky basement stairs.

"Hold tight. This is an old house and sometimes there are loose boards."

Sure, sometimes there were loose boards, but he always fixed them. But this way, he got to hold Jane's hand longer.

They crossed through the large padded workout area and to the small room he kept for Kali on the other side.

"This is impressive."

"I sometimes keep odd hours, so I figured I'd just build my own gym."

"I let my gym membership lapse ... three years ago."

He wasn't sure how he was supposed to respond to that, but once again Kali saved him.

"It's about time you brought the food; I thought I was going to starve to death."

"Uh, you eat donuts?"

"Kali eats anything she can get her hands on," Van said, noticing that as he said it, Jane started to slowly back out of the room. "Except blonde bookstore owners," he finished, pulling her back into the room and settling her into his arms.

If Kali noticed the gesture she was too busy wolfing down donuts to say anything.

"Did you have anymore luck last night?"

No, and it frustrated the hell out of him. Why were there werewolves after him? And more importantly, had he put Jane at risk?

"No."

"Yeah, sorry I zonked out on you like that. I must have been more exhausted than I thought."

"Don't worry about it, Kal, you'd been awake for almost a week straight."

"So, you don't drink blood, and you don't sleep and yesterday you were at my bookstore during the day. What kind of vampire are you?"

Both Van and Kali laughed. Few people outside of he and his brother would ever have the nerve to talk to Kali that way, and there went Jane blurting out questions.

Luckily, he knew that Jane just went up a whole lot in Kali's estimation.

"I'm a real vampire, not from a movie or book. Things tend to get distorted in modern fiction. I do in fact, need blood to survive, but I also need proteins and carbohydrates, just like everyone else in the world. I don't need as much sleep as your average person, but when I go without sleep for a week, I get really cranky."

"I can attest to that," Van jumped in.

"Shut up," Kali said, taking another bite of donut. She swallowed and then continued. "As for the sun thing, one of the benefits to living in Seattle is the number of rainy days where the sun doesn't come out."

"Yeah, speaking of, you're probably safe to go up to the office if you want, but I wouldn't suggest leaving until tonight."

"No problem. I'll probably just stay down here for most of the day," she indicated her laptop which sat on the bedside table.

Van nodded, and then turned to direct Jane out of the room. Now maybe they could get back to the business they were about to get to before Kali so rudely interrupted them.

"Jane," she called. Jane turned and walked slowly back to the doorway to Kali's room. "You're lucky, you know. You're about to learn about a world you couldn't imagine in your wildest dreams."

The women smiled at each other until Kali stuffed another donut in her mouth.

Van took her hand in his once again, and led her back upstairs, through the kitchen and down the hall into his study. It was by far the most comfortable room on this floor. He wasn't sure how she'd react if he took her all the way upstairs to his bedroom. The study had a huge couch, plenty of room for both of them.

But, why was she suddenly so quiet? It didn't really seem like the Jane he'd gotten to know over the last few days and to be honest, it made him a little nervous.

"Are you okay?"

Please say yes, because I have every intention of completely ravaging your body.

She stayed lost in her own thoughts for a few more moments before she spoke.

"Yeah, just thinking."

He led her into the study and over to the large couch. He plopped down in the middle and pulled her down next to him. He couldn't help himself, and he reached up to run a finger down her cheek.

"About?"

She shrugged her shoulders, an action that directed his attention directly towards the breasts that he was trying desperately to ignore while she was speaking.

"Just stuff, I guess. How everything I thought I knew has changed in the last twenty-four hours and I'm surprisingly okay with it. I feel like I should be freaked out, you know, sitting next to a werewolf while a vampire sits in the basement munching donuts. It's a little surreal, you know."

"I'm not really that different from other men."

Damn, she was adorable when she looked at him with those completely unbelieving baby blues.

"What?" He tried to defend himself. "The only difference between me and other men is that I have the ability to turn into a wolf."

She still just continued to stare at him.

"That's it."

She looked at him, studied him from head to toe, desire quite clear in her eyes.

"If you really think that the only thing separating you from other men is your ability to shape shift, then I think I'd better go back to my original diagnosis and say that you are delusional."

Well, that did it. What the hell kind of man could undergo that kind of scrutiny, get a compliment like that, and *not* ravage the woman.

He leaned forward and captured her surprised mouth with a kiss. His tongue was granted immediate access, tangling with hers, tasting the sugary sweetness of her donut.

Jane's arms twined around his neck, her fingers tangling in his hair.

"Damn, you taste good, Jane."

He moved his mouth from hers, over to her ear, down the column of her throat. Unfortunately, the sweater she was wearing this morning didn't have nearly the give in the neck area as he would have liked.

He had to restrain himself, otherwise he was liable to rip it.

As his mouth moved over her face and neck, his hands roamed the lower half of her body, her legs, her ass, her stomach.

What he wouldn't give to feel her smooth skin instead of the rough denim.

Jane's hands had moved too. Her fingers moved from his neck, down his chest, around his shoulders. Damn, her hands were roaming everywhere.

"Does this mean we're going to start our affair now?"

The breathy quality of her voice was nearly his undoing.

"Yeah, baby," he said as his finger found their way up under her sweater. "We're most definitely going to start our affair now."

He was rough with her as he pulled the sweater up over her head. But when he saw her delectable cleavage, he couldn't really begin to care.

"Damn, those things are works of art."

Van couldn't take his eyes off of her, but she giggled and tried to cover herself.

"No, baby. It's a crime to cover up these beauties."

"Van..."

"I'm serious. You are absolutely gorgeous."

When he looked up at her face, it was to see tears swimming in her eyes.

"Thank you," she said silently.

He was pretty damn sure that she didn't believe a word he said, but at the same time, he figured he had the duration of their affair to get to the bottom of her security issues.

Not that it was really his problem since this was only going to be a temporary thing.

He leaned forward and kissed her again. Just a simple meeting of the lips, no tongue involved, but man, did it pack a wallop.

Convinced that she wasn't about to go all girly on him, he turned her attention back to her breasts. Her bra held her up like some kind of offering. The tops spilled out over the top of the pink lace, and her nipples were just barely hidden by the fabric. In fact, if he looked closely, he thought he could probably see the dusky rose-colored areolas.

Yep, he'd have to look a little closer.

He lowered his head to the mounds of flesh.

Damn, she smelled all girly and sexy.

“Van?”

“Shhh, I want to take my time here.”

“But...”

She sounded so needy, it was hard for him to continue slowly when every bone in his body was telling him to strip them both naked and pound inside of her.

But he was determined to take it slowly.

When he touched his tongue to her soft flesh, and she moaned, a little sound that sounded more like a kitten than a woman, he began to feel his determination wavering.

With his head in her cleavage, Van used the other hand to open the button of her jeans, and slide down the zipper. When his hand found it's way inside of her pants, it was to find that she was already soaking wet. The silky material of her panties was drenched with her cream, and as he fingered her, the scent of her arousal wafted through the room.

“I want to touch you, too.”

Well, he certainly didn't want to be known for disappointing the ladies. He leaned back and pulled his shirt over his head.

“My, you're good looking.”

He had to laugh at the way she said it, and damn if he didn't think his chest puffed out a bit at her statement.

“You're good for my ego, Janie.”

While he was temporarily removed from her breasts, he thought it fitting to take the opportunity to rid her of the rest of her clothes. He pulled her jeans down her long silky legs, then leaned down to kiss his way back up.

When he would have resumed his position at her breasts, she stopped him.

“You should probably take off your pants, too.”

Well, hell, who was he to argue with a beautiful woman?

In a matter of seconds, he had his own shoes and pants off, and was once again firmly ensconced on the couch beside her.

If he thought he was going to take control once again, though, he was sorely mistaken.

*

Jane took one look at his incredible body, and she couldn't help it. She pounced.

He was sitting back down on the couch, once again next to her, but she desperately wanted more body-to-body contact. So, she lunged, pushing him backwards onto the couch, her body coming to lie over the hard planes of his.

He laughed, but she silenced him with a hard, almost punishing kiss.

She was crushed when she felt his hands on her shoulders, pushing her away.

“I'm sorry, I must be crushing you.”

She tried to move back, away from him, give him some breathing room, but she was caught by his strong arms twined around her.

“Don't think you're going anywhere now. You just need to slow down a little bit.”

He leaned up from his prone position and captured her mouth in yet another kiss.

This one was much softer, yet no less potent. His mouth stole access to hers, his tongue tangling with hers.

It was a good thing she was lying down, because Jane was pretty sure her knees had turned to jelly.

Once again his kisses moved from her mouth to her cheek, over to her ear. He

nibbled on the shell of her ear, and shivers skittered up and down her spine.

He held her closer.

When he started raining wet, open-mouthed kisses up and down the column of her neck, she thought she might actually prove the existence of spontaneous human combustion.

What in the hell, all of her other beliefs had been thrown out the window since she met Van.

"You're thinking too much."

He was right, but she had trouble believing she was really about to get down and dirty on a couch in the study of the hottest man she'd ever laid eyes on.

"I'm sorry."

Van sat them both up with a sigh. He ran his hands through his too long hair, giving it a delightfully sexy rumbled look.

"If I'm doing things right, you shouldn't even be able to think at all."

"I'm sorry."

Maybe this whole affair thing was a bad idea. Maybe it turned out she wasn't meant for more than one sexual experience. Maybe she just wasn't that good.

Van reached out and touched the spot between her eyes. She knew that it had a tendency to wrinkle when she was deep in thought.

"What are you thinking about?"

He pulled her back down on the couch, but this time there was much less touching. Well, less touching with the hands at least.

He pulled her down spoon fashion so that the entire length of her back was plastered against the entire length of his front. His hand rested on her naked belly. She couldn't answer him because she was too busy trying to suck in her stomach, making it as flat as possible.

"Stop sucking it in and tell me what you're thinking about."

She did as he said, happy that he removed his hand from her stomach to let it rest on her hip. His fingers toyed with the elastic on the side of her panties. Next time she saw Kali she'd have to remember to thank her for not packing granny panties.

"I'm wondering why you accepted my offer to have an affair."

His hand stilled on her hip, but only for a second.

"You're wondering why I'm taking the opportunity to have no strings attached sex with an incredibly sexy, insatiable woman, with obvious good taste?"

When he put it like that, her question did sound ridiculous.

She smiled and rocked back slightly against him.

She could feel the steel hard length pressing into her buttocks before he spoke.

"Damn, woman, I can't take anymore."

Jane wasn't sure what had happened, but the next thing she knew, her panties were gone, as were Van's underwear, and she was on her back, his length, already sheathed in a condom, poised to thrust into her.

"What in the heck are you waiting for?" She demanded.

Van laughed and leaned down to kiss her before sliding slowly into her.

He felt incredible. He was so big and he filled her so well. He thrust into her with the tempo of his kiss. It was a wonder that she didn't just forget how to breathe.

When he pulled the cups of her bra down, his mouth left hers to feast at her newly

freed breasts.

He rolled her pebbled nipple between his teeth, making it impossibly harder. He kneaded the other globe in his free hand, though he never once slowed the tempo of his thrusting.

When Jane started panting and moaning underneath him, Van removed his hand and slowly stroked his fingers down her body, until he reached her hips. His fingers followed the path where her hip met her thigh until they brushed over her clit.

It was ever so gentle, but Jane nearly came apart, thrusting herself, not only towards Van, but also towards his fingers.

“Come for me, Janie.”

His fingers continued to bring her to unbearable heights of pleasure, as his cock thrust in and out of her.

While she wasn't simply doing as he commanded, his words did manage to send her over the edge. She came apart, stars flashing in front of her eyes as her body thrashed and spasmed. She felt like her mind and body were no longer even connected when she heard Van's groan, and felt him thrust into her so hard she thought she might break in two.

She didn't remember anything else until she noticed that Van's weight was no longer pushing her deeper into the plush sofa cushions.

She heard a rustle, and managed to open her eyes and tilt her head to see him over behind his desk. She saw him pluck a tissue from the box on the desk and figured he must be cleaning himself up.

She tried to say something, but the only thing that came out was a tiny moan. In an instant, Van was kneeling next to her.

“Janie.” His touch was gentle as he combed her hair back, out of her face. “I'm sorry sweetheart, did I hurt you?”

Van's face shone with concern, but he also had the look of a man who had just been thoroughly pleased.

Jane smiled.

“I think Kali was right.”

“What?”

“I think that in this affair with you, I really am about to learn things that I only dreamt in my wildest dreams.”

Chapter Eleven

Van was an asshole.

He couldn't believe he'd just taken Jane like that. She wanted an affair, damn it. He didn't want it; having sex wasn't something he was doing for himself and he shouldn't have to remind himself of that. Damn it, for some unknown reason, he thought that Jane should know the pleasures of the flesh. She deserved romance and flowers, not what he'd just done to her.

He took her hard and fast on the couch in his office. He didn't even have the common courtesy to take her to his bedroom, or back to his bedroom, he should say.

And to make things even worse, now she was looking at him like he'd just given her the most magnificent present ever.

And it'd been nothing more than a quick fuck.

"I didn't hurt you, did I?"

"Of course not."

She looked beautiful, her creamy skin highlighted against the dark green of his leather couch.

She actually might be stuck to the leather; damn, he'd never even thought about putting a blanket down. How selfish could he be?

"I feel like you're beating yourself up over something, but I can't for the life of me figure out why."

She was observant, too.

"I should've taken more time with you. Should've taken you to a bed, or at least given you a blanket."

She reached out and touched his chest. He felt like his heart beat out of his chest, trying to touch her fingers.

"You didn't hear any complaints from me."

No, he hadn't. For some reason that didn't make him feel any better.

"I could've at least given you a little bit of foreplay."

Jane shook her head as she peeled her slightly sweat soaked body off of the sticky leather couch. She pulled the cups of her bra back, recovering her nipples. Grabbing a matching green blanket off the back of the couch, she wrapped it around herself.

"You're acting like a woman. What we just did was—good, great. Freaking amazing, all right. Now just quit worrying and start thinking about when we can do it again."

He wanted to thank her, but didn't really think that would go over well. He'd thought Jane shy, but the more he got to know her, he was coming to realize that she was quite a little spitfire.

"All right."

He couldn't help himself, he leaned forward and placed a peck of a kiss on her upturned nose.

Damn, she was adorable.

He had no time to think about their next encounter because the study door flew open, crashing against the wall.

"Ew, man, put some clothes on, already!"

The door slammed closed as quickly as it'd opened. He grabbed his clothes, pulling them on as quickly as possible while Jane continued to sit there in stunned silence.

Wasn't that just like his brother?

Have him worried out of his mind, and then show up the next morning like he didn't have a care in the world.

Well, he was going to have a lot to answer for today. He'd be lucky if he got out of here in one piece.

His fury was so all consuming, that he jumped when Jane spoke.

"Who was that?"

Damn, Aiden must have scared the hell out of her. He was scary looking on a good day, and today certainly didn't look like one of his better days.

And to top it off, he'd seen Jane mostly naked.

"I'm sorry. That was my brother."

"The one that you couldn't find last night?"

"Yeah."

"But, he's the one from the restaurant." Damn, had that only been last night? "He's the one who bought the book."

She latched onto his arm, her small fingers digging into his forearm. If he didn't know better, he'd think that she was really worried about him.

"Don't worry. He's not going to hurt me."

He wouldn't be stupid enough to try anything with Kali in the house.

"Okay. Well, be careful."

He gave her another one of those nose kisses.

"Why don't you get dressed? You can explore the house if you want, or, well, whatever. Just don't go outside. I still don't know what's going on here."

"Are you always in control, Van?"

He thought about her question. Yes, damn it, he was always in control. She was saying it like it was a bad thing.

"Yes," he said, just before leaving her alone in the study.

*

Jane hurriedly got dressed, but then sat back down on the couch. There was absolutely no reason for her to be in a hurry. She didn't have anything to do, or anywhere to be.

Speaking of anywhere to be, she did call Susie. Claiming illness, she made sure she could watch the store for the next few days. There was no telling how long Van was going to insist that she not leave the house.

Well, he did say that she could make herself at home. She left the study and followed the sound of voices to the kitchen. Van and his brother were in there, but both men stopped speaking when they saw her. Or rather, sensed her. It was kind of eerie how they stopped speaking a few seconds before she poked her head around the corner.

"Did you need something, Jane?"

A huge part of her wanted to be deterred by the grim set of his mouth and obvious worry lines across his forehead, but well, she could be just as stubborn.

"No," she said as she strolled into the kitchen and took a seat at one of the kitchen chairs. Both men simply continued to watch her.

Now that they were in the same room, she could see the similarities, and boy were

there similarities. She was surprised she hadn't noticed it last night at the restaurant.

"I'm Jane, by the way."

She stuck out her hand, and Aiden sent a questioning glance towards his brother. He shook her hand quickly before turning and stalking away, though he did have a wry smile on his face.

She couldn't help laughing.

"What's so funny?" Van asked.

"You two are so alike you can't make heads or tails of one another, right?"

"Wow, got it in one," a feminine voice answered from behind her.

When Kali appeared at the top of the stairs, Van instantly walked to the window and pulled the curtains closed fully. While it was still fairly gray outside, the cutoff of any outside light source plunged the kitchen into darkness.

Aiden rumbled around in a drawer, eventually coming up with a few tapers and a package of matches. He lit them as he brought them over to the table.

Kali rumbled through the pantry, eventually coming back to the table with a box of chocolate chip cookies. She plopped down in the seat next to Jane.

Jane politely declined a cookie.

"If you ladies don't mind, we were having a conversation," Van somehow bit out from between clenched teeth.

He stood by the now closed window clenching and unclenching his fists.

"We don't mind at all; please continue your conversation."

Jane was a sucker for never seeing anyone in pain, so when Van asked, even as non-politely as he did, she was willing to give him his space. Kali put her arm on Jane's though, holding her in place.

Okay, she'd stay.

"It was a private conversation."

Even though they were obviously fighting over something, Aiden came to his brother's defense.

"Yeah, and thanks to you guys, both of us are now involved in whatever it is that you're talking about. Therefore, you can say whatever you need to say in front of us, or you can keep it to yourself."

"Yeah."

They looked at Kali with respect when she spoke, but when Jane emphatically agreed, it earned a laugh from everyone. Well, at least she was good for lightening the mood, if nothing else.

Aiden capitulated first. He crossed the room and sat down with the women at the round table.

"Don't I know you from somewhere?" He asked Jane.

"Uh, yeah," she replied. "You bought a book from me. You know, a book on how to kill your brother."

Kali choked on the cookie she'd been eating.

Van made a strangled sound somewhere between a cough and a laugh.

The blood drained from Aiden's face. He stood and crossed to his brother, who still stood by the window. Van's arms were now crossed over his chest, and the lines of his face had softened slightly.

"Is that what this is all about?"

“Did you buy the book?” Van asked the question softly. She had to strain forward in her chair to hear him.

Aiden simply stood and stared at his brother. He crossed his arms over his chest. Just like Van’s face had been a few minutes earlier, Aiden’s face tensed. He began turning red and several small lines appeared between his eyes and across his forehead.

“Damn it. Answer me, Aiden.”

“No, Van. Believe it or not, I’m not four years old anymore, and you can’t just order me to do things.”

“Aiden, this isn’t funny.”

It was the first time Van had raised his voice. It wasn’t nearly as scary as the low controlled voice he’d used before, but it certainly showed how little control he was holding on to.

“So, what, big brother, you think I’m trying to kill you? Or wait, why stop there? I bet you think I’m the one who’s been killing werewolves all over the city, right?”

“Are you?”

Jane and Kali sat at the table watching the two men trade barbs like they were watching a tennis match.

“Do you really think that little of me, Van?”

“You still haven’t answered the question.”

“No, I haven’t, Van, and I can honestly tell you that I probably won’t be answering the question.”

“Why?”

The tension drained from Aiden’s body. He put his hands in his pocket and rolled back on his heels. He shrugged his shoulders.

“I want you to trust me, Van.”

“Why should I trust you?”

“Because I’m your brother.”

Van quieted, like he was thinking about what his brother said. Considering it even maybe.

“I’m sorry, Aiden, but that’s not good enough.”

*

Damn it, he wanted to trust his brother for no other reason than he was his brother, but it wasn’t just him at stake. He had an entire population of people to worry about.

He wasn’t sure if it was his body language that gave him away, or if Kali simply used whatever powers it was she had on him, but she let out a warning.

“Van, maybe you need to cool off a little bit.”

He knew she was right. He was getting mad, and that was never really a good idea. He was strong, but every once in awhile, it turned out that the Were part of his nature was a little bit stronger. He couldn’t stand it if he were to turn on his brother.

Hell, he hadn’t even realized that he had an audience before Kali spoke. She and Jane were sitting at the table, munching cookies and watching them like they were some kind of reality television show.

Yeah, Jane was probably really glad that she’d picked him, out of all the available men in the city, to have an affair with.

“I’ve gotta get out of here.”

He knew it wasn’t the most mature thing that he’d ever done, but he stalked from the

kitchen down the front hallway. He hesitated there.

He briefly considered going for a walk, but until he knew for sure who was killing werewolves, he thought it best not to leave Kali, and especially Jane, alone with his brother.

Damn it, could his brother really be the one killing Weres? The thing was that no one had been able to figure out what exactly was killing them. All had been in wolf form when killed, and it had taken a few days for anyone to realize they were missing. Hell, no one ever noticed when a werewolf disappeared for a few days, most other Weres thought they were simply in their other form.

What he really wanted to do was to go beat the hell out of something. But that would require walking back through the kitchen to get to the basement, and he'd rather walk on hot coals than see his audience again.

Instead, he turned and walked up the stairs. He headed directly into his bedroom and over to look out the window.

It wasn't lunchtime yet, but the fog had pretty much burned away. It was hardly a sunny day in Seattle, but it wasn't raining, and the clouds parted enough to allow small rays of light to shine down on the waters of Puget Sound.

"Are you all right?"

He sensed Jane's presence when she was about halfway up the stairs. He could still smell the sex on her, the combination of his juices and her cream. It made him hard just thinking about it. And as much as he wanted it, there was no way he could take her in the mood he was in.

Hell.

"I'm okay. You should go back downstairs. There's a television in the living room, if you're bored, or there are plenty of books in the study."

"How long am I going to be stuck here?"

She'd be stuck here until his brother answered the question!

Damn it, when she got closer, he could smell the chocolate she'd been eating, along with the flowery soap someone had left in his guest bedroom.

She needed to get the hell out of his room.

Now.

"You're not a prisoner here, you know? You may be a beauty and I'm certainly a beast, but that's where the similarities end."

He expected her to turn and run out of the room at his gruff tone, but much to her surprise, she started laughing.

His voice was low when he spoke. Over the years, he'd frightened many people with that tone of voice.

"Jane, I really don't think it's a good idea for you to be laughing at me at the moment."

She quieted for a second. Van expected to hear her soft footfalls on the carpet, indicating that she'd left the room.

Instead, she started laughing again.

He spun around to see her face pink, and tears running down her cheeks.

She held her stomach like the laughter was paining her. When she saw his tensed expression, she started laughing even harder.

"I'm telling you, Jane, you don't want to be laughing at me right now."

She waved her hand in his direction, but still didn't contain herself.

So, Van may not have done the most mature thing, but he did the only thing he could think of. He pulled her close, against his hard body, making sure that she could no doubt feel the hard ridge of his erection.

Now that he held her close, he could feel the soft curves of her breasts press against him. He could also tell the second that she realized what he had in mind. Not only did she stop laughing, her eyes going bright and wide, but he could smell her sweet cream that was no doubt coating her panties as they stood there.

Each of them was breathing hard, neither one of them willing to look away.

"Van."

She spoke quietly, and he had no idea what in the hell her words meant. Was it a question? A plea? Did it mean more? Or did it mean stop?

"What do you want, Janie?"

"What do you want, Van?"

He could tell that it was difficult for her to stand up to him. It wasn't difficult for her to stand up to him; it was difficult for her to stand up to anyone.

Van refused to acknowledge the fact that it made him happy that she trusted him enough to confront him, even given his rotten mood.

"I want you, Jane."

He wanted her hard and he wanted her fast, and most of all, he wanted her dirty.

"I'm right here, you know."

He could tell what an effort it took for her to say that. She swallowed hard and her breath was coming shorter.

Do it, his brain screamed. But he knew he never could.

Good God. He'd deflowered her last night. She was in no shape for what he needed right now. Hell, maybe he should just go take a shower and take care of business himself. No use involving sweet Jane. She was way too innocent for what he had in mind.

He stepped away from her and ran his fingers through his hair. He walked back over to the window and opened it. Maybe the cool air would make him start thinking with the right head again.

"I'm not going to take you in this way, Jane."

"In what way, Van? The way I want to be taken? Give me a break."

Van counted to ten. Then he counted to ten again. His hands clenched and unclenched, his fingernails digging into the sensitive skin of his palms.

