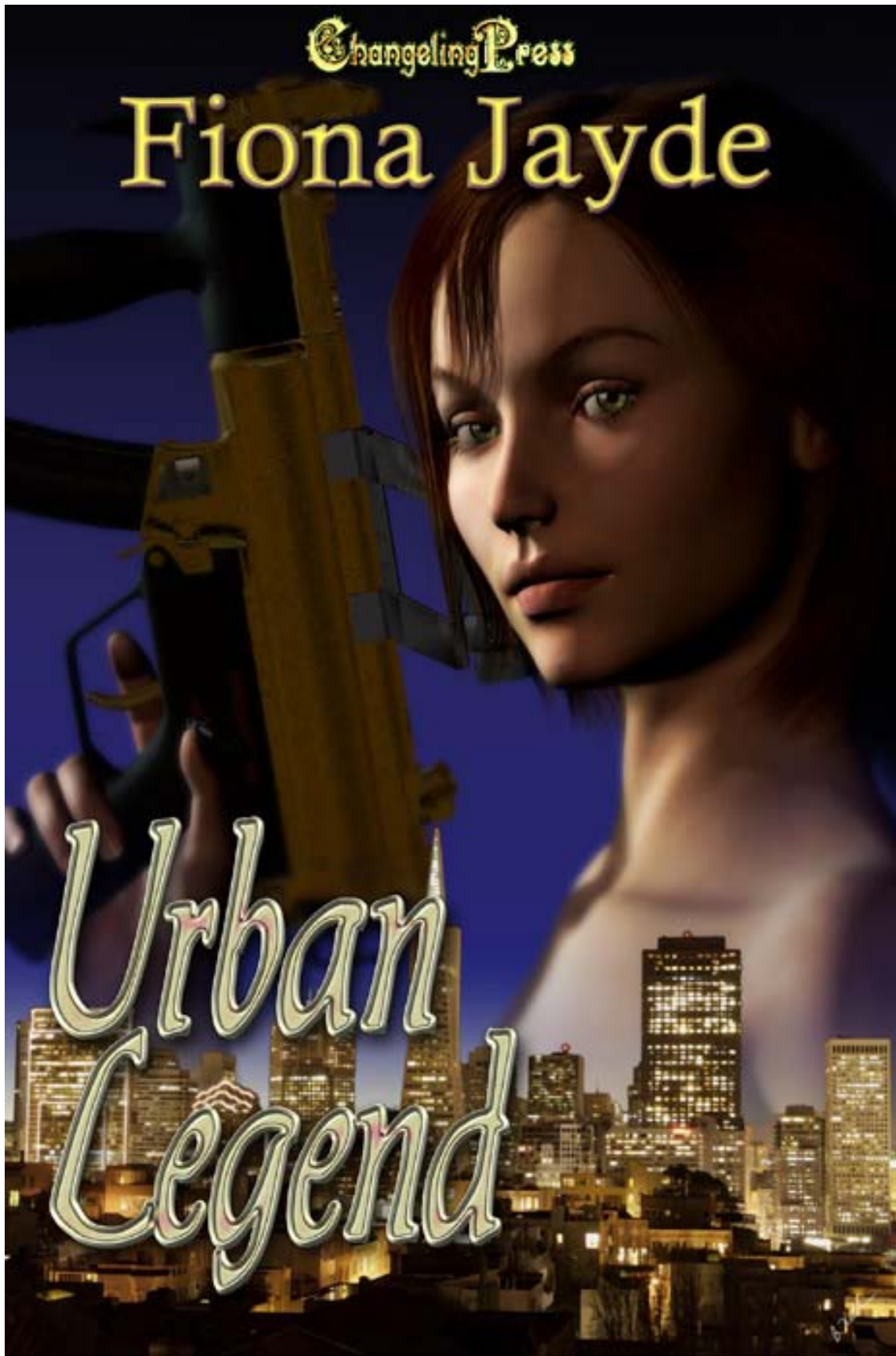


Changeling Press

Fiona Jayde

Urban
Legend



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Urban Legend

Fiona Jayde

The Council Of Vampyre refuses to believe one of their kind would willingly turn humans into monsters. They will not update the vaccine that can prevent this turning, nor will they allow humans to access the raw components so they can modify the chemical bonds themselves.

Nick Cain has pushed his body to superhuman strength ever since he was attacked and nearly drained by an amorous female vampire. When he is tasked to physically hack into a lab in San Francisco, he doesn't expect to rescue the lushly built Vampyre keeper of the vaccine, nor does he expect his sharp attraction to her while they race across the state.

Vampyre Valentina Ash has not been raised to trust a human. The man who rescues her floods her senses -- and with her yearly need rising, it's hard to focus on the fact he is still human, cannot be trusted, and is the enemy. As he saves her from death and blood dust, the hunger that envelops them both may lead them to the ultimate destruction.

Prologue

From: The Desk of Senator Wipstrom

To: Alliance of Human Protection Services/Jakob Grey

Occurrences of humans with Vampyre blood appear to be larger than anticipated. The mixing of the races has taken place despite the fear and distrust on both sides. The offspring of these unions are usually regular humans with the potential to be turned into blood-consuming nightmares. The vaccine that should have protected them from turning does not appear to take effect on the mixed race.

The Vampyre Council does not accept the possibility of someone willingly turning humans into Vampyre. The act is deemed unnatural, distasteful. They do not wish to see the sire marks carved into the bodies of the drained or on the faces of the newly-turned who terrorize the streets.

We must take action into our own hands. As they are responsible for the distribution of the vaccine -- and refuse to hear our call for updates -- we will take on this project without their input. To start, we must understand the raw components that make up the whole -- a task which will require delicacy as this information is heavily guarded by the Council.

I trust you will proceed with caution.

With respect,

Bill Wipstrom, Senator

Chapter One

The proximity breach occurred at precisely twelve-thirty. Val struggled to stay calm, to slow the pulse thundering in her throat and ears. Her fingers -- usually so sure and nimble -- clumsily pounded on the emergency shutdown keys.

About a minute until full breach. She knew exactly where the man was, could see him on the security cam -- black-clothed and huge. Human most likely -- a Vampyre wouldn't have a need to be here.

Orders were simple, and so was pride. She'd rather dust and join her father than give humans access to the vaccine.

The monitors blinked blue now, ready to short if someone even breathed on them too hard. There were no papers -- all was digital. She stumbled over an opened drawer, painfully scraping her knee on something sharp and cold as she swiped flash drives off the workstations, sticking her forefinger into data CDs. She thought deliriously that only she would be the one stupid enough to get killed here on Friday since everyone else was partying it up. Had she not been here, all data would have been locked up and inaccessible.

They either wanted her or just her data. Either way, they'd get dust.

She banged her other knee into that same drawer, a sharp edge ripped through her jeans and into skin. Ignoring the pain, she ran into the kitchenette to reach the microwave, sticking the CDs in there and setting it on high. Fridge magnets and flash drives were best friends.

She waited for the man to blow the inner door and curled her hands over the knife always carried on her lunch walk. It wasn't ladylike, but neither was this business. There was movement behind her; she scented human -- male, musk, muscle. The knife was in her palm, the handle hot and smooth as she turn around to face the human --

huge, thick muscles under a beat-up leather jacket, his clenched jaw grim in the bright and cheerful kitchen light.

"There's two of them. They ain't as nice as me." His voice sounded intimate -- a soft seductive whisper. Then he was on her, his body hard and heavy, his palm over the knife handle, the other on her waist.

Act, damn it!

Val allowed herself to wait a precious second before pivoting, circling his motion round, down -- his crash onto the floor just a muffled thud. The flash of victory was short and sweet -- he rolled onto his feet smoothly, uncommonly graceful for a man that big. She brought her fists up and wondered where he'd stashed his guns. He didn't look like the man she'd seen on camera, but that didn't mean shit.

"Impressive." He barreled into her, crashing her face down on the floor, her knife pried out of her fingers. She closed her eyes and waited to be dust. Instead she felt his lips next to her ear. "They either want you dead or the vaccine. Your odds're better with me."

She barely could breathe with his weight on her. And, gods help her, it was... interesting. His scent was potent human male, fused with adrenaline and yet not threatening. "And you want what?"

His weight was off, a large, rough palm wrapped over her upper arm and dragged her upward. She took this chance to look at him -- dark blond hair cropped close to his skull, dark stubble over a face too brutal to be considered handsome -- too striking to be anything but. His eyes were gray and cold as he returned her stare. "Just the vaccine."

She pushed at him, but couldn't dislodge the hand over her biceps. Were there more of them? Was he distracting her while someone was beating their way into the network? "At least tell me your name."

"Nick Cain, Alliance of Human Protection Services."

The title didn't mean much to her.

He dragged her toward the window. Val fought, stalling, and nearly threw him again. He was too big, that muscled body just too heavy. She cursed the non-aggressive choice of Aikido and wished she'd studied something deadly, something that would have given her enough skill to punch his lights out.

"Let go, damn you." She wanted to scream, instead she whispered furiously. He cursed an answer just as Val saw a green speck of light over her bare arm. And then a thud, a crush, a breathless stun as he just threw her on the floor, his body damp and hot over hers. Time stretched, seconds were hours. Glass shards rained like teardrops onto the tiled floor as she struggled for breath under this human male.

She dragged air in as soon as he rolled off her. She raised her head to find him on his knees in front of her, a wide shouldered Rambo with a gun in each hand, his back to her as he rolled onto his feet and yelled for her to find cover.

A loud shot, a groan... and then silence. The blood ash of a dead Vampyre drifted over her face like cherry blossoms. She simply couldn't move. "Stop flipping, Doc, a second earlier it'd have been you." His voice was rough and low. Sheer will had her clawing her way onto unsteady feet. His palm felt warm around her wrist. "Move it."

She smelled his blood. "You're hurt."

"That's what I get for playing hero." That gruff voice would be sexy any other time. Now it was terrifying.

He dragged her toward that same window, the broken glass letting in wind and night. Was there someone waiting outside? She struggled again, but didn't shriek simply because she didn't have the breath. Her hair fell over her face; she felt rather than saw when he burst through the window taking her with him.

He kept in shadow, using the wall for cover. Hunched behind him, Val prayed her knees wouldn't turn to jelly while her thighs trembled. She stumbled; the man dragged her up and forward, out to the street. She was shoved into the back of a large van, the door slammed after her. She shut her eyes and expected the roar of a motor and

a shove of acceleration to fling her back as they tore out of here. Instead she heard both of them breathing in the silence.

She let her stomach slide back down from her throat. "Shouldn't we get out of here?" He didn't answer. Val took a risk and opened one eye, then the other. The blue glow of monitors nearly seared her pupils off, and she squinted in defense, blinking at tears. Shock and nerves kept ruining her focus as she tried to kick start her brain into some semblance of action. He hadn't killed her. Nevertheless, she wouldn't trust a human even if this one had saved her life.

Chapter Two

Her voice drove him insane, curling around him and sliding into his crotch with the sweet intensity of cool, dark silk. Gone were the business suit and prim and proper blouses he had seen her wearing the past few days while attempting to hack into her closed-door network. Her jeans hugged curves designed to inspire lust, her sweater revealing cleavage that was an answer to male prayers. All that black wavy hair was coiled into a tail that begged him to take it into his fist, to pull her head back while he fucked her from behind. That voice -- pure kinked sex.

Ignoring it and her, Cain kept a close eye on the monitors displaying both sides of the street as he raced through the surveillance vid to see if anyone approached. He couldn't risk peeling out now, not with the possibility of someone rigging up a nice explosive parting gift while he'd been gone.

