

Vampire King's Husband

Amber Kell

A Literary Road Press Publication

Literaryroad.com

6523 California Ave SW, #193

Seattle, WA 98136

Copyright © 2009 Amber Kell

Cover design by RDF

Photos provided by Stock Exchange

ISBN: 978-1-934037-68-3

This book may not be reproduced in whole or in part by email forwarding, copying, fax, or any other mode of communication without author or publisher permission.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

Prologue

King Vasska kneeled before the altar, his long hair sliding across the ground. He leaned over and touched his forehead to the cold floor. Leaving a burning trail across in its wake, rough stone scraped a layer of skin off his face. Brushing the pain from his mind, he closed his eyes. This was his last chance and nothing would deter him from his worship.

The king's throat swelled as he swallowed his tears, squeezing his eyes tight.

If he didn't find a mate this season he would never marry. He knew this just as well he knew the position of the stars and moons.

The thought of going through the rest of his long life alone felt like a stone weight upon his chest. What kind of leader could lead without a heart?

"Please goddess, find me a mate." His raspy voice echoed along the cave walls. "Male or female, handsome or ugly, I care not. Just bring me someone with a solid heart and a good head. Someone I can spend my days and nights with. I beg of you. With the blood of my forefathers, please bring me my other half."

Pulling himself up from the ground he walked to the stone mantle and kneeled before it. He pulled out a sharp knife, from a sheathe mounted on his belt, and sliced his wrist from one side to the other. He let out a soft hiss but made no other sound as he held his arm over the altar, dripping his blood over the letting stone.

"I plead with you goddess Amethia, protector of the innocent, guardian of the sun and stars, matchmaker in heaven and in hell, if you have any fondness of my people's line, please give me someone to love."

Bowing his head, he let his tears fall, mixing with his blood. If this didn't work he was out of ideas. Everyone else in his family matched long ago.

He was the only one walking alone

Rumors were spreading that King Vasska was godforsaken.

Whispers no doubt started by his brother Derl, next in line for the throne. Kneeling on the rough stone steps, the strongest vampire king in a millennium cradled his face in his hands and cried.

Chapter One

“How old are you?”

Bastion sighed knowing where this was going. “Twenty-one, sir.”

“My apprentices are half your age.” The blacksmith laughed. “Besides you don’t look like you could lift a hammer much less use one.” The brawny man lifted one massive arm and flexed, showing off his impressive muscles.

“Thanks anyway.” Bastion nodded and turned quickly so the blacksmith couldn’t see the wetness pooling in his eyes. So much for the blacksmith, the jeweler, the bank, and just about every other possible place of employment, Bastion thought.

“Face it Bas, you’re useless.” He muttered, kicking a stone in the street.

Since his parents’ death two weeks ago his life had taken a downward turn. Kept from his fortune until he turned twenty-five, Bastion Karr was left at the hands of his unscrupulous uncles. One who wanted Bastion to marry his unfortunate stepdaughter and the other who wanted to corner Bastion in dark halls and grab him with his clammy fingers. As Bas preferred men closer to his own age and not related to him, he needed to find a way to get money and get the hell out of his family home. His uncles had invaded it at the death of his parents and he saw no way to get them out. They were both powerful politicians and had convinced everyone that they were there to help their nephew in his time of need. It was amazing what people would believe. However, in reality, Bas was essentially homeless and poor. The banks wouldn’t lend him money because of his uncles’ power and no one would hire him because he was too old to learn a trade. Although Bas could speak twenty languages, play a musical instrument, and host dinner parties, these weren’t useful job skills “Still looking for work, son?” A gruff voice spoke nearby.

Bastion jerked his head. Turning, he found a short aged man standing beside him. The man had long grey hair, a silvery grey suit and even his skin had a greyish cast. A quick look confirmed that indeed the man’s eyes were grey as well.

“Yes. I’m still looking. If the man had been watching at all he knew of Bas’ luck.

“Have you tried the castle?”

Bas looked at the huge golden building in the distance and shuddered. The vampire’s king’s castle was a testament to brilliant architecture. He shuddered. “No.”

The man stared at him with his piercing colorless eyes, making Bas think the older man could read his soul. Bas sighed and gave into his curiosity. "What are they hiring for?"

"Blood donors."

Bas flinched. "I-I don't think I can do that." Just the image of a vampire biting him sent tremors up and down his spine.

"Do you have a better offer?"

An image of his uncles flashed in his mind.

"No." He confessed. For some reason he didn't feel it was wise to lie to the man.

"Here." The man held out a piece of paper. "This will get you through the gates."

"Do you think I can do it?" Bas asked.

"You got blood don't you." The old man smiled.

The man's infectious laughter brought a reluctant smile to Bas' lips. "Yes, I do." He took the paper giving it a quick glance. It had writing scrawled across the page but Bas was too nervous to focus on the print. With a slightly shaking hand he folded it and tucked it into his pocket. "Th-thank you."

"No thanks needed boy. Just make sure you go."

Bas nodded. "I will."

* * *

Bastion looked at the tall iron gates complete with complementary matching soldiers and almost turned around. The paper in his hand rattled with an onset of nerves.

"Can we help you citizen?" The large guard on the left asked.

Nervous, Bas shyly handed over his paper to the unfriendly man. Afraid to speak he waited in silence as the soldier examined the note.

Careful eyes scrutinized the small print before handing it back with a slight smile. "Go right around the back and present yourself at the kitchen. Morley will interview you and see who you'll match best with."

Bas gave a soft sigh before nodding. "TH-thank you."

"So you *can* talk." The guard to the right said, his dark hair shining in the setting sun. "I was wondering if you were just beautiful and quiet."

The burning on his cheeks indicated that Bas was blushing. He ducked his head to hide his embarrassment.

"Leave the sweet thing alone Larro." The first guard said as his thick fingers opened the iron gate. "Go on in."

Eager to leave the pair, Bas scurried past with a whispered thank you. He couldn't believe his life was reduced to becoming a blood servant. The thought of being bit by a vamp made him a little queasy but not as sick as being trapped by his uncle in a dark corner again.

Never again.

He might not be young enough to be an apprentice and had no useful skills but even an idiot could stay still enough to be bitten. The challenge would be not passing out from fear.

Shaking, Bas followed the flow of people knowing they'd eventually lead him to the castle kitchen. Servants with large metal serving trays swerved around each other in careful steps keeping hold of their burdens as they dashed in and out of an arched doorway. Bas followed them in and came into a room of pandemonium.

People whipped back and forth as they dropped off trays and picked up more. There were people shouting orders, knives flying. In the far corner sat a dozen boys and girls with leather pants, white shirts and red collars lounging on various stools as if waiting for their summons. Their very stillness in the face of such activity made them stand out even more in Bas' eyes. It struck him that this was what he was about to become, a blood donor.

Bas had seen them in town before, but never up close. It was a bit anticlimactic now. They look like ordinary girls and boys. He didn't know why but Bas assumed they would have a shine to them as did their magical counterparts.

"You there! What do you need?" A wizened white-haired man walked up to Bas. His twinkling blue eyes widening as he took in Bas' appearance.

Without comment Bas handed over his note.

"Blood donor, hmmm." The man looked him up and down again. One hand came out and fingered one of Bas' shiny gold locks that brushed his shoulder.

"Yes, sir." Bas replied. The man oozed with power. Bas could feel it tingling against his skin. Straightening his spine, Bas stood still for inspection.

"I'm Morley. You're a pretty fellow. I think I'll send you to the king's chamber. That man always appreciates someone nice to look at when he feeds. Now don't blush boy. I can't be the first one to comment on your looks." Morley snapped his fingers. "Jorrell come here. Take this boy, what's your name?"