He tried to take a deep breath but when he got another whiff of Jane, he figured that wasn't the best idea. Damn it. She was getting even more turned on, and he could smell her arousal growing.

It was a magnificent smell. She was sweet. She was right up there with the smell of a great steak dinner complete with chocolate cake.

And she was taking her clothes off!

Van spared her a glance out of the corner of his eye. He'd expected her to be standing there with her arms crossed over her chest, a dejected look on her face, but no.

He did a double take and turned his head in just enough time to see her unbuttoning her pants and sliding them down her long legs.

"What in the hell are you doing?" He roared.

She didn't answer him right away; she finished removing her pants and then folded

them neatly, tossing them onto the end of the bed before speaking.

“I’m getting your mind off of your brother.”

She reached for the hem of her shirt. She’d just gotten it up far enough to bare her stomach when Van finally found the presence of mind to stop her.

“Jane, I’m not going to make love to you now.”

He grabbed her shirt and pulled it back down. In the process, the backs of his fingers brushed over her smooth skin. He stepped back as if he’d been burned.

“Good, I don’t want you to make love with me. I want you to fuck me.”

Chapter Twelve

Jane thought it was funny that Van didn't even try to hide the shock on his face. His eyes practically bugged out of his head, and from the looks of things, he was having trouble swallowing. Eventually he started to cough. She reached behind him and delivered a few hard slaps right between his shoulder blades.

He stopped coughing and practically ran to the other side of the room.

Great, was she really that repulsive?

"Jane, I don't think you know just what you're asking."

That was it. That was the last straw for her.

"Well, do you want to have an affair with me or not? And I want a real affair with all different kinds of sex, not just missionary position all the time."

Sure, he'd made her feel damn good in the missionary position, better than she'd expected from what she read over the years, but she wanted real sex. Honest to goodness down and dirty sex.

"Look Jane. I'm happy to oblige, but not now. You have no idea how close I am to losing control, and when I do, there's no telling what I'm liable to do to you. Keep your shirt on."

But she was too far gone. She was on the verge of melting into a big puddle of lust right on the beige carpet of Van's bedroom.

She whipped the shirt off over her head, standing before him in nothing more than her matching pink bra and panties.

Neither one of them spoke.

"Jane."

Now she was the one wondering.

Was it a plea? A question? Something more? Or less?

His brown eyes blazed with fire. A light sheen of sweat broke out on his forehead. He wiped at his head with the back of his hand before he started stalking towards her.

"God help me Jane, once we start I don't know if I'm going to be able to stop."

For the first time, she doubted herself. She wanted him more than anything, wanted the experiences that only he could, or would, give her. But watching him stalk towards her, she felt the first stirrings of uncertainty.

But, she used everything in her power to quash that feeling.

"As long as you give me an orgasm, I don't really care."

"Is that so?" he asked.

He stopped just steps in front of her, pulling his shirt up over his head, and tossing it towards the chair on the other side of the room. It hit the chair but teetered on the edge briefly before sliding down to the floor. They both stood watching, mesmerized by the hunter green polo.

Jane's attention snapped back to Van when she heard the rasp of his zipper being lowered. Then, her gaze was riveted to his crotch. As he unzipped, she was treated to a breathtaking view of his olive skin. Her eyes followed the path of hair leading under his waistband from his bellybutton. More hair was revealed as he lowered the zipper, until he stepped out of the jeans, revealing his turgid member jutting skyward from a thick patch

of dark hair.

Good lord, the man wasn't wearing any underwear! How'd she miss that earlier? Jane wasn't really sure if she found that incredibly sexy, or if she was totally skived. When she looked up and saw the look in his eyes, she decided that it was totally

sexy.

She didn't have time to dwell on it though, because apparently she had exhausted all of Van's patience.

He didn't move, but reached out and pulled her to him, hard.

She fell towards him, but he didn't flinch, her soft body was completely cushioned by his hard strength. His arms came around her instantly, his large hands grabbing her ass. He ground her center into his hard length.

She couldn't help it, she whimpered.

Any other sounds that she would have made were completely silenced when Van's mouth captured hers in a searing kiss. He forced his tongue into her mouth, practically licking her tonsils. He continued kissing her, bruising her with his tongue, nipping at her lips with his teeth.

His hands were still on her ass, though they found their way under her panties. He kneaded her ass in his hands, his fingers inching closer to the cleft. His fingers teased their way down between her legs, where she was sure that he could feel her moisture coating his fingers.

"You're so wet. You're going to like it rough, aren't you?"

"I think I'm going to like everything you do to me."

She felt Van's rumbling laugh the whole way up and down her body. She would have laughed back but she could only gasp when his middle finger slipped inside of her.

"Van," she gasped.

Her knees began to wobble.

"This is it, Jane. This is the last chance you're going to have to get out of here. To do what I said. From here on out, no complaining about what I do, no trying to rush me; you're the one that brought this on, so now we're going to do what I say."

A part of her brain was telling her to be scared. To get the hell out of there because Van meant what he said; if she didn't like what he was going to do, she wasn't really going to have a say. But the rest of her, the part that she'd spent the last two days listening to, urged her to stay silent.

And then the rest of her just wanted him to keep doing what he was doing.

She remained silent.

He crushed his mouth to hers once again at the same time he thrust another one of his thick fingers into her.

Her knees did give out then, but he was there to catch her. He walked them both a few more steps towards the bed before pushing Jane to a sitting position. Both his mouth and fingers were torn from her. She gasped at the sudden empty feeling.

But that only lasted a second. She opened her eyes to find Van's very erect cock right in front of her.

"Suck it."

It was on the tip of her tongue to argue, but when she saw the look in Van's eyes, the one that said, please, whatever you do, don't refuse me, she relented.

She leaned forward and tentatively touched her tongue to the very tip. He jumped.

She smiled and stuck her tongue out again. This time she ran her tongue around the head of his cock. Above her, she heard Van hiss breath out through his teeth.

Figuring that was a good thing, she leaned forward and took him entirely into her mouth. He tasted salty. She leaned forward, taking as much of him into as she could. She was bereft that she couldn't fit the entire thing into her mouth.

"Damn baby, that's good."

When Jane smiled at the compliment her teeth skimmed the sensitive skin of his cock. He jumped in her mouth. She wasn't really sure if that was a good thing or not, so she tried it again, just lightly sliding her teeth up and down his shaft.

When he didn't complain, and jumped in her mouth again, she figured it was a pretty good thing.

She alternated her new trick with twirls of her tongue and long licks and short sucks. In minutes Van's breath was coming in gasps.

"Use your hands, too."

She curled her small fist around the base of his erection, down where her mouth wouldn't reach. She clasped him tight, as tightly as she dared, and continued her sucking and licking with renewed vigor.

"Oh yeah, now it feels like I'm buried in your hot, tight pussy."

Jane could feel her own temperature rising, she could feel her moisture seeping into her panties. By the sound of things above her, Van's temperature was also rising, and it sounded like his top was about to blow.

"Oh yeah, baby, get ready. I'm going to come in your mouth."

Eager to taste him, she redoubled her efforts, squeezing even harder with her hands, and licking and sucking as much as she could with her mouth.

"Here it comes, Janie."

With one last bellow, Jane felt Van's seed hit the back of her throat. She didn't really know what to do, so she just kept sucking.

Van's hands came to her shoulders, holding himself up as his body trembled.

Plain Jane Applebottom made Donovan Wolfe tremble.

When he began to soften in her mouth, Jane slowed her ministrations. Van continued to hiss and moan until he eventually pulled away.

He moved away and plopped down on the bed next to her. He stared at her for a moment before he fell backwards onto the bed. She was wondering what to do until he pulled her down right on top of him.

*

Good lord, the woman was going to kill him.

But if this was the way he had to go, he was going to die a very happy man. If he didn't know for a fact that she'd never sucked anyone off before, he'd have thought that she was some kind of professional. That was the damn best blowjob he'd ever had in his life.

The hell of it was, he was too damn tired to find the words to tell her.

So, he pulled her down next to him. This wasn't the most comfortable position, on his back, his feet still on the floor, and he knew it must be even more uncomfortable for Jane, but damned if he was going to let her get away from him, even for a second.

"That was absolutely un-fuckin'-believable."

He looked over at Jane, laying next to him, chewing on her lower lip. Her lips were

red, and her mouth looked thoroughly abused. She was beautiful.

“You liked it?”

“Oh, yeah,” he said, rolling over so that he could lie face to face with her. “I think it’s safe to say I enjoyed it.”

“Good.”

The smile that lit up her face was breathtaking.

He leaned forward and kissed her gently.

She shocked him when she pulled back.

“I’m sorry, is your mouth sore?”

She swatted his hand away when he would’ve ran his fingers over her lips.

“My mouth is just fine, thank you, if a bit well used. Now don’t be getting so nice on me. I want what you said before.”

She wanted what he said before, about her having no choice in the matter, she’d have to do whatever he wanted her to do.

He didn’t know whether he should call the doctors and have them take her away in a straitjacket, or get on his hands and knees and thank the lord for this woman.

Instead, he kissed her, not the gentle kiss he was prepared to give her, he kissed her hard, showing her no mercy for the beating her mouth had just taken from his cock.

She whimpered in the back of her throat. He didn’t know if it was a sound of pleasure or of pain, but once he started kissing her again, he realized that he didn’t really care.

His energy suddenly returned he moved to the center of the bed, dragging Jane along with him. He delivered one last kiss before moving down, to the column of her throat, and then losing himself in her delectable cleavage.

He nipped and sucked at her breasts until he was able to get his trembling fingers to unhook the front clasp of her bra.

When her tits, breasts, hooters, whatever the politically correct term was, were bared, he thought he might actually start drooling.

They were large, more than a handful, full with rosy peaked nipples rising to greet him. He’d always been a tit man, and he didn’t think he’d ever seen a finer pair than these.

He leaned forward and lapped gently at one nipple. It hardened even more and Jane shuddered, arching her back towards his mouth.

Well, he’d never want to disappoint a lady.

He leaned down and took her nipple in his mouth, hell, he took as much of her tit as he could manage into his mouth. He suckled, nipping her with his teeth. All the while, he massaged the other tit with his large hands. God, he’d never fully recognized the benefit of having large hands.

“Oh.”

She sounded so surprised that Van couldn’t help laughing. And apparently she really liked the feel of his laugh rumbling through her body because she made some more noises.

Van didn’t think he’d ever be able to eat candy again, or cake, or any of that good stuff. Nothing could ever beat the taste of Jane’s creamy skin.

He switched his attention from one tit to the other; he was an equal opportunity suckler. As he moved, he walked his fingers down her stomach, under the waistband of

her silk panties and down to her incredibly warm center.

“Damn, you’re wet, baby.”

“You—ah,” She wasn’t able to finish because his fingers found her clit. She gasped, but quickly found her voice.

“You made me that way.”

He moved his fingers even lower to probe at her entrance. She was so warm and soft.

He continued to suckle her tits, moving from one to another, as he thumbed her clit and fingered her pussy. From the noises she was making and the thrashing she was doing on the bed, Van was pretty sure that she was enjoying herself.

It was only a moment before she started coming apart in his hand. Her pussy pulsed tightly on his fingers as her orgasm swept over her like a wave. Her head tossed back and forth on the bed, her arms braced on the bed as she lifted her body up, prolonging the contact with Van’s fingers and in turn, prolonging her orgasm.

He only removed his fingers when she lay completely satiated on the bed. Of course, he managed to hit all the good parts in the process. She shuddered a few more times, and then lay completely still.

And Van sat on the bed feeling like a stud.

There was no doubt that Jane had thoroughly enjoyed herself. Her entire body was flushed. Her breasts were red from where his stubble scraped over her creamy skin, and there were even a few teeth marks marring her skin.

He reached down and tried pulling off her panties. She didn’t seem to have the energy to help, but she mustered, lifting her hips so that he could remove the now sopping panties.

Aside from the bra, which was still technically attached to her, though it wasn’t hiding anything, she was completely naked.

She reached with her tired hands, trying to cover herself but Van stilled her hands.

She was fucking hot.

He’d gathered over the short course of their relationship that she had some body issues, but he couldn’t think for a second why. She was absolutely incredible. Her skin was creamy and white, and he couldn’t help himself, so he leaned down and lapped at her thigh. Jane jumped slightly, and when he looked up she had a big smile on her face, though her eyes were still closed.

And damned if he wasn’t getting hard again.

He grabbed her by the hips, hard, though he did take care not to hurt her, flipping her over until she landed on her hands and knees on the bed.

Oh, yeah.

“What are you doing?”

There was a little bit of fear in her voice, but there was no disguising that there was also excitement.

Her plump pussy glistened in her juices, beckoning him to enter her.

He forced himself to slow down, go slower. Not because of her, no, he didn’t want this to be over too quickly for him.

“Whatever I want to do, remember?”

He slid his hands up and down her silky back, only pausing long enough to slide her bra straps down her arms.

She looked back at him, over her shoulder. There was no doubt that she was nervous

about what was to come. There was also no doubt that she was excited.

Her back rose and fell as her breathing became heavier. While his hands traversed Jane's back and ass, he slipped one of his hands down between her thighs. She was so wet her juices had dripped down and now coated her inner thighs.

"Van," she said again.

Once again, it could have been a plea to stop or it could have been a plea for more. He didn't know and he didn't care. He was too far gone to care. The only thing he cared about at the moment was the feel of his cock plunging into her tight pussy.

Grabbing a condom out of his nightstand, he quickly sheathed himself. He rose up on his knees, his throbbing cock poised to enter her. She whimpered softly and instinctively tried to move away. But, Van clenched her hips, keeping her immobile.

"I promise I won't hurt you."

Damn it, there he went, caring about her. This was for *his* pleasure. He'd warned her. He was going to take what he wanted.

While still keeping a firm grip on her hips, Van surged into her. She was so wet that he had no problems sliding in up to the hilt.

She gasped again when he thrust, but much to his surprise, rather than jumping away, she pushed back into him, grinding her ass against his stomach.

It felt fucking incredible.

He reached around her hips and fondled her clit. He didn't think it was possible, but she pushed back again, and buried him even deeper.

"Fuck, Janie."

He thrust in deeper only to pull out and thrust again. Both of them were slowly rising towards their boiling point.

Jane continued to thrash underneath him, moving her hips all around, maximizing friction for the both of them. In only a matter of minutes, he could tell he was getting close. When Jane used her inner muscles to tighten her hole even more, Van couldn't hold back anymore.

He came hard.

Hell, he didn't think he'd ever come so long in his life. He continued pumping through his climax, and just after he finished spilling his seed into her, the answering muscle clenches of Jane's orgasm swept over her.

She collapsed onto the bed, his deflating cock sliding out of her.

Van got up and went to the bathroom to clean himself up. By the time he came back to the bedroom, she was sound asleep. He lay down next to her and drifted off into the undisturbed slumber of a man who'd been well and truly fucked.

Chapter Thirteen

“He’s your brother, Aiden, give him a break.”

Kali swung her leg in a high arc, hitting Aiden’s gloved hand with a smack and sending him stumbling backwards.

“Yeah, like he gives me breaks.”

Aiden struck back with a right hook, but Kali easily deflected the blow.

“He hasn’t killed you yet, has he?”

Kali executed a move that was straight out of The Matrix, seemingly hovering in the air before smacking Aiden lightly on the side of the head.

Damn, he hated that a girl had to pull her punches when she sparred with him.

He threw up his hands in defeat, crossing to the small bench on the other side of the room. He picked up a towel and wiped the sweat off his face. He watched Kali as she turned her attention to the large punching bag, hitting and kicking, and just generally beating the shit out of the inanimate object.

“Hey, Kal, you feeling all right?”

Sure, she was generally an ass kicker, but this seemed to be going far even for her.

She didn’t answer him, just kept pummeling the bag. It creaked as it shook precariously on the supporting beam.

Aiden took a long swig of water before crossing the mat again towards Kali.

Her face was red and sweat dripped from her brow. She didn’t care though, she just swiped her forehead with the back of her hand and kept pummeling.

“Kali?” Aiden called again. But still, she didn’t answer.

He walked behind her and grabbed her arms, holding her steady, trying to stop her from harming herself.

But he’d misjudged the fact that this was Kali, and she was a lot stronger than him. She reached out and in one swift motion, grabbed him by the neck, swung him to the ground, and pounced on him.

One of her sharp fangs punctured his neck before she came back to herself. She jumped from the mat, staring down at Aiden. The fear and confusion was clear in her eyes.

“Oh my God, Aiden, I’m so sorry.”

She helped him to his feet. He wobbled a little bit when he touched his neck and his fingers came away with a few drops of blood.

“You bit me.”

“I know, I’m really sorry. I don’t know what came over me, it’s just that when you grabbed me from behind I didn’t think, I just reacted. I’m so sorry.”

“You bit me,” he repeated.

“I’ve already apologized. What else do you want from me?”

“You bit me.”

“Yeah, why don’t you whine about it a little more?”

“Did you get my jugular; do I have to go to the hospital?”

“No, Aiden, it was just a little scratch. It’s not even bleeding anymore.”

“Are you sure? Maybe I should lie down for a little while.”

He smiled while he said it, and Kali smiled back.

"Thanks for making me smile."

He grabbed her by the hand, and walked back over to the bench at the bottom of the stairs. He tossed her a towel and resumed drying himself off. He had to admit, he'd sweat a little bit more when Kali turned on him. For the first time in his life, he could see why people were afraid of vampires.

"I should sit down, no telling how much blood I lost."

"You're so full of it, Aiden."

She tossed her towel at him, hitting him smack in the face. Damn, she smelled good.

"So, do you want to talk about what was bothering you?"

She shook her head.

"It's stupid."

"It may be stupid, but obviously it upset you. So, what's wrong?"

"Do you promise you won't laugh?"

Aiden was quiet for a moment as if he were lost in thought about the question. It earned another tinkling laugh from Kali.

"I'll tell you what, I can't promise I won't laugh if it's stupid, but I won't tell anyone else, and I promise I'll never laugh at it again after we leave the basement."

She slugged him in the stomach lightly. Well, he thought for her it was lightly. It felt like he may have bruised a rib or two.

"It's your brother."

"You were kicking the punching bag's ass because you thought it was my brother? Hell, why didn't you tell me that worked?"

Aiden turned to head over to the bag, but Kali grabbed him by the hem of his tee shirt.

"That's not what I mean and you know it. It's just that he's upstairs with Jane and I'm feeling a little bit ... lonely."

Hell, how could he laugh at her for that?

"And horny."

He thought he might have imagined the last part. Or perhaps it was wishful thinking on his part. But, no. When he turned and saw the blush that was creeping up the sides of her neck, slowly making its way to her cheeks, he realized that he hadn't imagined it.

Good lord he didn't want to be having this conversation with Kali. She was his brother's best friend, practically like a sister. A really freaking hot sister that he'd never had any kind of sisterly feelings for.

He hauled her up from her sitting position on the bench and crushed his mouth to hers. He half expected for her to kick his ass, but she anxiously kissed him back.

Their tongues tangled and it didn't take long for Aiden's hands to wander. He kneaded her breasts through her sports bra, her nipples pebbling under his touch. His other hand followed a trail down her bare stomach to her short shorts.

And he wasn't the only one with wandering hands. Kali went straight to the most important part, cupping his cock, stroking him through the fabric of his sweat pants.

"Naked. Now." She managed between sticking her tongue in his mouth and nipping at his bottom lip.

He pulled away and practically ripped his tee shirt in his haste to get it off. He pushed his sweat pants down, practically tripping before he realized that he'd have to

take his shoes off first. He toed off his Nike's and kicked aside his sweats.

When his attention turned back to Kali, she was completely, totally, gloriously naked.

Her skin was pale, almost transparent in places. The only places the paleness was marred were the cherry red nipples and the small triangle of hair between her legs.

"Damn, you look good, Kali."

But apparently she wasn't in the mood for a lengthy perusal. She pulled him close again, kissing him, his erection nestled in the V of her thighs. She was so fucking hot, and her wetness coated his already throbbing shaft.

He lowered his hand to her cunt, not surprised at all to find it practically dripping. He leaned down slightly, grabbing the back of her thigh and lifting it so that it rested over the curve of his hip.

He hesitated slightly before thrusting.

"Kali, we don't have a condom."

He was about to lower her leg and step away, but the woman produced one as if out of thin air. She unwrapped it, stretched it over his cock, put her hands on his ass, and pulled him into her.

"Oh, fuck, Kali."

"Yeah, harder."

Well, he never wanted it to be said he disappointed a woman.

He leaned down to suck on those cherry colored nipples, surprised for a moment that they didn't taste like cherry, and he did what she asked, he fucked her, hard.

They were both sweating again, when Aiden's balls drew up further towards his body. He was getting so fucking close, but he couldn't come until Kali did. Not only was it a matter of pride for him, but she could very easily kick his ass.

He didn't know if he slowed down or if Kali did her little mind reading trick, but she took his hand and led it to her clit.

He thumbed it a few times and before he knew it, she was coming. The first pulse of her pussy on his cock had him spilling his come inside of her.

Once their cries of ecstasy died down, silence echoed through the room. They both breathed heavily, but quietly. After a few moments, Kali removed her leg from where it was balanced on his hip and pushed him backwards gently until his limp cock fell out of her.

"Thanks, Aiden, that was just what I needed."

She kissed him on the cheek, just like she'd done a million times before, picked up her discarded clothes and sauntered into the bathroom.

Aiden fell back to the bench, still naked, the condom still attached.

He'd just fucked his brother's best friend.

* * * *

A few hours later, after Jane had a nap, and had taken another shower, she headed to the kitchen for something to eat. Van had disappeared after they'd had sex earlier that day. She vaguely remembered him lying down with her, but by the time she'd woken up, she'd been alone in his bed once again.

Kali sat at the table, a pint of Chunky Monkey in front of her.

"Whoa, what's wrong?"

Kali looked up and smiled, though it certainly didn't meet her eyes.

"Is it that obvious?"

Jane pulled out the chair and sat down.

"A woman doesn't eat a pint of ice cream unless something's wrong."

"Just man trouble. There's another pint in the freezer if you want some."

If ever a day called for ice cream she figured the day after you lost your virginity to a werewolf counted as one. She found a pint of Cherry Garcia in the freezer, grabbed a spoon and sat down.

"Well, you're welcome to talk at me if you want, but I doubt I'll be much help in the man department. Hell, I was a virgin until yesterday."

"And now?"

"Well, I can say with certainty that I'm no longer a virgin, but I have no idea what the hell I'm doing."

"Men are stupid idiot buttheads."

It was odd hearing something so juvenile from Kali, who seemed like such a classy person. But, she was right. Men were stupid idiot buttheads.

"Do you want to talk about it?"

Jane didn't have much experience in the whole girl talk department, but hey, she had no problems listening.

"I did something stupid." She looked around, as if to make sure that no one was listening. "I had sex with Aiden."

"Oh, oh."

Jane honestly had absolutely no idea what to say.

Was this a good thing? A bad thing? There was no doubt in her mind that it was a confusing thing.

"Yeah, oh."

"I don't understand."

Kali shrugged and simply continued to eat her ice cream.

"It just happened. It was good, and I can't say that I regret it, but Van's going to have a fit if he finds out."

"Is Aiden okay with it?"

"Well, we didn't really talk about it afterwards or anything, but yeah, I think he's okay with it. I mean, we're both consenting adults and we were just scratching an itch. It didn't mean anything."

"And why do you think that Van won't take it well?"

"Van doesn't do meaningless sex. I don't know why. Believe it or not, he's got some secrets even from me."

What did that mean? He was doing meaningless sex with her. They were having an affair. Friends with benefits, nothing more. And to be honest, she wasn't even that sure about the friends part.

Unfortunately she didn't have a chance to inquire further because both of the subjects came sauntering into the kitchen.

Van came through the hallway into the kitchen. He'd redressed in his dark green polo and black jeans.

All Jane was able to remember was the sight of him peeling the shirt over his head, showing off the wide expanse of tanned skin. Suddenly her clothes felt much too

constricting.

She pulled at the collar of her shirt, an action there was no doubt Van caught. He didn't say anything, but his mischievous smile spoke volumes.

At just about the same time, the basement door opened and Aiden stepped through. He had apparently showered because his brown hair, a shade darker, and more ashy than Van's streaks of red, was wet, glistening in the candle light. The blue of his tee shirt brought out the blue in his eyes, making him look eerie, almost paranormal.

Oh wait, he was paranormal.

The tension in the room was thick until an old man, hunched over and dressed in a tuxedo like outfit shuffled into the kitchen from a small door on the other side of the room.

"Good evening, sir," the old man said.

"Good evening Clifford." Van walked over to stand behind Jane's chair. "This is Jane Applebottom. She'll be my guest for a while. Please extend her every courtesy."

Jane wanted to break in, to tell him that she really needed to be getting home, not to mention back to work, but didn't have the opportunity.

"Yes, sir. Will the four of you be wanting dinner, sir?"

"Yes, please, Clifford."