"What are you doing?" There was a hint of suppressed panic in her tone.

"Hang on, Doc." He watched the cams, ran diagnostics. Sweat dripped into his eyes. They couldn't stay, and yet they could be blown to bits once he gunned the engine.

"We need to go!"

There was nothing on the cams. Cain figured he would risk it. He grabbed her by the waist, pulled her against him, fitted his mouth over hers. Nipped just a little, just for luck. "Let's go then." Pushing the divider down to give him access, he climbed into the driver's seat, pulling her after him. Grasping her wrist tightly, he gunned the engine.

Nothing. They were both still here, her skin smooth and soft under his.

Still holding her wrist, he sped the van through San Francisco -- tall, mirrored buildings crowding the streets -- and as the tension eased, he started thinking.

He'd kissed a fucking Vampyre. He didn't know what in sweet hell he'd been thinking. Sexy or not, she was a Vampyre and he'd just... Fuck. He felt as horny as a teenager at first grope. At least she'd finally gone silent. He couldn't handle that siren voice now, not when the adrenaline still spiked his nerves and his body wanted to play with those lush curves.

Damn, but her eyes went wide when he put his lips on her. She was so tall she matched him evenly in height, her eyes level with his when he brought her against him. Her skin was pale and white over high cheekbones, her mouth lush and wide and perfect. He thought about watching it stretch over his cock and felt himself harden. He dropped her wrist as if it had scalded him.

Christ, he was a case.

The Vampyre shifted next to him, that carnal mouth parting as she exhaled. She'd freaked minutes ago and now sat so still it was as if ice had coated her. Cain didn't care if it was shock or discipline. There was only one urge -- to take her down and feast as soon as they were safe.

Adrenaline, he told himself. *Nothing to do with her*. No way in hell would he be hungry for a Vampyre. No matter how hot she was. He needed to figure out what to do with her. His task had been simply to hack into her network -- he didn't usually play Rambo unless his team was with him.

Another stolen glance noted a small shiver that ran down her body. Without a word he attempted to shrug out of his jacket, clumsily tugging at the cuff until it finally came off. "Here." He shoved the leather at her. Christ, had she just sniffed it? He could have sworn his cock let out a groan.

The Vampyre remained silent as he swung the van onto 101 and into San Mateo. He took the Main Street exit, weaved between cars and streets, and shot into the freeway back north to SF. Another turn, another exit. The cars and taillights were a blur, their roar like an echo.

The no-name motel he'd been staying at was seconds from the freeway -- allowing a quick getaway should it be ever needed. The parking lot was a mixture of

cars and trucks, some old, some shiny. The streetlights spilled cones of even, yellow light over them.

"Let's go." Grabbing her wrist he pushed up the armrest separating the bench seat and pulled her out after him. He wasn't sure who made that short and sweet intake of breath as their bodies touched. Regardless, Cain broke the contact before his cock could burst right through his zipper. He didn't know what the hell was wrong with him, but he wouldn't allow it to shatter his focus.

The alert sequence would have wiped out the files by now. So she was the only one with knowledge of the raw components. Until somebody took her off his hands, he'd have to keep her close.

The motel was old enough to need a key, which Cain produced from snaps and a section of his belt. Once inside, he walked toward the window, rotating his aching arm and shoulder while he watched the street from the darkened room.

"Now what?" Her voice sounded strong and firm and terrified.

"Now I figure out what to do with you."

"You're hurt." Val was done here. This human had saved her life -- and yes she certainly was grateful for it -- but she was under no illusions. She wasn't grateful enough to give up the vaccine components even if his scent sent her hormones into overdrive. She needed meds and soon.

"I'm fine." He flipped open his phone to reveal a tiny lit up keyboard. His fingers large over the small keys, he pressed a series of buttons. She couldn't see much of him, but all that potent male scent was slowly killing her.

The meds were wearing off, that was all. She needed to get back to the lab and take another dose. "Are you okay?" She lowered her voice, going for seductive, and took a step closer to all that rich spiced scent of an aroused male. Lady or not, she knew his weakness and intended to exploit it. Honor aside, she would not trust a human.

Val threw a fist right where arm met shoulder -- and didn't have the time to scream as she was trapped against a wall with a hot, hard muscled body shoved against her, her wrists enslaved in both of his, his scent so potent she nearly moaned from it.

"I don't fuck vamps," he growled into her ear, his breath making her shiver as her pulse spiked. "Although I'll reconsider if you beg pretty."

The human's mouth hovered over hers, teasing with its closeness, not giving her that final rough contact. She fought herself for one sharp moment before giving in, rearing toward him to feel his lips crush into her. Their tongues mingled and fought -- his taste hot and dark, his hands on her shoulders, digging in, pulling her into him.

He tore his mouth away even as his hips smashed against hers. She felt a bulge against her belly, an unmistakable erection of an excited male. Another deep inhale -- musk and adrenaline and... human. Gods, again she'd kissed a human.

He crushed her to him with a groan of one in the throes of Hell, his arms banding around her, his mouth finding hers in a rough and hot caress. She fought against him this time, hating the coiling in her belly, the need that spiked her blood while her hormones sang. He tasted as good as he smelled, hot, sexy, potent, those firm lips feasting on hers as if he couldn't get enough.

His tongue probed past her lips and slipped inside, touching her fangs. He froze. Her mind broke through the haze. She pushed at him and for added emphasis jerked her knee up, causing him to jump back and release her wrists.

Now. Val brought her arms around and down, used her shoulder as leverage. He was too stable to be thrown. Instead he turned her, pressed her face first into the wall, her arms pinned behind her so tightly she knew it would be painful the more she struggled. Fighting for breath, she cursed this rising need as nerves and just a tiny hint of fear pooled in her core.

"Do that again and I'll kill you myself." His whisper was scraped raw. Nerves locked her muscles even as her pussy clenched. His weight was off. Air rushed into her lungs. She didn't move, couldn't see him. "If you don't move I'll just give in and fuck you."

She turned around. From the shadows she could feel him watching. "I thought you didn't do Vampyres." The heat of embarrassment infused her body -- shame at her own reaction, hating herself for being weak.

"Can't use your teeth if I bend you from behind." The image shot a stream of heat into her belly even as she flinched. "Might wanna use the restroom." He said it so matter-of-factly she didn't even think to blush. "You'll leave in twenty."

"I need to get back to my lab." And take her meds.

"And get your ass killed?"

"The Council will protect me." Val had to get away from him. It would only be moments before her pheromones got to him again -- he had already kissed her. A human for God's sake. He looked the type who'd want a delicate small feminine thing - - not one like her with too much bust and personality.

"Look, let's just put it this way." His voice sounded tired, as if resigned. "I saved your ass because of the vaccine. Once you give our scientists the raw components you'll be taken to a safe house. After that you can decide what you want next."

No way in hell was she giving the raw data to humans. "I won't divulge that information."

"You don't exactly have a choice."

"Or you'll what?"

The human smiled thinly, and she could see the sarcasm in the darkness. "I've got handcuffs."

Heat flared, both in her cheeks and pussy. She needed to regroup, to think, to get rid of this damned arousal that wouldn't let go. "Why do you need it so damn much?" Her father had been killed for it. The raw components could be easily combined into a weapon against her own kind. She was willing to follow her father rather than see the humans get their hands on it.

"Your vaccine doesn't work on hybrids. And someone's getting very rich on that fact."

Someone is turning humans for a profit? "That's just a legend. No one of my kind --"

"Your legend -- a human -- a carrier of your DNA, doesn't give a fuck about your Council or your laws."

"Fine." *Stay calm and reasonable.* It wasn't possible of course, but she could play along. "I'll need to get back to the lab." Once there she could lock herself inside the hazmat cube and he could go to hell.

"Your comps were torched five minutes after shutdown." He ignored what Val was sure was her dropped jaw. "You're stuck with me until Mathias picks you up." Mind whirling, she turned to look out the window and bumped her knee against a chair. Pain flared, so bright and sharp she sucked her breath with it. "What?"

"Nothing." Most likely he would think she was trying to distract him. Although the pain was good -- the coiling of need seemed to have lessened with this fresh onslaught of sensation. Gingerly Val lowered herself on the same chair, lifted her leg, and reached through the hole in her jeans to feel the swelling at her knee. Just bruised. His scent curled into her again as he lowered himself in front of her, his head level with her crotch. *Oh, gods.* "It's nothing."

"Don't worry, I won't kiss it better."

Calloused yet gentle fingers traveled under her jeans and smoothed up over her ankles. She winced a bit when he found the bump, but held the gasp of pain as need laved at her skin. He was so close she could make out his face, his square jaw, the nose that looked like it'd been broken more than twice.

Human, she told herself. *Just human.* Except his fingers lingered on her skin.

Chapter Three

Black candles brought an eerie glow to luxurious silks and silver.

Nonnenberg couldn't tear his gaze away from the two Vampyre females persuading the Ukranian to "join" them -- their gleaming naked bodies, the flash of fangs, the flow of blood as they licked drippings over each other's lips. The man splayed under them was pale and thin and shuddering in ecstasy, his mouth gaping open like that of a drying fish.

"They're yours, Yuri." The sire -- Armand Church -- was invisible in shadow somewhere deep inside the room. "They need your blood. They will do anything to get it."

As if in answer, one of the females raked her nails over the skinny chest, and dragged a long tongue over the welling blood. Church did enjoy using the female persuasion -- and these two would do anything for a supply. The strength in them was of ten men, their beauty that of the eternal. Nonnenberg wanted it. Church had promised it to him.

A beeping on his cell took his attention. "She's gone," he murmured, not taking his gaze off the naked female flesh. He felt rather than saw Church moving toward him.

The old man's eyes were a strange, pale blue, the candlelight carving deep shadows in his cheeks and mouth. "Humans? The Alliance?"

Nonnenberg shrugged. "Most likely."

"Destination?"

The idiots didn't even stick a tracker on the car. "I'd say LA."

"You'll find her."

Just then the blonde straddled that pink, stubby penis, while the redhead alternated between sucking down human blood and chasing it with her blonde partner.

"You should have sent me in the first place." Nonnenberg didn't take his gaze off the writhing female bodies.

"I needed Yuri. You will find her now."

"I have a man who'll do just that."

"If he does not, she must be dead before her meeting with the human scientists." A small semblance of disgust showed through Church's stony features as he watched the artistically moaning Vampyres and the small human male eager to offer them his lifeblood.

Nonnenberg gave a curt nod. "Agreed. And my reward?"

"Once we have her, you will be the first."

He wasn't an idiot. "The second."

Church simply smiled, took a small sip of dark red liquid in a wine glass. "As you prefer."

* * *

His Vampyre made a tiny move to get away from him just as Cain realized he was caressing the satin skin over her knee. He snatched his hand away while his cock thickened in greeting.

"I need a shower." Her voice was a hoarse whisper.

With jerky movements, she got up, as if she felt the same damned lust that gripped him. *Right*. The thought of her naked had his cock twitching again. "You've got fifteen."

She nodded, her arms across her chest as she marched into the bathroom, nearly searing his pupils when she flipped the lights. At least it took attention off his cock.

He needed weights, the punching bag, the secured track so he could run it off. Just push his body to the limit until all thought was gone and he was left with nothing but bone draining emptiness. Something to take his mind off her, something to keep him strong. He heard the shower start; the line of light under the bathroom door like a magnet for his eyes. Cain wished Mathias would get here soon so he could get the hell away from her, away from this insane urge to just take her.