"Bastion."

“Take Bastion to his highness’ room. Once there leave him and return to me. I hear Lord Dallen is coming tonight and you’re his favorite.” A red-haired boy jumped up from his stool and rushed over, green eyes gleaming with mischief.

“Will do, Morley.”

Jorrell flashed Bas a wide smile. “Follow me.”

The pair barely cleared the doorway before Jorrell began his interrogation. “So Bas, where do you come from? You must be well off because you have the best skin. Did your parents send you? Is your hair really natural?”

Bastion laughed, feeling his nervousness melt under the friendly onslaught. It was hard to feel nervous around a young man who bounced around like a rambunctious puppy. “I come from Corvel, I’m no longer well off, my parents are dead and yes my hair is natural.”

He could tell that Jorrell wanted to continue his questioning but they stopped beside a massive wooden door engraved with leaves and the royal crest of a hunting bird.

“Here’s the king’s quarters. Go inside and kneel on the bed. Keep your clothes on. He never pushes blood donors, not like some.”

Before Bas could ask about the *some*, his new friend rushed back down the hall.

Like rabid butterflies, nerves skittered inside Bas’ stomach. What was he doing here? Maybe he could go back to his uncles and just hide at night or during the day, or anytime they thought he might be alone. Shit, he didn’t have a choice.

Holding his breath, Bas opened the door.

Chapter Two

Vas looked up when the door opened. His dinner had arrived at last. He'd already sent three notes down to Morley and he was starting to think he'd have to grab the next servant wandering down the hall instead of waiting for a proper blood donor.

All of his frustration and anger drained out of King Vas when a golden-haired godling scampered through the door.

"Took you long enough." He roared.

The newcomer jumped. "I-I'm sorry sir. I mean your highness." His voice, soft as crushed velvet. "I just arrived a few minutes ago."

The king stalked across the room and found himself looking into a pair of the most brilliant blue eyes he'd ever seen. "Do you have eye colors in?"

Streaks of pale pink appeared across the beauty's cheeks. "No, they're natural. But I get that a lot."

Fascinating.

"Stand up straight." Vas snapped. The shy beauty blinked a few times before straightening to his full height. He barely reached the king's shoulder. "You're just a small thing aren't you?" He asked, amused.

A flash of anger sparked those beautiful eyes. "I'm big enough."

Vas snorted, "I just bet you are."

The color deepened on the donor's sculpted cheeks making him want to see how many ways he could get the innocent to blush. But first a few things had to be straightened out. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-one."

"Your name?"

"Bastion."

"Short for Sebastian?"

"No."

Vas couldn't stop from smiling. "Not big on words are we, my sweet? Where are your parents?"

"Dead."

The hopelessness in Bastion's words said more than anything else that the young man still felt their death keenly. "Recently?"

A quick blink of the eyes hid a flash of moisture. "Two weeks."

Vas didn't know who was more surprised when he wrapped the boy in his arms. "It'll be all right." He found himself saying as he surrounded the boy with his scent. Vas sent out waves of calm; something he used only on prey. Sorrow didn't belong in this gentle creature's heart. Absently, Vas rifled through Bastion's memories starting with his beautiful childhood. It

was filled with joy and laughter and ended with the death of his parents and the beginning his current miseries. In his visions he saw a man identified as an uncle grabbing at Bas. Vas' grip tightened.

A noise from Bas loosened his touch. "Sorry, my sweet." Absentmindedly he rubbed his cheek across the top of Bastion's head; spreading his scent like a cat marking his territory.

The smell of the boy seeped into Vas' conscious, his scent more enticing than any he'd touched before. He wanted to lick Bastion from one end to the other but with their height difference it wasn't feasible.

"Come lay on the bed with me."

He wasn't prepared for the pliant youth to stiffen in his arms. "A – are you going to bite me?"

"Not yet." He rubbed a hand across Bastion's back. "We're just going to get to know each other better."

* * *

Bas took a deep breath and let it out slowly. He flashed what he hoped was a reassuring smile at the vampire king. "I realize that that's what I'm here for but I've never been bitten."

The gorgeous dark-haired vampire gave him a fang-tipped smile. Even knowing the man was going to sink his teeth into Bas' vein wasn't enough to stop the desire from rushing through his body. He hoped the king didn't notice his arousal or think he was coming on to him. Fired on the first day of work wasn't his idea of a good time.

Vas flicked his wrist and Bas heard the lock on the door click shut. "We wouldn't want to be interrupted." He said. The sultry tone in the king's voice was enough to make Bas' dick stand up and salute.

Maybe Jorrell was wrong and the king did like to play with his food.

"Strip beautiful. I want to see who I'm sharing my bed with."

"Umm. I-I thought you didn't have sex with your food." Bas stammered. And damn if that didn't sound even stupider outside of his head.

The king threw back his head and laughed. One of those loud belly-laughs you always hear about but never actually witness in real life. "Oh you are precious." The king stroked a hand across Bas' face. That didn't help his hardness at all.

"In this case I'll make the exception. I can smell your desire sweet thing and it is calling to me stronger than any siren." Vas was unbuttoning his shirt as he spoke, revealing a smooth chest with a light amount of chest hair. King Vas had an impressive pebbled abdomen, causing Bas to drool.

“By the gods you’re fine.” He whispered.

Vas smiled, his fangs exposed. I’d like to say the same about you but you’re still dressed.” The king gave a friendly growl. “I do believe I gave you an order.”

Swallowing, a sudden lump in Bas’ throat, he worked on his buttons with trembling hands. He only got to button three when the king ran out of patience.

“Enough. You’re about to give *me* a nervous breakdown.” Two large hands gripped the sides of Bas’ shirt. A loud rip followed. “That was my nicest shirt.” Bas scowled. “It matched my eyes.”

A hot, hard kiss took away his rage. Soft cool lips took away his breath. Moaning, Bas wrapped his arms around the king’s hard body. Pressing against his own, a slight whimper escaped Bas’s throat.

The king broke free. Panting filled the air.

“I must take you, my sweet. Have you been with a man before?”

Bas nodded.

“Who.” The king’s eyes flared with rage.

“None of your business.”

Vas shook him, jerking his neck. But Bas instinctively jabbed his hands into the king’s vulnerable spots. When the vampire released him, Bas swept his foot behind the other man’s feet and knocked the king to the ground. Vasska landed on his back with a loud thud.

“Oh, shit.” As soon as the king stood up he would snap Bas’ neck like a twig. Instead a soft sound filled the room. Walking with cautious steps towards the king, Bas stopped right above him.

The king was laughing.

“S-sorry, your highness.”

Gold eyes bright with delight looked up at him. “I had it coming.” Vas rose to his feet in one graceful motion. “Though it is good to know you can take care of yourself.”

Bas shrugged; an elegant motion despite his torn shirt and rumpled hair.

“My father gave me tutors so I could defend myself in case of an emergency. He always worried that I’d be kidnapped as a child. I’m also fully trained in swordplay.”

“Impressive.” The king smiled. The vampire stood and took Bas back in his embrace. It felt so good to be there that Bas had to bite back a groan. How could one person’s touch feel so amazing after only a few hours?

“Your father was a wise man. I will see that you continue your studies. I’m sorry I attacked you but the thought of you being with another angered me.”

Bas rubbed the King's chest soothingly. "There's nothing I can do to change the past and you don't have the right to scold me for things I have done."

Vasska stroked his head. "You're right. Please accept my apologies." He placed a soft kiss on Bas' cheek. Bas wondered if the king looked after all the blood donors this well.

"No." Vas replied as if Bas had spoken. "You are a special case." With an arm still wrapped around his waist, the king led Bas back to the bed.