He sounded like a child when he said it, bringing a smile to Jane's face.

"Very well," Clifford said, sounding reserved to his fate. "You know the rules. Everyone out of my kitchen while I cook. And leave the ice cream, ladies. No spoiling your dinner even more than you already have."

He took the Cherry Garcia right out of Jane's hand. Kali tried to save her Chunky Monkey but wasn't swift or sneaky enough for the old man.

He put both pints of ice cream back in the freezer before turning to shoo everyone out of the room.

"Is he getting grumpier in his old age?" Aiden asked as they trudged down the hall, all of them seemingly unsure of where they were going.

"Is it possible for him to be grumpier?" Kali asked.

"Quit your complaining, you're both going to get a free dinner out of the man."

Aiden turned to Kali once again.

"Is Van getting grumpier in his old age, too?"

Kali didn't have a chance to answer because Van turned on his brother.

"Oh, excuse me if I'm a little testy when I'm not sure if my brother is trying to kill me or not."

All the blood drained from both men's faces. Once again, it was wide open in the open.

Jane felt her heart break a little for both of them.

Van stalked towards his study while Aiden stalked out the door through which Jane had entered last night, which led to the garage.

Almost as soon as Van got to the study, his head popped back out.

"Kali, go with him and make sure he doesn't get into any trouble."

Kali's gaze followed Aiden, it looked as if she wanted to go, but she said "No."

"This is your fight, Van. I'm sorry, trust me when I say that I don't want anything to happen to Aiden, but this is your fight."

"Kali..."

The anguish in Van's voice tugged at Jane's heartstrings, but she knew Kali was right. Plus, it wasn't like she could do anything about it.

She followed Kali's lead into the study, plopping down on the couch where she and Van had done it earlier that day. Kali sat down in Van's oversized desk chair and started tapping away at his computer.

She was still having trouble realizing that it was only the night before that she had lost her virginity to this man. She didn't think she'd ever be able to look at her collection of vibrators the same way again.

Mere moments later, Aiden stalked back into the room, a brightly wrapped package under his arm.

"Happy Birthday, big brother."

He shoved the package hard into Van's stomach, causing him to flinch slightly. Aiden walked over and calmly sat on the other end of the couch.

All eyes were on Van as he stood in the middle of the room, the yellow package in his hands. He held it carefully like it held the weight of the world. Without any care for the wrapping paper, he tore open the package.

Jane knew she'd seen it before the instant it was unwrapped. She was the one who sold it to Aiden. Was this whole situation nothing more than a coincidence? Was she being held, well, she really couldn't say that it was against her will, but was she being held over a birthday present?

The silence in the room was unsettling. Never a big fan of tension, Jane broke the silence.

"When's your birthday?"

All three heads spun towards her.

"What?"

"Your birthday? When is it?"

She thought no one was going to answer her. Kali had gone back to tap-tap-tapping on the keyboard and Aiden seemed to be very interested in a spot on his jeans.

"Tomorrow."

"Oh, well, Happy Birthday. I'm sorry I didn't get you anything, and well, um, you won't let me out of the house to get you something now, so well..."

"Holy shit."

Well, Jane knew she'd been babbling, but she didn't think it deserved that kind of reaction.

"I think you need to come see this."

Van put down the book gently, sending a glance his brother's way. He leaned down over the back of Kali's chair.

Jane didn't think she'd ever forget the look on Van's face. The blood drained completely, leaving his normally olive complexion a pasty ash color. His eyes changed to a sickly yellow color.

"What's wrong?" Aiden asked.

Jane liked the fact that even though the brothers were fighting the underlying care was still there. She wished that she had someone to care for her like that.

Kali and Van looked at each other.

"Maybe you should come see for yourselves."

Jane got up and walked to the other side of the desk. It was only a matter of steps,

but it seemed like she was walking miles. Whatever it was on the computer screen wasn't going to be pretty.

What she didn't expect to see was a picture of herself.

Chapter Fourteen

Van really hated to do this to Aiden and Jane, but damn it, he couldn't protect them if they didn't know.

"Wanted?" Jane croaked. "What did I do?"

It wasn't anything she'd done. It was him, it was all him. Damn it, why couldn't he have left good enough alone. No, he had to go thinking with his cock.

He wanted to put his arm around her, comfort her somehow, but he didn't think she'd appreciate it at the moment.

The website was set up so that there were four pictures, each looking like old fashioned wanted posters, something you'd expect to see the face of Billy the Kid on, not yourself.

Van was in the upper right hand corner, next to Aiden. Pictures of Kali and Jane were underneath.

"I don't think it's anything you've done, Jane, it's Van."

But Holy hell, what had he done?

Kali scrolled back up to the top of the page, to an explanation of the site.

The following people are wanted for crimes against the paranormal community, including but not limited to: Fraud, Burglary, Arson and Murder.

"I've never done any of those things. Until two days ago I didn't even really believe in the paranormal."

Jane's voice continued to get higher and higher. She was really starting to freak out, and honestly Van couldn't say that he blamed her.

"Oh my God. You're not criminals, are you? I just have no people skills at all. I couldn't tell a flower salesman from an axe murderer."

"Jane, none of us have done the crimes we've been accused of."

She looked at Van, studying him closely, trying to decipher whether or not he was telling the truth. He tried his hardest to project the most innocent looking face he could.

"None of you have ever murdered anyone?"

"No," Van answered.

"Not me," Aiden agreed.

"Just try to go to any other city in the world to find vampires that haven't killed."

Jane's shoulders slumped with relief. Apparently she was going to take their words for what they were saying. Good.

Jane left the computer screen and walked back over to her perch on the couch.

"When you're a werewolf, are you, can you, do you know what's going on?"

Van wasn't prepared for that question, but he couldn't say that he minded it. It was one way to get his mind off of their current situation.

"Yep," he answered. "My consciousness still remains, it's just that I happen to be in the shape of a dog, rather than a man."

"So it's not like a wolf man?"

Van laughed.

"No. I have heard of people who could transform that way, but basically I'm a shape shifter. It's nothing like Michael Jackson in Thriller. One second I'm a man, the next, a

wolf.”

“Can you control the changes, or is it only during a full moon?”

She was really interested in this stuff. He supposed it came from her owning an occult bookstore. She must love learning new things. Unfortunately, it was only a matter of time before he could tell her that she couldn’t leave until this whole *Wanted* situation was worked out.

He walked over to the couch and sat next to her, though careful not to touch. He didn’t need an audience for what could happen if he touched her.

“The pull to become lupine is much stronger during the full moon, but I can deny the change then, just as I can force the change any other time.”

“Will you do it?”

Both Kali and Aiden’s eyes shot up from the computer at Jane’s question.

“What?” They asked in unison.

Jane’s face turned red, and she immediately started backtracking.

“I’m sorry. Is that rude? Is that like asking someone to strip or something? I’m really sorry. Forget I asked. It’s just my inexperience with these things talking.”

Van put his hand out, tentatively covering her small hand in his larger one.

“Are you really interested?”

“Well, yeah, kind of. But I understand if it’s some kind of secret or something.”

“No, no secret. It’s just...”

“What?”

“Well, no one’s ever asked me to change before.”

Jane got up and started to leave the room. Where in the hell did she think she was going?

“Well, that’s okay. Like I said, you don’t have to.”

“No.”

Van didn’t know why, but it was really something important to him that Jane asked to see him change.

“I’ll do it for you.”

Hell, he was starting to think that he’d walk across hot coals if she asked him to.

The smile that spread across her face practically lit up the room. For a minute, he actually wondered if Kali was going to have to take cover, it was so bright.

“Do you want us to leave?” Kali asked.

She knew that changing in front of Aiden always made him a bit uncomfortable. Right now, though, he didn’t care.

“Do what you will,” he said, and meant it.

He started undressing, pulling his shirt up over his head, while at the same time, getting in touch with his baser nature. The wolf inside him howled, ready to be released. He’d been cooped up too long, hadn’t been getting enough exercise; it was going to be tough knowing that he couldn’t go outside, run free, hunt.

Once a month, he tried to get out to an old fishing cabin he owned near Mt. Rainier. There, he could change into wolf form and be natural. But he hadn’t been able to make it there for the past few months, and as he let the wolf free within him, he realized that he’d have to make time to get there soon.

He shucked his pants and was just about to pull off his gray boxer-briefs when Jane stopped him.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m taking my clothes off.”

“Well, you don’t have to be naked-naked, do you?”

“Whatever I wear when I’m human I end up wearing when I’m a wolf, although usually not in as good condition.”

“Well, couldn’t you, uh, keep your underwear on just this once?”

When he’d started stripping Kali had spun around in the desk chair to face the wall. Aiden turned with her, sitting on top of the desk. But Jane had watched him with her eagle eye, as if she turned away for a second, she might miss everything.

“Uh, sweetheart, there’s nothing here that you haven’t seen before.”

Her face turned bright red and even though he’d tried to lower his voice, he heard the laughter coming from the other side of the room, though it was unsuccessfully hidden as coughs.

“Just this once,” she continued to plead.

“I told you, my consciousness transfers completely from human to wolf. That includes my pride. No way am I going to be a wolf with underwear.”

“Oh, all right, fine. Get on with it.”

He shucked his underwear, and called on the change.

He knew that it only took a fraction of a second for him to change; for Jane, Kali and Aiden, first he was a man, then he was a wolf, but to him, it seemed like an eternity.

The sound was like a freight train barreling down on him, until the sound of bones popping and tendons and muscles rearranging themselves took over. Everything got blurry, and then snapped back into excruciating clarity. The only difference was that he was looking at the world from four feet lower.

He tested his wolf form, stretching his front legs, then his back. He was stiff for having remained human for so long. There was no doubt about it, as soon as the danger for his family had passed, he’d be going fishing.

He walked in a circle once before settling down on his hind legs and looking at Jane. She still sat on the couch. Her face was a combination of unbelieving and smiling.

“He’s beautiful.”

Van knew he wasn’t modest; he was a damn good-looking wolf. He was large, and his coloring was the envy of many other werewolves, yet he’d never felt quite so good looking as when Jane said it.

“He can hear you, you know.”

It was Kali that spoke, but Jane either didn’t believe her, or didn’t care.

“Does he like to, you know, play or something? Fetch?”

“Hello? I’ve told you already. I’m still a man, I’m just in a wolf’s body.”

Jane’s eyes went wide and she fell right off the couch, landing with a thump on the oriental carpet.

“I can hear him. He’s—he’s in my head.”

Aiden walked over to help her back up, once again trying unsuccessfully trying to hide a laugh.

It took all of Van’s strength not to snarl at his brother when he put his hands on Jane.

“Can you all hear him, too?”

Kali and Aiden nodded, but Kali answered.

“His powers aren’t such that he can get into one person’s head. It’s pretty much just

like he's talking. Anyone in the room can hear him."

"Can he hear me think?"

"No, not like a vampire. We can put things in your head, and take them out."

"You can get into my head."

"Well, yeah."

"Have you ever done it to me?"

Kali had the grace to look sheepish. Good, Van had been trying to break her of the habit of listening in on other people's brains for as long as he could remember.

"Um, well. Yeah."

"Oh my God. What did you, what did you see?"

"Nothing, really." Jane visibly started to relax, until Kali spoke again. "Only the fact that you and Van had a little fun in the mirror."

"Is that the only time you've been in my head?"

Kali kept her eyes on the floor. Van had never seen the vampire nervous before. Most people were afraid of her.

"No."

"Geez, Kali, what else have you done to me?"

"Well, that time you passed out. You know, shortly after you got here. That was actually, uh, my fault."

"Well, is that it?"

Kali finally met Jane's eyes.

"Yes, that's it. I swear."

"No, it's not."

"What? Yes, it is."

He felt ridiculous arguing while in the shape of a wolf.

"No, you put something in her head the night that we met, the night that I took Kali home to her own apartment."

"I did no such thing," Kali insisted.

"This is ridiculous. I know you gave us both suggestions that night. Don't even try to deny it, and can I change back now?"

"No," Jane said. "I still have questions for you." But, she went back to talking to Kali. "What did you do to us that night?"

Kali held her hands up in a gesture of innocence.

"Nothing. I swear."

"Oh, come on. I wouldn't have slept with Jane if you hadn't put something in my head."

"What?"

All three heads snapped in his direction.

Uh-oh. Time to start digging himself out of this hole. Big time.

"That didn't come out right..."

"You better hope it didn't," Jane insisted.

Kali tried to hide her smile but didn't quite succeed.

"I mean that I felt something in my head that night. It wasn't just my decision to do ... you know ... what I did. It was something bigger."

"Well," Kali said with a shrug. "You can't argue with fate."

Jane opened and closed her mouth like a fish.

“Are you saying that fate is what made me sleep with Van?”

“If you’re finished now, can I change back into a man?”

“No,” both women said at once.

Van turned in a circle again, trying to find a comfortable position, then plopped down on the softest spot he could find. He waved his tail a few times. When he realized that Jane’s eyes were riveted to it, he kept wagging, slowly, her eyes following it like a hypnotist’s watch.

“Do you like to be patted?”

“The same way I do as a man.”

She blushed as she was obviously remembering the way she’d pet him in human form that afternoon.

Before Jane could launch into another question, Clifford appeared at the doorway.

“Dinner’s ready,” he said. “And sir, I told you I don’t like dogs in the house.”

*

Clifford turned and walked back down the hall followed by Kali and Aiden.

Jane was left alone with Van. Van the wolf.

“I hope you don’t mind if I change back to a man. I’m starving.”

Almost as soon as he finished speaking, if you could call it that, the air before her shimmered, and in nothing more than a flash of light, Van was once again standing before her.

And he was naked as the day he was born.

“Are you ready for dinner?”

Darn it. She’d been caught staring at his crotch.

She turned and walked out of the room, head held high. She’d defy any woman in the world to be in the same room as a naked Donovan Wolfe and not try to sneak a peak.

She left the study and followed Aiden and Kali into the dining room. She had no idea what dinner was, but it smelled fabulous.

There were only four places set at the table. Kali and Aiden had taken the two facing away from the still closed window leaving the head of the table and one other chair. She left the head seat for Van and plopped down.

Van followed a moment later and the food started flowing. She soon found out the main course was three-meat lasagna—she figured a lot of meat was probably eaten in this household. But there was also salad and soup and the best smelling garlic bread she’d ever gotten a whiff of.

If she ate like this all the time she’d weigh three hundred pounds. Good thing her stay at the Wolfe household would soon be coming to an end.

Chapter Fifteen

The cavernous basement room was once again filled with the grunts and groans of people working out. But this time, it was four people trying desperately to work off their sexual frustration.

Two weeks.

Two gosh darn flipping weeks she'd been stuck in Donovan Wolfe's stuck-up Queen Anne house. And he hadn't touched her since that day two weeks ago when he'd changed into a wolf for her.

At first she didn't mind. She'd had some girlie issues of her own that kept her out of his bed, but since that then, nothing, nada, zip, zero, zilch.

He could barely stand to be in the same room with her at this point. Every time she walked into a room, he found an excuse to leave. And they weren't any closer to finding out who in the hell wanted her dead (or alive).

She was sick of having to call Susie to work. Originally she'd said she wasn't feeling well and she'd be back in a few days. Once those few days were up, she had to call and tell her that her illness had lasted longer than she'd anticipated and she'd need a few more days.

Last week Kali finally convinced her that she should just call in and say she'd been called away on a family emergency and she'd been gone indefinitely. How sad was it that she thought Susie was her best friend, but she didn't even know that Jane was lying about having any remaining family.

The only good thing to come out of the last two weeks was the fact that she'd lost ten pounds working out her sexual frustration. And that was ten pounds while still eating Clifford's amazing cooking.

She hit the down arrow on the treadmill, slowing her pace to a nice cool-down speed. Kali kept climbing along on the stair climber next to her, her black ponytail flapping up and down.

Van and Aiden sparred on the mat in front of her. Or, more to the point, Van was wiping the floor with Aiden on the mat in front of her.

Aiden still wore the red boxing helmet and teeth protector, but Van had discarded his a while ago after realizing that Aiden wasn't landing any punches.

Van jumped around on his toes, but Aiden was lagging. He wasn't even responding to Van's taunts anymore. Aiden looked like he just wanted to get things over with.

When Van landed one last punch, a right hook right on the side of Aiden's head, he tore off his gloves and put his hands up.

"All right, all right, I give up. Believe it or not, having the shit kicked out of me has lost all of its fun."

He took two steps towards the bench, but then seemed to decide better of it. He stumbled to the ground and lay on his back, trying hard to catch his breath.

"You need to work out harder, little brother, you're getting soft."

"Whatever." Aiden just waved his hands in the air.

"Well, I've barely broken a sweat. Kali, you up for a spar?"

"Absolutely."

She hopped off the stair climber, stretching her legs and rolling her neck.

Jane climbed off the treadmill and hobbled over to where Aiden had moved to get out of the way. He tossed her a towel and she plopped down next to him. Every single one of her muscles protested every single move she made. She hadn't worked out this much in—well, ever.

"Why are we killing ourselves like this?" Aiden asked her.

She knew what he was asking. Why did they spend hours every single day working out?

She watched Kali and Van for a few moments before answering. Kali had come on strong, her main weapon being her mile long legs.

"Cause we're sexually frustrated."

He thought about it for a fraction of a second before replying.

"Oh, yeah."

Jane sat with Aiden for awhile, both of their muscles protesting, both still struggling to catch their breath as Kali and Van continued to fight.

Before too long they had one another on the floor. There was nothing overtly sexual about what they were doing, not in their minds anyway. Both of them were fighting—fighting, well, because it was in their nature.

But Jane could feel her heart rate rising once again, even though she was sitting still. Aiden shifted in his seat a few times, crossing and uncrossing his legs. A light sheen of sweat broke out on her forehead.

"I think I'm going to go take a shower now."

Aiden jumped from the bench and headed into the basement bathroom. It was impossible not to notice the tenting in the front of his sweatpants.

"Me, too."

Jane jumped up and ran up the two flights of stairs to the bedroom Van had given her two weeks ago.

*

Kali struck out with her right leg, but Van had been anticipating the move. He grabbed her by the ankle, her foot only making the barest of contact with his stomach. He twisted her leg in his hands, sending her falling to the floor. She regained her balance easily, arching up into a backbend before kicking her feet over her head until she was once again in a standing position.

Fury burned in both of their eyes, the sweat dripping from their bodies went unnoticed as they circled each other, each waiting for the other to make a mistake.

At the same time they lunged for one another in a massive tangle of arms and legs. When the dust settled, Van had his arm around Kali's neck, squeezing slightly harder than he knew he should.

Her arms were stretched out in front of her, also around his neck. The pressure of her fingers made it hard for him to breathe, but he wasn't about to let her get the upper hand.

Each of them slowly increased the pressure. Stars fluttered in front of Van's eyes, his breath was becoming shallower and it was becoming harder for him to keep his grip around Kali's neck. She let up slightly before squeezing again and he knew that she was having the same problem.

Simultaneously they dropped their arms, both of them rubbing their own necks as they paced the mat, each trying to reconcile what had almost just happened. He was

pretty sure that he'd be sporting finger bruises on his neck for the next few days.

Kali fell to the ground, breathing heavily and still rubbing her own neck.

"Why in the hell are we trying to kill each other?" Van asked.

"We've been locked in this house for two weeks, no contact with anyone but each other, and to top it all off, nobody's getting laid."

Everything she said was true, but were they really trying to kill each other because they were horny?

"Yes, Van, we are."

"Stay out of my head, Kali."

"Oh, please," she said, "you're thinking so loud I'm surprised no one else can hear you."

"I'm not that horny. I've got more self control than that."

"No, you don't, Van," she insisted. "What's it all about anyway? I thought you and Jane were having an affair."

He walked over to the long bench that rimmed one wall of the room and picked up one of the nicely folded towels. He wiped his face and then wrapped the towel around his neck, fingering the bruises that he knew were forming there.

"Yeah, 'cause every woman wants to sleep with the guy who gets a hit put out on them."

Everyday for the past two weeks, the time he hadn't spent working out, he'd been on the computer trying to find out who wanted them, and what in the hell he could do about it. Unfortunately, he was no closer to knowing things now than he was two weeks ago.

"Uh, Van, has she actually said something to you?"

"No, of course not. She's too polite for that."

"So, you're just assuming that Jane is happy about being forced to stay here against her will because if she leaves she might be killed, and to top everything else, the guy who she thought she was going to be having an affair with ditched her."

"I didn't ditch her."

"Yes, you did."

"Kali, damn it, I didn't ditch her."

"Well, do you think she knows that?"

"I'm sure she does."

He turned away as he said it, following the path Jane had gone just a few minutes later.

"Oh, because you read minds now, too?"

Van was quiet for a few minutes. Was he right, did she really think that he had ditched her?

"I gotta go, Kal."

Van ran up the stairs.

Damn it, what in the hell had he done?

He'd assumed that Jane would never even want to look at him again, let alone sleep with him again. Had he completely wasted the past two weeks with Jane?

Well, damn it, he was going to make up for it now.

He stalked the whole way up the stairs, and he practically rattled the house down with his stomping. When he got to the top of the stairs, he thought about heading into his own room to take a shower, then confront Jane once he no longer smelled like the inside

of a gym locker room.

But when he heard the water of her shower running, that thought flew right out the window.

Once he heard her shower, all he could think about was the fact that she was in her shower. Naked. He could imagine the water sluicing off her body.

Tugging off his shirt as he walked, he figured he most definitely wanted to be the one there to catch the water as it slid over her breasts. He was going to dry her off, slide a soft towel over her body, down between her legs just before he surged into her.

By the time he reached her slightly ajar bathroom door, he was completely naked and primed for action. He paused for a moment outside her door. Her hum was barely audible over the water, but he could make out the *woo-woo*'s of the Rolling Stones *Sympathy for the Devil*.

He walked over, pulled aside the shower curtain and stepped inside.

"Please allow me to introduce myself, I'm a man of wealth and taste," he quoted the song.

He thought it was a pretty good opening line, if he did say so himself.

But, she jumped away, almost slipping on the slippery porcelain. He grabbed her tightly around the waist and pulled her close—simply so she didn't fall, of course.

"What are you doing, Van?"

Her body was warm and soapy. Her breasts pushed into his stomach and he could feel her nipples pebbling against him.

"I thought you might need someone to wash your back."

She stepped back from him and resumed rinsing her hair.

"I already washed it, thanks."

That certainly wasn't the reaction he was hoping for.

"Oh, well, is there anything else I can do for you?"

He used his most persuasive voice. It'd helped him get plenty of women in his bed over the years.

Jane reached forward and wrenched off the water.

Apparently it wasn't helping him much at the moment.

"Sure, now you've decided that you want some? Nothing for the past two weeks and now you want to get in my pants? I don't think so, buddy."

She opened the shower curtain, practically ripping it off the rings. She grabbed a towel and vigorously dried herself off. It was a far cry from what he was imagining about toweling her off.

He turned the shower back on and twisted it to cold. This was not the shower he'd been imagining.

*

The nerve of the man!

For two weeks, two eternally long frustrating weeks, she'd been trying to do everything she could think of to get him back in bed. And every single time he shunned her advances.

And now, she was in her shower, minding her own business, thinking about placing an Internet order for a few of her favorite toys so at least she could get some action, even if it was with herself and a battery operated boyfriend. He strolls in like the king of the world, naked at the day he was born, quoting her favorite song no less, and now he wants

some.

Well, maybe she wasn't in the mood this time.

She plopped down on the bed, wrapping herself tightly in her new terrycloth robe. A few days after she'd first seen the wanted poster on the computer, new clothes had started showing up in her bedroom. She figured Van bought them, probably with Kali's help, through they'd never actually talked about it.

She sighed, her breasts rising and falling with the deep breath.

She was in the mood.

She was most definitely very in the mood.

"Yes, you can use my shower," she muttered.

She laid back on the bed and closed her eyes. Working out was starting to take its toll, and she was tired. She'd just close her eyes for a few seconds.

The next thing she knew, Van was standing next to the bed looking down on her, a big smile on his face. He had a towel slung low around his hips and his arms crossed over his chest.

"Showering takes a lot out of you?"

That was when she noticed the heat in his gaze, and she figured it out almost immediately. She felt the cool air on her legs, all the way up to her stomach. As she napped, her robe had fallen open, exposing everything from the tips of her toes up to her bellybutton.

Uh-oh.

"Well, if that's not an invitation than I don't know what is," he said.

He reached down and touched one finger to the arch of her foot. He moved that one finger around to the top of her foot, up the inside of her ankle, to her knees, up the inside of her thigh. When she was almost whimpering with pleasure, he removed his finger, closed her robe and tucked it around her.

"I didn't mean to disturb your nap."

He turned and started out of the room, that damn towel still slung low on his hips, his wide back and broad shoulders clearly defined, even in the low light of the bedroom.

He didn't get very far before Jane grabbed the pillow off the bed and hurled it in his direction, hitting him smack dab in the back of the head.