She was so close, naked and wet, and he could picture those lush full breasts beading with water, that full mouth parted as she slicked her soapy hands over her nipples before moving lower over her softly sloping belly. Christ, was her pussy smooth or did a nest of black curls cover her mons?

His cock nearly burst through his pants. Eyes on that line of light, Cain adjusted himself, pushing his cock sideways so that at least the zipper wouldn't leave permanent teeth marks. That's when he heard it, a moan so soft, so sexily, excruciatingly soft. He strained to hear more, and made his way closer to the bathroom. The fall of water was the only thing he heard. He pictured her under the spray, skin flushed from heat, her black hair streaming down her back --

There. He heard it again, soft, low moaning or crying. Then something crashed and tumbled and he'd ripped off the doorknob before he'd even registered his action. He walked through the light and steam to see her shape through the glass doors; her head thrown back, her hair piled high, damp curls framing her face, her foot resting on the ledge... the detached showerhead aimed at the apex of her thighs. A shampoo bottle was on its side by her left foot.

She jerked her head to face him. Even through steam and glass he saw her flush, and couldn't look away though his mind screamed it. She was a Vampyre. She was... the most beautifully shaped female he'd ever seen, those water-drenched slick curves a man's wet dream. He cleared his throat. Through the glass, her wild, dark eyes looked at his. "I figured you'd be crying." Christ, did he just say that?

She didn't scream at him to get out, didn't make a move to cover gorgeous full breasts topped with dark pink jutting nipples. "I don't cry," she said, and simply stared at him, not moving, her pussy hidden from his view by a long shapely thigh.

He couldn't tear his gaze away.

"Either get in or get out," she snapped, equal amounts of arousal and loathing in that siren voice. Hell, if she'd said it as a challenge, Vampyre or not, he would get in.

His hands were clumsy as he fought his jeans, exhaling in relief as his cock sprang free, his balls aching and heavy. He watched her hands jerk the showerhead,

and arrow it at her pussy before snatching it back as if embarrassed. In a swift move he tore off his T-shirt, boots and socks.

The Vampyre didn't scream for him to stop as he approached the transparent sliding doors, or as he slid one open with enough force to have it banging against the steamed-up wall. "You don't want to be here," she whispered, even as her eyes darkened and her flushed lips called to him.

"You think?" He stepped behind her, wincing a bit as water sliced over the deep scratch on his shoulder. The small, sharp pain kept him focused instead of instantly shoving mindlessly inside her. He placed his hand over hers on the showerhead, forcing it lower until the water arrowed down just above her pussy. Control almost escaped him when a tiny moan went past her lips.

She fought against his strength, but not for too long. Cain knew the exact moment she accepted the pleasure of the water once more on her flesh. He came closer, still not making a move to touch her with his other hand.

He flicked the showerhead in tiny pulsing circles. Her head rolled back, dropping on his shoulder. She was nearly as tall as he; if he turned her around he wouldn't even have to dip to taste that perfect mouth. But she moaned again, softly, and Cain snaked his arm around her middle slowly, slyly gliding his palm over her belly, allowing her the time to stop him, to tell him to go to hell.

Her soft groan was his answer when he brushed the smooth lips of her pussy.

Val couldn't find the strength to tell him no.

Her mind screamed it while her body latched on to the feel of him around her. She didn't know what had possessed her to invite him in. The words had flown out of her mouth before she could slam it shut. Gods, he was beautiful: that thickly muscled chest sprinkled with golden hair, his arms bulging with muscles, his stomach iron hard and flat. He had the body of a warrior, complete with scars that triggered something in her mind. His steel-gray gaze was steady on her face as he approached her and she felt weak and foolish... and just lost.

His chest pressed against her back, his thick arm around her. The huge male hand fitted over hers, forcing the showerhead to aim onto her clit, moved the pulsating water in maddening circles.

Her breathing quickened as the human caressed her lower belly and dipped lower to touch between her thighs. She felt thick, hard fingers spread her nether lips and jerked as the water became sharp over her clit, the stinging of it overshadowing the pleasure.

"Sorry," he murmured, and cupped her pussy in his hand for a small moment, before allowing water to pulse over her again. His hand moved higher, lifted her breast, and rubbed at her hardened nipple. His heat surrounded her, and his cock pressed hard against the crease between her buttocks.

His breath was loud in her ear, harsh gasps of air that he drew between his teeth as he caressed her pussy with the water. She trembled now, shivering as the flutters in her core spun tighter, as his hand caressed her breasts more boldly, as he pushed his hips against her, rocking her forward, his cock rubbing against her, harsher, faster. She shivered more, took in a gulp of air and let her body clench into a climax.

His arms left her and she leaned against the wall to keep her knees from jellying. Wordlessly he took the showerhead, reaching around her to turn off the water. Steam kept the air warm. She didn't turn to face him. "I thought you didn't fuck Vampyres."

His voice was a harsh grunt. "That wasn't fucking." Cool air licked her skin as he shoved the glass door aside. "This is."

Before she had a chance to protest she was lifted from the tub, deposited in front of him, and leaning over the sink. The fogged up mirror showed them both, his body taut and strong looming over her. His cock jutted at her back, his large, rough hand smoothing over her buttocks. She shivered, watching the water bead over his skin, feeling it caress her as the droplets slid onto the floor.

"Yes or no, Doc," he rasped, the muscles of his chest so tight they stood in relief as he breathed out.

She couldn't say yes. Wouldn't. Despite herself, she nodded, and pressed her buttocks into him.

Staring at her, with one smooth movement he filled her with his cock, both their harsh gasps augmented by the tiles. His shaft was thick and hard inside her, pulsing as she clenched around him.

A small and teasing movement of his hips had her biting her lip to keep from moaning. "I wanna hear you." A slow sensual movement as he pulled out, breathed through his teeth, pushed his cock back inside her, deep and full and thick. Again. "Moan for me."

Val wouldn't.

His arms banded around her, his hands cupping her breasts, caressing her nipples with rough erotic brushes of his fingers. His big body tightened around her, inside her, his hips moving faster, his cock rasping her walls with a delicious burn. She arched back into him, her breasts held in his palms, and slammed her ass back against him, needing more. "Scream for me."

"Gods." She barely could breathe.

"Nick."

She shoved against him, shuddering, the slapping of his flesh against her a rough erotic sound as he hammered into her now, his rhythmic brutal shoves driving her higher, faster. His hands had left her breasts, one curled around her waist while the other brushed her pussy, teasing her lips before delving inside, circling her clit with maddening delicious strokes.

"Oh, gods." Her breathing was a harsh rasp in her throat.

"Nick."

Still harsh, still fast. He rubbed her clit while he fucked her, both movements sharply, wickedly erotic. Val felt something in her belly coiling, grinding, building, and she moaned now, only to have him increase the force of his blows into her even as he slowed his thrusts, sure, deep and powerful. His name seared her lips as she shattered

into another climax, feeling him surge within her moments later, watching him arch his neck and groan as he pumped his seed inside her.

Chapter Four

Good Christ, he'd fucked her. A Vampyre. After everything he'd been through he'd let his cock dictate his action. All for a piece of ass.

He pulled out of her in a sharp rough movement, ignoring the delicious flush that painted her face pink. In silence he reached for the toilet paper, cleaned himself, didn't say a word. Beside him, silent, she cleaned herself. He hoped she was on birth control or something, he didn't know how these things worked between a Vampyre and a human.

"You've got five minutes." He threw a towel at her, used another to dry the water from his skin. She didn't even look at him while they both shrugged back into their clothes. Christ, he'd fucked up. Guilt started to seep in. "Look, I'm sorry if --"

"It's fine." Her brisk cool tone surprised him. "It was my fault. I apologize." So prim and proper, as if she hadn't just pushed her ass up against his cock.

Fine then. Her fault -- her deal. "Mathias will be here shortly."

She clocked him on the head with something white and plastic. Cain felt his vision darken as he went down to his knees; heard a tinkling of keys as she grabbed them before running out. The headache pounding into his temples was raw and ugly -- and his own fault for losing focus.

Shirtless, he ran into the hallway to find her still and shocked, a Glock entirely too close to her defenseless body.

Mathias.

"Put that shit away and simply cuff her." Cain made a move to get behind her when the redheaded man nodded and grinned -- then took out a second gun. Cain had the uncanny feeling Mathias had just switched sides. Shoving his Vampyre behind him,

acutely aware of the vulnerability of naked skin, Cain faced the Glocks and thought it was ironic to risk his life for one who wanted blood, probably his.

"Don't wanna kill you, bud." That singsong voice was happily high. Mathias grinned at him while the Glocks swayed. "Gimme the vamp and we'll be gold."

"Can't have her dead." There was no way out. His weapons were... shoved under his armpit. He heard a pop loud enough to wake the best and Mathias fell to the floor, his grin now permanent.

Under his arm, the gun shook like an autumn leaf. He pried it out of her icy fingers before she screamed or aimed for him instead. "Nice job." He felt her start to tremble, and needed to keep her occupied. "Surprised you know how to shoot this thing."

Her face was white and still she answered; her eyes wide and terrified as she kept glancing at the body on the floor. "It was already loaded," she said and covered her face before bursting into tears.

This human had saved her life, more than just once. On top of that, she'd let him touch her, she'd enjoyed it, and she'd cried all over him. She was no lady as her father had wanted, and yet she had no strength. She'd killed a man. That was survival. Nothing else she could have done. But the image of that still and silent body had her shaking.

Once more inside the silent van, Val was too close to him, his scent both a comfort and insanity. She listened in while Cain made his phone calls, alternating commands and curses, explaining what had happened -- Gods, was that today? -- and telling someone he wasn't letting her out of his sight until he dumped her in LA. His words were as insulting as they were comforting. *At least he didn't go into the gory details as to how you managed to get ahold of his damned gun.*

He cussed somebody out, told them he'd beat him up if someone named Taina wasn't all right when he got back. Was that his girlfriend? Val snorted to herself. It

wasn't her business. She smelled his essence on her skin, and she couldn't shake away the image of his naked body over hers, but this wasn't her business either.

"What are you frowning about?"

She didn't realize she had, or that he'd noticed. The truth blurted out before she had a chance to stifle it. "Is this Taina your girlfriend?"

He shot her a quick look. "Friend. Vampyre Hunter -- you'll like her."

Did he have feelings for his "friend?"

"What, no comment?"

"Just wanted to know if someone else would want to kill me."

He threw a look at her, genuinely surprised. "She'd dust you if you were after blood. Otherwise she'll probably ignore you. She either trains or fights or... well, let's just say keeps her husband busy." *Ah, so this woman has a husband.* Relief was an unwelcome sigh. "What, you're jealous?" His mocking tone grated on her nerves.

"I wondered if you were that much of a bastard to... to..." She felt herself blush, a ridiculously heated blush, and couldn't bring herself to finish what she'd started.

Instead he finished for her. "To fuck you while I had a woman?" He shrugged, those strong, lean hands relaxed over the wheel. "No one's perfect."

Val had killed a man within the hour. She'd let a human... *oh just say it...* fuck her. Before that she'd nearly been killed. Now she was sitting with a human, the someone who'd touched her, whose scent nearly made her weep for him. She hadn't fought him to escape. Even while knowing he would attempt to access the raw data through her, even after some concocted story about a human blood carrier, she trusted him to keep her safe. She was an idiot. Val settled deeper in her seat, and curled her legs under her.

His breathing was rhythmic and loud. "I need a fucking Starbucks."