In a matter of minutes Bas was stripped naked and spread eagle on the bed. The king was lying on top of him, between his thighs.

"Hello." Vas gave him a wide smile flashing a bit of fang.

"Hi." Bas responded shyly. The bout of shyness was ridiculous but there was something about the king that made him feel like a wedding night virgin.

"Would it be better if I just bit you and got it over with?"

"Maybe." Bas said after a moment. "I think it's the anticipation that's making me nervous."

Vas nuzzled his throat, sending shivers rippling down Bas' spine.

"Bite me." He whispered, confident the vampire could hear him.

"Not yet. I like to play with my food." The king chuckled. A tongue lapped at Bas' skin like a big cat testing and teasing its prey. "You taste divine and I haven't even sampled your blood yet."

Before he could reply the vamp struck. A yearning ripped through Bas like an electric current, making him so hard he felt dizzy.

Of its own volition his body started humping the king.

He needed.

Something.

Too many sensations bombarded Bas. His mind couldn't separate the pain of the bite from the pleasure sinking into his bones. Finally, when he didn't think he could take much more, Vas released Bas' neck and lapped at the wound.

"Your father was Lord Destion."

It wasn't a question.

Bas blinked to clear his blurry vision. "Yes. How did you know?"

"I saw him in your mind and besides I always recognized your father's blood. He always tasted like an honorable man."

"Sounds like father." Bas was really proud that his voice didn't crack. Curiosity prompted the next question. "What do I taste like?"

"Sorrow." Vas cupped Bas' face in his long fingered hands. "You taste like sorrow my sweet and underneath the sorrow you taste uniquely like mine. I cannot make you my blood slave."

“What?” Bas tried to sit up but he couldn’t move under the other man’s weight. He was a complete failure. Even his blood wasn’t good enough.

“You are a titled young man with dangerous connections.” Vas held up his hand to stop the younger man’s protests. “I know your uncles are a problem, I saw your memories. But they will make further problems if I take you as a blood donor. I can’t have the human’s revolt because I took one of their own.”

“What will I do then?” Bas held back his tears. “This was my last chance.” He whispered.

Light as a butterfly, the king’s soft lips gently kissed Bas’ forehead.

“I didn’t mean to disturb you, sweetness. I’m not dumping you on the side of the road. In fact, just the opposite.”

Vas leapt off the bed, leaving Bas feeling empty.

The king quickly returned with a small square wooden box. The rich wood of the box gleamed in the light, reflecting off the shiny brass hinge. Instead of lying back down the king sat beside Bas and helped the younger man sit up alongside him.

“I have saved this for a thousand years; waiting for the one granted to me by the gods. I believe the goddess has finally brought me my wish.”

Not waiting for Bas to respond, the king popped open the latch and lifted the lid. Inside the box was an intricate ring made out of woven gold and emeralds, designed to look like a trailing vine.

It was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

“Wow.”

Vas smiled. “I’m glad you like it.” The ring was lifted out and the box tossed aside. “This is for you to wear for the rest of your born days.”

The king slid the ring onto Bas’ right middle finger.

“You are now and will forever be known as my mate.”

“Mate?” Vas took Bas’ mouth in a carnal kiss that curled his toes and brought back the stiffness to his cock. It was like a really good dream where the prince swept away the fair maiden except Vas was a king and, despite his current mood swings, Bas wasn’t a young girl.

When they finally parted Bas was under a now familiar weight. He looked up into a pair of predatory gold eyes. “You have any objections about being my mate?”

Did he? Bas searched his mind for any reason why he couldn’t be the mate for this amazingly gorgeous man who would undoubtedly take excellent care of him. “No. I have no objections.”

Vas tilted his head and Bas thought for a moment. He could feel Vas searching his thoughts. "I do hope I'm better than nothing." A strange expression marred the king's face.

It took him a moment to realize the king looked hurt. Bas stroked Vas' arm. "Don't take it personally, love. I just don't know if I'm ready to settle down."

"You're ready." The king said, his eyes glowing with possession..

Their naked skin slid together and Bas forgot to breathe, to think, to comprehend anything other than the hard body pressing him into the mattress.

"I want to fuck you into tomorrow." Vas growled.

"Please." Really what else could he say to something like that?

Vas' eyes went wide. "Oil." His graceful fingers fumbled with the table side drawer. The cold bottle against Bas' stomach made him jump, a giggle bubbling out of his throat.

"Oh. I like that sound." Vas as he tipped the container over on Bas' stomach, oiling his fingers and a good portion of Bas' naval. The vampire slid his fingers through the pool before sliding them into Bas' hole.

One finger slid inside his ass, causing Bas' breath to hitch. He gave a soft grunt from the mixture of pain and pleasure.

"It's been a while, my sweet?"

Bas nodded. "A long while."

The king gave a satisfied smile. "Good. Then it will be as if it is all new again. You can be my blushing bride."

Bas snorted. "I'll be your mate. But I'll never be your bride."

"Fair enough. Besides a bride would never have this delightful thing to play with." Vas wrapped his oiled hand around Bas' cock sending jolts of pleasure up Bas' spine. While Bas was distracted, Vas struck, plunging his fangs into Bas' neck the same instant he slid inside Bas' body.

The double penetration had Bas' back bowing with sensation. Too much. Between the pulsing beat from his neck and the pumping in and out of his body, Bas' release was tremendous. Coming left him drained; floating on pure sensation, a sweet numbness paralyzing him.

Seconds later, the king moaned, filling Bas with his craving. Vas' mouth lifted from his neck, and after licking closed the wound he languidly licked his way up Bas' throat before plunging into his mouth. The vampire's tongue swept across Bas' tasting of salt from Bas' sweat and a tinge of metallic from his blood.

"You are mine, my sweet, sweet man."

Bas nodded, or at least flopped his neck up and down.

"Yours." He said, before letting the darkness take him away.

For a long time the king watched his small mate, cradled in his arms. Long, elusive peace filled him until he cuddled his blond godling close and followed him into sleep.

Chapter Three

A soft knock on the door pulled Bas out of his slumber. Rubbing his eyes, he realized he was wrapped in the embrace of the vampire king. A heavy arm and leg pinned him into the soft mattress.

The knock came again, more insistent this time.

With a wiggle and a few gentle shoves, Bas finally freed himself from his snuggling lover.

He barely remembered to slide on his pants before he cracked open the door enough to peek out. Jorrell stood with a tray of food in his hands.

"Brilliant." Bas threw open the door and let the other man in. "I'm starving."

Having grown up with servants he didn't have any hang ups about his body so he was surprised when a low growl from the bed stopped Jorrell in his tracks.

"Close your eyes boy." The king snapped.

The young man immediately froze and snapped his eyes shut.

Vas slid from beneath the blankets and pulled on a pair of leather pants and a blue silk shirt. Bas walked over to Jorrell. "I'll take the tray."

"You will not take the tray." Vas growled. "You will put a shirt on and never answer the door half-dressed again."

"What?"

"From now on, only I will see your naked flesh."

"O-ookay. But if you remember properly, you destroyed my shirt."

Bas hoped his glare was fierce. It was difficult to frown at someone who looked so damn good in the morning.

"So I did." The king agreed.

He went to his closet and pulled out a brilliant blue shirt almost the exact color of the one Bas wore the night before. Except when he slipped it over Bas' arms it dangled several inches over his fingers.

Bas smirked and rolled the sleeves up to his wrists. "Better?"

The king flashed a bit of fang.

"Wow you wake up really cranky." Bas observed. "Can poor Jorrell put the tray down now before he drops it?"

Examining Bas he finally spoke to the other man. "You may open your eyes and put it on the table. I assume you made all of Bas' favorite things? I'll not have my mate neglected."