He stilled, standing in the doorway. Jane felt naked as he stared at her, his hands on his hips. He bent over, picking up the pillow. She couldn't help but wish he'd turned around so that she could see his ass when he picked up the pillow.

Her body temperature rose as he slowly walked back over to the bed.

"I think you dropped something," he said, tossing the pillow onto her lap.

"Oops, it slipped."

She tried to use her most innocent voice. What had happened to her in the last two weeks? Two weeks ago, she was terrified of Van, terrified of what she'd asked him to do, but now? Now, she was egging him on.

Heck, maybe if she egged him on long enough, he'd actually do something about this incredible ache she'd been feeling for the past two weeks.

"It slipped?"

His right eyebrow arched over his amber colored eye. Jane felt the impact in the pit of her stomach—and lower.

"I said 'oops.'"

That was when she realized just how deep she'd gotten herself. His eyes had darkened to the color of cola. Maybe fine whiskey would've been a better description, but she didn't have much experience with fine alcohol.

"So, I'm putting you up out of the kindness of my heart and you have the nerve to throw pillows at me?"

Jane had no idea whether or not he was joking or if he was serious, and frankly, she didn't care. He'd sparked her anger. Jane was generally a nice even tempered woman but when she did get mad, it was best to watch out.

She jumped up from the bed. She stood directly in front of him, her finger poked into his still naked chest.

"Listen buddy, I didn't ask to stay here, all right. I didn't ask to have some kind of weird paranormal bounty on my head."

"I'm sorry."

She barely heard his apology, she was on a roll and there was no way she was going to be able to stop now.

"The only thing I asked of you was to have an affair with me. You said yes, yet I haven't been touched in two weeks. Two freaking weeks of waiting and wondering if tonight was going to be the night, only to end up in bed alone again. I want to have sex again, damn it."

As always, once her outburst had subsided the silence echoed through the room. Almost as soon as she stopped speaking, she felt ridiculous.

"Are you finished now?"

She could feel the redness climbing up her body from underneath her robe until she was sure that she must look like a tomato.

"Look Van, I'm really..."

But she didn't get a chance to finish.

"I asked if you were finished."

She looked down at the floor, afraid to reach his eyes.

"Yes, I'm finished," she muttered.

He put his hand under her chin and lifted until her gaze was equal with his. She saw that he was trying to hide a smile and his dark eyes were now sparkling with mischief.

"Good," he said just before he crushed his mouth to hers.

Chapter Sixteen

She tasted better than anything he could ever remember eating and he was pretty sure that he could survive on nothing but the taste of her for the rest of his life. His mouth probed at the seam of her lips. She easily opened for him.

He wrapped his arms around her, pulling her close like he had in the shower. Only this time, he had no intention of letting her walk out on him.

While he could still think somewhat coherently, he scooped her up in his arms and carried her down the hall to his bedroom.

"What are you doing? Put me down. You're going to hurt yourself."

She protested the whole way down the hall until he dropped her unceremoniously in a heap on the bed. Her robe flew up, giving him a tantalizing view of her long legs, but he forced himself to get up and go lock the door.

He turned back to the bed, looking every bit the big bad wolf that he was.

Jane swallowed the lump in her throat.

"Van," she whispered.

But he didn't speak. He was going to enjoy this. Now that he knew that Jane was just as sexually frustrated as he was, he had no problems using that to his advantage.

"Take off your robe."

Rather than doing what he said, she bunched the robe even tighter around herself.

"Damn, you're disagreeable, woman," he said grabbing her by the sash and pulling her to a standing position.

She put up a token protest, but he quickly had her naked.

He stepped back to enjoy the view.

Her body had changed in the past two weeks. He thought it was perfect before, but due to all the working out, she had tightened a good bit. He couldn't wait to find out if she had been working on some more intimate muscles.

He dropped his towel.

She swallowed hard again.

"Sit down on the bed, right in the middle."

Surprise, surprise, she once again didn't do as he'd demanded.

"Jane, sit on the bed, God damn it."

Finally, she complied. Though she didn't lean back in a seductive post like he was hoping, she sat in the middle of the bed, her legs pulled up in front of her. She looked a little wary, but ready for battle at the same time.

Like a light bulb going off over his head, Van suddenly had a really good idea.

He crossed the room to his closet where he rummaged inside. He could feel Jane's eyes on him the whole time, like a caress. Finding a few old ties, he crossed back to the bed. He caught Jane trying to sneak a peak again but she quickly averted her eyes.

"Lay back."

Damn, two weeks ago Jane had been so sweet and meek, now she was just a troublemaker. He wasn't sure which version of her he liked better.

Slowly, she leaned back, though she did so keeping her legs raised and her hands crossed over her chest.

“Give me your hands.”

“Van...”

“I promise I’m not going to hurt you. You’re really going to like what I’m going to do to you. Now please, just do as I say.”

She held her hands out in front of her, no longer meeting his gaze. He took both of her hands in his and raised them both up over her head, where he secured them to the headboard with his ties.

In this position his cock was near her head, close enough that she could take him in her mouth and suck him off easily. As it was, he could feel her hot breath on him.

“Tease,” he muttered as he forced himself away from her.

He soon realized that his bed was much too large to secure Jane’s legs spread apart. Not without hurting her, at least. Plus, if they were tied she wouldn’t be able to wrap her legs around him and pull him into her.

He figured he’d settle for only having her partially tied up.

Grabbing her ankles, he pulled her legs from their crossed position and spread her legs wide, baring her pussy. She’d continued to shave during the past two weeks so her lips were smooth and glistening with her juices.

He leaned down over the end of the bed and delivered one long swipe of his tongue, from bottom to top.

She shivered and let out a small whimper that sounded almost kitten-like.

Van reluctantly managed to pull himself away, turned on his heel and walked out of the room.

The sounds of her curses followed him down the hallway towards her room where he’d left her a little surprise earlier in the week.

He couldn’t help laughing as she cursed him, his entire family and any children he may someday have. When he walked back to his bedroom, he paused in the doorway.

Her body was flushed pink with anger, and he could already see slight abrasions on her wrists from where she’d pulled at her bonds. He’d anticipated that though, and he knew she wouldn’t get free until he released her.

“Aren’t you the woman who doesn’t swear?”

You couldn’t tell from the names she was calling him now.

“You left me here!” She yelled. “You tied me up and left me here, with the door open, where anyone could see.”

“I came right back,” he said trying to use his most innocent voice.

He was pretty sure that he didn’t succeed.

“What are you doing?”

Apparently she hadn’t found the presents he’d left for her, because he located them right where he’d left them, still in their packaging next to her bed in the drawer of her nightstand.

“I’m unwrapping the presents I left for you.”

*

He’d left her presents?

She desperately wanted to continue argue with him, it was the only way she felt that she had even a modicum of control, but judging from the look on his face, it probably wasn’t the best idea.

Finally, what he said seemed to penetrate her lust fogged brain.

“You left me presents?”

With his back to her, all she could see was his incredibly toned back and ass—not that she was complaining. But she really wanted to know what the presents were that he left her and why she had to be tied up now that he was about to give them to her.

“Yes, I left you presents. You think the only thing I’ve had delivered over the last two weeks were clothes and food?”

He turned around and Jane’s mouth went dry. Her mouth went dry because all the moisture in her body had flooded south of the border.

Forgetting for a moment that Van was buck naked—as if it were possible to forget that—his hands were full of sex toys. In his right hand he had a rather realistic looking dildo and although it wasn’t as large as him, it was rather impressive looking.

In that hand there was also a smaller item, a small red dildo that she was terribly afraid was actually a butt plug. She’d never thought she wanted anything there, but the thought of Van using it on her sent another wave of moisture down towards her pussy.

In his other hand, he held a purple jelly vibrator and a long string of pearls. Behind him on the dresser were several bottles of what she assumed—hoped—was lubricant.

Again, she struggled against her restraints.

“Stop it, you’re going to hurt yourself.”

“Well, you could just come over here and untie me, you know.”

He arched one dark eyebrow in her direction.

“Before the fun starts? I don’t think so.”

Okay, now she was starting to get a little bit nervous.

“Um, please?”

She didn’t think it would work, but it was worth a shot, right?

“I seem to remember a fantasy about being tied up. Not finding it so erotic now?”

He continued to stand over by his dresser. She felt so exposed under his gaze, though she supposed she was completely exposed. It still didn’t make things any more comfortable for her.

At least he hadn’t tied her legs together though. This way at least she was able to maintain a tiny bit of privacy. She didn’t want him knowing just how much his words were turning her on.

“It’s not polite to read other people’s diaries.”

He walked slowly towards the bed, his hands behind his back.

Oh—no.

“Yeah, well it’s not polite to watch a strange man jacking himself off either, but it didn’t stop you now did it?”

Well, he did have her there.

She didn’t answer though because he brought his hands out from around his back.

“A ... a blindfold?”

Almost subconsciously she began pulling on her restraints again.

“Stop it, you’re going to hurt yourself.” He rubbed her wrists as he spoke. “It’s a good thing I used silk or you’d really be doing some damage.”

He had her tied to the bed with silk ties? Wasn’t that a little—expensive?

His hands were warm on her skin, but he removed them quickly, and once again reached for the blindfold.

“I don’t think...”

“Good, don’t think,” he said. He leaned down and kissed her, just a peck on the lips, before sliding the blindfold over her head. Her world plunged into blackness and it scared the hell out of her.

“Van?”

“Don’t worry, I’m not going anywhere.”

But he had moved away from her slightly. Back over to the dresser maybe? She could hear his feet shuffling on the carpet, and then felt the bow of the mattress as he sat on the bed.

She strained her body towards him, moved her leg until it came into contact with him.

“I promise. I’m not going to go anywhere without telling you and even if I do, I guarantee I’m not going to be gone any longer than I have to.”

His warm hand lay on her stomach, and it was oddly comforting. Now that her vision had been cut off, she needed, craved Van’s touch.

“Can you ... will you ... tell me what you’re doing?”

Her voice sounded pitiful to her own ears.

She was terrified and this was her own darn fantasy. No wonder she’d remained a virgin for so long.

“Will that make you feel better?”

“Yes.”

“Will it turn you on?”

Hell yes!

“Will it turn you on when I tell you that I’m going to play with your breasts?” He continued.

An ‘mmm’ was all she could manage but apparently he took that as a yes, because she felt his hands touching her.

His fingers circled her breasts, moving closer and closer to her nipples, but never quite touching them. Every few circles, Van would lean over her and touch the very tip of his tongue to her nipple. She arched up, silently pleading for him to take her entirely into his mouth, but no. He pulled away, blowing on the sensitive skin.

Her nipples felt like they could take someone’s eye out.

“Do you like what I’m doing to you?”

His voice was husky, as if he hadn’t had enough water to drink in a long time.

“Yes, but...”

“But, what?”

“But I want more.”

“More what?”

What did she want more of?

“More of you touching me.”

His laugh was rich and warm.

“Don’t worry. We’ll get to that, I promise.”

He did give her a slight bit of relief when he leaned down and took her nipple in his mouth. He rolled it around his tongue, nipping it with his teeth while his hand molded and kneaded her other breast.

In only a few seconds, he stopped though.

“What?”

"I said, don't worry." He sounded like he was exasperated with a small child. "I'll tell you what I'm doing if you give me a chance."

She thought she might have heard him mutter something about a gag, but she couldn't be sure. For good measure, she decided that maybe it was in her best interest to keep as quiet as she could manage.

"I'm getting something from the bedside table," he said.

The bed bowed again, and Jane struggled to keep herself from not moving towards him.

Her heart rate kicked up a notch as she wondered which of the things from his hands he was going to retrieve.

"You're going to feel something slippery now," he said just before the scent of pineapple filled the air.

And something cold trickled onto her breasts and down to her stomach.

Breath hissed out through her teeth and she would have curled into a ball were it not for her restraints.

"I'm sorry. I didn't realize it might be cold, too. Don't worry, though. I'll make sure you stay warm."

His hands came down over the oil and spread it around her breasts. Like he promised, she warmed up instantly. In fact, her nipples started tingling.

"What is it?"

"It's warming gel." Van didn't pause in his massaging. "Do you like it?"

"Yeah."

She felt his mouth on her breast as one of his hands moved down to rub the pineapple oil into her stomach. He caressed and suckled hard this time, and once again, she found herself straining the ties on her wrists. This time she wanted to hold his head exactly where it was while forcing his other hand down even lower.

But, she stayed still, only the occasional moan escaping her lips, until Van's mouth left her breast and she felt his breath on her lips.

"It tastes good, too," he said just before crushing his mouth to hers.

It did taste good, like pineapple, but she doubted that it would taste half as good if she weren't tasting it secondhand. What they were doing seemed so—illicit.

As hard as it was for her to stay still, she loved every second of it.

When the taste of pineapple disappeared from their mouths, Van pulled back.

"I'm sorry I've been avoiding you the past two weeks."

He wants to have this conversation while she's blindfolded?

"Why have you?"

She was amazed at the fact that her voice sounded so normal.

"It was stupid, but I figured you'd want to end our affair."

"Why?"

"Well, maybe the whole 'you've got a bounty out on your head because of me' thing?"

"Oh, yeah, that."

She could barely think straight, she couldn't see, and she was naked, and somehow he wanted to have a rational conversation with her? She didn't think that was going to happen.

"I'm going to make it up to you, you know?"

How in the hell did he think he was going to make up for two weeks of forced celibacy?

He answered her question before she had a chance to ask it.

"I'm going to make you come as many times as I can before you scream that you can't take it anymore. And then, I'm going to make you come a few more times, just for good measure."

"Oh."

*

That's all she could come up with? *Oh*?

Of course, she wasn't the one holding back. She wasn't the one whose control was stretched to the limit.

Trying to get himself under control, Van stood from the bed, trying to give himself a little distance.

She murmured a sound of protest when he stood, but he quickly reassured her.

"I'm not going anywhere. I just want to see you—all of you."

Damn, she was breathtaking.

"Van?"

"I'm here, baby. Do you want me to tell you what I see?"

"Okay."

That meek little voice she had was almost his undoing. Unfortunately, she didn't convince him that she did want to hear what he saw. Too bad, he was going to tell her anyway.

"Your skin looks so creamy next to the dark green of my comforter. Your face, what I can see around the mask, is all flushed, and I have no doubt that if I took the mask off your eyes would be heavy with desire."

"Why don't you try it?"

Van threw his head back and laughed.

"Good one," he said.

"It wasn't supposed to be funny," she shot back.

"Well, it was, now shut up and let me tell you how sexy I think you are."

"You think I'm sexy?"

The disbelief in her voice was quite clear.

"You're not shutting up."

"Sorry," she finally mumbled.

"You really are breathtaking, you know?"

She made a snorting sound, a sound that made it clear that she didn't believe him.

"Your breasts are absolutely perfect. Like ice cream or something, with a nice ripe cherry on top."

Van crossed his arms in front of his chest and studied her, walking around the bed to make sure he took her in from every angle.

"Your body is more toned than last time I saw you naked. I assume it's due to the sexual frustration you were working off, and I do apologize for that. I like it, though; it looks good on you, not that there was anything wrong with you before, far from it, in fact."

He paced the length of the bed again.

"I like your stomach. I don't know why, maybe because it's soft and smooth, but I

just want to rest my head on it to go to sleep.”

“Great, you’re comparing me to a pillow. That’s a way to win a girl’s heart.”

But he wasn’t trying to win her heart, was he? No, he was trying to win his way into her pants, he insisted to himself. Well, then why wasn’t he taking her now? Why did he insist on making Jane feel good about herself, hell, make her feel good in general?

“No talking, remember? Where was I? Oh yeah, and I especially like what’s directly below your stomach.”

“Typical male.”

“You know, I think I liked you better when you were all meek and afraid of me.”

He said it, but he hoped that she knew he was joking when he ran a single finger up her tied arms, making her shiver.

“I was shocked as hell when I found out you shaved. Here you are, a nice virgin, with the smoothest pussy I’ve ever felt. It was like every schoolboy fantasy come to life. And I like the strip of hair that you do leave. It’s like an arrow to paradise.”

“Are you almost finished?”

Jane struggled with the scrutiny.

“Almost. We’re to your legs now. I like how strong they’ve become. I can’t wait to feel them wrapped around me, pulling me closer so my cock thrusts even deeper inside of you.”

Jane whimpered again.

“And last,” he said, “we get to your feet. I never thought I had a foot fetish, but you’ve got the cutest little feet I’ve ever seen. The first time we met I was amazed at how tiny your feet are.”

As he spoke, he touched her feet.

“Please don’t,” she pleaded.

“Ticklish feet?”

“No, I just don’t like to have my feet touched, that’s all.”

He knew she was lying, but he decided to use his newfound knowledge another day.

“Okay then. I’ll just have to find somewhere else to touch you.”

Chapter Seventeen

Jane's head turned on the pillow as she followed Van's voice around the room. When he stopped speaking, however, she started to get a little nervous.

All she could think about was his last pronouncement echoing through her brain.

I'm going to touch you somewhere else.

He hadn't spoken since, but she heard him once again rustling at the bedside table. While she hoped that he was sheathing himself in a condom and was about to take her, she was afraid he was going to prolong her torment for a really long time.

The bed bowed again, this time closer to the bottom of the bed. She automatically tried to move away, to give him more room, but he stopped her with a hand on her ankle.

"Keep your legs apart."

"What are you doing?"

"Don't worry. It'll be something you like."

"But..."

"No butts, well, at least not until later."

He laughed at his own joke and ran his palm up her leg, to the outside of her thigh. He positioned her legs even further apart, and though she couldn't see where he was, she was pretty sure that he was perched directly between her legs.

While the room was silent, she was biting her lip to keep from crying out, a buzzing filled the air.

"What's that?"

"A pocket rocket."

A pocket rocket? She'd heard of it, of course, but well, she'd never used one and she certainly never thought that a man would be using one on her.

But before she could think of anything else, or protest in any way, he touched the cold nub of metal to the inside of her thigh.

Had she not been tied to the bed, she probably would have hit the ceiling.

And that was just her thigh.

Ever so slowly, the device began inching towards her pussy.

Part of her wanted to move closer, another part of her wanted to slam her legs closed and demand to be released. She compromised and stayed still.

Until the rocket touched her core. Then, she couldn't have remained still if her life depended on it.

Van was an expert with the small device. He put just enough pressure on her clit, until it almost hurt, and then he moved it away, down through her wetness to her core where he slid it ever so slightly inside of her.

"Van," she moaned.

"I told you it was going to feel good. I didn't lie, now did I?"

He most certainly hadn't.

He pulled the small bullet out of her and ran it back up towards her clit, pausing only slightly before starting all over again.

Jane felt as if she were on fire. Her skin burned and she was pretty sure if spontaneous human combustion were possible she'd be proving it in the next few

minutes.

The next time, Van pushed the small bullet a little bit further inside of her. She arched up to meet it, to urge him to go deeper, but he didn't. When he touched her clit again, she came.

She expected him to toss the small vibrator aside, but when it slid back down her lips to once again be lodged inside of her, she came even harder.

Her heart pounded and a sheen of sweat broke out all over her body. Her own wetness dripped from her pussy down her thighs and she was sure she was leaving a huge wet spot on Van's bedspread.

How embarrassing.

That thought, and her self-consciousness, brought her down from her climax.

He must have sensed the change in her, because he thrust the rocket even deeper.

"I guess I didn't do it right if you're still thinking."

Something, she assumed it was Van's finger, slid inside of her, pushing the now still metal egg inside of her even deeper. At the same time, a warm sensation settled over her clit.

It took her only a moment to realize that it was Van's mouth.

He continued to lick and suck her clit while his finger pushed the vibrator deeper, before he pulled it out slightly. When he turned it on, Jane was surprised that the spontaneous combustion thing didn't come to fruition.

She came again, hard, and this time, she didn't stop to think of anything afterwards but how good she felt.

*

Van had several sex toys left, but for some reason he didn't want to use them on her. Oh, he most definitely wanted to use them someday, but not right now.

He was almost disgusted with himself when he lay down next to her as she continued to shudder from her climax.

Well, he'd made sure he'd ridden out the entirety of her climax, but for minutes after, she continued to shiver and every once in a while let out a soft moan, or tiny whimper.

When she'd been quiet for a few moments, and her breathing and heart rate had slowed close to normal, he reached up and took off the blindfold.

"Hi," she said, after blinking her eyes a few times, adjusting to the light in the room.

"Did you enjoy yourself?"

"I did, but..."

"But, what?"

Were they really going to have to play this game again?

"But nothing. It's not important, never mind."

"Jane, if it weren't important, you wouldn't have thought to bring it up, so spill."

"Well, I would've enjoyed it more if, well, if you were more involved. I mean, don't get me wrong, I liked my present. I liked the way you gave me a present, but well, I've had experience with battery operated boyfriends and if it's just the same to you, I'd like to experience things with you."

"Don't worry," he said aligning his body with hers as he reached up to untie her binds, "We're going to get to that right now."

He untied the ties and brought her hands back down, rubbing the circulation back

through them.

“Do your arms hurt?”

“No, they’re fine.”

Her voice had taken on a kind of a dreamy quality, like she had no cares in the world except for the next time she was pleased.

She mumbled something, but Van couldn’t make it out.

“What did you say,” he asked, still vigorously rubbing her arms.

She pulled herself away and repeated herself.

“Can I suck on your penis now?”

Van was suddenly struck down with the dumb stick. He couldn’t think of a single thing to say. This whole thing was supposed to be about her pleasure. He’d been the one staying away from her for the past two weeks.

He said, “Uh, okay.”

She pushed him flat on his back. It was easy to do since he was still suffering from extreme stupidity brought on by impending sexual release.

She moved towards the bottom of the bed, straddled his knees and didn’t hold anything back.

There were no tenuous licks this time, no testing of the flavor or whatever. She leaned down and took him as far into the back of her throat as she could get him.

Van had died and gone to heaven.

She sucked and slurped like she was devouring a lollypop. Van was pretty sure his eyes rolled to the back of his head, and it was only minutes until he was getting way too close to the point of no return.

It was with great reluctance that he summoned all of his remaining strength and flipped her over once more so that he was on top.

“I wasn’t finished, you know.”

“Yeah, well, a few more minutes and I would have been.”

He reached over and grabbed a condom from the nightstand. He only had a moment’s disappointment when he thought of the toys he didn’t get to use on her. But, he quickly reasoned, there was no telling how long they’d be stuck together.

He sheathed himself in the latex, but rather than plunging straight into her, which ninety-nine point nine percent of his body was telling him to do, he slowly rubbed his cock up and down her dripping wet pussy. He got ever so close to thrusting, but then moved back up to slide his cock, and the ribbed rubber, over her clit.

Judging by the way she was reacting, the manufacturers knew what they were talking about when they said that it was ribbed for her pleasure.

When he was pretty sure she was nearing the point of no return once again, he finally thrust himself in to the hilt.

“Damn that’s good.”

If possible, it felt like she had gotten even tighter over the two weeks since he’d last had her.

It was only going to take a few thrusts before he exploded. He reached down between their bodies and fingered her clit. If he was going to go off, he wanted her right there with him.

“Yes,” she gasped.

He thrust harder until the room disappeared around him and all he could feel was

their bodies slapping together. Far too quickly, he swelled inside of her, coming hard and collapsing on top of her.

He was pretty sure that he saw stars.

"I can't breathe."

Well, neither could he, but he did manage to roll himself off of her slightly.

"I still can't breathe," she said.

As his eyes slowly came back into focus, he saw that she lay under him, a slightly dazed expression on her face.

"Are you alright?"

"I think so. That was a long two weeks."

She didn't have to tell him. He was pretty sure he'd just unloaded at least a gallon of come inside of her.

"I'm going to get up now, okay."

"Do you have to?" She asked quietly. "I kind of like it like this."

He didn't speak but he did gather her close in his arms, once again tucking her underneath him, but at the same time making sure that he wasn't crushing her.

It was only a few moments before he felt the worst thing that he could imagine feeling at the moment. His thigh was sticky. He pulled away from her suddenly, knocking her towards the other side of the bed.

"What are you doing?"

He looked down at the piece of rubber ringing his cock, and then back to the bed where he could see his white cream coating the inside of Jane's thighs.

"We've got a problem."

"What's the matter?"

She looked iffy, but not nearly as terrified as Van was.

"The condom broke."

*

By the time Aiden finished in the shower and walked back into the basement he found the room dark and empty.

"That's okay guys, no need to tell me where you're going," he muttered under his breath. He turned towards the stairs when he was stopped in his tracks.

"I thought I was alone."

The most breathtaking woman he could imagine was standing in front of him in all her glorious nakedness and he's complaining? What in the hell was he being defensive for?

There were no words to describe how she looked, her dark black hair fell in waves down towards her waist. There was only a small lock falling over her shoulder, where it fell in a perfect point down to the rosy tip of her nipple. It was like a neon sign saying "look at me, look at me."