"If you're tired I can drive." Why that came out she had no idea. She was actively helping him kidnap her. *Brilliant.*

"So you can crash us into something?" The look he shot her was actually amused.

She simply shrugged, and tried to get comfortable. Closed her eyes. Nearly jumped out of her skin when he put his hand over the gearshift, much too close for her comfort level.

"Jumpy. I thought the sex would've calmed you down." *Bastard*. She gave him silence. Too late to remain ladylike, but at least she could regain her dignity. He snorted, his face hard in the passing headlights. "Gotta tell you though, I never thought I'd fuck a vamp." She tensed now, wishing his body heat wasn't so close even as his words sliced into her. "No comments?"

"No interest." Cool calm and proper.

"Pity."

* * *

Cain let the wind beat at his face through open windows as he flew on 101. His Vampyre -- Christ, when did she become his? -- was sleeping. Somehow she'd managed to scoot across the bench seat closer to him, her head resting on his shoulder, her hair tickling his neck. He should've shoved the partition down and kept her away from him, but fuck, it felt good.

Disgusted with himself, he couldn't help but replay the events of hours ago. He'd fucked her so he could be the stronger one, to prove he could control her, that no one would overpower him. The only thing he'd proved was that the sex was insanely good and now his cock twitched for her again. He had been a total bastard to her -- after she saved both their asses -- because he had to be the one with strength.

She was nothing like the bitch who had drained him. Had the doc wanted to, she could have drunk from the first human she got her fangs into and kicked his sorry ass from here to LA.

Instead she'd clocked him with a hair dryer while he was still blissed out. The thought had a small smile tugging at his mouth even though his mood was still as dark as night. Mathias had been too close. A second later would have had a different ending for them both. Cain didn't want to dwell on it. Instead he trusted Jakob would check the bank accounts of his recruits more often. Bribery was a bitch because it worked.

He stole a glance at her -- her face curtained by her hair, her breathing soft and warm over his shoulder. He'd dump her onto Jakob and then get rid of feeling all this shit.

He'd felt ridiculous an hour earlier as he'd forced handcuffs on her and made her climb out with him to pump gas, holding her hand in his so the cuffs wouldn't be too visible. She'd rolled her eyes but didn't fight much, not even when he'd cuffed her to the inside doorknob of the bathroom while he did his thing. At least for her it had been easy -- he'd stuck her inside and simply waited until she knocked. Finally the shock was gone from those dark eyes, the icy chill over her skin replaced by embarrassment and anger. If he hadn't known better he would've thought she was a human.

Vibration from his cell against his hip broke his train of thought. He jerked, nearly plowing the van into a guardrail. Keeping one hand on the wheel, he reached across himself to grab the phone -- and brushed a peaked, hard nipple. *Christ.*

Keeping his mind off his hardening dick, he flipped the cell open. "Cain."

"Slade." Deadshot's voice had always been a low growl. "Got you a place in SB."

"Why?"

"Because you'll get to LA after dawn."

"And you're what, the time police?"

Slade didn't even take the bait. "You've got a Vampyre in your car."

Shit, bastard was right. She'd dust in morning light. Cain kept an eye on what looked like a bus that had merged on after Paso. It had gained speed steadily -- would catch up with them in a few. He was already going ninety -- government plates and an armored vehicle were enough to keep a zealous speed cop in his seat. "Fine. Thanks."

He'd have to spend the day with her. She'd probably sleep, but hell, he didn't want to be near her. As if he'd taken a few blue happy pills, his cock wouldn't stand down. Cain willed the thought away and concentrated on the road. The bus was getting closer -- school bus from the looks of it.

"Hey, you had a zone alarm pop up." Deadshot was clicking something; Cain heard it over the phone. "Gone now, but I know your paranoid ass."

“Yeah, probably nothing. I’ll check on it.” He closed the phone and eased off the gas pedal, letting the bus get ahead on the right lane so he could get around it and pull over to check into the network.

The move saved both their lives.

Chapter Five

A thud followed by a screech of tires jostled Val out of sleep and into hell. Still cuffed to Cain, she was tossed on her seat as the van shuddered and swerved, while rocks pelleted the passenger side window. Looking at the spidering cracks, it dawned on her that they were bullets.

Cain threw his arm across her chest, pinning her to the seat as the van bucked and swerved. "Hold on," he muttered through clenched teeth and between obscenities. "We're fine, everything is fucking fine. Just hold on."

Another thud, this time on the front somewhere. She pushed her feet against the floor and grabbed a door handle. "Just pull over to the side!"

"Can't. Cliff." Again through gritted teeth. "Van's bulletproof. We'll outrun 'em." She looked beyond him, but couldn't see much in the darkness. With her free hand she reached into his belt for a gun. "Now's not a good time to get rid of me." His breathing harsh, his hands clenched and flexed on the wheel, he stared dead ahead, ignoring the bus where the bullets came from. She couldn't see into its windows, couldn't tell who was shooting or from where. She reached for Cain again. "I told you, Doc --"

"And what, sit here and be shot at?"

"So you're gonna shoot back?" More thuds at the passenger door. A whistle as a bullet ricocheted.

"I'll shoot out their tires." She felt dead calm even if her hands shook just a bit. His arm across her shoulders was a heavy comfort.

"Through the closed bulletproof windows?"

She felt the van increase in speed, heard a screech of metal, and was pushed hard into his side as the van hit the bus. "What are you doing?"

"Hold on!" He shouted now over the crashing sounds as he twisted the wheel and again drove them into the bus. His arm was still across her chest, pushing her back against the seat.

Another screech, this time the bus moved closer, trying to push them over the railing and into hell. She felt Cain's leg flex as he punched the gas, shooting the van into a forward motion, breaking out of a potential spin.

Another crash, the screech of metal nearly causing her ears to start bleeding. The bus slowed a bit, moving closer for a strike designed to hit the passenger. A squeal of brakes and the bus shredded against their front, the back wheels spinning out. Then it rolled in front of them in heaving metal groans and rear mirrors showed its bulk scrape and spark the cement.

Cain punched a button on the wheel and, despite her tensed muscles, pulled her closer until she was all but sitting on his lap. "Keep driving," he muttered and lifted her up to slide himself from under her. Val clawed her hands into the wheel and realized the overdrive took care of the speed.

She heard him rummage and pull out something. She was too scared of the speed to take the time to look. Forcing her breathing to stop burning, Val kept her shaking hands over the wheel. "They're not moving." A long and ugly shape was in Cain's hand when she spared a nanosecond to glance at it. An urban assault rifle -- she'd seen one on TV. But then again, she'd killed a man and it was the third time someone had tried to dust her. The shaking in her fingers traveled higher. "We need to stop."

"Keep going." With clean and practiced movement he did something to the rifle. Flipped the safety maybe?

The shaking in her arms became worse. It spread into her chest, her lips, her toes. "We need to stop." She muttered it through freezing lips, and without asking him she swerved onto an exit lane hitting the brakes, praying it would take off the overdrive. Applying steady pressure with cold and trembling toes, Val guided the van into Atascadero.

"Damn it, I told you --"

"We need to stop." It was the only thing she could push through her freezing lips. Locking her knee so it wouldn't slip off the gas she kept up the speed until they reached some sort of plaza. She swung in there and managed to ease off the pedal. With a shaking foot, she used the brake to come to a full stop. A breath. Another.

She clawed over the door release with numb desperate fingers, until she stumbled outside onto her knees over the asphalt, breathing, crying and shaking. His hands rubbed the warmth back into her shoulders, easing the beast that rattled her bones with each icy breath.

Heat seeped back slowly, relieving her clenching muscles, allowing the shaking to grow softer until it finally stopped. Still this human held her in those thickly muscled arms, rubbing her skin with warmth. His scent was too strong, so powerfully male, and the need hit her again, so hard she nearly staggered with it, as arousal spiked her blood.

With a small whimper she found his mouth, pressed her lips against his in a move both desperate and greedy. Shocked, he stood still as she moved over him, needing his scent, his flavor, his body on her. She put her hands over his neck, her fingers sliding up to comb through his short, wiry hair. His arms tightened around her, she was crushed into him with enough force to have her breath punched out and he kissed her, devouring her mouth as if he couldn't get enough.

She ran her hands over his back, his arms, his shoulders, digging into his skin as tongues fused, mated. She needed him, now, over her, under her, inside her. He pulled his mouth away even as his arms were steel around her waist. "Baby." His voice was sandpaper. "Baby, we need to go."

Val dragged in oxygen and felt shame flush her cheeks. *Pathetic really.* Simple excitement and she was ready to fuck him right here on the asphalt while whoever tried to kill them probably planned their next entrance. "You're right, of course." She tried for dignity, managed a whisper. "Let's go."

* * *

The next two hours were made of hell and blue balls.

He'd wanted to drag her into the back of the car and bury himself in her, then turn her over and do it all again. He'd wanted to worship those breasts and taste her as she came. He'd wanted... Shit. Cain wanted not to have permanent zipper marks over his cock when he finally peeled these damned jeans off.

In the passenger seat, pressed against the door, his Vampyre slept. How she could go from pumping with adrenaline and lust right into sleep, he didn't know. His own blood still sang from unfulfilled arousal, the tension of the chase, the bullets pelleting the car like hail.

Adjusting his cock again so the zipper wouldn't leave permanent damage, Cain concentrated on known facts. He'd already briefed his team, had them monitoring the police network for info on the vehicle. He doubted he'd be so lucky as to get a plate number but one never knew.

Back to his Vampyre. They hadn't wanted her dead in the beginning -- it would be easier to simply blow the lab to pieces than to capture her. Mathias hadn't shot her outright. This little car chase though had been swift and deadly. Obviously the stakes had changed. They could've shot the tires -- which would mean nothing since they were the newest tech, one piece and airless, virtually indestructible. Instead they'd aimed for the windows, and had nearly gotten lucky since the damned things were open.

Good solid shots, swift ability to adapt. Most likely Nonnenberg, Randall, ex Green Beret, seduced by the idea of eternal life. Or someone equally well trained. Turning into the State Street exit, Cain flipped his cell open and dialed Jakob. "Chances of Nonnenberg being in that bus?"

The Vampyre on the other end was silent for a moment. "Potentially. But again, timing. Even if they knew your heading, they would need to get to the location, outfit a vehicle and strike. I want to say they waited for you."

"The zone alarm would've gone batshit if someone had managed to break through to trace me." The idea of someone hacking into his network had his gut roaring in fury. A glance at the GPS screen he'd left on silent so as not to wake his Vampyre, showed him getting closer to the address. "What's this crib you got me?"

Jake chuckled. "My crash pad for the day. Not quite the Hilton."

"It'll do." Now that adrenaline was fizzing he felt every one of his bones aching. He needed a bed, a shower, sleep. Maybe an ice pack on his crotch.

He reached the address twenty minutes before sunrise. Before he could touch his Vampyre to wake her she was already upright, pulling on the handle of the door as if impatient to get away from him. Cain shrugged. She'd had one hellish night and was probably spooked by the close proximity of sunlight.

The apartment had no external lock and appeared unopenable -- by conventional means at least. He used his cell to dial into the computerized alarm and used the codes Jakob had texted. He could have hacked them but that would have taken too long.

His Vampyre was silent as she walked behind him, somehow drawn inside herself. He almost made a move to touch her but in her haste to back away she stumbled over something, nearly crashing onto the floor. That "I'm fine" was cool and calm and brittle.

He was simply too wired to deal with it.