"Mate." Jorrell gasped. He set down the tray and wrapped his arms around Bas in an enthusiastic hug. "Congratulations."

Vas grabbed Bas and ripped him from the other man's arms. "No touching." He snapped, flashing his fangs.

"Calm down." Bas made shooing motions to Jorrell with his hand. Jorrell gave a low bow and left them, no doubt to pass along the news that the king found a mate.

"Is there a reason you felt compelled to scare the nice boy who brought me breakfast?"

The king kissed him, an embrace so wickedly sexy, Bas forgot his question. When the king finally released him, he had to grab the table to steady his knees.

He shook his head to clear his mind but the king spoke before he could organize his thoughts.

"I have waited a thousand years for you my sweet, so you'll have to forgive me if I'm possessive and overbearing. Please put on clothes when others are in the room. I can't fight my protectiveness and I'll be damned if I'll stand here while others enjoy your beauty."

Bas choked on the juice he was drinking. "*My* beauty. Honey I don't think they'll even notice me if you're in the room. You're a damn fine man."

Vas looked at his mate with new eyes. His stunningly gorgeous mate had no idea how rare his beauty was. How his brilliant blue eyes and shiny gold hair dimmed the other poor mortals who occupied the planet.

He stroked Bas' hair, relishing the contact. "Humor me beautiful."

Bas looked at him for a moment with his clear, bright eyes before shrugging and sitting down. "If it makes you happy I'll keep covered."

"Thank you." He didn't want to explain to this sweet man that if his protective instincts were roused, no one was safe. It was his nature to protect what was his and there wasn't anything he wouldn't do to guard the mate he'd waited forever for.

"Eat up mate and then we'll go introduce you to my family."

"Do you eat regular food also?" Bastion's look was a mixture of suspicion and hope. Vas realized how important it was to his mate that they were able to share a meal.

"Yes. I can eat regular food also." He didn't need to but if his mate wanted that connection he'd eat three meals a day. With a reassuring smile he sat down and grabbed a piece of toast and proceeded to eat for the first time in three hundred years.

Damn, after all those years of waiting, the goddess really came through. Now they just need to get through the formal claiming ceremony and Bastion will be his.

Unaware of his mate's thoughts, Bas calmly ate his breakfast.

"This is good." He said, scooping his eggs.

"You'll have to give a list of your favorites to the kitchen."

"All right."

It was nice to see the shadows fading from his lover's eyes. When Bastion arrived the night before Vas could tell the other man was nervous. A good night's sleep and some food lowered Bas' stress level and what Vas realized was his mate's natural sunny disposition was shining through.

Bastion polished off his food with neat and tidy motions displaying exquisite table manners. He looked up at Vas with a questioning gaze.

"Do-do you need blood?"

The combination of shyness and anticipation went straight to Vas' groin.

"No baby. I won't need blood for another twenty-four hours. But if you want to have sex, just say the word."

Damn, he blushed adorably. Vas couldn't stop the wide smile he felt spreading across his lips.

There was a knock on the door.

"Come in." He said without looking away from his lover's eyes. At least this time Bas was dressed.

Derl entered the room. His brother stalked through the door like the predator he was. Cold grey eyes scanned the room before settling on the pair of them.

"Cozy." He said, curling his lip. His eyes turned a little warmer as he got a better look at Bastion. It was an effort but Vas restrained the growl building in his throat.

He stood up and motioned Bastion to stand also. Wrapping an arm around his lover's waist he turned to face his younger brother.

"Brother, I'd like to introduce you to my mate Bastion."

"Mate. MATE!" Derl shrieked. "You don't have a mate. You are forsaken."

Vas smiled, he was really enjoying this. Then to the king's utter surprise his sweet lover completely snapped.

"Don't you dare talk to my man like that!" Bas said, stepping in front of Vas as if to physically protect him from his relative. "He is *not* forsaken."

"Well, well. The little blood-giver has teeth." A cruel smile curled Derl's lips.

"Go and tell the rest of the family to prepare. I want a bonding ceremony at second moonrise."

Cyialla, the second moon rose at middlenight, the ceremonial time for bonding. He wasn't going to make any mistakes on this one. This man was his mate and he knew he'd best claim him before Bas' uncles started making noises about missing him. He doubted Bastion told the bastards where he was heading last night.

Derl gave one last fuming glance at the pair before storming off. The door slammed close behind him.

"He's going to be a problem." Bas said tilting his head to meet Vas' eyes. "He means you harm."

Vas shrugged. "If he tries anything I'll kill him."

It meant little to him if he ended his brother's life. His mother would have a fit because she wanted his younger brother to be on the throne. Derl was her favorite because he was as cold hearted as she. But anyone who threatened his mate wouldn't live to brag about it.

Chapter Four

There were moments in Bas' life where he felt nervous but never this on edge. His parents had brought him out to mingle with visitors since he was very small, often throwing parties for famous celebrities or powerful politicians but never had a party mean so much to him personally.

This wasn't some important visitor who could make or break a political alliance with his father. These were the people most important to his lover who he would be dealing with for the rest of his life.

"Relax mate. They will love you. And even if they don't it doesn't matter, they will tolerate you."

Great. Nothing like starting with high goals. Bas wanted to be liked. He already lost one family and he hated the thought that he wouldn't be embraced by another.

Sucking in his breath, he allowed his lover to drag him through the double doors and into the reception room where he would go through the ceremony that would change his life.

People milled around the room, filling the cavernous structure with hundreds of warm bodies. Bas' eyes became wide, he didn't know there were so many vampires in one entire kingdom much less the vampire stronghold.

A large hand stroked his back. "Don't forget to breathe, my sweet." Vasska whispered into his ear. Warm breath moved the fine hairs on Bas' skin sending a shiver down his spine.

Looking around he saw a regal woman in a cream-colored gown standing at the top of a dais. Her features reminded Bas of the man standing beside him.

"Is that your mother?"

"Yes. Come let me introduce you to her."

The king brushed past a group of onlookers while keeping a firm arm around Bas, protecting him from being bumped in the crowded room.

Bas felt a streak of warmth at the care of Vas. It made him feel treasured.

Before he could become too gooey with sentiment they were standing in front of Vasska's mother and Bas felt her cool glance, like a physical touch, as it swept him from hair to foot.

"Mother this is Bastion Kerr, my chosen mate. Bas this is my mother Queen Siella."

Bas gave the queen his best bow trying not to shiver beneath the arctic blast of her eyes. She may look like the king but she had his brother's cold gaze.

“Well at least you chose someone decorative.” She said. Her voice was so chilly Bas could almost see the icicles forming in the air between them.

“He’s intelligent also.” Vas said, his tone impossibly colder. “He was chosen for me by the goddess and I intend to claim him.”

Her lips curled. “We’ll see won’t we?”

Bas was afraid to ask how they were going to see.

“Yes we will.” Vasska’s voice didn’t allow for hesitation or disagreement.

Bas decided it would be best to stay quiet until he found out what was going on. Vasska was invested in his safety so he doubted the vampire would do anything to endanger him.

The king turned them both so they were facing the crowds.

“Attention everyone.” Vasska’s powerful voice rolled across the people, forcing them into silence. “I bring to you my newly found mate.”

Cheers went up until they rose to a thunderous roar that had the king raising his hand for silence. “Please everyone. I don’t want you frightening him.”

“Is he so timid then?” A man shouted from the crowd.

“No. He’s just new and I’m trying to break him in gently.”

Laughter came from the crowd but Bas felt like prey in a room full of predators. Careful not to emit fear he meditated, slowly breathing in and out to calm his nerves. They weren’t much different than normal people they just had fangs and a lot of political, monetary and personal power. And most were related to the man by his side.

Already his future mother-in-law didn’t like him.