Aiden took his time to look his fill.

He hadn't looked much further south than that during their last encounter, but he took his time perusing her now. What else could he do? He felt like his feet were encased in lead. Her stomach was tight, the rippling of her six pack of muscles defined in the low light.

The lips of her pussy were plump and ready to be fucked, topped off by a triangle of black curls. When he looked to her face again, she had a condom wrapper in her hand,

tapping it ever so slowly against her chin.

Suddenly released from the lead, his feet barely touched the floor as he ran to her.

Without speaking, he pushed her back against the wall, and immediately went to her knees. She gasped when he pushed her knees apart, slinging one of her legs over his shoulder.

He devoured her, his tongue plunging in her dripping cunt, alternating with nips at her distended clit.

"Fuck, Aiden," she moaned above him.

"Yeah, we'll get to that."

He moved his tongue to her clit, and focused his attention there while he plunged two of his fingers into her. Her cream dripped down his fingers to his wrist.

Her knees buckled, but he reached above his head to place one hand on her chest, holding her up.

When her insides began to quiver around his fingers, Aiden pulled Kali to the ground with him, removed his fingers and thrust himself inside her just as her climax was washing over her.

Sweat dripped from their bodies to pool on the mat underneath them and allowed their bodies to slide together seamlessly.

The rest of the room was silent except for the occasional moan or groan, and the slapping of skin against skin.

"I'm coming," Aiden moaned.

His orgasm flooded every cell of his body and he collapsed on top of Kali.

"I think I need another shower now," Kali said after a few minutes.

"Yeah, me, too."

"Want to join me?"

*

Jane didn't think she'd ever seen a human being shut down as quickly as Van had shut down after the *broken condom* announcement. He'd quickly disappeared into the bathroom, and while she thought he was just going to clean himself up, the water in the shower came on. She waited five minutes and then she went back to her own room.

Taking yet another shower relaxed her some, but to be perfectly honest, she was furious.

She wasn't furious at the situation necessarily, no actually she was strangely calm about that, but she was really mad about Van's reaction.

What the hell did he care? It wasn't his life that could, theoretically, be turned on its head.

She was pretty darn sure that it was the wrong time of the month for her to get pregnant, but she also remembered a couple of girls in high school telling her the same thing when they were nine months pregnant at graduation.

She grabbed the shampoo bottle and squeezed a little bit into her hands. She rubbed at her scalp vigorously. She was going to have to find a better place to cool her anger and frustration because if she kept up with the showers like she'd been going, she was going to start going bald soon.

As she rinsed the shampoo and applied the conditioner she thought about her options. She could try to get Van to let her leave the house and head to her doctor. She'd heard about that morning-after pill.

But no, if there was even the slightest chance that she was pregnant, then she couldn't do anything to possibly harm the baby. She'd never given much thought to motherhood before. Being an almost thirty year old virgin, she'd pretty much decided it wasn't in the cards.

Suddenly, though, a whole new world seemed to open up before her. She could actually be somebody's mother.

And she'd be a damn good one, too, if she said so herself.

She turned off the water and stepped out onto the bathmat, reaching for her towel at the same time. It was still wet from the last shower she'd taken.

She pulled on her clothes—this time she'd remembered to take them into the bathroom with her. She wasn't about to be quite so easy next time.

She slipped into the purple sweats and pulled the University of Washington sweatshirt over her head. She combed out her hair, and applied some face lotion and the tiniest bit of powder.

"You're not one of those girly girls who takes forever in the bathroom, are you?"

Kali's voice scared her and she dropped the powder, spilling it all over the vanity.

"You scared the hell out of me!"

Kali snickered while Jane mopped up the powder with a towel.

"When did you start swearing?"

And why was she suddenly in such a foul mood?

"Well, when you're cooped up in a house with three people who pretty much don't speak without dropping the f-bomb, let alone other swears, you tend to adopt their speaking habits."

Kali rolled her eyes and pursed her lips, but didn't say anything.

"What," Jane dropped her shoulders and staggered into the bedroom. "Come on, hit me with whatever you've got."

Suddenly all Jane wanted to do was lay down and go to sleep.

"I guess you didn't get laid."

As much as she didn't want to, Jane found herself laughing. When she saw the two cartons of Ben and Jerry's on her nightstand, she was suddenly really glad that Kali had interfered when she did.

She grabbed the closest carton, not even caring about the flavor, and dug in. The sinful chocolatey goodness hit her tongue and she was suddenly in a much better mood.

Kali picked up the other carton and climbed onto the other side of the bed.

They ate in silence for a few moments.

"I actually did get laid."

Kali choked on her ice cream.

"And you're still in such a bad mood?"

Jane just shrugged her shoulders. She didn't want to talk about it. Talking about it led to thinking about it, and that just led to bad things.

"Look," Kali said, "generally I think it'd take two women from insanely opposite walks of life more than a couple of weeks to be friends. But," she continued, "I thought I'd been proven wrong in the past two weeks."

Jane had never really had a best friend before. She felt a tickle at the back of her eyes, but quickly blinked away any tears.

"The condom broke."

She mumbled it, hoping that Kali would get the picture that she really didn't want to do anything about it, especially talk.

"The condom broke?" She yelled.

"Do you want to be a little bit louder? I think maybe there are people in New Zealand that didn't hear you."

"Sorry," Kali mumbled. "What are you going to do?"

Suddenly the ice cream in her hands had lost all taste. She put the lid on and set it back on her nightstand. Flopping back on the bed, she looked to Kali for advice.

"I don't know," she said. "You're my new best friend. What do you think I should do?"

Chapter Eighteen

Van had showered again and he still couldn't seem to shake the feeling that he was a dirty bastard. Sure, he guessed technically it wasn't his fault that the condom broke, but if he hadn't practically forced himself on Jane, none of this would've happened.

He was startled out of his reverie when the coffee pot in front of him started hissing as the coffee dripped into the carafe. He watched it closely until it filled just enough for his cup, poured himself a mug and headed into the dining room.

"You gonna share that?"

Damn it, he hadn't even known Aiden was close to the kitchen. What in the hell kind of werewolf was he?

"Help yourself," he said, and kept on walking.

His brother joined him in front of the window a few minutes later.

"Seems like your water bill has probably gone up drastically in the past two weeks."

Van snorted, and took a sip of the coffee. He started wishing he'd put some Irish in his coffee.

Aiden was probably sexually frustrated, too. He was used to meeting women all the time. Didn't he usually go home with a new woman every night?

"You know, you're not as old as you seem to think."

Van shook his head.

"Sometimes I feel like I'm a hundred."

"Yeah, it must be really hard to be you."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

Aiden had been getting nasty lately, and Van wasn't about to put up with it any more.

"Your life is really tough. You're loaded so you only have to work when you want to. You own your own business that makes you even more money. I've had women tell me that they've never seen anyone sexier than me—except you. And to top it off, you've got a completely willing woman stuck in the house with you, one you could seriously have a future with, if only you weren't too much of a pansy ass to take a chance."

The disdain in his brother's voice was clear, but Van told himself to ignore it. He made himself stare out the window. What had been a rather gray day had turned into a rather pleasant sunset. The barest whispers of sunlight shone through the thick clouds, landing twinkling on the water below. The sound was calm, and at the moment there wasn't a boat in sight.

"Remember when we were kids, and mom used to tell us that the sun shining through the clouds were the strings of the harps the angels played after the sun went down and we went to bed?"

Out of the corner of his eye, Van saw his brother shake his head and take another sip of his coffee.

"Changing the subject again. Isn't that just like you?"

Aiden drained the last of his coffee in one gulp. He turned to leave the room, leaving the mug on the table as he passed through the dining room. He paused at the doorway, turning back towards Van.

“And to think, when I was a kid I wanted to be just like you.”

That was a slap in the face.

Although he couldn't say it was an unexpected one. He'd known his brother had been turning on him for years.

Hell, why shouldn't his brother have turned on him? He *was* a crappy big brother.

He took one last glance at the sunset before following his brother from the room.

“Aiden, get the hell back here.”

It was time they had this out once and for all.

He followed the sound of voices back to his office. Kali was behind his desk, Jane on the couch and Aiden was pacing the room.

“Aiden, I need to talk to you. Now.”

His brother had suddenly become someone he didn't know at all. Or was it really that sudden?

“I don't really have anything more to say to you, Van.”

“I said now.”

He could feel his temperature rising and he knew that was a bad thing. Damn it, everyone in the room knew it was a bad thing, but no one seemed to mind.

Jane jumped up.

“Can I talk to you for a second, please, Van?”

“Not now, Jane.”

He brushed her off.

“But Van. It's about what happened, you know, before.”

“Maybe we should talk about this later. In private. I need to talk to my brother now.”

“Well, I'm not really in the mood to talk to you now,” Aiden shot back.

And apparently Jane wasn't about to be deterred.

“I want to get this over with, if it's all the same to you.”

“Really Jane, it's not a good time.”

“But, well, I just wanted to let you know not to worry about it.”

“Aiden I really think we should...” suddenly what Jane said seemed to penetrate the fog in his brain. “What did you say?”

“Well it's just that if anything does happen, which I don't think it will, well, I just ... you don't have to worry about it.”

When had his world turned completely upside down?

“What did you do?” Aiden asked.

It didn't take very much for his brother to turn on him.

“Nothing.”

Kali spoke up from behind the desk.

“The condom broke while they were doing the nasty.”

“What? What in the hell are you going to do about it?”

Maybe he could just leave the room and when he came back in an hour or so everyone would have forgotten about what was going on.

Looking around the room and finding all eyes upon him he figured that was too much to hope for.

His mouth was open to answer, not that he had any clue what he was going to say, but Jane interceded on his behalf.

“Didn't you just hear what I said? Probably nothing ... happened, but if I do happen

to find myself, you know, with child, then Van doesn't have to do anything about it."

"The hell he doesn't," Aiden shot back.

"Does anyone want to hear what I have to say about the whole situation?" Van asked.

"No!" all three people shouted simultaneously.

What in the hell was going on here? When did everyone become so tense?

"So I assume you're going to take over parental responsibilities if it turns out there was a defect in the condom you and Kali used?"

As soon as she finished speaking, Jane's eyes went wide and her hands flew to her mouth.

The room grew eerily quiet. Van could feel the blood rushing to his head. He suddenly felt like he was a cartoon and half-expected steam to be coming out of his ears.

"What did you say?"

He knew the tone of his voice scared her. She flinched when he spoke, and moved to stand next to Aiden. Aiden put his hand on the small of her back.

When did it become everyone against him? When did Jane and Aiden become so close, and how in the hell did he not know that his best friend and his brother were sleeping together under his own roof?

"I didn't say anything," Jane spoke quietly.

"Aiden, is what Jane said true?"

"But I just said that I didn't say anything, so how could it be true?"

She laughed slightly, trying to defuse some of the tension in the room, but there was no humor in the sound, nor did anyone else crack a smile.

"Donovan." He hated when his brother called him Donovan. "You may not believe it, but I'm a grown-up. And believe it or not, so is Kali. We both made grown up decisions and frankly, whatever we have or haven't done is none of your damn business."

"It is my business if it happens under my roof."

"Oh, I'm sorry, so you're allowed to fuck anybody you want, but nobody else can, is that it?"

All hell broke loose in his study. Unable to contain the animal inside of him, he lurched for his brother. Jane tried to help, tried to stand between the brothers, but Van honestly didn't care. Van pushed her aside. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw her hit the ground, her head thumping hard against the leg of the chair.

She lay motionless on the floor, but Van couldn't bring himself to care. He was controlled strictly by the animal now, and the only thing he could think was to hurt, hell, even kill his brother.

"Stop!"

Kali's harsh cry and a heaping dose of mind control were the only things keeping Van's hands from tightening completely around his brother's neck. He warred with the animal inside of him, finally letting go.

They faced off, both of their chest's heaving, a small trickle of blood running down the side of Aiden's face.

Finally they were startled out of their reverie by a small sound coming from the floor.

"Oh my god, Jane."

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“Was there an earthquake?”

Jane’s head hurt like it’d never hurt before, and she couldn’t quite bring herself to open her eyes. Her hands were encased in larger warm hands, and she was lying on something comfortable, a soft blanket pulled the whole way up to her chin.

“No, there wasn’t an earthquake.”

The voice was masculine, but she didn’t recognize the whisper.

She didn’t know quite how she could go from being so comfortable to so uncomfortable quite so quickly, but when a something extremely cold touched her temple, she shot up from her prone position. Immediately her head started spinning, and she had to work hard to keep the nausea at bay.

“Are you sure there wasn’t an earthquake?”

It wasn’t that unheard of, considering they were in Seattle.

“I promise there wasn’t an earthquake.”

“Then how come the room is still moving?”

She heard two distinct laughs now, one feminine and one masculine. She was desperately afraid that the one she wanted to hear the most was no longer in the room. Now she wouldn’t have actually minded passing out again.

“You’ve got to stay awake, Janie.”

Her eyes were closed again, but she recognized Kali’s voice as coming from the foot of the couch.

“I’ll stay awake, but with my eyes closed.”

“The lights are turned down really low. You can open your eyes for us.”

She tested her eyelids, first opening one slowly, just the tiniest fraction of an inch. When she didn’t pass out again, she opened it the whole way, and then proceeded to do the same thing with the other eye.

Slowly the faces of Aiden and Kali came into view.

“Hi.”

“How are you feeling?”

It was the first time she’d heard such concern in the vampire’s voice.

“Like I was punched in the head by a werewolf, actually.”

Kali and Aiden laughed, the emotion she was going for, but she quickly realized that Van hadn’t left the room like she’d thought.

“That’s not funny.”

She turned her head, and when the room stopped spinning she saw Van sitting on the other side of the room in the same chair she’d hit her head on.

“Oh, quit moping. I’m the one that got knocked out.”

“You don’t have to remind me.”

Jane looked at Aiden and Kali. She’d obviously made a mistake before when she brought up the broken condom in front of the other people. She was a smart girl. She wasn’t going to make the same mistake twice. Obviously Van didn’t like to have his dirty laundry aired in public.

She looked at Aiden and Kali.

“Can you leave us alone for a few minutes, please?”

Kali instantly got up to leave, though Aiden seemed reluctant.

“Try not to knock her out again,” he said as he passed his brother.

“Try not to have sex with my best friend while you’re waiting outside,” Van shot

back.

"Bunch of children," Jane muttered as she struggled to a sitting position.

Van, the damn bastard, didn't even bother to try to help her. She managed to move her aching head to a sitting position on the couch, plopped a pillow behind her head and turned on him.

"What in the hell is your problem?"

He only looked shocked for a moment.

"I'm sorry," he muttered.

The idiot wouldn't meet her eyes.

"Hello? I'm the one that jumped in front of a werewolf, what in the hell are you sorry for?"

"I should have had more control while you're around. It won't happen again."

She struggled to her feet, only wobbling once or twice. She couldn't believe she'd slept with this guy. Could anyone be more self-centered? Well, she'd rather live the rest of her life celibate than continue her affair with him.

"You're damn straight it's not going to happen again. I'm leaving."

Through the pounding of her head she managed to make it to the door.

"You can't leave, someone's after you."

She opened the door, knowing that Aiden and Kali were in the hall. She didn't really give a damn if she aired Van's dirty laundry anymore.

"Oh, and somehow you think that someone else is going to be half as dangerous as you? You shouldn't apologize for hitting me, you should apologize for attacking your brother."

With as much dignity as her aching head could muster, she stalked out of the room. The stairs loomed menacingly in front of her, but Kali got to her feet and took her by the elbow. She even let Jane lean on her when she couldn't make it more than half way on her own power.

"Good one, Van. I guess you succeeded. You've lost everyone in the world. Your brother, your best friend, and even the woman that loves you. I hope you're happy alone," Aiden said.

Jane's heart broke for him.

"Stay here. You'll all be safe here," he said before turning on his heel and walking out the door.

The slam reverberated behind him.

Jane lost control of any strength she thought she had and collapsed on the stairs. Tears started falling, and she didn't even bother trying to stop them.

"He shouldn't be out there alone," she said.

Kali nodded.

"I'll go make some calls."

When she reached the bottom of the stairs, she stood on her tiptoes and gave Aiden a kiss on the cheek.

He took Kali's place sitting next to Jane halfway up the stairs.

"Do you want to go upstairs? You can't go to sleep or anything, yet. Not until we're sure you don't have a concussion."

Jane shook her head, and only realized that it was a bad idea when her head stopped moving but the house continued to shake.

"I could use an aspirin." Her stomach grumbled just as she finished speaking. "And some food, too, I guess."

"Come on," Aiden helped her up, down the stairs and into the kitchen.

He settled her into one of the kitchen chairs and retrieved an aspirin from the downstairs powder room.

"How about grilled cheese? I'm no gourmet cook, but I grill a mean cheese sandwich."

"Sounds great."

As she watched Aiden prepare the makings for the sandwiches, she was struck by the realization that she should've fallen in love with this brother.

Immediately on the heels of that realization was that sometime in the past two weeks she had fallen in love with Van.

"Damn it."

"Is everything okay?"

Aiden was just sliding the first sandwich into the pan. It hissed when it hit the hot butter. He squished it with a spatula before covering the pan.

"Yeah, I'm fine. It's just, um, what you said before. Before Van left..."

"You mean about him being alone?"

"Yeah, no, well, not that exactly."

Aiden look confused, but Kali came to her rescue.

"She means the part about her being in love with him."

She entered the room and walked directly over to the stove, picking the lid off of the skillet.

"Get your paws off," Aiden said, talking the lid back and returning it to cover the grilled cheese.

Kali stuck her tongue out and Aiden blew her an exaggerated kiss. Once again Jane found tears running down her cheeks.

"What's wrong? Do you need another aspirin?" Aiden asked.

"No. It's nothing."

Jane was a fool.

"It is something. What is it?" Kali asked.

How did these people integrate themselves so fully into her life in a mere two weeks?

"Nothing. It's just that I think you're wrong. About the love thing. I mean, I want a relationship like you guys have, with the joking and teasing and stuff."

Both Aiden and Kali looked uncomfortable.

"What?" She asked.

Kali and Aiden shared a guilty look before Kali took Jane's hand in hers.

"Aiden and I don't have a relationship."

Jane laughed.

"Are you denying it just as much as I am? Of course you have a relationship. I'm very aware of the fact that you're sleeping together."

"Yeah," Aiden said as he slid a grilled cheese onto the plate in front of her. "We're sleeping together, but that's it. And assuming that we get out of here alive, as soon as we're not housebound anymore, we'll be going our separate ways."

"I don't understand."

Suddenly, the thought of grilled cheese turned her stomach. Unfortunately, she knew she had to eat. She picked apart her sandwich and took tiny bites as the conversation continued and dread pooled in the pit of her stomach.

Kali explained.

“The paranormal community is ... well, there are rules. I’m more than just a simple vampire enforcer.”

“She’s a princess,” Aiden added while Kali hemmed and hawed.

“Really?”

Her new best friend wasn’t just a vampire she was a vampire princess. That was cool.

Kali blushed, but she did nod.

“There are rules about who I’m allowed to have real relationships with, but nobody ever bothered making rules about who I can and can’t have some fun with.”

“Plus, I’m not ready to settle in for a real relationship,” Aiden chimed in.

Well, was Van ready to settle in for a real relationship? Did he have rules governing who he was and wasn’t allowed to fraternize with?

Was she fooling herself thinking that Van could ever love her back?

Yes, she decided. She was pretty sure she was.

Chapter Nineteen

Van left the house, but he stayed within the yard. Hell, he'd be a fool not to.

Oh, but wait, he *was* a fool.

The three people he thought he was closest to in the world had told him so.

He walked around the side of the house to the back patio. He figured at least Kali knew he wouldn't go too far away. Or well, at least it used to be that she'd know. He didn't trust himself to know anything about anyone anymore.

Almost as soon as he got outside, he could sense the others. There were at least four of them in wolf form, a few more, in human form.

Damn.

He quickly considered his options. If he stayed in human form, it was more likely that they wouldn't sense him. At the same time, he knew he wouldn't be able to defend himself, let alone the people in the house, as well in human form.

Deciding to stay in human form for the moment, until he could gather as much information as possible, he stayed close to the wall, and crept towards the back patio. He desperately hoped that they wouldn't try to get into the house.

He heard a rustle towards the back of the patio and knew that he'd been caught.

He shifted into wolf form just as a large gray leapt out of the bushes, fangs bared. He turned to the side, bracing himself for impact. Pain lashed through his side as the other creature's nails dig into his side.

But, he rolled with the beast and it wasn't very difficult for him to get the upper hand. Unfortunately, as soon as he was on top of the other beast, the other wolves made themselves known.

He was quickly surrounded. Wolves of every color, shape and size jumped out of the surrounding bushes, their white teeth glistening in the moonlight. Snarls permeated the air.

Van knew that he was outnumbered. He had to get back inside. He had to get back inside to make sure the people inside were safe.

He turned on his haunches, trying to sprint back to the front door—he figured that would be his best bet at getting to safety while at the same time not putting his family in danger.

He made it almost to the front door before he felt the first stab of pain. His eyes crossed, but he forced himself to keep moving.

He shook off the animal whose claws had punctured his side. In the process he felt another scratch slide the whole way down his torso.

He forced himself forward through the pain.

Damn it.

He was going to have to slow down when he transformed back into his human form.

He poured on the speed. He had to get enough of a head start to have time to transform and get into the house. He couldn't open the door with paws, now could he?

Several more swipes were taken and a few even made contact, but no one else was able to keep up with him completely.

He reached the front stoop, shifted back into human form and wrenched open the

door. Just as he got it open another flash of pain tore through his back.
He slammed the door behind him and fell into a heap.

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“Van? Is that you?” Aiden yelled.

There was silence from the front room.

“He must still be mad,” Kali said.

Shivers skittered up and down Jane’s spine. At the same time both Aiden and Kali froze. Something was wrong.

Jane was the first one out of her seat, dashing towards the front of the house. As she ran down the hall, the feeling of something being wrong intensified. She finally made it to the front hallway and found Van.

“Oh my God,” she moaned as she saw Van’s crumpled body by the front door. He was naked, and a series of jagged, deep scratches crisscrossed his torso.

“We need to move him to the couch.”

He was awake, moaning, but he wasn’t speaking.

“Van, can you hear us?”

He didn’t speak, but he did nod his head. Jane took it as a sign to continue talking.

Aiden helped his brother to his feet, supporting just about all of his weight.

Struggling, they made their way into the study.

Jane followed, helping as much as she could.

Kali stayed behind, she said to make sure the front door was locked, and whatever was out there wasn’t going to be coming in.

“You’re going to be just fine, Van. We’ll take care of you.”

“Jane, why don’t you go get a wash cloth and a towel or two and we can get him cleaned up.”

She ran upstairs as fast as she could. She dashed into his bathroom and threw a few washcloths into the sink, cranking on the water. Letting the washcloths soak, she dashed to the linen closet and grabbed a huge stack of towels.

She retrieved the washcloths, turned off the water and ran back downstairs, dripping a trail of water behind her.

The whole trip took her less than a minute.

Dashing back down the stairs she almost ran into Clifford who was also heading into the study.

“What happened?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” she answered. “We found him inside the front door.”

Clifford shuffled into the study just in front of Jane.

“Give me a wash cloth.”

His voice demanded complete cooperation. She handed over one of the wet cloths.

Aiden moved from his brother’s side, letting the elder man tend to the wounded Van.

“Aiden, go to my room and get the black bag that’s sitting directly inside the door.”

Aiden didn’t hesitate and he rushed out of the room.

“What can I do?”

Jane certainly wasn’t helping any by simply standing in the middle of the room wringing her hands.

“Sit down and just talk to him. This is going to hurt.”

Jane did as directed and sat down next to Van’s head. She grabbed another cloth and

swiped at the blood on his face. Luckily, he didn't seem to have anything more than superficial head wounds.

"Van? Van wake up."

His eyes didn't fly open, having been in the same position herself just an hour earlier, she knew that speaking probably wasn't his first priority. Although, his eyes did crack slightly.

His mouth moved, but she didn't hear anything.

She leaned down and put her ear directly above his mouth.

"I didn't hear you, Van."

He licked his lips before he spoke again.

"I said I'm sorry."

Her heart swelled and she felt horrible for what she'd caused earlier.

"I'm sorry, too," she said, "but let's worry about you getting better first."

He smiled slightly, although it was more like a wince, and closed his eyes again.

"Uh-uh, no one let me go to sleep so I'm going to have to insist the same of you. Open your eyes, Van."

He wince/smiled again, but did open his eyes.

The pain in his eyes was evident and increased each and every time Clifford pressed a cloth to one of his wounds.

"What happened, Van?"

He didn't have an opportunity to answer because Aiden rushed back in the room followed quickly by Kali.

Any unease that had lessened came back ten fold when Jane saw the worried expression on Kali's face. She didn't speak but rushed directly to the phone. While dialing, she also started clicking away at the computer.