Val's jaw ached from the effort to keep the tears at bay. The need raged on inside her, her belly and her pussy clenching, her muscles tensed, her body heated. She'd thrown herself at him while they faced danger and he'd rejected her. *Rightfully so*, she thought, even as shame curled in her belly lacing with the arousal to the point of pain.

Through gritted teeth she looked over the apartment. In this one darkened room, with shades drawn down against the pending sun, she thought she'd just go mad locked up this close to him.

"You'll be fine here."

A bed dominated the room -- king-size -- complete with a thin blanket and a pillow. The shades that blocked the dawn were thick and black. "Thank you." It was an effort to even push that through her lips. She needed meds, relief, just something. The thought of touching her own flesh to ease the ache was fleeting and useless. It wouldn't last, but there was a way.

"I'm gonna grab a shower." Cain's tone was rough and tired.

"Sure." The visual of that hard muscled body under streaming water, the steam licking his skin was yet another hard twist in her belly. Her mouth ached from clenching her teeth so tightly.

He frowned at her, those dark gold eyebrows flattening into a line over his brow. "You okay?"

He needed to leave -- now. "Yes. Fine." She could've sworn the look he gave her was tired confusion but at this point she didn't give a damn. As soon as the door closed behind him Val found the tiny kitchen, tore off a couple of paper towels, and found ice in what could generously have been called a fridge. Rubbing the ice over her wrist to numb it, she stuck her arm over the sink.

She let the tears flow, as she would let her blood flow -- as soon as she had guts for it. The drain would ease the ache inside and her body would focus on regenerating rather than flooding her with the need to mate.

With a deep exhale, she pressed her fangs into her wrist and bit. Blood welled over the two small punctures, and she flexed her arm so the dark splash of it would fall into the sink. A tiny movement had her looking up. She met Cain's gaze, dark, hot and furious.

Chapter Six

Blood stung his eyes as Nonnenberg clawed through shards and steaming metal. His bones were screaming, his skin cold. Each breath was like a rake of splintered ice. He couldn't die when immortality was near. He couldn't die because dying was weak and he'd been promised strength. He couldn't die simply because he wouldn't.

They were long gone, the Vampyre bitch and the human who stood for her, leaving him here to death and cold and night. He clawed and crawled and made his way over the asphalt, blood dripping after him like breadcrumbs.

He had to get away from here. The cops would come; humans with their blissful lives of ignorance and weakness. They didn't know the ease with which their throats could crush, their necks could snap, or some of them could be lucky enough to have their souls dragged out and replaced with strength. So blissful in their ignorance. So... human.

Hate drove him on, hate that he was one of them. Weak. Mortal. He'd taken lives before, and never felt empathy for those he sent to Hell or Heaven. He wouldn't join them. He wouldn't.

He crawled into the bushes, and with bleeding palms felt over his hips for the cell phone still clinging to his belt as if by a miracle. He couldn't hold it still as he punched in the digits with trembling fingers.

The voice that answered was cool, clipped and exotic. "You lost her."

"Yeah. I crashed. I'm fine but --"

"You're bleeding. I can hear it."

"I'll get her to you, but first I need --"

"You're weak and human. I should have known you would be drained rather than gain strength."

The coolness of his gut burned off to panic. "I told you, I will get her."

"You've proved weak. I have no need for weak. Die well."

A click and silence. Church was gone. Nonnenberg crushed the phone in a shaking fist, considering simply sitting here until death. He wouldn't. Strength had been promised to him, strength, immortality, and power. He would die getting it, so he could live forever. That prick Ukrainian with his slavish lust for flesh owed him. Nonnenberg intended to collect.

He used his hands and knees to crawl toward the lights. He would be strong. He'd be immortal.

* * *

Cain wasn't sure he believed what he saw. With tears drying on her face, his Vampyre bled from the wrist into the kitchen sink. "You wanna tell me what the fuck?" He made himself stay a few feet from her, didn't trust himself not to walk closer and shake her until her teeth would rattle.

"It's fine. I need to do this."

"You're fucking crazy."

She flexed her wrist again. Cain didn't know when he approached her, lifting her arm up, tearing the wadded paper out of her hand and applying pressure to her wrist. She fought him, silent, crying, then she gave up, her muscles going lax under his hands as she was pushed against a counter.

She used her hands against his chest to hold him off. "Stay away from me." It was a whisper, hot and hoarse. "Or I will finish what I started earlier."

He wasn't in the mood for cryptic. "Sounds like a threat." His cock once again strained against the zipper. Christ help them both. Her blood was on him.

"I can't control it." She yanked her wrist out of his hand. "If you don't let me do this, I'll be all over you."

He was on her before she could finish, grabbing her wrist again to keep the pressure on, putting his mouth on her. She didn't fight him, yet she held her body taut, steeling herself against his touch even as her lips parted for him. Fleetinglly Cain

thought of Hunters, of their need to drain their blood or ki to get rid of the excess energy that drove them. Seemed like his vamp was doing the same, though Christ knew why. "There's a better way of doing it," he muttered, pressing hot nipping kisses on her lips.

Her voice was a defeated sigh. "I don't want pity."

Keeping the pressure on her wrist, he brought her palm to rest over his cock. The happy bastard jumped under her touch. "That feel like pity to you?" Silent save for a gasp, she shook her head. "Good. We'll use the bed this time. But first --" He rummaged through the tiny kitchen drawer and came up with tape and scissors. With clumsy fingers he taped up her wrist, then pressed a small kiss over the wound. Then fell on her just like a starving teenager.

He wasn't sure how he managed to drag her out of the kitchen and into bed. Her body sweet and hot, she strained into his kisses, matching him in a fevered rush for skin. He tore her clothing, didn't allow her time to do the same to him, nearly came right then when she pressed her lips over his chest, his shoulders.

The skin he bared was smooth, pale and perfect, the round globes of her breasts with the hardened berries of her nipples called for him to taste. He did, wedging himself against her, dry humping like a virgin teenager. Her fingers trailed hot magic as they dug and scratched over his back, as she arched into every caress, as she fought him for control to get her mouth on him.

Hot stinging kisses, dueling tongues, hot palms over sweat-dampened skin. He drew the hardened nipple into his mouth, loving each moan that tore from her lips. Her hips ground up against him, and he slid to the side to find her cunt, swollen, slick and waiting. With a hard groan he sank his fingers into her, felt her wet heat surrounding him and barely had the time to watch her face as she shuddered and with a thin splintering gasp, climaxed.

Fighting for air, shaking, Val slid back to earth to find him watching her. She would've thrown her arm over her face but his hand laced with hers prevented it.

"You know what they say in LA, don't you?"

He wanted to talk? "What?"

He slid down until his head was level with her stomach. That wicked smile had the need flaring to life again. "Take two." He tore her pants down her legs, ripping her panties off as he pressed a bite into her inner thigh. His shoulders pushed her legs apart as he wedged himself between them and dipped his head.

She froze in anticipation, not moving a muscle, not breathing. Propping on her elbows she watched his eyes close as he inhaled, taking her essence into his lungs -- and dove in.

She didn't want slow, didn't need seduction. Thankfully he went for neither, ravaging her flesh with firm, fast strokes of his wicked tongue, circling her clit, closing his lips around it to nibble with just enough pressure to have her writhing under him. His heavy arm was on her pelvis, holding her shaking body firmly in place for his lips to feast on.

A small scrape of his teeth against her pussy lips had her moaning. A stab of tongue inside her cunt had her screaming his name. Again. More. Faster. His tongue was back to tormenting her clit, a long, hard finger teasing the clenching opening inside her. When she dragged her eyes open to see him, she met his dark, intense gaze.

The trembling that gripped her body wouldn't stop. He worked her toward a climax with his mouth, then backed off to tease her by plunging his fingers inside the wet channel of her cunt, spiraling arousal tighter with each stroke, with each firm lick. So close, she was close. Breathing through clenching teeth, Val tried to raise her hips, wanting to grind herself against his mouth to release that coiling lava in her belly.

Another lick, another teasing plunge, and then... nothing. He stopped. Got up onto his knees and loomed over her. She willed herself not to beg him to move faster as he shrugged out of his pants -- she hadn't really seen his cock before and now it jutted thickly toward her. She couldn't see the color of it since it was dark but she knew it was long and curving upward, with veins intricately circling its length.

Val reared up toward it, then held back, looking at him with a mix of fear and lust. Would he push her away? Would he not trust her to give him the same pleasure he just gave her?

“You want it?”

Licking her lips, she nodded. He held out his hand. She clasped it, letting his strength pull her onto her knees. With clumsy fingers she caressed his cock, amazed that one so thick could fit inside her. Nick’s groan was hoarse and loud, and his fingers tangled in her hair as she knelt in front of him. She teased the bulbous head with soft and lengthy licks, making his cock twitch and dance before she opened her mouth and took him inside her, cupping his balls, stroking his length, amazed that he would trust her.

“Baby, you keep this up, I’m gonna come.” The low guttural voice made her inner walls clench again. Opening her mouth wide, she slid over him, taking him as deep as she could handle. Another groan before his hands briefly tightened in her hair, the sharp prick of pain only heightening arousal.

Hands were on her shoulders, pushing her back, pushing her away from him. “Now.” She was laid onto the bed, her legs spread once more. A moan escaped her lips as he fitted himself between her thighs, took that thick cock into his hand and teased her cunt, spreading her moisture over her nether lips. She wondered if he would turn her over, if he would take her from behind since, as he’d said, she wouldn’t be able to use her teeth that way. But then he pushed inside her and all thought fled.

He seared her from the inside, so full, so perfect she whimpered with the pleasure of it, and linked her ankles around him to get him closer, to press against him. He leaned forward, lowered his weight onto his elbows. Moving inside her, he rolled his hips in a slow torturous grind. She raised her head, searching for his lips.

“Look at me.” She forced her eyes to open, lifting her hands to loop around his neck, to bring him closer. “Look at me, Doc.”

He didn’t kiss her, just rode her in easy rolling thrusts, his chest heaving over hers, his arms taut. “Faster. Please, faster.” She barely could breathe as she clenched her

thighs, her arms, her cunt around him -- she couldn't get enough. His scent was on her; she inhaled deep and strong, took more of him inside her.

"Faster?" His weight was fully on her, his arms went under hers to grab her shoulders, to cradle her head, to lift her toward him. "This way?" The roll of his hips was rougher, the strokes of his cock short and deep, rasping against the slickness of her entrance at each push forward, at each sensuous glide back.

His head dipped, his lips found hers. He held her head as he dropped quick burning kisses on her cheeks, her eyes, her lips, probing into her mouth with the same deep rhythm as he probed inside her cunt. "Come for me, baby." Cain's voice was hoarse between kisses. "I wanna hear you come."

Release was close and yet in this position there was no contact with her clit. "I can't like this." Breathless, Val struggled for the words, clawing for a climax that was just out of reach.

"You can't?" He hammered into her, drawing a scream from her ravaged throat.

"I can't," she panted, tearing her lips from his, "it doesn't work like that." He pushed her down into the mattress, got a death grip on her ass. Thrust hard inside her. Rolled. She was on top, lying over his chest, feeling his heartbeat thunder in her palm. "What are you doing?"

"This way you can." His hands worked her to show her how to move and the delicious fullness inside her set sparks of fire over her damp skin.

She heard her own wetness with each slap of their bodies. Bracing her hands onto his chest she rode, and rolled her hips, kissed him and felt her muscles tighten, the base of his cock pressed into just the perfect spot. Her climax bloomed with short sputtering waves of piercing pleasure and she rode each wave, clenched her pussy around him, buried her face in his neck and screamed and screamed.