“I have called you here to witness my mate bond with Bastion Kerr we will undergo the Shaelib to confirm our mating by the goddess.”

There was a rush of whispers that spread through the room like wind.

Bas wanted to ask what the Shaelib was but he didn’t want to look like an idiot in front of all these people, half of who looked like they expected him to act like an idiot. So he did what his father always advised. If you don’t know what you’re doing in a political situation pretend you do until things become clearer.

The king held out his hand prompting Bas to put his right hand in Vasska’s left hand. “We will go into the chamber and come out as one.” The king said. Bas followed Vasska’s lead to a door in the back of the room still unaware of what they were doing. He trusted the king to do what was best.

“Just a moment.”

Bas felt a chill go up his spine as he recognized the voice of Vasska’s brother.

Vas turned around, Bas followed suit.

Derl was standing behind them with a disturbing smile and a reptilian gaze. "I object to them doing the Shaelib without the proper preparation. They haven't done the required twenty-four hours of contemplation. We wouldn't want our king to mate without full traditions followed."

The man's voice sounded reasonable but Bas was disturbed by the chill in Derl's eyes. The vamp was up to something. Vas obviously thought so too by the tightening of his hand over Bas'.

"After waiting so long I thought to dispense of that particular formality." Vas said. Bas could almost feel the tension running through the other man.

"Sorry brother. I wouldn't be doing my duty as your second-in-command if I didn't make sure you were properly wed."

"How considerate you are of your duty." Vas said, his voice drier than the Duillan sand dunes.

"I agree." Queen Siella said. The crowds broke apart as the Queen stepped forward. "I want my son to follow all the proper traditions. We don't want any claims that this is a shabby affair. As you say son, you waited a long time for your mate, surely you can wait a few hours more."

"As you wish mother."

Vas turned Bas to face him. "It is traditional in our mating ceremony for the couple to spend the twenty-four hours before the wedding thinking over the ramifications of binding their lives together. I want you to think carefully about what it means to be my mate and all of the hassle it is to be a consort to the King."

"Will you be thinking things over also?"

Vas laughed, his eyes looking Bas over from top to bottom. "What do I have to think over? I've waited for you my entire life and nothing will change that."

Bas leaned up on his tiptoes and placed a kiss on the king's cheek. "Thank you."

Bas turned to face the Queen and Derl, both who had eerily similar satisfied expressions on their face. "If that's what the proper ceremony is than I'm all for it."

"Excellent." For the first time the Queen smiled and Bas was surprised to see she was stunningly beautiful and looked even more like her eldest son.

"There will be a guard with you at all times and I will assign a companion so you won't be lonely."

"Surely he can entertain himself for twenty-four hours." Derl sneered.

“Of course but I want someone familiar with the court to be there to answer any questions.” Vas gave Bastion a smile. “How about Jorrell? You seemed fond of the boy.”

“A blood donor?” Derl laughed. “You’re going to trust your fate to a blood donor? Why wouldn’t you want one of your faithful subjects to spend it with him? Afraid they’ll tell him what you’re really like.”

Bas didn’t even see the King’s hand move but Derl’s head flew back with the impact of Vasska’s punch.

“Careful brother! You are treading close to outright disrespect for your King.” Vasska cautioned.

Derl glared at him as he pressed a hand against his quickly bruising cheek. “We wouldn’t want that. Everyone knows how much I respect you.”

“Why is it you don’t want him to spend time with another vamp?” Queen Siella asked. Her voice was less confrontational but her eyes lit with glee as if she was certain she had her son trapped.

The crowd stirred restlessly around her. It looked like some of his subjects objected to the King not wanting them near his future mate.

“It’s not that I don’t want another vampire near him.” Vasska said. “I want him to know what court life is from the perspective of a human. What I, or any vampire of court experiences isn’t going to be the same as what Bastion as a human will. I want him to learn about it from the human perspective and make an informed decision.”

“And will you let him go if he doesn’t like what he hears?” The Queen challenged.

Vasska let out a bitter laugh. “No. But I will be able to discuss his concerns with him.”

Bas let out a sigh he didn’t realize he was holding. He didn’t want to be let go.

“Let me take you back to our rooms. I want you to be comfortable where you spend the night and you can be properly protected there.”

Bas hadn’t had very many relationships in his short life but so far this one was the best.

Giving into impulse, Bas leaned forward and kissed his future mate. A low growl tingled his lips. The vampire grabbed him and pulled him into his arms. Moments of time drifted away beneath the King’s skillful mouth.

Vasska forced himself to release his mate. He didn’t want to give the audience more of an eyeful than a kiss and if this continued he was afraid he’d take the beautiful man against his throne.

“Come gorgeous, let’s get you back to my rooms.”

“And where will you spend the night?” Derl asked. His face was innocent but his voice made all sorts of insinuations.

Vas wrapped his arm around the smaller man. “I will spend it in the temple thanking the goddess for my mate. Alone.”

Bas’ small hand patted his in a show of support. “Thank her for me too.” He said in a quiet voice.

“I’ll do that.” He placed a soft kiss on his mate’s forehead before leading him through the crowds and to their chambers. Quickly scanning the suite to make sure they were alone he led Bastion to the bed and had him sit on the edge. Vasska kneeled before him.

“I want you to know that despite my brother’s interference I consider us wed. No one but you will ever know my body again. You are the other half of me so please don’t believe anything my brother might imply.”

He was shocked when Bastion laughed in his face.

Anger surged through him. He started to rise only to settle down again at the feel of his mate’s hand on his shoulder. “Calm down. I wouldn’t believe anything that vampire said even if he had a million witnesses. Go do your praying to the goddess. I’ll sit and have a nice chat with Jorrell and then go to bed. Tomorrow we’ll be bonded and officially together in the eyes of the kingdom.”

Bas’ eyes were untroubled.

“Beware my sweet.” Vas felt compelled to warn his lover. “My brother means to do us harm. Treat him with caution. He won’t directly act against you or me but he’s the sneaky type and will cause mischief where he can.”

“I’ll keep an eye out.” Bas promised.

The pair exchanged a kiss and Vas stood to leave. “I’m locking the door behind me. Don’t let anyone in besides Jorrell. Some guards will come soon to block your doorway but I’ll tell them not to bother you.”

After exchanging a brief kiss, Vas left his young lover behind a set of locked doors before going to the guardhouse. The soldiers stood at his entrance.

“Saddler and Harrow come forward.”

A tall sandy-haired soldier walked through the ranks followed by another man with wide shoulders and dark brown hair worn to his shoulders.

“I want the two of you to guard my bedroom door. My mate is inside. You are not to approach him or speak to him in any way unless he has a question. Do not let anyone inside except Jorrell who is to spend the night.”

“You’re going to let another man spend the night with your mate?”

Vasska laughed. "My brother has insisted we observe the twenty-four hour waiting period. I don't think that I have anything to worry about with Jorrell." Bastion was his. It was one of the few certain things in his life.

"Now go and watch over my lover while I give instructions to the kitchen."

A few minutes later Vasska was giving Morley instructions as to what to give Bas for dinner when Jorrell walked in. The redhead looked pale but then redheads always did.

"Jorrell, I want you to keep Bastion company tonight and tell him all about your life here. He will officially be joined with me tomorrow but Derl insists we observe the official period."

"Of course he does." Jorrell said, his green eyes flashing with anger. "It's just the type of thing he would do." He rubbed his hands together. "I'd love to learn more about Bas."

"After his food is ready, take it to him. Grab something for yourself too. Remind him I said not to let anyone in his room besides you. No one."

Jorrell nodded solemnly. "Worried Derl will have him kidnapped?"