Aiden rushed the black bag to Clifford's side.

The old man dug through the leather satchel finally coming out with a large needle and a vial of liquid.

He grabbed a long rubber tourniquet and wrapped it tight around Van's upper arm. He tapped the vial and filled the needle before puncturing Van's arm and injecting the liquid.

Van's breath hissed through his teeth.

"Keep him still," Clifford commanded, though he never wavered from his task.

She scooted a little closer to Van and lifted his head up, settling it on her lap. She leaned down over him, careful not to suffocate him with her breasts, and held him tight.

She didn't release him until Clifford removed the needle and the tourniquet. When she moved back and looked back down at him, his eyes were sparkling and he had a big grin on his face.

"I'm not sure if I want you to let me up or not," he said.

"Wha—What was that stuff?"

Jane jumped up, dislodging Van's head.

"Oh, I could use a couple of aspirin."

Aiden rushed right to his brother's side, two pills already in his hand along with a glass of water.

Van took them with thanks.

"Will someone please tell me what's going on here?"

Jane was adorable when she was flustered.

Her hair was rumpled, and there was a purple bruise growing on the side of her forehead. He had a moment of guilt when he realized that he was the one to have caused it.

But, he did owe everyone an explanation.

"I'll explain, but can I put some clothes on first, please?"

He'd really rather not talk about almost getting mauled while being naked.

"Do you want me to go get you something?" Jane asked.

Why was she being so nice now after what happened earlier?

"Yeah, that'd be great."

She dashed from the room. But he had no intention of letting her go alone.

He picked himself up from the couch wrapping the blanket around his hips. His limbs were heavy, but Clifford's magic potion seemed to have done a lot. Thank god he had a butler who understood werewolf physiology better than anyone else he knew.

"I'll be back," he said following Jane out the door and up the stairs.

He chose to ignore the snickers that came as soon as his back was turned.

He trudged up the stairs and into his bedroom. He stopped when he was only a step inside.

Jane was rifling through his closet. She tossed a black tee shirt onto the bed, followed by a pair of well-worn jeans. She'd just opened his underwear drawer and began rifling around when she noticed him.

"What are you doing? Should you be up? Maybe you should go to the hospital."

"I'm fine."

She rushed to his side and forced him to sit on the bed.

"You'd be more convincing if you didn't wince while you said that."

Van laughed, but damn, that did hurt.

"Please don't make me laugh for a few more hours."

"Your scratches are almost gone."

Her fingers brushed lightly over his chest and he had to remind himself that he was in no shape to grab her, throw her down on the bed and never let her up.

"They'll be tender for a few days yet, but with my werewolf genes and all, plus Clifford's magic medicine, I'm feeling pretty good."

"What is it? The medicine, I mean?"

Van shrugged his shoulders and then remembered that it was a bad idea. Clifford's stuff worked well, but he was still damn sore.

"I don't know. Clifford is an expert on werewolf physiology. Before he became my mother's butler he was a biochemist. I don't know what it is, but I do know that it's worked every time I've needed it my entire life."

"Oh."

She plopped down on the bed next to him.

He reached out and put his hand on her thigh. Even through her jeans, she was warm.

"It's been an interesting two weeks for you hasn't it?"

"You can say that again."

She shrugged.

"To be honest, it's the most excitement I've ever had in my entire life."

He squeezed her thigh again.

“Well, I could definitely do without the excitement from tonight.”

Van was shocked to all of a sudden have Jane’s mouth on his, and his arms full of a warm and willing woman.

Her lips were soft and pliant against his, and suddenly, wearing only a blanket around his hips was just too much clothes.

He held his head to the side and deepened the kiss, his tongue slipping into her mouth. His hands came up to hold the back of her head.

“I’m sorry,” she said when he removed her mouth for just a second.

“I’m sorry, too,” he agreed.

“I want you.”

He was pretty sure that it was very difficult for her to admit that. But he could damn sure agree with her.

“I…”

Whatever it was he was going to say was interrupted when Aiden yelled from the bottom of the stairs.

“Are you all right?”

Jane stepped away from him and answered the question.

“Yeah, we’re fine. We’ll be down in a second.”

He wanted desperately to grab her and pull her back into his arms. He wanted to slam the door and everyone else be damned, but he knew he couldn’t do that.

They were going to have to do something about their situation. And they were going to have to do it tonight.

“You should get dressed.”

“Yeah.

“Are you all right? Do you want me to stay?”

“No, go ahead. I’ll be down in a second.”

She looked like she was going to say something else, but then turned and walked out of the room.

He picked up the clothes she’d picked out for him. They slightly smelled like her sweet flowery scent. He pulled them on quickly, and headed back down to the study.

He had a feeling that whatever happened when he walked back in there was going to take a lot out of him. He wasn’t really used to this whole *sharing* thing, especially when it meant that someone he cared about could get hurt.

He couldn’t help the shiver of dread that coursed through his body when he thought about what could have happened if he weren’t the one to go outside tonight.

Aiden was pacing back and forth; Kali was once again tapping away at the computer behind his desk. Jane lay sprawled on the couch and Clifford, looking distinguished as always, stood just inside the door.

“Are you all right?” Jane asked, sitting up so that he’d have room to sit on the couch.

Much to Van’s surprise, Aiden rushed to his side, grabbing his arm and steering him towards the couch.

“Yeah,” Aiden said. “How are you doing? Are you all right?”

“I’m fine. Well, a little sore, but fine.”

“Good, okay, good.”

Van sat down next to Jane, probably closer than he should have, but he didn’t really care about propriety at the moment. He pulled her closer, as close as he could without

hurting his already bruised ribs and put his arms around her.

“What happened out there, Van?”

Aiden asked, but it was a question he knew they were all dying to ask.

A part of him wanted to do what he always did, simply say “nothing” and leave it at that. Unfortunately, he now knew the truth. He couldn’t protect the people he loved. Not all by himself anyway.

“There are werewolves surrounding the house.”

“What? Can they get in?”

Jane crept closer to him. It was like she would have climbed into his lap if she could have.

“Don’t worry. They can’t get in. I’ve got a really good security system.”

She may have pretended to be calm, but at the same time, she didn’t move any further away.

He held her a little closer.

“What are we going to do about it?”

Van hated more than anything that he was going to have to admit this.

“I’ve got no idea.”

“Were you able to recognize anyone?” Kali asked.

“Sorry, while they were kicking my ass I didn’t bother to stop and introduce myself.”

“Hey, no need to get pissy again.”

“Sorry.”

He was sorry. He’d been apologizing a lot lately. But, damn it, he didn’t want to have to put them in danger. He was a werewolf, for God’s sake. He should be able to protect the people that meant the most to him.

“So, what are we going to do? Just stay in here forever? It’s not like we can have food delivered for much longer. If there are werewolves outside than they can take out anyone that comes to the door.”

“Van, I think you know what you’re going to have to do.” Kali said.

He did, damn it, but that didn’t mean he had to like it.

“What are you going to do?” Jane asked. Her eyes were wide with curiosity.

“I have to call my father.”

Chapter Twenty

"I don't think that's such a good idea," Kali piped up from behind the computer.

"Why?"

"Because I just found out who it was that put the hit on us in the first place?"

Everyone in the room, save for Clifford who remained in his stoic position by the door, dashed to the computer.

"Holy shit," Aiden murmured.

"Son of a bitch," Van said.

"What?"

Once again, Jane found herself staring at her own picture on the computer screen, a big Wanted plastered across her forehead. Pictures of Kali, Aiden and Van were still there too. The only difference was that a large gray wolf lay across the top of the screen.

"What?" She asked again.

"Jane," Van said motioning to the screen. "I'd like you to meet my father."

"Wait a minute. Are you telling me that your father is the one that's trying to kill us?"

"Apparently," he said.

Aiden was understandably quiet. Kali moved her hand from the desk to put her hand on Aiden's.

Jane reached out to put her hand on Van's arm. She supposed that when you found out your father was trying to kill you, you probably needed all the support you could get.

The room remained quiet for a long while, each of them staring at their pictures on the computer screen.

Their attention only wavered when Van's stomach began to growl.

"Come on, we should get you something to eat."

Jane suddenly found herself in caretaker mode. It was a mode that she felt comfortable in, way more comfortable than paranormal outlaw.

"I'm all right. I have to figure out what I'm going to do now."

"Don't you mean *we* have to figure out what *we're* going to do now?" Aiden said.

Van was quiet for a moment, the muscle in his temple throbbing, and his teeth clenching and unclenching.

Come on, Van, she urged silently.

"Yeah, that's what I meant."

It was like everyone in the room released the breaths they didn't realize they were holding.

"I'll make you some dinner," she said grabbing him by the elbow and steering him out of the room.

He needed to get his mind off of things, and if she was able to read people at all right, then she was pretty sure that Aiden and Kali could use some time alone also.

"Miss Jane, I'd be happy to make some dinner," Clifford offered.

"Thanks, but if it's just the same to you, I'd like to keep myself busy."

He took her hand and patted her gently before shuffling his way back to his room.

"So, what can I get you?"

Van walked directly to the small kitchen window. He didn't answer her.

She followed him over to the window peering outside. It creeped her out to think about people, or wolves, as the case may be, were out there watching them.

She shivered. Van reached out and put his arms around her, pulling her into his embrace. She didn't protest, in fact, she snuggled even closer.

They stayed that way until his stomach rumbled again.

Jane reluctantly pulled away.

"I can make you a grilled cheese. That's what we had for dinner. Or an omelet maybe? Trust me when I say that I'm a much better cook than you are."

"You don't have to cook anything for me. I'll just make a sandwich."

"Sit down," she insisted. "What do you want on it? I'll make it."

He looked like he was going to protest but eventually sat down.

"Roast beef is good."

She got what she needed from the refrigerator and busied herself making a sandwich. She much preferred making dinner than thinking about people outside trying to kill her.

She felt quite domestic making her man his dinner. She piled the bread high with beef and spread some Dijon mustard on the bread. She sprinkled some salt on the roast beef and topped it with the other slice of bread. She cut it in half, corner to corner, put it on a plate and set it in front of him.

She filled up a glass with iced tea and set that in front of him, too.

"Thanks," he said.

He didn't dig into his sandwich, but simply sat and watched her.

"What?"

"Nothing," he said, shaking his head. "Thanks for dinner."

She sat and watched him eat his sandwich. Sitting in the kitchen like any average couple seemed to drain the tension from his body.

And Jane had to admit she was feeling much less stressed out than she figured she should considering she knew there were people outside in the bushes waiting to kill her.

"Would you like another sandwich?"

Van wiped his mouth and chugged the last of his iced tea.

"No, I'm good, thanks, but there is something that you could do for me."

"Sure, what is it?"

"Come here."

He pushed his chair back and indicated the spot directly in front of him.

Almost mindlessly, she complied.

"Damn, you're beautiful."

She could feel herself flush at his comment.

"Thank you."

"I mean it, you know."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"You make me feel beautiful."

*

He wished there was a way to let her see herself through his eyes. She was absolutely breathtaking, and if he were perfectly honest with himself, it was waking up to see her beautiful blue eyes that woke him up just as much as Clifford's magic potion.

He pulled her even closer, his hands running up her back under the bottom of her

sweater. He lowered his head to her, to breathe in her flowery scent.

His hands came around to push her shirt up out of the way so that he could touch her, taste her, skin to skin.

As soon as her sweater cleared the waistband of her pants, he leaned down to kiss her skin, just above her belly button. He continued to push her shirt up, kissing every inch of skin that he bared.

“Van.”

“Shhh.”

He didn’t want anything to interrupt what he desperately hoped was about to happen.

Her hands grabbed onto his wrists. He was afraid that she was going to pull his hands away, but all she did was squeeze his arms.

He took that as encouraging and continued to move his hands upwards. Hell, this was moving too slow for him.

He stood up from his chair and at the same time whipped her shirt up over her head.

She was totally breathtaking.

He leaned down and laid his head into her delectable cleavage.

He inhaled deeply, and with his hands on her breasts, he pushed them closer together, practically suffocating himself within her cleavage.

“Van ... Van, I want you.”

“I know,” he said.

He positioned her so that her back was to the table. He unbuttoned her jeans, and slowly lowered her zipper. Rather than pulling her pants down and shoving himself into her which is what a good part of her body is telling him to do, he moved his hands down, into the back of her pants. He was shocked when he didn’t encounter anything but skin.

He leaned back and looked down at her.

“No panties?”

“A thong.”

She winked at him. She actually winked at him. He wasn’t sure what happened to the meek little girl whose virginity he’d taken a few weeks ago, but damned if he didn’t like this new girl a lot.

“That is so freaking sexy.”

She laughed, a sound that echoed softly through the kitchen.

“You shouldn’t be too surprised. You’re the one that ordered it.”

“Yeah, but I didn’t think you’d actually wear them. Why do you think I only got you one pair?”

She leaned into him, planting a quick kiss on his lips.

“Well, I do like them.”

“Hell,” he said. “I’ll order you a couple thousand thongs tomorrow.”

She laughed again, but he quieted her when his tongue probed into her mouth.

They were doing way too much talking and not enough other stuff.

He pushed her pants down off of her hips to pool around her knees. She wriggled her pants the rest of the way off while Van’s fingers examined her new thong.

Damn, it was sexy. His fingers ran along the fabric, over her ass and down into the cleft between her legs.

He was so riveted on her thong that he didn’t even realize that she was lavishing just as much attention on his body until she tweaked his nipple.

“Hey,” he said, jumping away from her.

“Sorry.”

But the smile on her face told him that she was anything but.

He lowered his head to her mouth. Damn, he would have devoured her if it were possible.

When he felt her fingers tangling with the button fly of his jeans, he lifted her up on the table. The plate his sandwich had been on, as well as his empty glass went flying to the floor. It broke, but it didn't shatter.

He didn't give a damn. And since she didn't even flinch, he assumed that she didn't give a damn either.

As soon as he had her seated on the edge of the table he went to his knees. He pushed her back onto her elbows, lifting her knees.

The thong just barely covered her pussy lips, and it disappeared back between her ass cheeks. He leaned down and exhaled his warm breath onto the silky fabric.

“Oh.”

Her little moan of surprise made him smile.

He pulled the fabric aside and lowered his mouth to her pussy. He delivered one long lick from top to bottom before focusing all of his attention on her clit.

She thrashed on the table.

“Van, we shouldn't be doing this here. Anyone could walk in.”

Her protest was weak at best.

“Shut up and enjoy.”

“Okay.”

He continued to lick her until she was writhing beneath him. When he felt the first pulses of her climax against his face, he stood up and impaled himself inside of her. Had he not silenced her with a juicy wet kiss, she would have cried out. Loudly.

“Oh yes,” she said when he removed his mouth.

He pumped in and out of her, thrusting along with the pulses of her climax. When he felt her first orgasm start to die down, he fingered her clit once more, and sent her soaring again.

When the tight muscles of her cunt began to spasm again, he followed her over the edge, exploding inside of her.

“Wow.”

“You can say that again.”

“We should probably get back in there. They're probably wondering what's taking us so long,” she said.

“Yeah.”

Reluctantly, he disentangled himself from her and helped her to a standing position. God help him, he was never going to look at his kitchen table the same way again.

“Van.”

He looked her way expecting to see her face flushed with passion and desperate to go for it again, instead, she looked panicked. “What's wrong?”

He tried to go to her, to comfort her, but she wouldn't allow him close to her, she pushed him away.

“We didn't use a, you know, a condom, at all this time.”

Damn it.

He could feel himself paling, though he didn't have time to say anything, to reassure her, because Aiden called from the study.

"Are you guys okay in there?"

"Yeah," the last thing he needed right now was his brother barging into the kitchen when they were both half dressed. "We'll be right in, just finishing up my dinner."

Jane put her clothes back on, fluffed her hair and headed back down the hallway to the study.

"Jane," he grabbed her by the elbow and forced her to face him. She did so reluctantly. "When this is over, we have to talk, all right."

She nodded but didn't say anything. He let go of her, and she practically ran into the study.

They had to talk, but first he had to make sure she was out of danger.

And damn it, the thought of her pregnant with his child didn't freak him out nearly as much as it should.

In fact, he found himself smiling as he walked back into the study.

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"That must have been some dinner," Aiden said trying to hide a snicker as soon as Van walked into the room.

Kali elbowed him lightly, but it wasn't like Van was doing anything to try to hide the fact that he'd just had sex in the kitchen.

He was smiling like a kid on his birthday.

"So, what now?" Jane asked.

She just wanted desperately to change the subject.

Van looked really uncomfortable.

"Maybe we should talk about it, and try to come up with something. You know, together."

The strangled quality of Van's voice amused Jane, but she could tell how painful it was for him.

Aiden smiled.

"Don't worry, Van. It's not going to be as bad as you think. I promise."

Jane walked back over to the couch and watched the events unfolding in front of her like she was watching television.

"Yeah, well, I reserve the right to make up my own mind."

He slapped his brother on the back, a brotherly sort of slap that she though probably meant the same thing as a hug.

Men.

"I think it's probably safe to assume that my dad has been the one putting hits out on the other werewolves that have been found dead recently. Right?"

He turned to Kali for clarification.

"Do we have any proof? No. But, I agree with your assumption, as do most of the members of the committee," Kali answered.

"What committee?" Jane wondered aloud.

Kali and Van shared a quick glance. Kali shrugged her shoulders and Van walked over to join her on the couch.

"You might as well know, I guess. After all, you are targeted."

"Yeah, thanks for bringing that up again."

He laughed, but then continued speaking.

"There's a very large paranormal community in Seattle. Probably a good number of them are actually your patrons. They—we—are governed by a committee, The Council. It's an elected position and elections are held every eight years. The committee goes back to before America was a country, though obviously it's had to change over the years."

"So there's like a vampire mayor?"

"Well, actually the head of the council is a wizard," Aiden answered.

"Oh."

It was all she could manage. Truthfully, she had more questions than she could process, but all she could manage was "oh."

"I work for the council. I'm kind of an independent troubleshooter," Kali said. "Van does consulting work for them on occasion."

"Right."

She was a regular wordsmith.

"I've asked the council about you and your bookstore. Apparently your father stumbled upon the paranormal community by accident. He knew who his patrons were, but it was decided that unless you needed to know, you'd be kept in the dark."

"I assume that someone has decided that I need to know?"

Because she just loved when people made major decisions about her life without bothering to tell her. Her anger started to bubble and she didn't think that it was going to take very much at all for it to shoot to the surface.

"So, what does this have to do with your father wanting us dead?"

Both Van and Aiden looked uncomfortable, but she wasn't about to let them off the hook. Miss Nice Jane was over.

Van took her hand and twined it with his. As he spoke, he studied their hands.

"There are certain factions of werewolves, and vampires, who don't think it's natural for all the paranormal creatures to kind of coexist under one ruling body. They think that werewolves should have their own packs, witches their own covens, whatever."

"Yeah, I thought werewolves lived in packs with an alpha male and stuff."

He laughed but still didn't let go of her hands.

"You're thinking of wolves, not werewolves. Actually, you're right. Seattle is one of the few places in the world where all creatures live together in harmony so well. It's worked for thousands of years, so why bother changing now? But like I said, there are some, like my father, who don't believe in the council."

"And that means he's trying to kill us why?"

Kali took over speaking. Van and Aiden looked a bit unsure about this one themselves.

"The best guess is that your father feels that by eliminating werewolves that agree with the council, he'll be left with those who only want to form a were-pack. Presumably he'll be the leader."

"But I don't have anything to do with the council. I mean until two weeks ago I didn't believe in vampires or werewolves, and before tonight I didn't know about the council. So, why kill me?"

"Because of me."

The pain in Van's voice when he spoke nearly tore her heart out.

"You're all in danger because of me. Don't get me wrong, taking out Kali would be

a major coup, and would no doubt go a long way to showing his power, but basically, you're all involved with me, so you're all a liability in his mind."

"He really has totally gone of the deep end."

Aiden sounded like he desperately didn't want to believe it, but in the eyes of such overwhelming evidence, there was no way else to think.

"So, what do we do?"

Jane found herself scooting closer to Van once again. Whenever she thought about anyone trying to kill her, she just felt so cold all over. Van dropped her hand and pulled her closer, settling his arm around her shoulders.

"Well, I can't take care of it myself."

He said it with self-depreciating humor, which was a good thing, but at the same time Jane was pretty sure that it cost him a lot to say something like that.

"I suggest we get the council involved. They've called an emergency meeting for tomorrow night. I think I should go and talk to them"

"But," Jane started to speak but was silenced by nothing more than Van holding his hand up.

Aiden erupted, spewing his anger at Kali.

"You can't go. It's too dangerous."

"Excuse me, but I don't think I appreciate you telling me what I can and can't do."

"Well, you're just going to have to get used to it. We have to come up with another plan because you're not leaving this house."

Kali and Aiden stood nose to nose, each one yelling louder than the other.

"I think we should leave them to fight," Van whispered in her ear.

He grabbed her by the arm and steered her out of the room and up the stairs to his bedroom.

"We're not going to be able to do anything until tomorrow night. I'm sure we'll be able to find some way to occupy our time," Van said.

At the same time, he reached for the drawer in his bedside table. Inside were the toys he'd brought from her bedroom earlier that day.

It was going to turn into an even more interesting night.

Chapter Twenty-One

“Just because we’ve had sex a few times doesn’t mean that you can tell me what I can and can’t do.”

“It’s too dangerous to leave here. Have you already forgotten what happened to Van?”

“The werewolves are not going to get me, Aiden. I can fly, remember.”

“What? And you think that a bunch of people out there are counting on their brute strength? I’m sure they wouldn’t bother with guns or anything, right? There is a contract on your head, Kalista,” he spoke slowly, like he was talking to a child.

“Aiden, I’m going to pretend that you aren’t treating me like a child.”

She spoke slowly and succinctly.

“And the fact that we’ve been sleeping together doesn’t mean anything at all to you?”

She inhaled deeply, and then exhaled. She mentally counted to ten. When she didn’t find herself calming down any, she tried it again.

“We’ve been sleeping together, Aiden. I like you. A lot. But we both know that there’s no future for us.”

She said it as calmly as possible, and she desperately tried to project calm vibes his way. She didn’t know if it was her doing or what, but when he spoke he was defiantly calmer, though no more in agreement with her.

He took her hands in his, squeezing them tight.

“I know our relationship doesn’t have a future, Kali, but that doesn’t change the fact that I care about you. A lot.”

No, they’d decided at the beginning that their relationship wasn’t going to go anywhere. They’d agreed from the beginning.

She was just about to argue with him, but he continued.

“I’m not saying I want anything more, Kali.”

She found herself breathing easier.

“But we also agreed that we’d remain friends. If something happens to you, if you get killed, then we won’t be able to be friends anymore.”

Leave it to Aiden to make her laugh. She supposed she did see his point, but at the same time, she didn’t know if the council would believe her if she weren’t there in person.

“All right. I’ll call the council members and see if I can set up a conference call.”

“Thank you.”

“But if they don’t agree, then I’m going to have to leave. I promise I’ll be careful, but it’s worth risking me to save the rest of you.”

Before he could interrupt her, she continued. “And really it’s not much of a risk to me. Hell, I’m immortal, remember?”

“I’m not happy about it, but I’ll accept it.”

He pulled her close, into his warm embrace.

It was so great to simply be close to someone. It’d been so long since she’d felt warm, and being in Aiden’s arms was definitely warm.

She pulled back slowly, allowing him to lower his mouth and capture hers. He tasted of the grilled cheese they'd had a few hours earlier and his mouth was hot.

His hands came up to cup her cheeks.

Suddenly, she knew that this was going to be their last time together. Well, she intended to make it a memorable one.

She lowered her hands to his waistband, and unfastened his belt, quickly followed by the button and zipper of his jeans. She shoved them down as far as she could manage, unfortunately, he held her tight and they got stuck on his boxers, so it wasn't that far.

He lowered his hand from her face and directly to the hem of her shirt. He pulled it up over her head, tossing it back onto the desk. He walked backwards with her, still kissing her, until the backs of her knees bumped against the couch.

She instantly sat down. He followed her down, kneeling on the floor as best as he could while his pants were still on in such an awkward way.

He removed his mouth. She flinched. But when he stood again, whisking off his pants, she wasn't quite so upset.

"Nice," she said when he removed his pants and underwear. His cock was thick and long, with just a slight curve upwards.

A small drop of moisture glistened on the tip. She leaned forward, grabbed him by the ass and pulled him towards her.

He anxiously complied, only stopping when he bumped into the couch.

She leaned forward and took him into her mouth.

"Fuck, Kali," he said.

She looked up at him to see his eyes glazed over and his head thrown back slightly.

That was all the encouragement she needed.

She pulled him closer and took as much as she could deep into her mouth.

Unfortunately, it wasn't nearly as much as either of them would've liked.

"You taste good."

She released him from her mouth, tonguing the rim of his cock, and exploring the tiny opening with her mouth. She licked him like a Popsicle that was melting on a hot summer day.