Chapter Seven

He came so hard Cain could've sworn he felt his brain cells frying.

His Vampyre lay over his chest, dead limp and sated, her long hair like silk over his skin. He needed to get up, to clean them both. Christ, he just didn't want to move.

It was an effort to push her hair aside so he could see her face. Her eyes were closed, but even in the shadows he saw the hint of a smile. He pushed her gently to the side, and got up to use the bathroom. A quick glance back showed her snuggling into the pillow, her ass deliciously round in the shadows. His cock twitched again but this time simply sighed with the promise of more later. Damned happy bastard.

She didn't stir when he came back and snuck his hand between her thighs to clean her. "So spill it, Doc. What were you doing?"

She didn't turn around but he could see those muscles tensing. It was as if he touched a stranger. "My name is Valentina."

He rolled his eyes. "Next time just jump me." He didn't know where that came from and was as surprised as she looked.

She turned now, lush and naked. "I won't depend on humans."

That tone -- bewildered and disgusted -- put him immediately back on edge. "You drink our blood, don't you?"

Her glare was dark and bitter. "You could say I'm a vegetarian."

"What, you prefer your own? Or animal? I heard only a human gives you that rush."

"You're disgusting."

"So's life." There was one bed and he'd be damned if his ass was sleeping on the floor. He lay back down, though he didn't touch her. Wouldn't -- he promised himself.

Not anymore. This need for her was strange but it was manageable. He'd turn her over to Jakob and get back to fucking women who were human.

* * *

Val wasn't sure how she'd managed to sleep through the day, his body warm and strong beside her. At some point, they'd shifted and she'd woken sprawled over his chest again, his hand over her breast.

And when he woke, he'd gotten up without saying a word.

Back in the van, she watched the lights go by and wondered what would happen in LA. Would he dump her on someone and never see her again? She couldn't blame him. And yet the thought made her want to weep. *You're an idiot.*

She glanced at the chiseled features of his face while he barked into his cell, that low voice grim, long fingers clenched over the wheel. "They hacked into the fucking network. I just feel it." A murmur from the phone had him erupting into a string of curses. "You can't seriously tell me -- Oh." He fell silent, shot a glance at her, listened intently to the phone. "Fine. Yeah." He flipped it closed. "Your Council is pissed." His voice was coolly empty.

She felt cold inside. "Excuse me?"

Cain shrugged. "They'd rather I didn't have the raw component list."

She felt her belly freeze, her mouth turned to ash. "You don't have them."

"I will."

Bitterness flooded her mouth even as bile rose. "Was fucking me part of your plan to get them?" Val never used to say that word before. It came much easier now.

He spared her an icy glance. "Fucking you was just a bonus." She turned her back to him; wouldn't let him see the tears. The short drive to LA was tense and silent.

He swerved off 101, roared the van toward a metal fencing with more security than probably the Pentagon. A punch of code, a thumb scan and they were past the gate, tearing through a field toward a smattering of buildings. He stopped at the largest one and killed the engine. "Come on."

Val had just stepped out when a woman wrapped in black erupted from the house followed by a large man with a... hat? His coat looked like black leather and billowed around his legs as he grabbed the woman by the arm, turning her only to be met with a raised fist.

The woman's voice was clipped. "Ever since I was a cop he was my snitch. I won't have your ass spooking him."

"He won't see me." The answering growl was low and threatening. The woman didn't seem impressed, although she did put the fist down. "Because you're so small and light on those gigantic feet?"

"We agreed."

"We sure as hell did not. I won't lose him because you're an overprotective --"

The man dragged her toward him, covering her mouth in a surprisingly sweet kiss. He murmured something -- Val didn't quite hear him but it ended in a "please."

"Fine, fuck it, let's go."

Cain stepped out of the van. "Get a damned room."

The woman smiled at him, a warm and shiny smile that had Val wanting to tear into her. "Where's your Vampyre?"

"Hiding from you."

Her face flaming, Val stepped out from behind the van, and met the woman's gaze. Hunter, she realized and squashed the urge to run. Instead she stood still as the woman studied her with cool, amber eyes. "You've got guts, Vampyre. You'll need 'em."

Yes, she would need those guts when the Vampyre Council would dust her even if she didn't give these humans what they wanted. *Deal with it later when you can think straight.* Val took the offered hand, felt the strong grip. "Valentina. Val."

The woman nodded. "Suits you. I'm Tai."

The man in leather stepped up closer. "I'm Slade." She felt his touch inside her mind. Vampyre -- sympath. Chills roughened her skin, and she shrank away from him,

only to stumble into Cain's broad chest. The Vampyre stared at her, the Hunter raised an eyebrow.

"Don't fuck with her." Cain dragged her in the house before either of them could say another word. She passed through numerous scans and beeps, his hand warm and impersonal over her arm. Inside a large room lit up by more monitors than she could count, he let her go. "Home fucking home. Now get her where she needs to be."

There was a movement to her left; a chair with a tall, thick back swiveled around until it faced her. The man in it was dark-haired and scarred. "Doctor Ash." His voice wasn't strong, and yet she felt intensity in it. He was Vampyre and yet he worked with humans. "I'm Jakob Grey."

She wondered what she was supposed to do now. Offer her hand like she did earlier? Politeness was one thing, but being kidnapped and shot at and nearly run over by a bus was another. Val remained silent, simply nodded. He'd get to his main point soon enough.

He didn't preamble. "We need the raw components, Doctor Ash. You will be safe as --"

"As long as I'm useful?" She stared at him dead-on, challenging him. His eyes were flat, the scar over his chin dark against blue-tinted skin.

Behind her, Cain was both a comfort and a thorn. "Why don't you settle her somewhere before you rip into the questions." His muttered voice sounded irritated. His scent... Val simply closed her eyes against it. His scent was like a spiced silk weapon, burying itself inside her. The need flared to life again.

The man -- Jakob -- got up. "You haven't been raised to trust humans." He moved closer to her in a movement somehow stalking. He should have frightened her, but with Cain behind her, he simply annoyed her. Nevertheless, she wished she had her knife. "Your Council does not believe us," he continued, "and yet we keep finding and killing newly-turned."

She really was sick of this. "I don't know where you get your facts. Fresh human blood makes our kind into animals. No one would do that. And even if they did, the vaccine would protect the human from our DNA."

Behind her, she could feel Cain tensing. "You think no one would do it?" He was in front of her, and with one swift motion he pulled the neck of his T-shirt aside, revealing the scar she'd seen earlier. The scar that looked like... markings? "You know what this is?" Fury was in that savage voice. She simply shook her head, his scent and rage whipping around her. "It's a sire mark. The newest trend of your kind." His eyes were a heated storm, his voice a harsh whisper. "The bitch that did this fucked me while she drained me."

The thought was just impossible. It had to be a lie. It simply had to be. "I won't believe this." She breathed the words, deliberately turning away from him to face the other man who calmly watched them both. "That can be anything. That isn't proof."

"You have been raised to avoid humans." Jakob's voice was icy calm. Val nodded in response. "Even if you drink their blood, it's never from the source."

Cain's breathing was harsh in front of her, his scent had changed to disgust and fury. And still she wanted him. She wondered why she didn't want the Vampyre. He was acceptable. Even if he were siding with the humans, for whatever reason, he was at least one of her own her kind. And yet his scent was unappealing to her. She wanted Cain. Though Gods knew why.

The Vampyre turned toward a monitor, plucked at a few keys with a slowness that didn't seem characteristic of him. Perhaps he was much older than he seemed. "Your kind would not risk death for the taste of human. But this man --" he pulled up a photo; bleak, pale blue eyes, thin weathered skin, pursed lips -- "this man isn't one of you. He's a human carrier."

She'd heard this story before. Nevertheless, she made her way toward the monitor. "A carrier of what?"

"Of Vampyre DNA. A mixing of his blood with humans will cause the change."

Val shook her head. "How is this possible?" Cain muttered something, dropped into a chair at her right, his fingers dancing over keys. He didn't look at her. She met Jacob's steady glance and raised her chin. "Fine, let's assume this is possible. Nevertheless, the vaccine will --"

"The vaccine was made for pure humans."

Right. "What other kind is there?"

"The hybrid. A human with Vampyre DNA."

Val cringed at that. "That would entail the races --"

"Fucking." The word was uttered from her right -- Cain's voice, while he still didn't look at her. It brought the heat back to her crotch even as she struggled to comprehend.

She forced herself to ignore him. "You're telling me there are children of both Vampyre and human?"

"You've met Slade?"

"The sympath? Yes."

"He was half sympath. When he was drained, he turned into a blood Vampyre."

Stubbornly, she shrugged. "It's still not proof."

Now the Vampyre laughed. "Your Council already thinks you're compromised. This man," he nodded at the screen, "has been trying to kill you. Don't you think it would be beneficial to help the ones who're trying to keep you safe?"

It would be beneficial to get the hell away from Cain. She thought about bleeding again, but the memories that came with it had her entire body shuddering. "I assume you will not want an incident." Calmly she folded her arms across her chest even while every nerve ending tingled. "Even if the Council believes I'm compromised, turning me into dust won't be... beneficial to your organization." She used his word for emphasis. "Until you give me proof, I won't help you."

Proof equaled time. She would make contact with the Council. Her father's name still had some favor even if she herself was somewhat of an oddity, a woman scientist in a male dominated world. Not delicate -- no lady -- as was proper for women of her

kind. It didn't matter now. She would turn over this whole thing to them and let the politicians fight it out. In the meantime, this need for Cain would end and if she ever faced him, it would be only as a reminder of her weak lust for a human. One that had been nearly drained.

"Would you stop yammering and get her to a lab?" Cain still didn't look at them. "I've got a network to secure."

She felt her cheeks flame while Jakob simply smiled. "Her being here won't affect your network." Those dark eyes looked at her in an uncomfortable understanding. "Stay here. I'll get you proof."

She nodded, couldn't speak, just followed Jakob as he led her out of the room, all the while fully aware that Cain didn't spare her a single glance.

Chapter Eight

He should've gone to sleep. Or gone into the city to find Slade. Or put another layer of security onto the network. He'd filched the IP of the originated call and stuck a present on it. Next time they looked into his business they'd get a nasty little jolt.

Sweating, Cain pounded the punching bag, hoping to pound *her* out of his head. He didn't know what the fuck had happened. What in the world had possessed him? He'd fucked her -- damn, he'd fucked her twice. A Vampyre. She didn't suck his blood and yet her imprint was all over him. He didn't know which one was worse.

Another jab, a hook, a wicked backhand. He followed with a vicious sidekick -- a bit too low for a man his size since chin-high wasn't really useful. He'd do weights later; exhaust his muscles if he couldn't exhaust his spinning mind. He'd stopped taking the hormone pills after that one night with Slade, when sparring became combat, when control was lost and he'd nearly killed them both. He didn't want the rage that came with strength. He just wanted the strength.

Cain had kept the lights low -- the red and blue squares of the mat were dark and silent as he moved, circling the bag, alternating punches and kicks, using aggression to drive out the lust.

Jakob stepped out from the shadows. "She has your scent all over her." His voice was hoarse and strained.

Cain didn't care for it. "So the fuck what?"

Jake's punch sent the bag reeling. "It was the only thing that kept me off her."

Fuck. "Have her." Cain's fists tightened in protest even as the words went past his teeth.

"You think it's easy to keep off her when her blood calls out?"

Another vicious punch. "Go fuck her if you want, you don't need my permission." Except he'd have to kill him if Jakob touched her.