"Of course not." Vas said, but his eyes conveyed his concern. The kitchen was a hotbed of gossip and if the king said anything about his brother it would be through the castle rumor mills faster than he could make it to the temple. He didn't need that kind of backlash.

So instead he patted Jorrell on the head and left to go to the temple.

Bastion was nervous as he waited for Jorrell to come. Was there anything the blood donor could tell him that would make him want to back out of his marriage to Vasska? Pacing the floor, Bas gnawed on his nails as he waited. His stomach was churning and his heart was pounding as minutes felt like hours. A knock had him rushing to the door.

Mindful of Vasska's warning, he stopped shy of opening it.

"Yes."

"It's Jorrell."

Bas whipped open the door. The redhead stood there carrying a large tray in his hands.

"Come in." Bas stepped back so the other man could enter and gave a nervous smile to the guards before closing the door. His stomach growled loudly as the delicious smell of food drifted towards him. Jorrell laughed. "I guess I don't have to ask if you're hungry."

Bas laughed. "I guess not." Now that Jorrell was finally there he could feel his nerves unwind. There was something about the other man that soothed him.

The redhead set the tray on the table and removed the cover. Inside were two plates with juicy steaks and piles of steamy vegetables. A bottle of wine lay on its side between two empty glasses. Bas noted it was red.

“Need to keep your iron up.” Jorrell said, nodding towards the plates. “If the King is going to use you as his sole source.”

“He is.” Bas interrupted, although he wasn’t sure if it was true or not. The thought of his lover biting another made him sick.

Jorrell patted his hand. “I didn’t want to presume. Mated vamps almost always only drink from their mate. There are only a few exceptions I can think of and they have special circumstances.”

Bas almost asked about what made them special but the look in Jorrell’s eyes stopped him. It was obvious the other man didn’t want to discuss it by the way he fidgeted with the tableware.

The redhead looked up and gave Bas a bright smile. “Why don’t we eat first and you can tell me a little about yourself.”

Over steaks and a bottle of wine, Bas told Jorrell his life story.

“And your uncles just took everything?”

Bas shrugged. “I’m not sure how much was left. The banker wouldn’t talk to me and my uncles control all the judges I could go to for help. I’m out of money so I came here to be a blood donor when a guy gave me a flyer.”

“What guy?” Jorrell asked, sitting up straighter in his seat.

“Some grey guy. He gave me a piece of paper and the guards let me in and you know what happened next? You brought me to the vampire king and he claimed me for his mate.”

“Wow. You were chosen by the grey man himself.” Jorrell’s green eyes lit with wonder.

“Who is he?” Bas asked when Jorrell continued to look at him like he’d done something amazing.

“You don’t know about the grey man?”

Bas shook his head.

“The grey man is the spirit of the oppressed, the right hand of the goddess. He gives aid to those who are truly in need. If you came to his attention then the goddess must have wanted you to meet the King.

Jorrell jumped to his feet and gave Bas a hug. “I’m going to go and tell the others about this. They’ll spread the word around.”

“But we never talked about you.”

“I’ll be back. This is too important. I need to tell the other donors so they will tell the vampires they service. Word will be spread by morning that you were handpicked by the goddess.” He gave a kiss on Bas’ cheek.

“Trust me. I’ll return and we’ll discuss my job and being human in a vampire world.”

Bas watched with astonishment as his companion gave a quick wave and danced out the door. What this would mean to Vasska he didn’t know but Jorrell seemed confident it would make a difference.

Bas sighed, locked the door and threw himself on the bed wondering what his lover was doing.

The thought of Vasska leaning over him, his strong naked body rigid with desire sent shivers down his spine and pooling in his groin. His cock rose restlessly seeking release.

Bas thought about taking care of the problem but what he really wanted was his lover’s touch. In a few hours he could have Vasska’s big hands rubbing across his body.

He could wait.

“You can wait.” He said to the rigid pole threatening to peek out of his pants.

A knock at the door startled him out of his desire.

It was too early for Jorrell to be back. The kitchen was close but not that close.

He had a bad feeling about this. Bas searched the room for anything to use as a weapon as he called out. “Yes.”

“New guard, just checking in.” A deep voice said.

“Thanks, I’m fine.”

The sense of foreboding grew. Vasska told him not to open it for anyone. He would’ve given any guards the same instructions. “I need a visual confirmation.” The supposed guard said.

Bas scanned the room looking for a sword, a heavy sculpture, anything. A piece of wood peeked out from behind a cabinet.

“I’ll be right there.” He called towards the door.

Bas rushed over to the cabinet and pulled on the wood. A wooden practice sword came free. It was over two feet long and made of sturdy hard wood. Vasska probably tucked it there to keep it out of the way.

At another knock at the door, Bas gripped the wooden sword handle tightly and approached the door. Staying to one side of the door he leaned over and unlocked the door hiding the sword behind him so it wouldn’t be easily seen. If the person meant no harm he didn’t want him to feel threatened.

“Vasska told me not to answer the door.”

“The king wanted me to report that you were all right. I’m not going to lie if I haven’t seen you in person.”

The man sounded so reasonable but it felt wrong. On the other hand he didn't want people reporting to Vasska that his new mate was a paranoid embarrassment.

Anything would be better than that.

Against his better judgment, Bas turned the knob and peeked out. A tall man with blond hair and a cruel expression in his grey eyes looked back at him.

The man was alone and the guards Vasska promised him were nowhere to be seen.

"I'm perfectly fine." Bas said, tightening his grip.

"You won't be for long." The man shoved the door open causing Bastion to stumble back. Only his natural grace and the hours of weapons practice had him regaining his balance.

"What are you doing here?"

"Why don't you come along with me and we'll go for a little walk."

Bas didn't think; he just reacted. He knew that walking anywhere with this guy was a bad idea. Using all his strength, Bastion swung the wooden sword and bashed the intruder in the head. The man screamed as he went down.

Not bothering to check if the guy was injured, Bas ran through the door and down the hall. Sounds of pursuit behind him had Bas running faster. A loud curse spurred him on.

Coming around the corner Bas slammed into another body.

"Easy there." A brown-haired man and his blond companion looked at him with matching puzzled expressions.

"Excuse me." Bas looked behind him as running footsteps came closer.

"Isn't that the king's sword?" The blond asked.

Bas looked at it. "Yes. Listen, sorry for running into you but I have to go."

He tried to maneuver between them, but their bodies blocked his way.

"You don't understand." Bas started to say.

"There you are." The blond snarled approaching him with blood on his forehead.

He reached out to grab Bas only to have the dark-haired man shove Bas behind him.

"Who are you?" The brunet demanded.

"What's it to you?" The blond snarled.

"Harrow, detain this man." The dark-haired man ordered.

"What for?"

The guard's fist punched Bas' assailant in the face. The man toppled down for the second time that afternoon. This time he didn't get up, Bas figured the man was out for a while.

"For attacking the King's mate." The brunet muttered.

The sandy-haired man called Harrow turned to Bas. "We're the guards the King sent to watch over you. Sorry we were delayed so long. I have a feeling now that it was deliberate. I'm Harrow and that's Saddler." He said pointing to the brunet. "I'll take this idiot down to the dungeon and Saddler will take you back to your room."

"Th-thank you." Bas said more than a little bewildered by the sudden change of situation. At least now he knew that his lover hadn't forgotten to assign him guards.

He watched with awe as Harrow lifted the huge blond over his shoulder and walked off down the hall.

Bas jumped when a hand landed on his shoulder.

"Did you bash him with the sword?"

Bas nodded.

"Good thinking." Saddler said. "Smart to get away instead of trying to take a guy twice your size."

"M-my father always said that it was better to escape alive than to fight to the death."

"Smart man." Saddler said, gently pushing Bas back towards where he came.