When she released his shaft to suck on his balls, Aiden moaned above her, and if she wasn't mistaken, his knees went weak.

Once again, she went back to sucking his thick cock.

"You need to stop."

Kali put on her best pouty schoolgirl face and whined.

"But, I don't wanna."

"Well, if you want to do more than this, you're going to have to."

"What?" She batted her eyelashes innocently. "You don't think you'll be able to work up the recuperative powers to go again?" She reached around to her back and unhooked her bra. "I can be very persuasive."

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At that moment, Aiden thought he could probably fly if she asked him to.

He grabbed her roughly by the head and guided her mouth back to his cock.

"Suck it," he said. "Make me come."

She wasted no time doing what she was told.

She took him deep, until he could feel the back of her throat.

“Oh, baby.”

Somehow her mouth had turned into a freaking vacuum cleaner. She licked and sucked and before he knew it, much before he wanted, he began spurting his come inside of her.

She didn't pause until every last drop of come had been wrung from his body and he stood before her quivering.

Only then did she stop and release him from her mouth. She dropped one last kiss on his deflating cock before settling back on the sofa, a content smile on her face. She tugged on his hand and he collapsed next to her.

“So, you liked that?”

Good lord, she almost killed him. Did she really need reassurance?

He mustered up all the energy he could to say, “Hell, yeah.”

She laughed.

They lapsed into silence, Kali doing whatever it was that women did in this situation and Aiden trying desperately to catch his breath and slow his heart rate to a much more normal level.

The silence wasn't overly awkward, but it was getting pretty darn close.

“I'd hope that you plan on returning the favor?”

As soon as he was sure he wasn't dying.

“I would happily return the favor, although I think you just about killed me, so I hope you don't mind waiting a few moments.”

Kali laughed and stood up in front of him. She was already naked from the waist up, but she gave him quite a show while taking the rest of her clothes off.

She unbuttoned and unzipped her jeans before turning around, her back to him. She showed off her amazing ass as she lowered the denim, exposing a ruby red mesh thong and nothing more. Her ass was tight, it didn't move at all as she bent at the waist, removing her pants. She walked, hell, it wasn't any normal walk, it was more like a strut designed to send any straight male's temperature through the roof, to the other side of the room and folded her clothes neatly.

As he tried to “recover” she also found several other things to pick up off the floor, always with her back, and that delectable ass, facing him.

“Good god, woman, are you trying to kill me?”

She looked over her shoulder at him, batting those eyelashes once again.

“I have no idea what you're talking about.”

“Get over here, woman.”

Damn it, he had forgotten this was Kali he was dealing with. If any woman ever existed that hated orders more than Kali, he'd yet to have met her.

But, he figured he had the upper hand in this one. She knew she'd get thoroughly pleased if she did what he said.

She put an extra swing in her pretty little hips as she walked back in his direction.

She stopped directly in front of him.

“Do you want something?”

She threw her head back and laughed.

“I knew there was a reason I liked you, Aiden.”

She straddled his waist, her knees on either side of him and plopped herself down on his lap. She leaned forward and captured his mouth in an explosive kiss.

Aiden ran his hands up and down her back, to her ass, cupping those sweet globes in his hands. Damn, he couldn't wait to fuck her from behind, grab onto her hips and slam his cock deep into her waiting pussy.

Kali had moved from his mouth to his neck. He wondered for a brief moment if he should be worried about the fact that a vampire seemed to have a fondness for his neck, but then decided what the hell. If she was going to suck his blood and kill him, he'd die one happy man.

"Lay back."

She seemed to know what was coming, so complied very easily. She leaned back on her elbows, put one foot on the floor and swung the other leg up over the back of the couch.

She gave him a look that very clearly said, "Come and get it."

He eagerly complied.

If this was going to be the last opportunity he'd get to lick and suck her pussy, he was going to make it last a lifetime—for both of them.

He lost count of how many times he brought her just to the edge before backing off. He'd lick and nip at her engorged clit until she was quivering, on the very verge of climax. Then he'd stop, delivering long strokes of his tongue from just below her clit down to almost the puckered hole of her anus.

She writhed around him, calling him names, trying desperately to hold his head between her legs, but he always managed to break free, letting her come slowly down to earth before making her fly again.

When Kali was practically weeping above him, he figured she'd had enough torture, even if it was a very pleasant kind. He leaned back away from her long enough to suck two fingers into his mouth, making them wet, not that he'd need any extra lubrication since she was gushing.

Just as he touched his tongue to her clit, he slid the two fingers into her, curling his fingers upwards so he knew he was hitting the spot that would take her over the edge.

It did.

He was shocked that no one came running when she started screaming and convulsing above him.

"Fuck Aiden, don't stop licking me!"

He didn't.

He continued to lick her even when she changed her mind, he continued to force his fingers into her even when she started to threaten him. He didn't stop until she went over that peak once again and lay completely sated, unable to move, on the couch.

He delivered on last long lick from top to bottom and then slowly slid his fingers out of her. They were coated with her cream.

He was just about to take his fingers to his mouth, taste some more of that amazing taste, but Kali stopped him.

She grabbed him by the hand and pulled him up the couch so that he was sprawled half on top of her.

It shocked the hell out of him when she took his hand and pulled one of the fingers into her mouth.

"Fuck, that's hot," was all he could manage.

She released one finger and took the other one in her mouth as well, swirling her

tongue around and between the digits. He was turning hard as a rock again.

"If you think that's hot, we should try..." she leaned up and licked his ear before whispering her naughty suggestion.

"I've never done that before."

It pained a man of the world like him to admit it.

"Neither have I," she said.

"And you really want to? With me, I mean?"

She sat up and pulled her knees against her chest. For a supposedly ruthless vampire she looked an awful lot like a little girl.

"Believe it or not, I don't really have a lot of sex. I ... I want to try it, and I want to try it with someone I can trust."

Well, with an admission like that Aiden didn't have to be asked twice.

*

Kali had no idea what made her suggest what she had. It was true, she was curious about a little back door action. The girls in the books she read seemed to enjoy it, and while she didn't have any female friends to talk to about it, she'd heard some women in the coffee shop talking about their anal adventures with their husbands.

It was completely true what she'd said to Aiden. She did trust him. She trusted him with taking the only virginity that she had left.

She gasped when he pulled her up, twisting her so that she was on her hands and knees on the couch. She'd never been able to be taken by Aiden before. Was sex making him stronger or was she just so on edge that she'd lost the ability to fight back?

It should have been instinct that had her lashing out at him, but damn if she hadn't developed a soft spot for Aiden.

"I don't want to hurt you," he said, rubbing his hands up and down the small of her back.

"I know."

"No, I mean, I really don't want to hurt you. You could kick my ass."

Kali laughed and wiggled her own ass in his direction.

"How about we make a deal? As long as you follow up any pain with some pleasure, I promise not to kick your ass."

"Deal," he said, though it was a bit distracted.

Aiden kneeled behind her, his cock poised to enter her. She flinched, her body automatically jumping away from his touch.

He laid a soothing hand on the small of her back.

"Don't worry. I'm not going to just dive in. We're going to go slow and easy, all right?"

Suddenly she realized just how nervous she was.

He moved back slightly and settled himself back on his haunches. Reaching out his hand, he cupped her pussy. She knew she was still practically dripping down there, not only because of what he'd already done, but also because of what he was about to do.

"You're still wet. That's good."

He gathered her cream in his finger and slid it up towards her ass, massaging the wetness into her tight hole. Her neck hurt from craning it backwards to see what he'd do next.

She whimpered.

“Is that good?”

“Oh, yeah.”

He rubbed a little harder, his finger gaining just the slightest entrance before pulling away.

He reached forward and turned her head back so that she was facing forward.

“Don’t watch,” he commanded. “Just feel.”

That was much easier said than done when you were used to being in constant control. But, she tried her hardest to do as he asked.

The next thing that she felt was his warm breath in her most private of places. That was quickly followed by something warm and wet.

Good lord, he was licking her!

“That’s nice.”

Nice? She was ready to fucking explode.

His tongue moved away much too soon for her liking, but she couldn’t complain because it was replaced by Aiden’s thick finger.

Kali was boneless with desire. That coupled with the lubrication of her own juices and Aiden’s saliva allowed his finger to slide in up to the first knuckle.

“Oh God,” she tried to move away. Not because it hurt, but because it was more pleasure than she was prepared for, but Aiden held her tight around the waist.

“I won’t hurt you, darlin’. I promise.”

“It doesn’t hurt. It ... it...”

She couldn’t get the words out.

He slipped his finger in the whole way.

“What baby? Does it feel good?”

“Oh yeah.”

He pulled his finger out and then adding another, pushed back into her.

It was such a strange filling sensation.

“Please,” she begged.

Aiden’s voice was husky when he spoke.

“Please what, Kali?”

Yeah, please what, Kali? She didn’t know what she wanted, she just knew that she wanted more.

“More,” she said. “I want your cock.”

*

Well, how in the hell could he deny her request?

He slowly pulled his fingers out, stretching them slightly making sure that she was well prepared for his cock.

He removed his fingers and once again bent towards her to deliver a few more licks.

Big tough Kali was making noises like a scared kitten.

“Are you ready?”

His cock poised at her back entrance.

He had no idea what in the hell he was going to do if she said no.

“I’m ... I’m nervous.”

“If I hurt you, tell me to stop.”

He bent over her causing his cock to slide in slightly.

“Oh, God,” she moaned.

He hadn't meant for it to happen, but damn if he could do anything about it now. He grabbed for her hand at the same time he slowly pushed his cock the rest of the way into her ass.

"Damn, you're tight."

He wasn't sure his cock had ever been squeezed this tight before, and he knew once he started moving, he wouldn't last very long at all.

"I feel so full. Did ... did your cock get bigger?"

They both tried to laugh, but it came out as nothing more than strangled noises in their throats.

Aiden pulled himself back until just the head of his cock was inside of her.

Damn, she felt good.

"More Aiden, please more."

He certainly didn't want to disappoint. With more force this time, he surged into her, immediately retreating once again only to repeat the process.

He wasn't going to be able to last long at all.

His hand still entwined with Kali's, she shocked him by moving both of their hands to her pussy where she started rubbing her clit.

Within seconds of her touching herself, Aiden began to feel the tiny pulses echo through her body.

"Yes, Aiden," she yelled.

"Oh, God, Kal, I'm going to come."

Aiden's world had narrowed to nothing more than his cock and Kali's ass. When her orgasm hit her hard, her muscles tightened around him, milking his cock.

Damn, he should be empty since she'd already made him come twice, but damned if she didn't give him the best orgasm of his life.

Her knees gave out on her and she fell to the couch. He didn't have much more strength and used the last of it to collapse next to her.

"Good Lord, Kali."

"Wow," she said. "Talk about going out with a bang."

She shifted slightly so that they were lying face to face on the large leather sofa.

Aiden touched the side of her face. She was so beautiful with her dark eyes and normally pale skin flushed with the aftereffects of their loving.

"It's going to be harder than I thought it would be to walk away."

"Yeah," Kali agreed. "But we still have to walk away."

Aiden sighed.

"I know, but that doesn't mean I have to like it."

She laughed before leaning over to kiss him. It was the most gentle kiss they'd shared, and he had no doubts that it would be their last.

"I'll never be sorry," she said standing up to put on her clothes.

Aiden felt it best to ignore the tears brimming in her eyes.

"Me, either," he said.

She pointed out into the hall, to the bathroom next to the den.

"I'm going to go clean up and get dressed." He wondered if she might shed a few tears, too. "When I come back, could we just, I don't know, sit together for a little while?"

"Yeah, I'd like that."

He'd like that a whole lot.

He knew from the beginning he was going to have to give Kali up, but that didn't mean he had to like it.

And he had every intention of holding onto her until the very last second.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Van left Jane in his bedroom and headed into the bathroom once again. He desperately wanted Jane again, but he wanted to clean up all of his dirt and wounds first.

He wrenched on the water, and for the first time in a couple of weeks cranked on the hot water. How nice was it that he didn't need a cold shower. The one ache the hot water wouldn't get rid of, the sexy woman waiting in the next room would.

He stepped in and let the water sluice over his skin.

He felt ... relaxed.

When was the last time he'd felt that way? He couldn't even remember.

"Damn," he muttered under his breath, but the water washed away his words along with the blood and dirt that streaked his skin.

Grabbing the soap, he scrubbed himself clean as his mind wandered.

Relaxed. There were werewolves outside waiting to kill him and three people he loved.

Did the water suddenly get cold?

"Fuck," he yelled when he got soap in his eyes.

He tried to turn around to wash the soap out, but in the process managed to stub his toe on his other foot.

As if suddenly everything in Van's small world conspired against him Van found himself catapulted back to his previous thought.

Three people he loved.

Aiden was his brother. There was no doubt he was a huge pain in the ass, but they were brothers. Of course he loved Aiden.

Kali was his best friend. She knew more about him than anyone else in the world. He loved Kali as a friend.

But Jane?

It was a good thing that his shower had the bench seats because his knees gave out from under him and he fell backwards. His ass hit the cold seat and his head fell backwards smacking against the smooth tile of the shower enclosure.

Well he'd eat his own shoe if fate wasn't trying to tell him something, and it was pretty sure that he was in love with Jane.

"Love."

He tested the word on his tongue.

Much to his surprise, he didn't choke on it.

"Love."

He said it louder this time.

The house remained standing. There were no major earthquakes and he didn't hear any screaming.

Maybe he could do this after all.

"I'm in love with Jane."

Still sitting, he braced his hands on either side of him, waiting for whatever it was that would follow that pronouncement. Still, the only thing he heard was the sound of the water splashing the tile in front of him.

Suddenly Van wanted to get this shower finished with a whole lot more quickly.

He rinsed himself off and jumped out of the shower. He didn't even bother drying himself off, he just tied a towel around his waist and dashed back into his bedroom.

Jane remained sitting on his large bed, her back to him, the large array of sex toys spread out around her where he'd dumped them before his shower.

It felt like fate, that fickle bitch, reached into his chest and squeezed his heart.

Damn it. He was in love, but he had no idea what in the hell he was supposed to do about it.

*

Jane was scared out of her mind.

Sure, there was the whole 'werewolves outside waiting to kill her' thing, but she was more nervous about whatever it was Van had planned for her this evening.

He pulled the drawer of sex toys out of his bedside table and dumped the contents on his bed before announcing he wanted to take a shower and clean his wounds before getting down to business.

And, gosh darn it, he was taking a really long time in the shower. Jane glanced at the clock. For God's sake, he'd been in there a whole four minutes already.

Jane plopped herself down on the bed. It was much too freaky to stare out the window, knowing there were people out there looking in. She jumped back up, though, when the realistic looking dildo rolled across the bed and touched her.

She stared down at the array of sex toys and felt her temperature begin to soar.

She wasn't naïve about her body in any respect, but damn if it didn't make her feel like a giggling schoolgirl to stand here and look at these toys.

The variety was astounding. Sure, she had a vibrator, a pink one, but all hers did was vibrate.

She reached down and picked up one of the boxes lying on the bed.

"Develop a rabbit habit," she read on the front of one of the boxes. "Sounds harmless enough."

Tearing open the package she was surprised to pull out a rather large jelly vibrator with beads all through it. On the side there was a bunny rabbit.

"Ew," she said.

She dropped it when she heard Van's masculine chuckle behind her.

"Trust me. If the recommendations from the site where I bought it are any indication, there's nothing 'ew' about it."

"Oh, well," she stammered. "I just don't think of the bunny as the most, you know, sexual of animals."

She had to work hard to keep her eyes on his face. He leaned against the door jam, his wet hair glinting in the low light of the room. He was clad in nothing more than a towel slung low on his hips. Water clung to his tanned skin.

"No?" He quirked an eyebrow upwards as he walked towards the bed. "Haven't you ever heard of fucking like rabbits?"

No words came out of her mouth. She thought she may have tried, but sometime in the seconds that Van had come out of the bathroom her brain had obviously short-circuited.

"Jane?"

Well, how was she supposed to think with that wide expanse of chest and six pack

abs right in front of her?

“Jane, are you all right?”

“Wha—yes!” She came back to herself and wiped the drool off of her chin. “Yes, I’m fine. What were you saying?”

Breath once again caught in her throat when he reached out and toyed with the ends of her hair. The hair looked even lighter as he twirled it around his thick fingers.

When he spoke, his voice had taken on a new huskiness.

“So, do any of these toys peak your interest?”

All of them!

She simply shrugged her shoulders and remained quiet. She didn’t trust her voice.

Letting go of her hair, he leaned forward and picked up the rabbit vibrator she’d dropped.

“I think you’d like this one, but I want one that involves me a little bit more.”

He returned it to the drawer.

He picked up the pineapple massage lotion and pocket rocket and returned those to the drawer also.

“Already tried those out.”

He picked up a few more bottles of lubrication and checked them out thoroughly before setting one on the bedside table and tossing the rest into the drawer.

“What flavor did you keep out?”

Jane had trouble believing that she was remaining quite so calm.

“Strawberry.”

“Yum.”

“Yeah, well, I’m really more interested in the taste of whatever I decide to put the lotion on.”

“Oh.”

Van leaned over and picked the remaining items off the bed. She had trouble swallowing when she saw the items in his hands. The large realistic looking dildo, a strand of beads and a long red skinny thing that she was desperately afraid that was a butt plug were all that remained.

“What do you think?”

“I ... I don’t know.”

“I’d rather fuck you myself than use the dildo.” She nodded and he tossed it into the drawer. “I don’t really think you’re ready for these.” The string of beads followed the other disregarded items.

He didn’t say anything, just stood in front of her, one hand on his hip, the other holding the slender wand up in front of her.

She swallowed. Hard.

“What are you going to do with it?”

Okay, stupid question. She knew very well what he was going to do with it. He was going to kill her.

She was going to die from too much sex.

*

Jane’s face was flushed and her breathing was labored.

“Are you alright, sweetheart?”

He reached out and ran his tanned finger down her pale cheek. She was so soft, and it

made him so hard.

"I think so."

Her eyes cut from his face down to the tenting of the towel. Her face colored as she once again met his eyes, or tried to anyway.

"Lay back on the bed."

He worked hard to keep any harshness out of his voice even though it was killing him. He wanted nothing more than to rip off the towel, rip off her pants and bury his cock as deep as he could.

Considering his recent realization in the shower though, he knew he had to proceed slowly. He wanted to please her, make her feel good.

As much as his cock may be telling him differently, he needed to go slowly.

She complied and lay back on the bed, her upper body resting on a pile of pillows. Her nervousness was apparent as she crossed her arms over her chest and kept her ankles crossed.

He unhooked the towel from around his waist and tossed it on the chair. He made a mental note to clean his bedroom in the next few days. The pile of clothes on the chair was getting precariously high.

"Van..."

"What, baby?"

"I'm scared."

He crawled over the bed to lay next to her, lowering his mouth to hers briefly that, a brush of her lips that could barely be called a kiss.

"Don't be scared." If he was honest with himself, he was terrified, too. They'd already had sex twice today. Why was this time so much more intense?

He knew why. Because this time they weren't going to have sex. This time, they were going to be making love.

"Do you want to wear the blindfold again?" He asked.

She shook her head adamantly.

"No."

"Good," he said. "I want to be able to see your eyes."

"What are we going to do?"

"We're going to make love."

He saw the shock in her eyes. She didn't expect him to come out with that one. Hell, he hadn't expected it himself.

His eyes practically boring holes into hers, his fingers slid to the button of her jeans. He unbuttoned and then slid the zipper down.

The rasp of the zipper was so loud in the quiet room. The only other sound at all was the deep breathing of the two people on the bed.

"Damn, this thong is sexy," Van said when the pink of her panties was revealed.

"Lift up," he said.

When she did, he slid the pants down her legs and followed the trail with his lips. When he reached her feet, he tossed them onto the ever-growing pile of laundry.

Van moved back up her body, this time kissing the other leg. When he reached her waist, he pushed her shirt up over her head.

"I love that you always wear a matching bra and panties."

She blushed, a sweet pink very similar to the color of said bra and panties.

“It makes me feel sexy.”

“Well, damn girl, you’d be sexy if you wearing a paper bag, but if it makes you feel good then I’ll keep buying you matching sets for as long as I can.”

He didn’t want to give her a chance to respond to that, so he leaned down and kissed her. There was no hesitation on her part and she immediately opened her mouth to him.

His tongue tangled with hers and he knew that there was no way he’d be able to live the rest of his life without the taste of her. The feel of his tongue in her mouth was easily becoming an addiction.

His hands slipped up around her body. With shaking hands he unhooked her bra and tossed it aside. He hugged her close, her breasts with hardened nipples pressing into his still damp chest.

He practically had to bite the inside of his lip to keep from telling her how he felt about her.

He pulled away from her abruptly. He had to get them back to where they were before. To the fun sex they were having earlier in the day. To giving her all the new things he’d promised her.

“Turn over,” he said.

She looked iffy, but apparently quickly decided that he hadn’t steered her wrong yet. She flipped over to her stomach.

Van had to fight not to drool when he was presented with a view of her ass, still clad in the barely there thong.

But, as sexy as it was, it was going to have to go.

“Lift your hips.”

He was so impressed with the way that she did as he asked so damn easily. It was usually an indication of how lost in pleasure she was.

He shimmied the fabric down her thighs. The scent of her arousal quickly filled the air and he couldn’t resist running a finger down the cleft between her legs.

She whimpered.

“Damn, you’re so wet already.”

“I don’t know how,” she said. “I feel like I’m still recovering from what you did for me on the kitchen table.”

Van laughed, and he thought his chest might have puffed out a bit at his manly prowess, even in the face of an injury.

“Close your eyes.”

Reaching across the bed, he grabbed the strawberry flavored lube and squeezed a hefty amount into his palms. Learning from last time, he rubbed his hands together, warming it up a bit before kneading the muscles of her back.

“Oh, that feels heavenly.”

“You’re really tense.”

He pushed harder, rubbing the warmed gel into her tight muscles, kneading and squeezing.

“Yeah, well, I tend to get that way when I find out that people are trying to kill me.”

Her words completely undid any bit of relaxation he was able to coax out of her body.

“I’m sorry.”

As much as he hated it, Van was getting pretty good at this apologizing thing.

“No,” she said, her voice getting heavy as he continued to massage, moving lower on her back and occasionally dipping down to squeeze her ass. “I’m sorry for bringing it up. Damn, this feels good.”

A slightly chuckle escaped Van’s lips.

“Well, then darlin’, you just continue laying there and I promise I’ll make you feel even better.”

She chuckled, but it was impossible to miss the huskiness of the sound.

“Sounds like a good deal to me.”

*

Jane felt like she might have been lying there forever, Van working her muscles, soothing her. If they weren’t both naked, it could have been a completely innocent massage.

Well, except for the quick detours his fingers took every so often down between her thighs. But each and every time, his fingers were gone, back on her back, her shoulders, before she was able to say a word.

She was completely worked up. And she was frustrated.

“Are you going to touch me?”

“I am touching you, baby.”

She liked when he called her baby. It made her feel all warm and fuzzy inside.

“You know what I mean.”

She had no doubts that he knew what she meant.

“You mean like this?”

While one hand kept massaging, the other one slipped down between her legs. He had to feel how wet she was. One finger continued down to flick her clit, once, twice. Then, he dipped slowly inside of her. Her body came off the bed, but he held her down with his strong hand on her back.

Using his finger, combined with the strawberry scented lube, his finger rimmed her back entrance.

“What...”

“Shhh,” Van silenced. “You knew this was coming, baby. I’m not going to hurt you. I promise.”

She did know it was coming, but at the same time, she didn’t feel any easier about it.

She desperately wanted to do whatever he wanted her to do but she was scared.

Taking deep breaths, she resolved herself to forget about what he was doing and simply feel.

“That’s it. Relax.”

Van continued to explore her cunt, moving his fingers from her clit to dig into pussy and then further backwards to the tight puckered hole of her ass.

With each stroke, his finger pushed further and further into the last virgin hole he could claim.

Van moved away briefly, she felt the bed bow a bit and she knew that exactly what he was going for. The bright red plug.

“You’re getting tense again. You’re ruining all of that massage I gave you.”

Jane chuckled, a kind of humorless sound.

“I’m nervous,” she said.

He leaned down and kissed her. Almost immediately she could feel the change in her

body. She could feel herself relaxing again.

It was a great kiss, but almost instantly, she realized that something was wrong. She opened her eyes and realized that Van was paying attention to something else.

Just as she broke away, just as she was about to ask him what he was doing, she felt the cool strawberry lube sliding between her ass cheeks.

“Van!”

The cool plastic of the plug, also lubed up, probed at her entrance.

“I told you I won’t hurt you. I want to do this for you, baby. I want to make you feel so good, so full. Please, let me do this for you.”

He sounded so earnest.

Was he really doing this for her?

No, of course not, she decided. He wanted to do this for himself.