"You idiot." The vamp was on him, hands twisting on his T-shirt. Cain used his fists against that iron stomach, felt satisfaction with each grunt. It took a minute for them both to empty out. He needed this more than the bag. Breathing cool air through his bloodied lip, Cain moved to the stacked towels, threw one at Jakob and watched with satisfaction as the Vampyre used it to wipe his own bleeding mouth. "She's in need."

"Huh?"

"Didn't you --" Jakob didn't finish, simply raised an eyebrow.

"You want a play by play?"

"Spare me. But do something."

"Will you speak fucking English?"

Jakob sighed. "Your Vampyre --"

"She's not my fucking Vampyre!"

"Regardless, she's pumping pheromones like no fucking tomorrow."

"And you care because..."

"Because it's driving me fucking insane!" The words were pushed through gritted teeth. "It's rare for the females, but potent as hell. Didn't you wonder why you couldn't keep your hands off her considering..."

The thought that bloomed was wild and red and ugly. "So that's what I'm reacting to. Her fucking pheromones." Relief mixed with rage. He wasn't falling for a fucking Vampyre. He was just falling for her hormones. He needed to get rid of her. "What will you do with her after you get the data?"

A shrug. "Can't leave her out. I'll stash her underground until this is resolved with the damned Council."

Perfect. "I'll get the data. She can be gone tomorrow."

* * *

She pushed out air through her teeth and lifted the barbell off her chest. Weight training wasn't exactly feminine, but since she'd killed a human Valentina had stopped caring.

Her muscles already trembled and sweat covered her skin. She wouldn't bleed herself this time, but she could exhaust herself enough to simply sleep. One more burning push -- a breath and hold. A slow torturous lowering.

"Why don't you just drink a human and spin like a toothpick?"

She nearly dropped the weights onto her belly; fought with her body to ease it up and onto its resting place. Cain stood in the doorway of the gym, a towel over his gleaming shoulders, his lip cut and bleeding. Val wondered if she licked at it, would the strength it gave her drop him long enough for her to clear this place?

"Don't even think it." He seemed to read her mind while she willed her tired body to get up and face him. "Your Council will kill you even if Church's people don't."

She let out a bitter laugh. "I'm getting used to it."

He didn't pretend to small talk. "I need the data, Vampyre." He didn't even call her by name. It chilled her skin while her blood heated, despite exhaustion.

"I will not give them the data, Human." She sneered as she said it, scenting the excitement pour from him, mixed with something else, something dark and desperate. His scent curled around her once more and she'd do anything to have him, to feel his hands on her.

And still he didn't move, framed by the doorway of the gym. "I know about your need."

She shuddered. "And?"

"I say let's trade."

"Data for cock? No, thank you." Gods, she was getting more vulgar by the minute. Her muscles tensed in sweet anticipation, but she forced her body not to move.

Cain took a single step toward her, and flicked off the lights before letting the door shut. She heard a lock twist and was now trapped in here with his huge body. As

he crossed toward her, the tiny lights that now illuminated the gym outlined the bulge between his thighs. The roaring in her blood went faster.

"You want it, Doc." A few more steps -- a swift, rough motion as he tore off his muscle shirt, his chest and abs gleaming in the dim light. Val followed the line of hair that arrowed to his cock. Throat dry, she swallowed. "I know you want it. Work for it." His voice was strange -- empty and hot at the same time. She couldn't figure out what it was but with his scent so close she just gave up. His arms banded around her, her muscles melted into liquid gold. Still, she refused to move.

He turned her so her back pressed against his chest, his breath teasing a shiver on her neck, his cock pressing in her rear. Val felt her pussy creaming, and nearly moaned. Pride kept her silent.

"Come on, Vampyre. Tell me you want it." A teasing lick over her neck, a nip just at her earlobe. She shivered with his arms around her, drawing in air that suddenly became too thick. His fingers burned through the thin material of her borrowed T-shirt, moved up to mold her breasts, lifted them softly as if testing their weight. His breaths sounded fast and harsh into her ear. A wicked fingertip brushed against a hardened nipple, circled it, rubbing it though the cotton, sweet and sharp. "You want it. Say it."

She couldn't deny it. "Yes."

"You'll give me the raw component files?"

"You know I won't."

"I'll make you beg."

"Like hell." Another pinch followed by a soothing rub. Val couldn't stop the moan that trembled out. Supported by his weight, her head on his shoulder, he kneaded and pleased her breasts with patient reverence of one too focused.

Two could play this game. She sighed deep and lush, twisting in his arms until she was eye to eye with him. Keeping hers open, she leaned into his mouth, stung it with a quick and vicious kiss. "What will you do... baby?" She used the term as if a curse. "Fuck the data from me?"

His groan was harsh, his arms swift and furious as he stripped her T-shirt off. There were no sports bras here she could borrow. Without the restraint, her breasts spilled free and heavy. She pushed them into him.

"Come on, Doc." Something was shoved into her hand, a small device -- his cell phone. "List the components for me."

She held onto control with fingernails. Slicking a finger in her mouth, she then reached between her thighs, watching with dark satisfaction as his gaze followed. The simple touch over her clit tore another moan from her. His hand was on his zipper.

She prayed he would break first.

Cain watched those long graceful fingers play under the baggy sweats she'd filched from somewhere as she sat down on the bench press, spreading her legs to give him a better view. He moved his hand roughly over his cock, clenching his teeth to hold off the onslaught of pleasure. He'd make her beg before he came. He'd make her beg, and give him everything. He'd hold the control, the power.

A broken moan tore past Val's lips as she watched him with a hungry gaze, her pink lips moist and swollen as she licked them. Her fingers played over her pussy, he could just picture them as they dipped inside her and circled her clit. He pumped his own cock faster. Rougher.

Her teeth sank into her lower lip. A harsh groan, Cain couldn't tell if it was his or hers. So close, he forced himself to slow, wanting to watch her get herself off. Her fingers slowed as well.

Dragging warm air through clenched teeth, he reached out to her, slid a single finger inside her pants and inside her moist pussy. Her breathing hastened, she arched toward him while he pumped inside her as he pumped himself. "Come on, Vampyre." She didn't answer save for gasps. "Give me that data." He didn't even know where his cell had fallen. That siren voice was sweet and dark with need, her moans and gasps driving him crazy. Another pump inside that hot, tight pussy, another stroke of his own hand --

The alarm claxons were deafening and shrill -- the lights flashing red blinding them both. "Shit. We've got company." He couldn't see her face and yet he knew her eyes were wide and frightened. He couldn't leave her here. A quick grope on the floor found his T-shirt. Cain shoved it at her. "Let's go."

A quick shuffling movement, and she was up, her hand in his. Emergency generators kicked in, bathing them both in a pale, weak light. They ran into the hallway and were met with weapons.

Nonnenberg's face stretched into a sunny smile. "Hello, old buddy." A single shot and Cain felt himself being pushed down, his Vampyre screaming for him as iced heat stabbed his body.

Chapter Ten

He didn't know how long he had been out -- minutes most likely. Cain was surprised to find himself alive -- with burn marks on his chest. That would explain how Nonnenberg had got past the metal scanners. A gun would set off every alarm here. The taser being polycarbonate didn't elicit even a whisper. As to how the bastard got into the compound without setting off the perimeter alarms, Cain intended to find out -- as soon as he managed to push himself off the goddamned floor.

His body shuddered, his muscles clenched. His Vampyre was gone, and yet he saw no ash in the alarm lights. She must be alive still, though for how long he didn't know. Holding his arm over his guts, he forced himself to move, to shove his body up and forward until he reached the comps and fell into a chair.

The monitors froze on a cop car, CHP, heading west toward 101. Nonnenberg -- it had to be -- and more than likely, Valentina with him.

Jakob ran in, his cell flipped open in his hand. "What the hell happened?"

Cain didn't even look at him, just tapped into the zone alerts and cursed. "The perimeter alarm was hacked. And the fucking bastard set a tracer on the hack and let them do their shit until we got their info. Our old friend Nonnenberg." He rubbed a hand over the burning rashes on his bare chest while Jakob cursed in vile Japanese. "I'm gonna find him." His voice was grim, his body beyond tired. He would find Valentina, too. Alive.

* * *

Her body ached as if she'd been pummeled. Nerves, fear, loathing, tears -- all struggled for space inside her stomach. She wondered what it would be like to turn to ash.

The heat mounted; sweat a slimy trickle down her back. With dawn minutes away, she would see the sun in its full glory. She saw the brightening sky through the tinted windows of the cop car, and couldn't keep her tearing eyes from it even as they burned. Her captor had driven around until he'd finally stopped in this parking lot on the top level, the car positioned so the sun would hit the darkened back windows. It would burn but wouldn't dust her. Val wondered which was worse.

The man who'd taken her -- Nonnenberg -- sat in the front seat whispering into his cell phone. She could, of course, try to choke him with her handcuffed wrists, or maybe strike with a well-placed palm over his temple. This CHP Camaro had no divider between the front and back, so she could easily reach up and touch him. But then she'd have to sit here until dusk -- or until the sun changed position and shone into the clear windshield in the front. By midday she'd be dust.

This human who had taken her wanted to be immortal -- he'd even laughed because she wasn't as strong as she could be. Ironically, Val wondered if he knew he was inviting her to take strength from his vein just then. Probably didn't. She was appalled to find herself contemplating it. How easy would it be then -- her strength tenfold, invincible?

Would that have kept Nick alive? She couldn't think of him right now. Wouldn't.

She saw the man's burning, green eyes in the front mirror. "So you're Cain's vamp. Did you turn him?" She shuddered at the thought. Nonnenberg simply chuckled. "We're the same, me and your lover boy. Both taken by a Vampyre, overpowered. He nearly killed himself with 'roids trying to prove he could be strong. Me?" A small shrug of the shoulders. From what Val could see in the mirror his face was smeared with recent blood. "I want to become one of them. Or I should say, one of you."

Well, here was her chance. Hiding revulsion she looked at his eyes again in the rearview mirror. "I can turn you, just like I did Cain."

The laugh was both maniacal and sad. "I wish you could, Vampyre, but I'm a pureblood human. That damned vaccine will keep me that. But with the raw data, if

you could make an antidote or something..." He turned now and faced her. "Church wants you dead, but I think you are much more useful alive. I'll try to convince him of it. Wouldn't you like that?" His grin was shiny evil when she nodded. "Pray for me, hon."

A car pulled up, an old gray Honda, the man inside pale, old and wrinkled in the impending dawn. Not Vampyre since he didn't seem scared to be out. And yet something about him... She couldn't scent him and yet somehow she knew. It was the human who could turn others into her kind. Church.

Her captor got out of the car just as the sun burst through the clouds. She huddled in her seat and felt the mild burn. One minute. Two.

She could see Nonnenberg's face while he talked, could see the old man glancing in her direction with pale blue ageless eyes. She couldn't just sit here helpless and scared while they did their thing but the sun was too damned bright for her to simply throw open a door and run like hell.

But... there were keys.

* * *

The sun shone brightly above the roof level of the downtown lot, luckily empty for the next few hours. Cain waited in the security elevator, ignoring the throbbing skin over his chest. He prayed she was all right; begged gods and demons she hadn't already become ash under that bright, vicious sun. He'd rigged the vid camera to show the one car in the lot.

Nonnenberg had managed to hijack a fucking CHP Camaro -- complete with GPS. His Vampyre must be in there. Cain hadn't been able to see much through the tinted windows but he figured she was too hot a commodity to stash somewhere. He hoped that Jakob had pulled his shit and managed to convince LAPD that this was a government op. Cain had cooked up a few fake codes, and it had been a snap to stick them in the feds' database. His fake badge hung off his utility belt, an FBI patch on his vest. He just hoped Jakob did his thing.