"I always thought so." Bas agreed allowing the larger man to herd him down the hall. "What will happen to him?"

"The guy who attacked you?"

Bas nodded.

"They'll question him and then the King will give his sentence. It will be severe for attacking you. It's like attacking the King himself." The guard gave Bas a reassuring smile. "Don't worry he won't be allowed anywhere near you again."

"Good." Bas didn't want to admit it but he was scared. Now that the entire scuffle was over he had time to give into his nerves. He was proud about how he handled things but that didn't mean he wasn't nervous about it happening again.

Was this what being the King's consort would be like? Always looking over his shoulder?

Bas was quiet as the guard led him to his room. The man walked inside first and scanned the interior opening up doors to make sure no one was hiding inside.

“Looks good. Stay here and I’ll be right outside to watch over you.” His eyes scanned Bas. “Try to get some sleep.”

“Jorrell said he’d come back to talk.”

“Then he can wake you up when he arrives. Lock the door behind me.” With a friendly smile the guard left and Bas locked the door.

Bas reluctantly propped the wooden sword against the wall, glad that he found it in time. He was certain that if he hadn’t answered the door the man would’ve knocked it down.

His body ached from the stress of his encounter and Bas shook his hand out to release the kinks building in his fingers from gripping the sword so hard. He would definitely have to practice his swordplay in the future or hire really big dependable guards. He idly wondered if he could keep the pair who would be watching him now.

A soft pattern of three knocks sounded on the door.

“Who is it?”

“Jorrell.”

Bas flew to the door and pulled it open, hugging the redhead.

“Shh. It’s all right.” He felt the other man pat his head in a soothing motion. “The guard told me what happened.”

Bas pulled away with a laugh. “I know it’s all right. The guy is gone and I survived my stupidity.”

“How were you stupid?”

He let Jorrell lead him to the bed and settle them both on the mattress, leaning against the headboard. It was comfortable sitting with the other man. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d felt friend chemistry with anyone and he was enjoying the moment.

“I opened the door to the guy after Vasska told me to keep it closed. When he finds out about this he’s going to be furious.” Bas sighed. “And I wouldn’t blame him.”

Jorrell patted his leg in sympathy. “Don’t worry about that. The king is going to be too angry with the guy who attacked you than question how he got in.”

“You think so?” Bas didn’t but it was nice of his new friend to try and make him feel better.

“No.” Jorrell laughed. “But I’m sure as a newly mated male you can think of ways to distract him from yelling at you.”

They exchanged a smile and Bastion felt the evening trauma fade away under his new friend’s understanding gaze.

“I’m sure I’ll think of something.” He agreed. Bastion shifted until he lay more comfortably on the pillows. “Now tell me all about you.”

Jorrell sat up straighter and cleared his throat. "What do you want to know?"

"Where do you come from? How did you get here? Do you like your life?"

"Actually I came from here. My mother was a staff cook for blood donors who got pregnant by my father who was one of the guards. He died in a horse riding accident when I was only a few years old. I've been here ever since."

Bas was certain there were tons of things left out of that recounting but he let them slide. "Where is your mother now?"

Jorrell looked away for a moment. "She died a few years ago." Bas could hear the pain in Jorrell's voice.

It was Bas' turn to pat his friend's leg in commiseration. "I miss my parents too. There's no shame in missing the one's who've passed on."

Jorrell nodded but Bas could see he wasn't convinced. Apparently he wasn't the only one who felt he had to hide his feelings.

He pressed a hand to Jorrell's shoulder. "There's no shame in mourning your loved ones, Jorrell. The only shame is in others for making you feel you don't have the right."

Jorrell rested his head on Bas' shoulder. Only a discreet snuffle broke the silence. "Thanks."

"No problem. So after your mother died you decided to stay here?"

"Yeah." Jorrell sat up and faced Bas. "I've been here since I could remember. This for me is home."

"Do you enjoy being a blood donor?"

Jorrell shrugged. "Some days more than others. I have some regular vamps who prefer my blood and treat me well. There are always the occasional jerks but most days are good."

Bas turned Jorrell's head so he was forced to meet eyes. "If you have a day that isn't so good or someone who is harassing you, let me know and I'll have Vasska do something. No one should be treated badly for providing a needed service."

Jorrell gave a faint smile. "I like providing them with sustenance. It feels good and I can do what I want during the rest of my time."

"What do you like to do?" Bas curiously asked.

"I like singing and playing my guitar. It relaxes me. I always hid in my music as a child when life became too much. As I got older music went from being a reason to hide to being a reason to live."

"Why don't you pursue it professionally?" Bas believed in people following their dreams unfortunately he never could decide what his were.

Maybe being a consort would give him time to think about what he wanted to do.

Jorrell sighed. "No one takes me seriously and it's not like I can just walk up to the Minister of Entertainment and ask him to listen to a blood donor. We might be needed but we don't have any status. No. It's best if I just entertain myself."

"There's a Minister of Entertainment?"

"Of course."

"Huh." Bas made a vow to himself to do something about the situation but settled for smiling at his new friend. "Maybe one day you can play for me."

"I'd like that." Jorrell said. "Let me know when you're available and I'll come by with my guitar."

"Will do." Bas yawned. "I guess I'm more tired than I thought."

"You've had a long day." Jorrell said. "Why don't you go to bed? Vasska will wake you when it's time to get up."

Bas watched his new friend walk towards the door. "Jorrell."

The redhead turned back to look at him.

"Thanks for everything."

Jorrell smiled. "Anytime my friend. Anytime. Lock up behind me."

Bas dragged himself off the bed and threw the lock after Jorrell left. He didn't bother to check on the guards. He'd seen them both as he was closing the door.

Stripping off his clothes Bas slipped into bed and fell immediately into sleep.

Chapter Five

Bastion was having the best dream; soft kisses on his face and shoulders, large hands roaming his bare skin.

He couldn't stop the moan that rolled from his chest.

"That feels good." He whispered to his dream lover as he wallowed in the man's exquisite touch.

"I'm glad you think so my love since today you'll be bound to me forever."

Bastion's eyes whipped open.

Vasska leaned over him with a wicked smile on his face.

"Oh."

"Good morning." The vampire King said placing another kiss on Bas' forehead.

"Good morning." Bas couldn't stop the wide smile spreading across his face. Today he was getting mated. The gorgeous man leaning above him was going to be his.

"It's time to get dressed. The ceremony will start in an hour."

"An hour!" Bas sat up in bed so quickly the king had to jerk back to avoid getting smacked in the head. "I don't even have anything proper to wear."

Vasska laughed. "I got you a set of robes. They're lying on the chair. It's the traditional wear of the mating ceremony."

Bas tried to look but the King blocked his vision. "I think we have something more important to take care of before you go and get dressed." Bas would've objected because he wanted to look good for his mating but the King's hand dipped beneath the covers and wrapped around his morning erection.

"Oh." Bastion said.

"That's it my sweet, just let go." Vasska leaned forward, licking a path up Bas' neck.

The anticipation of the King biting him was almost more than he could handle. "Bite me." He hissed as the vampire continued his slow licking and nibbling up and down his throat. Accompanied by the slow slide of Vasska's hand it was enough to drive him out of his mind.

"Bite me." He said again trying to put more command into his voice but it only came out as a soft whimper when Vasska moved and settled his hard, muscular body above his.

"All in good time." The King teased with a smile.

"Enough." He moaned. "Bite me."

“As you wish.” Vasska said with a flash of fangs. The vampire sank his teeth into him and he lost all ability to form thoughts. Pure sensation took over his body as he became a creature of need. He sank his fingers into Vasska’s dark hair and pinned the larger man into place as a tsunami of desire rushed through his body.