If she felt good in the meantime, well, she was sure he wouldn’t mind that, but why was he doing this for her? She didn’t ask for it.

“Please?”

She hadn’t realized that he was staring at her. Waiting for her to answer.

What would happen if she said yes?

Would he plunge the damn plug hard into her? What would happen if she said no to the backdoor action but asked him to fuck her?

When she looked at his face, yes was the only answer she could give.

“Okay.”

“Thank you, Janie.”

*

Van leaned down and kissed her again.

He was getting so damn scared that she’d say no.

Desperately, he wanted to do this for her. He wanted to make it so good for her. He wanted her to trust him enough to do things she’d only hinted about in her diary.

As he kissed her, he slowly moved the plug around, making sure that she was completely lubricated.

She whimpered when the rounded head moved past her tight entrance, but he soothed her with kisses, until the whimpers were no longer of fear but of intense pleasure.

When she writhed against him, he pushed the plastic a little further inside of her.

“Turn over for me.”

She didn’t protest and eagerly complied.

On her back now, Van kissed her on the lips one more time before moving down her body, kissing her way down.

While he suckled her breasts, he kept a strong hold on the plug, neither moving it in or out. His mouth was on her breast for a matter of seconds when she began to writhe underneath him, impaling herself even further on the plug.

“Oh,” she gasped and tried to move away, but Van held tight.

He moved even lower on the bed until he was perched between her legs.

“I feel...”

“How do you feel, Jane?”

Damn, he barely recognized his own voice it was so husky with need.

“I ... I don’t know. I want ... more.”

Never one to disappoint a woman, he leaned down and captured her clit with his

mouth. At the same time, he pushed the plug the whole way into her ass.

She climaxed almost immediately.

But he didn't let up.

Van wanted her to know the most very intense pleasure she'd ever felt in her life. If her noises were anything to go by, he was getting pretty damn close.

He slowed down his licking slightly, until her climax started to wane. Then, he stuck two of his thick fingers into her dripping wet pussy.

She practically flew to the ceiling she came so hard.

Van couldn't take it anymore.

He sat up, reached across the bed again and quickly sheathed himself before plunging into her.

"Good lord," he moaned as soon as he thrust into her. "You are so fucking tight."

Stamina was a joke. There was no way in hell he'd be able to last more than a few strokes. The plug tightening her hole combined with the unfamiliar feelings coursing through him were going to be his undoing.

Thrusting hard into her one last time, he felt himself explode inside of her. He knew he had to protect her, but he desperately wanted to be able to feel the soft skin of her muscles clenching around him.

I love you.

With that thought screaming through his head, he collapsed on top of a practically passed out Jane.

*

Standing alone in Van's bedroom, Jane had no problems admitting that she was totally scared out of her mind. He had sent her into the bathroom first, to "freshen up" and now it was his turn in the bathroom.

If freshening up meant picturing every single thing that might happen to her tonight in excruciating detail well, then, she was as fresh as fresh could be.

She walked over to the window and peered outside. It was a dark night. There was no moon, and she couldn't make out a star in the sky. She knew that straight ahead, across the sound there were mountains, but all she could see was inky blackness. Even when she reached over and turned off the lamp on the bedside table, nothing became clearer.

A shiver worked its way up her spine when she realized that there were people out there looking in, just as she stood looking out.

The bathroom door opened and Van came out looking good enough to eat. His hair was wet; she'd heard the water running and assumed he'd taken a quick shower. She liked his hair wet. You could see all of the colors, from the lightest blond to the reddest red to the darkest black.

Black, like outside.

She shook off her unease and turned back towards him, though she was careful to not put her back towards the window.

He hadn't dried off well when he'd gotten redressed. The gray tee shirt he'd put on showed dark gray splotches where he was wet when he put on the shirt.

He'd put his jeans on, but hadn't bothered with the top button. Nor had he bothered with shoes or socks. Who knew a man's feet could be quite so sexy.

He walked over and joined her at the window.

“Don’t worry,” he said. “It’ll all be over soon enough.”

That was part of what had her so uneasy.

What was going to happen to their affair once she was able to go back to her old life?

Affairs end, she reminded herself for the dozenth time. It wasn’t like they had a relationship or anything. She knew whatever they had was finished before it began.

“It’s creepy out there.”

He pulled her into his arms, his head resting on the top of her head. It didn’t feel like it was something that was over before it began.

“It’s the same view it’s been for the last two weeks, just now we know there are people out there watching.”

“And that doesn’t creep you out?”

“It does,” he admitted, “but I’ve got a beautiful woman in my arms and a drawer full of toys over there I think she’s going to enjoy.”

“Ah,” she said snuggling further into his arms. “So what you’re saying is that you’ve got your priorities in line?”

“Something like that.”

Van lowered his mouth to hers, capturing them in a gentle kiss. Almost as soon as their lips touched, though, she pulled away.

She was suddenly hit with what was so wrong with the view from outside. It was too dark.

“Shouldn’t there be a streetlamp in front of the house?”

“What? Yeah, there is.”

She dashed from his grasp. He tried to pull her back but she shook him off.

“It isn’t on right now.”

“What?”

He rushed to the window.

“Shit.”

“Can you see anything?”

He had better senses than she did, maybe he could see that the streetlamp had a broken bulb. She desperately prayed for it to be nothing more than a broken bulb.

“No. Get downstairs and find Aiden and Kali.”

He rushed to the other side of the room, digging through his drawers for his socks. He hurriedly threw on a pair of sneakers and was only a few steps behind her.

There was no doubt that Aiden and Kali were shocked when they burst into the den. She considered it a good thing that they had jumped apart from where they were lying intertwined on the couch before Van saw them.

“What’s wrong?”

“All the streetlights are off outside.”

Almost as soon as Jane was finished speaking, the first crash echoed through the house.

Perhaps it wasn’t the wisest move, but all three of them dashed into the foyer. They could see the kitchen engulfed in flames.

A second crash sounded in the study, a flaming projectile striking the couch.

Maybe it had been a good idea that they left the study.

Van dashed in and quickly put out the fire in the study, smothering the flames with a pillow. Unfortunately, the leather couch was never going to be the same again.

More crashes sounded and the roar of flames was becoming louder. Thick black smoke billowed from the kitchen.

Jane stood motionless, unable to get her feet to move.

*

“Get out,” Van yelled.

He knew that it was what they wanted, a way to draw them out, but if they stayed inside, there was no doubt about it, they were going to die.

He briefly thought about taking shelter in the basement, but the doorway was already blocked by flames.

“To the garage,” he called.

He pushed Jane ahead and waited for Aiden and Kali to precede him. The only chance they had was to get to the car and hopefully get away.

Kali would have help on the way soon, but they had to stay alive until then. As soon as he ran into the garage, and smack dab into his brother’s back, he realized that hiding in the garage was not the way to do so.

“What now?” Jane asked.

The cars had been moved from the garage, he could see his SUV at the end of the driveway, burning just like his house was.

“Kali, where are your reinforcements?”

“They’re coming,” she called over her shoulder.

“Is there any way you can make them come faster?” Aiden asked.

God bless his brother for being able to keep his sense of humor in this situation.

Four wolves, including his father’s feared bodyguard, stood at the entrance to the garage. Their snarling mouths and the hair that stood on end gave away their intent.

The four of them were not supposed to get out of the garage alive.

“Can you take two of them?” He asked Kali.

“I don’t know. I wasn’t prepared for a fight and I haven’t had blood in too long. But you know I won’t go down without a fight.”

“No, you can’t, it’s too dangerous.”

Aiden tried to hold Kali back, but she flicked him off easily.

“Can’t we wait for reinforcements, like you said?” Jane pleaded. She was holding onto Van’s arm so tightly that she was sure she was leaving fingernail marks.

“I’m sure *we* can, but *they’re* not going to.”

He flicked her off like a horse swatting a fly.

“Keep her safe,” he directed his brother before turning back to the wolves and shifting his form.

*

Jane cowered with Aiden towards the back of the garage.

“There has to be something we can do,” she cried.

“There has to be, but damned if I can think of it.”

Kali and Van, woman and wolf, approached the four snarling creatures.

Without warning, the one on the far right lunged towards Van.

She wanted to cry out, but Aiden put his hand over her mouth. She knew he was right. If she were to make any noise at all, she could divert their attention from where it was supposed to be focused.

She nodded her head and Aiden released her mouth.

Van rolled with the other wolf. He had easily fifty pounds on him, and he immobilized him easily with a sharp bite to the neck and a swat of his claws to the side.

In seconds the beast lay on the floor of the garage, his breathing shallow, a pool of blood spreading underneath him.

At a nod from the largest beast, the one in the middle, the wolf on the far left attacked. He jumped, aiming straight at Kali's neck.

This time it was Jane trying to hold Aiden back.

"No," she whispered.

He stilled in her arms.

It turned out though that they didn't have to worry. Kali easily disposed of the animal, bringing up an arm to block, and then elbowing the creature hard in the stomach.

The sound of cracking ribs echoed through the garage. The animal limped off whimpering.

Unfortunately, for the two wolves that had been taken down, four more now stood in their places.

This time four attacked at once. On one side of the garage were three balls of fur, writhing on the floor. Fur flew and blood began to coat the ground. It was impossible for her to tell who was winning.

On the other side of the garage Kali fought with two beasts. All three were obviously in agony. Flesh was torn from Kali's body and she cried out in pain.

Jane and Aiden continued to hold one another tighter.

"We have to do something."

They looked around frantically for something, anything that they could do to help.

"Here." Aiden tossed her a two by four. "Just make sure you don't hit anyone on our side."

He stalked towards the Kali's fight. It was obvious that she was tired. When one of the wolves tried to attack her, he hit the animal like he was swinging a baseball bat.

Well, Jane didn't have any experience with baseball, but surely she could do something to help.

She dashed towards Van.

"Get back, Jane."

She didn't answer him with words. Instead, she held the wood over her head and brought it down hard when a large gray wolf'd sunk his teeth into Van's side.

"Remind me never to get you mad at me."

"Shut up and fight, Van."

Two more wolves came from around the house and joined the fray.

Jane hissed through her teeth and tears blurred her vision when one of the beast's talons scratched her leg, but she never stopped fighting. Between the four of them, it only took minutes until the only beast left standing was the largest silver wolf she'd ever seen.

He circled them, snarling, saliva dripping from his teeth.

Suddenly, there was a noise overhead.

"It's about time the reinforcements showed up."

Jane started to breathe a little easier.

"You may have won this time, but it's not over."

With that, the gray turned on his heels and took off down the driveway. Suddenly everything seemed to happen at once.

Four men appeared in front of her. Silently and swiftly, they gathered up the wolves, most moaning, some unconscious, she hoped none of them dead.

Almost as if the whole thing as a dream, they disappeared as quickly as they arrived. Almost immediately after they left, the fire trucks rolled up.

Ambulances soon followed.

They were sent away by Kali who insisted that they were all fine.

“But I’m not fine. My leg hurts like hell,” Jane complained.

“I know, I’m right there with you but we need to be treated by council approved paramedics.”

Jane tried to lean heavily on Van, but he didn’t seem to be doing any better. The same with Kali and Aiden.

They were waiting impatiently for the council ambulance when one of the firefighters approached them.

“I’m sorry, sir. We’ve got the fire put out. The damage was fairly minimal but it’s going to take some time to get the smoky smell out. But I’m afraid we haven’t been able to find your dog.”

“My dog?”

“Yes sir, we saw a dog when we pulled up and we haven’t been able to find it. If it’s in the house well, I’m afraid for the worst.”

Jane didn’t know why, the firefighter was genuinely concerned about the non-existent dog, but all she could see was the humor in the situation.

She laughed. She tried to hide her laugh, disguise it as a cough, but there was no use. It was obvious that she was laughing and there was no use trying to hide it.

Pretty soon, Aiden and Kali were laughing with her.

“I’m sorry, sir,” Van said to the fireman, though she could hear the laughter bubbling just below the surface of his voice. “She laughs when she’s under an extreme amount of stress.”

“I understand, sir. I’ve seen weirder things.”

As soon as the fireman turned around and jogged back to his truck, Van too threw his head back and laughed.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Van walked into his bedroom and exhaled. He looked down at his watch. It was cracked, but it still worked. A mere six hours since the firemen left.

As promised, the council approved ambulance had shown up and patched them all up. Kali got her much needed blood and Van got some more of Clifford's magic potion. Jane and Aiden were the worst off, not having any restorative powers; they had to get stitched up and put on antibiotics to prevent infection.

Kali had taken Aiden off "to help him recuperate" and Jane had disappeared into the bedroom that had been hers for the last two weeks.

Funny, how he thought of his own room as Jane's room.

He walked over to his favorite spot by the window.

Those paranormal cleaners were awesome. While the fireman was right and a slight smoky odor still permeated the air, there were no other traces of the fact that fire had nearly destroyed his home the previous evening.

It was shaping up to be another Seattle day. The sky was gray and fog hung low in the air. It was damp outside, misty he supposed would be the right word for it.

Where the world had been completely black when he'd looked outside last night, this morning it was completely gray.

It suited his mood.

He left his bedroom, went downstairs and filled his coffee mug. Rather than going to the dining room window as was his usual custom, he stepped outside, into the chilly air.

The wetness lay on him like dew on a plant. He never thought he'd be interested in knowing how grass felt.

There was a big part of him that wanted to change into wolf form and run. Just run, nowhere in particular and to do no particular thing, but he wanted to run. He was restless.

Jane was inside, and she was packing to go home.

If he were a gentleman, he'd go inside and offer to help. He'd take her home, give her a kiss on the cheek, and that would be the end of it. If he ever needed a book from her bookstore, well Aiden or Kali would get it for him.

Why now?

He'd never had a problem leaving a woman behind, but why now?

Why with Jane.

Especially why with Jane? She was so much better than him. She deserved so much more than an unemployed werewolf that was antisocial at best. And really, he was an asshole.

But, goddamn it, he didn't want to see her go.

"Van? Is everything all right?"

As if she were a mirage and he'd been in the desert for too long, she stepped out of the kitchen.

She looked too good to be true in her dark blue jeans and gray sweatshirt.

Her jeans were looser now than they had been, and they were beginning to bag on her. The sweatshirt he recognized as his. He'd given it to her a week ago when she said she'd been cold.

“Yeah, I’m fine.”

But he wasn’t. To be honest, he was eaten up inside. He hadn’t been able to protect everyone and it grated on him.

“I was surprised to find you out here instead of in the dining room.”

He simply shrugged. The house he’d been holed up in for so long felt claustrophobic to him this morning. He had to get the hell out.

“Well, the smoke was bothering me so I thought I’d get some fresh air.”

The lie rolled off his tongue so easily, he was disgusted with himself.

“Oh yeah. I hardly notice it but I guess with your enhanced senses it must be ... well ... yucky.”

“Yeah.”

He didn’t say anything else, just continued to look out on the gray rippling waters of the sound.

“Well, I’m all packed and everything, so I guess I should get going.”

“Do you need a ride?”

Please just get her out of the house as soon as possible. Out of his life. He was desperate to go back to his solitary life, even though he knew that it would make him miserable.

“No, Aiden said he’d take me home. He has to get home himself.”

Yeah, the big difference, though, was that Van knew Aiden would be coming back.

“All right then.”

He set down his coffee mug on an oversized planter and walked towards Jane. While every molecule in his body was telling him to hug her, hell, to take her in his arms and never let her go, he simply stuck out his hand for her to shake.

She stared at him, at his hand.

*

He took her virginity, nearly got her killed, and now he wanted to shake her hand? Screw that.

Jane turned on her heel and stomped back towards the kitchen. She was going to march down to the basement, demand that Aiden get his lazy ass up right this second and get her the hell away from here.

A handshake, for God’s sake.

“I’m sorry, Jane.”

She had her hand on the doorknob when his soft voice stopped her.

She turned, crossing her hands over her chest and jutting her hip out to the side. She knew she was close to pouting but she didn’t care.

“For what?”

If she wasn’t mistaken, he had a slight smile on his face.

“You’re not the girl you were two weeks ago.”

No, she wasn’t, but he was sorry for that? Two weeks ago she was practically a spinster. She was an almost thirty year old virgin with no friends, who had never stuck up for herself a day in her life.

And he was sorry she was no longer that pathetic creature?

“I’m not.”

She turned to go back inside.

“No, that’s not what I’m sorry for—that was just ... never mind. I’m sorry for, well,

for everything. For the last two weeks.”

He wasn’t earning his way back into her good graces.

“I’m not sorry for that, either.”

She turned again to go back inside. She was going to start getting dizzy if he didn’t say whatever the hell it was he wanted to say.

“Stay.”

That time she did get dizzy. She whirled around so fast that she lost her balance and tumbled down the two stairs that lead from the door to the patio. Luckily Van’s speed kept her from hitting the ground, but she did manage to scrape her still fresh stitches on the railing.

“Ouch, damn it, that hurts.”

Van scooped her up in his arms and carried her over to the railing, settling her on the wide piece of wood.

He bent down to inspect the damage. There was no new blood on the bandage, so she figured she’d be okay, and the throbbing had already faded to a dull ache.

“The old Jane would’ve never said anything like that.”

“Yeah, well, maybe the old Jane really did suffer from the hit that was put out on her.”

She didn’t mean to be so callous, she meant it as a joke, but the blood drained from his face.

He reached out, tentatively at first, and then cradled the side of her face in his hands.

“I am so sorry that I ever got you involved in this, and I don’t think I’d ever forgive myself if something were to happen to you.”

She shivered, not from the cold but from his words.

“We should go inside.”

He shrugged his shoulders, but didn’t move his hand from her face. The other hand came around to rest on her waist.

“I kind of like it outside.”

“That’s new, isn’t it?”

“I’ve discovered a lot of new things in the last two weeks.”

His mouth lowered slowly towards hers. She had plenty of time to pull away, but she wouldn’t have been able to had her life depended on it.

If this was going to be how it ended with Van, so be it. She was going to enjoy every last second of it.

There was hesitancy in his lips when they touched hers. It wasn’t anything like the other kisses they’d shared when he knew he’d be welcome to do anything he wanted to her.

This kiss was most definitely a question. She answered by pressing her lips harder onto his, and opening her mouth, her tongue teasing his lips, until his tongue joined in the kiss.

His hand moved from her face to unzip his gray sweatshirt. All she had on underneath was a white tank top. It had a built in bra, but she was mostly naked to his touch.

His hands slid into the sweatshirt and came around her body, hauling her towards his chest.

His skin was slick from the mist, but warm. She reached down and pulled the gray

tee shirt over his head.

His skin was marred with scratches, but they were nothing more than faint lines across his tanned skin. She didn't know if it was due to the chilly weather or lust, but his nipples stuck out, peaks that she couldn't wait to get her hands, her lips, on.

She leaned forward and nipped at one of the distended buds. He countered by lavishing attention on her nipples.

"That feels good."

He picked her up from the railing, settling her in front of him. He went to work on her pants, divesting of them quickly before laying his tee shirt on the railing as a barrier between her skin and the wood, and lifting her back up.

"Do you know, the first time, you didn't say anything. You were so quiet, I didn't know if I was hurting you or if you were enjoying yourself."

"Oh, I was definitely enjoying myself."

She reached down and helped him with his own pants. With their hands tangling, it took much longer than it should have.

He settled his shaft at the juncture of her legs, but didn't go any further; he just teased her pussy with the very tip of his penis.

"I like it when you tell me what you're thinking. What you're feeling."

He thrust himself into her.

She thought she might have actually seen stars.

"I feel really good."

She couldn't believe she was doing this, outside, completely naked from the waist down, in the rain.

She just desperately hoped that there weren't any lonely sailors out on the sound with very high-powered binoculars.

"Do you know what I feel?"

He pulled out slowly and then slowly maneuvered himself back in. Jane held onto him tightly. She was afraid she'd tumble over the railing if she didn't.

"What?"

When they weren't speaking, they were kissing and Van's hands never stopped moving, from her waist, her back, her breasts, even her neck, she was pretty sure there wasn't anyplace left above her waist that he hadn't caressed.

As he spoke, he moved his hand lower, to caress the places below the waist.

Jane jerked in his arms, but he held her tight.

"I feel like I'm home."

She was confused. Of course that could be because all of her brain cells were currently heading south.

"You are home."

"No, not the damn house. I couldn't care less about the house. It could've burned down last night and I wouldn't have mourned for a second. But I would have died if something would have happened to you."

He increased his tempo, at the same time increasing the rhythm of his fingers moving over her clit.

Jane's brain turned all foggy and muddled, but before she climaxed, she knew she had to get one more question out.

"What ... what are you saying?"

Van continued to thrust even harder and deeper. It was only a matter of seconds before her body started pulsing in response to his thrusts, and at the same time, she could feel him growing inside of her.

“I’m saying I love you.”

Jane’s climax rumbled over her with the power of a freight train. Van’s seed spurted inside of her, filling her completely and then dripping out, down her thighs.

She collapsed, leaning forward against Van as he leaned against the railing, trying to stay upright.

“What did you say?”

She was really shocked to hear how devoid of any emotion her question was considering all the feelings rushing through her body.

“I said I love you.”

“Oh.”

What was wrong with her? Why didn’t she say it back? There was no doubt she felt it, too, so why did she remain silent?

“Look Jane, I’m not proposing or anything here. God knows I thought about it, but the truth is two weeks just isn’t enough. It isn’t enough time to prove to you that I’m a good guy. I’m decent and I care about you, and I do anything for you. But, I want you to stay. I know I’m not necessarily a good...”

“It’s long enough.”

“—catch, but...”

“What did you say?”

“I said that two weeks is definitely long enough.”

“Oh.”

He sounded so deflated. Now she knew how her “oh” must have affected him a few moments ago.

“It’s enough time to fall in love, Van.”

He stepped away from her and handed over her pants. He wouldn’t quite meet her eyes.

“I’m sorry. I’ll go get Aiden to drive you home.”

“You are such a woman.”

She laughed, the giddiness inside of her suddenly bubbling over.

“What?”

She decided that he could sweat a little bit. She put on her pants and re-zipped her sweatshirt. She tossed the now sopping wet gray tee shirt in his direction.

“I was telling you that I love you too, but you were acting like some romance novel heroine.”

Whatever she was about to say next was silenced by his tongue invading her mouth. She didn’t care about being interrupted. She eagerly kissed him back.

“I do love you, you know. I’ve never said that to anyone before.”

He was so full of wonder that she found her eyes filling with tears.

“Well, you’re good at it, and I love you.”

“So, does that mean you’ll stay?”

The old Jane would have jumped in his arms and said yes a thousand times over. The new Jane couldn’t help playing a few games before she got to that part.

“Well, we’ve only scratched the surface of my diary.”

Van smiled at her, a smile that made her heart sore.

“Ah, so you’re only staying with me because of my skills in the sack.”

They couldn’t remove their hands from one another. You’d think that there wouldn’t be anywhere else to touch, but every single touch felt newer now that they’d admitted their love.

“Well, it’s certainly not for your culinary skills.”

Van laughed and picked her up, carrying her into the house like she was a woman half her size.

“Well, then, I guess I’ll have to do what I’m best at.”

They walked through the kitchen. Home. It was almost eerie how right that felt.

Clifford didn’t even bat an eyelash when he carried her through the kitchen.

“Shall I put breakfast on hold, sir?”

“Yes, Clifford. As a matter of fact, we just might need some sustenance left outside the bedroom door today.”

Jane blushed, but Clifford easily agreed.

Van didn’t struggle at all as he carried her up the stairs to their bedroom. He simply raised an eyebrow at her suitcase sitting inside his room.

She shrugged.

When you knew, you knew.

He dropped her on the bed with a plop, covering her with his own body. They were both still cold and wet, but Jane couldn’t feel anything but the heat of his eyes.

“Thank you,” he said.

“For what?”

“For giving me a chance. For staying with me. For loving me.”

She leaned up and kissed him with all of the love in her heart. It was so easy to love him, she felt like she’d been doing it her entire life. And she did know that she would be doing it for the rest of her life.

“Didn’t you mention something about a proposal?”

Instead of answering, he stripped off all of their wet clothes and slipped inside of her.

“We’ll get to it in good time,” he said.

Jane decided she didn’t really care. She had all the time in the world, and she intended to enjoy every last second of it.

The End

About the Author:

While she'd like to confess to settling before her computer to write every day in silk and lace while half-naked boy-toys bring her champagne and truffles, the truth is she writes in her jammies and has to get her own Diet Coke.

Like many writers, Emma was bitten by the writing bug early in life. To date, her most memorable work has been The Blue Bowl Bunch which she both wrote and illustrated in sixth grade. It was a story about a bunch of grapes (yes, the fruit) that formed a club. It was mostly a series of puns and one-liners that unfortunately started a life-long love of bad jokes.

Emma lives in New York with her husband who keeps her in Diet Coke and indulges her love of puns.

You can keep up with Emma and all of her books at www.emmasinclair.com

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