The wail of sirens burst that hope to shards.

Six units -- eight -- pushed their way through toward the Camaro and the Honda, red and blues blazing, loudspeakers ordering hands to be kept in the air. A slam of doors -- more cars as CHP joined the game. He muscled open the elevator doors just as Church held up his hands while Nonnenberg stepped back. The cops piled out, weapons drawn.

To Cain's horror, the Camaro moved. Stop and go motions, as if the driver wasn't sure how to work that thing. He heard the wail of sirens as the cops and loud speakers ordered the car to stop. Then a single shot was fired to take out the tires.

Shit hit the fan.

Cain ran toward the cars, not caring about bullets or the shouts or his life. Nonnenberg had his gun out, shooting at the cops hiding behind the Honda. The echo of the gunshots was a long drawn-out thunder as the sounds bounced off the concrete walls. Another shot and the Camaro's back window shattered. He heard a squeal of tires as it turned around, gaining speed toward Nonnenberg.

Cain heard someone yelling stop, more shots fired, the whistling of bullets as smoke thickened. Another cop car had pulled up, and he glanced around to see Taina running out. A van pulled up among the mess of cars -- brown and dark -- he recognized it as his own as the white Camaro smashed nose first into the Honda, moving it, giving the cops just the right angle to take the bastard down.

More of the cops were yelling for everyone to stop; some were waving, their guns down. Radios squawked, while loud speakers howled "FBI." Slade made his way toward the cops as Tai flipped open her fake badge. Cain didn't care that Nonnenberg was moving, didn't care that Church stared up at him with knowing, watery eyes.

He wrenched the driver's door of the Camaro open and saw horror. Bleeding, her skin one giant burn, his Vampyre had bullet holes over her chest and arms -- her T-shirt was soaking red, her hair matted. Steam rose from her as ash formed in her hair and caked on her face.

He didn't know where to touch her. He had to get her out of the sun. Panicked, Cain glanced around and screamed at Slade for a leather coat. More guns were drawn

as Deadshot did just that, revealing the arsenal over his hips. Cain didn't care. With trembling hands, and murmuring prayers and curses, he shoved the leather over her limp form, and finally got her out. He felt the cop's weary eyes and the weapons on his back while on shaking legs he carried her to shade.

"Get in." Through chaos he heard Jakob's voice from inside the van. The slide door opened. Much like before, he put his Vampyre inside, this time as gently as he could, straining to hear her voice, her breathing... something. She didn't move at all -- just steam and searing heat rising when he removed the leather. Cain couldn't see her face under the black and bleeding burns. His roaming gaze met Jakob's. "Blood." He saw rather than heard the Vampyre say it. "Give her your blood."

A dagger was pressed into his hand -- a samurai-style short sword, probably old, probably priceless. He slit his wrist with it, brought the cut over her burned lips. Flexed, twisted. Watched the life-giving liquid fall. "Come on, baby. Come on."

He said it like a litany, praying to Hell and Heaven. Somehow the cops didn't come to bother them. Somehow the van started to move as Jakob got them deeper into shade of the garage then out, heading for the compound, the tinted windows keeping the sun at bay.

His arm tingled, his lungs burned. "Come on, baby. Take it." His blood ran dark -- her burned mouth was darker. The stench of burning skin and ash was acrid in his nose. With his free hand he ripped open his vest, tore off a chunk of cotton from his T-shirt, forcing himself not to clean the blood over her eyes. He needed ice, still water, something cool.

Jakob sped through LA, the morning traffic not yet heavy since they were racing away from downtown. With cotton over his free hand, Cain felt her thigh, gently putting his palm under it to feel for skin. Covered by sweats, he didn't think it would be burned too bad. He felt for a pulse.

Heard nothing.

Chapter Eleven

Nick's scent was everywhere. It curled around her while Valentina lay over his sheets that caressed her now cooled skin. It kissed her lips with his taste every time she licked them to once again check they weren't peeled, cracked or charred.

She wasn't bleeding. Nor was she just plain dust.

Now in Nick's room, his scent surrounding her in comfort, she saw flashes of blood, of water, of him bathing her skin in coolness, murmuring something soft, sweet and incoherent.

Val didn't know what god determined that she'd live, but when the door opened and Nick's shoulders filled the frame, she thought for sure they laughed at her. Arousal curled inside her belly, despite the fact that hours ago she was nearly dust. And gods help her, it wasn't at all the boiling need that had been stabbing at her for days. This was different somehow. Emotion and arousal combined.

"I know you're awake." His voice was strangely somber. "I just want to do a quick check on your burns."

"They're fine." Actually they were gone. She kept the sheets over her breasts, ready to move if he approached her. Strength coursed through her, strength borne of human blood. It sickened, frightened and excited her. She could take him, right now. Exactly as she wanted. She clamped her teeth over her lips. This wild energy coursed through her and she didn't know how long she could contain it. "You need to go. Right now."

His tone was old Nick Cain -- that pure male arrogance. It made her pussy cream. "You're in my room." He closed the door, and pitched the room in darkness. The sun had set she realized. She had survived the dawn.

"You need to go. Right now." Forcing the beast down, she breathed through clenched teeth. Air was cool and sweet inside her mouth, air mixed with his scent.

"You need me."

She didn't see the point in lying. "Yes. And if you won't leave, I'll take you."

"Do it."

Those hoarse words were a shock. He had another muscle shirt on; she'd seen his skin gleam in the light minutes ago. Now with the door closed she could smell the musk of sweat and male. *Mine*. "Go before you regret this."

He took another step, and she nearly moaned from just the scent of him. "My blood kept you alive. You want me? I'm yours."

She had to hold onto the sheets to keep from tearing into him. "I can't be gentle."

"Good, neither can I."

Those words broke her. She reared up in bed, took a good handful of his shirt, and tore through it. She feasted on the damp skin of his chest, the crisp, sparse hair over it. His breath hissed when she grazed her teeth over his flesh, gripped both his wrists and pulled him down under her -- both of them nearly falling off the bed that now seemed too damned small. Straddling him, she ran greedy hands and lips over his face, his neck, his mouth. She wasn't so gone that she missed his sudden tension when she licked his neck and that thudding pulse under his jaw. But then his hands clamped over her ass, and he moved his head to give her access. Giving himself to her.

She wouldn't take more of his blood. Instead she'd take his soul. With hot nipping kisses she feasted on his mouth, and couldn't stop rubbing herself against the bulge already forming under her. His hands caressed her ass, her thighs, finally claiming her breasts before she scooted down to trail her lips down his ribs, his stomach. With shaking hands she tore at his zipper, pulled at his jeans until they were around his hips.

Mine. Hot, thick and heavy, the head of his cock was already pearling with precome. Watching him in the dark she leaned over him, letting her hair brush against his belly. His sucked in breath was her reward.

She gave him a teasing lick, just at the drop of moisture on his cockhead. The rich male taste exploded in her mouth; she needed more of him, all of him, right now. With a soft growl she covered him, took him deep inside her mouth, still looking at those glittering eyes as he lifted his head to watch her. She tongued his shaft, then slid down on his cock until the smooth, thick head of it touched the back of her throat. She sucked, she slid, she lingered. She milked him for every groan until the need inside her was unbearable.

She straddled him again, lifted a bit, took his cock into her palm and rubbed herself with it before enveloping him completely, slamming home with such ferocity that the pleasure became almost painful -- almost too much.

She had to pause for a second for that sweet and precious shock -- and then she rode him, hard and wild and loud. Her mouth fused with his, her tongue invading the same way his cock invaded her, so big and smooth and perfect. His scent and taste filled her senses, his mouth hot, his hands a death grip on her ass as he slammed her onto him with hard vicious strokes.

His pelvis met hers as she bounced on his, his cock rubbing against her, her clit grinding against his skin. Wicked sensations coiled through her, electrifying every nerve ending. She shuddered as she rode him, feeling herself tighten more, the thick base of his cock rubbing against her opening, so good, so tight. She coiled and tensed around him, and felt him gasp into her mouth -- short, ragged intakes of breath -- and then he surged inside her, pumped into her, just as her own orgasm overtook her, rattling her. She buried her face against his neck and shuddered with him.

* * *

Cain had been content to just keep lying there with Valentina sprawled all over him, when she scooted away and got up. His brain barely managed to kick start into gear by the time she'd exited the bathroom.

He'd hardly slept in two days. He'd been shot at, shocked with a taser, fucked by a Vampyre. Fallen for that same Vampyre. All in two days. His brain bone tired, his

body still too wired for rest, he watched her as she approached the bed. "I need my clothes. I left them in the locker but..."

Yeah. He didn't want her thinking of the "but." "I'll get them for you." He wanted to just grab her wrist and tug her back to bed. He wondered if she would let him do it. With her strength now, she was as strong as ten of him.

"It lasts a week. Ten days," she said, as if she'd read his mind.

"Prolongs your life too, doesn't it?"

She shrugged. "About three years. I'm sorry you had --"

"Don't be." He grabbed her wrist now, and pulled her down to sit next to him. In the dim light, her skin gleamed like finest gold. "Look, Jakob is straightening out this mess with your Council. You'll need to talk to them, but if it all works out, they will allow you to update the vaccine without having to give us anything. So stay here. I'll rig up a lab for you."

She frowned at him. Cain wished he could see what she was thinking behind that thoughtful gaze. "The Council won't harm me." There was a strength in her voice he hadn't noticed before. Some sort of confidence, an edge. "Don't feel like you need to babysit me. I'll get back to San Francisco and update the vaccine from there."

"Fine." He reared up in bed, his muscles finally starting to feel sore and used. Adrenaline had gone, and for the moment lust was satisfied. The heaviness that sat over his chest was all emotion. Foreign and bittersweet. "I'll go to San Francisco with you. I can't stay there for good, but maybe for a week at a time... if you let me."

Again she frowned. "What are you saying?"

She was torturing the words out of his mouth. "I'm falling for you. Okay?"

Her hand fisted in his. "I never quite knew what that meant."

He swore now, pulled her closer knowing at any moment she could pull away, that her strength was so much greater. Still, he would try. "I'm falling in love with you." There, he'd said it.

Somehow she didn't look stunned. Or happy. "It's just the pheromones." Her tone was cool and just a touch too calm. "My need was strong and you're responsive. It's done now. We have... nothing."

It would have been nothing if he hadn't heard the telltale hitch in that siren voice. That and the past tense reference to her need. "You think?" He placed a sweet, slow kiss over her lips, nibbled her cheek, her jaw. "This isn't nothing. I don't know what it is, but... stay with me. Okay?"

She looked at him for one silent long moment. He didn't know what she could read in him, didn't know what he could offer her. But then she nodded, and hope bloomed in his chest.

"All right. But get a bigger bed."

Fiona Jayde

Fiona Jayde is an author, a pilot, a ninth degree black belt in three styles of martial arts, a computer hacker, a mountain climber, a jazz singer, a weight lifter, a superspy with a talent for languages, and an evil genius. All in her own head, of course.

In real life, she really is an author, insists she is a good driver even though various loved ones refuse to let her drive, possesses a brown belt in Tae Kwon Do and blue belt in Aikido, a web developer, scared to death of heights, loves jazz piano, can bench-press about 20 pounds -- with effort, speaks English and Russian fluently, and when not plotting murder and mayhem enjoys steamy romance novels, sexy spy thrillers, murky mysteries and violent movies where things frequently blow up.