When Vasska rubbed his body against Bas’, pressing their hard cocks together, Bas lost control. Arching, he shot his come between them. A corresponding wetness told him he wasn’t alone in his release. The King licking a long stripe along Bas’ neck before whispering, “you’ll have to let go of my hair if you want me to get up so we can bathe before the ceremony.” Vasska said.

“Oh. Sorry.” Bas released the vampire. He could feel the blush rising in his cheeks.

The King smiled brushing his nose against his lover’s in an affectionate gesture. “Never be sorry for wanting me, my sweet. I find it extremely flattering.”

Bas daringly placed a quick kiss on the vamp’s mouth. “Let’s get clean. We don’t want to miss our own mating ceremony.”

* * *

Vasska stood before his people and for the first time in his life he was nervous. He wanted this to be perfect for his mate and the glares his mother and brother were giving him didn’t indicate it would happen. Bas gave him a nervous smile before turning to face the crowd.

As he was about to speak there was a commotion in the back of the room. Saddler and Harrow were dragging a blond man between them the prisoner’s hands and feet in shackles.

Without ceremony they threw him at the vampire King’s feet.

Saddler stepped forward. “This man attacked your intended yesterday. He claims the Queen sent him.”

“You were attacked yesterday?” Vasska turned Bas to face him.

“I wasn’t harmed.” Bas bit his lip causing the King’s attention to fail for a moment. It was then that the other piece of information sank in. Releasing Bas he spun to face his mother.

She stood defiantly on the far end of the room.

“Is this true?” He didn’t want to believe the facts but he doubted anyone could withstand Saddler’s interrogation techniques.

“I will not be supplanted by a human.” The Queen sneered.

Vasska felt a pain stab his heart. He knew that his mother was power hungry but he never knew how far she would go to prevent his happiness.

There were some restless rustling in the crowd and for a moment he wondered if there would be a coup. The Queen was a powerful monarch and she could have a strong show of support if she decided to fight him for the throne.

To his surprise Jorrell stepped forward and gave them both a low bow. "I have further information for you my liege."

"Jorrell, please step forward and state your information."

"I would like to state for the record that Bastion was chosen by the grey man. He personally sent Bas here and that means he was handpicked by the goddess."

There were rustling murmurs and Vasska noticed the tone of the crowd shifted towards him. His subjects were looking at Bas with awe.

"How do we know he's telling the truth?" Derl asked.

A soft wind whipped through the room. The smell of lilac's and fresh blood stung the air. The scent of the goddess.

A glow around Bas formed, lighting him up like a candle before vanishing again. Vas was awestruck.

"That felt incredible. It was like being wrapped in a warm hug."

"Anyone else doubt he's goddess chosen?" Vasska asked the room.

There was a wave of head shaking and a chorus of no's.

"Now does anyone else want to contest my right to my mate?"

"We do." Two men pushed their way through the crowd followed by a white-faced Derl. He knew without question that his brother was responsible for bringing them there but the expression on his brother's face told him that the goddess' intervention ended any objection he might have. His brother was power hungry but even he wouldn't go against a goddess.

The resemblance between the two men and Bas, let Vasska know that these were his lover's uncles.

"What right do you have when you've sought to oppress him? I'm certain my investigations will find that you've robbed him of his birthright.

Some of the bravado faded from their faces. One of them was braver than the other and came closer until he was just below Bas' position. A sly expression was on his face that Vasska didn't trust.

"Hello Bastion." The man said in an oily voice.

"Uncle." Bas' voice was soft as if he only spoke to the man reluctantly.

"The King brainwashed you, my boy. Come back with us and we'll see you're taken care of."

Vasska was surprised at the sneer that crossed Bas' face. Who knew the man could look so superior.

"I remember quite clearly how you wanted to take care of me uncle." "I'd rather submit to the King's brainwashing than the groping of your hands. Now leave and I don't want to see you again unless it's in front of a judge."

Vasska motioned to his guards. "Please show these gentlemen out." The men went quietly but Vas knew they would end up facing the pair on court. There was no way he would let them rob his lover of his birthright.

He held out his hand to Bas. "Come on love let's get our mating ceremony underway." He gave the crowd a warning look. "Does anyone else have something to say?"

Silence reigned. No one even fidgeted.

"Good. Then we will go to the chambers and intertwine our destinies.

Bas let the King lead him towards the double doors for the second time. For a moment he had wondered if they were ever going to be mated. Between Vasska's relatives and his, there were too many people trying to stop their connection.

The room beyond the double doors was austere in its beauty. The walls were an unadorned cream and the floor was matching marble.

The only object in the room was a marble pedestal that rose up from the floor in the exact same color of marble. As they approached Bas could see that there was a shallow bowl carved into the top. There was also a carved statue of the goddess Amethia, her hands held up to the sky in a beseeching gesture.

"Take off your clothing."

"What?" Bas looked away from the statue and around the cold room. "Why?"

"It's part of the ceremony. It proves we have nothing to hide from each other. Strip and just leave them on the floor."

Bas shrugged.

He was startled when he turned and found Vasska naked. He took a moment to admire his future mate. There weren't any flaws in the gorgeous creature before him. Vasska was sleek and muscled. His cock rose at the sight.

"Come with me." The King held out his hand and Bas placed his on top it. They walked over to the pedestal in a strangely formal manner considering they were both stark naked.

Bas bit back a giggle.

Vasska led him to one side of the pedestal and walked over to the other. For the first time he noticed that his lover had a dagger in his other hand.

The King must've noticed his expression. "Don't worry darling, I'm not going to stab you or anything. I only need a bit of a blood for the ceremony. You didn't think a ceremony for a vampire wouldn't involve blood did you?"

Bas blushed. He'd been so involved in thinking about his future mate that he hadn't given the ceremony much thought. "I didn't really think about it." He confessed.

"I'm flattered." Vasska gave him a smile that made his stomach flutter nervously. He could hardly believe that this man was going to be his.

"Now I want you to repeat after me." Vasska wrapped his hand around Bas' wrist with one hand while holding the dagger with the other.

Bas nodded.

"With my heart I bind myself to you."

"With my heart I bind myself to you." Bas repeated.

"With my soul I bind myself to you."

"With my soul I bind myself to you."

"With my blood I bind myself to you." Vasska slashed his dagger against his wrist.

Bas winced at the sight of his lover's blood.

"Um. With my blood I bind myself to you."

Vas slashed a line across Bas' skin opening a small wound.

Vasska pressed his open wound to Bas'. Bas gave a hiss as Vasska pressed against his cut.

"Blood to blood, flesh to flesh we are bound for eternity."

"Blood to blood, flesh to flesh we are bound for eternity." Bas dutifully repeated.

Pain seared through his head as he felt something give way.

Can you hear me, my love?

Vas' voice flowed through Bas' head like water. It was strange to hear a voice in his head not his own. The warm baritone of his voice was filled with so much love and longing that Bas barely held back the tears in his eyes before he could speak.

"Yes. I hear you."

"Try responding with your mind."

Bas looked up into the loving gaze of his mate and focused.

I love you.

The surprised look let him know that his mate heard him.

"Really?"

“I thought we were supposed to be talking with minds.”

“I’d rather talk with our bodies.”

Vas leaned over and licked Bas’ wound sealing it instantly. He did the same with his own. “Let’s go back to our room and seal our mating in comfort.”

“Let’s.”

Bas leaned over and kissed the vampire King.

“I’m happy the goddess chose me for you.” He said with a smile.

“Me too.”

Dressing quickly in their robes the two men left the mating chamber to start their life together.

The End

Amber Kell loves to spend the day dreaming about hot m/m romances.
To learn more about her and her work check her out at <http://www.amberkell.wordpress.com>