

STEPHANI HECHT

THE DRONE VAMPIRE
CHRONICLES 1



BLOOD LUST

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CHRONICLES BOOK ONE

BY

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DEDICATION

*To the TMH. You guys know who you are.
Thanks for the support and laughs.*

CHAPTER ONE

“Why do parking garages always smell like piss and ass?”

Kane barely held back the groan at his brother, Dante's, whispered question. The idiot may as well have shouted it in the deafening silence of the garage. First, because the creatures they were hunting could hear the smallest of noises, and secondly because the question was so annoying it grated on Kane's very last nerve.

That's not the garage you're smelling. It's your breath backfiring on you, he replied via the same telepathic link he'd shared with his brothers since they were small children. *Now, let's keep all of our conversations in stealth mode, shall we? The last thing we need is for these bastards to know we're here.*

Dante raised his hand and huffed into the palm, testing his breath's foulness for himself. He must have found nothing because his dark eyes narrowed in a scowl. *You suck, Kane, and not in the normal vampire way either.*

If Kane could have, he would have snorted at his brother's vain streak. Tall and thin, Dante was

used to having others fawn over his good looks. With dark brown eyes that melted the hearts of both sexes, Dante never had to worry about being able to find his next feeding partner. He played up his good looks by always dressing in the best and styling his dark hair just long enough in the front so it occasionally fell into his eyes. Right now, Dante didn't look so charming. His face was screwed up in a scowl and he mouthed curse words.

Instinctively, Kane turned to see what his youngest brother, Rafe, thought about Dante's bitching. But Rafe's gaze was locked at his feet. He kept his hair even longer in the front so it always draped in his face and obscured his bright green eyes from view. He was shorter than Dante, but he had more muscle, making them about even in a fistfight.

Fine, Dante snipped.

Kane let out an aggravated sigh. Good God, how was it Dante managed sarcasm, even while using telepathy?

Dante continued with the bitch fest, *What are we hunting tonight? Psychotic werewolves? Witches suffering from PMS? Oh, maybe it's homicidal bunny rabbits. Wait, since it is a couple days before Halloween, maybe it's a batch of rabid black cats in search for candy corn.*

Kane took a deep breath, both to stop himself

from strangling his brother and to get himself ready for Dante's response to his answer. *We're hunting kubolds.*

A mask of anger and disbelief slid over Dante's face. *Please, tell me I heard you wrong and you did not just say we're here to fight some fucking rats.*

Technically, kubolds were really goblins, but they did look and act a lot like your every day rat. They smelled like them, too. The only difference was kubolds were the size of a bullmastiff and just as nasty. Oh, and they could talk the meanest smack out there. Kane had never met a kubold that didn't speak a streak of bullshit. Still, in the end, they were considered rats and no self-respecting vampire would lower themselves enough to hunt one.

But then the Toren brothers weren't self-respecting vampires. At least not anymore.

"Fuck this," Dante said aloud. "We don't need the money that badly."

He spun around and started to walk away, but Rafe placed a hand on his chest and stopped him. Rafe didn't say anything, but his silence was accusation enough. For a second, Dante looked like he was going to take a swing at his younger brother. Then his face softened and he relaxed. "Damn it," he muttered, softly.

Kane knew while Dante might be able to tell him to fuck off any day of the week, there was no

way he would ever say anything like that to Rafe. Not with everything Rafe had been through. Not when they had almost lost Rafe that night so long ago. Sure Dante wouldn't hesitate to trade blows with Rafe, and the two would probably go at it before the night was over. However, Dante would never turn his back and leave his youngest brother alone in a fight.

Fine, Dante switched back to mental mode. Let's go round us up some rats.

"You can talk aloud now," Kane snapped as he pulled out his Glock.

Dante gave him a confused look. "Why?" The answer came in a kubold flying out of nowhere. It caught Dante in the chest and brought him down to the cold cement. Kane didn't intervene, not worried. His brother's fighting skills were as efficient as his mouth.

Sure enough within minutes, the giant rat let out a loud howl of pain, its pointed face contorted in agony, the jagged teeth glistened with spittle. It fell heavily to the side as Dante pushed it off himself with a loud grunt. A knife was wedged deep in the kubold's chest, right in the middle of the buttons on its bib overalls. The supernatural rat was dead before it hit the ground. Dante scrambled to his feet and looked down at the creature's blood that was soaking into his blue jeans and black t-shirt.

"We can talk aloud," Kane drawled, "because thanks to your big mouth, they already know we're here."

"How many are there?" Dante wiped the gore off his face and spat to the side.

"The city official who hired us didn't say. All I know is these things have set up shop here and have killed a few humans. They need exterminated." Even as Kane said those words, he tried hard not to choke on them. He and his two brothers had once been the most elite soldiers in the vampire world. It was said if you wanted a job done, then you called the Toren brothers. Now they were taking this piece of crap job because no one else would hire them. They had hit rock bottom, hard and fast.

"How in the hell did kubolds end up here in Detroit?" Dante asked as he spat again. Kubold blood tasted nasty, even to a vampire.

Kane shrugged. "I guess they go wherever there is easy food to be found. Think about it, a parking garage would be a perfect place to stalk humans."

Rafe finally spoke, his voice harsh from being rarely used, "Shhh... I hear more coming."

Five of the giant rats lumbered out of the dark from various directions and started to walk toward the brothers. The beast's claws made clacking sounds against the concrete. The noise

mingled with the regular drips that echoed from off in the distance. Why was it all parking structures seemed to have a leak somewhere? Maybe it was connected to the whole ass and piss smell. Dante may be onto something after all.

One separated itself from the pack, showing he was the leader. Its lipless mouth attempted a smile, only to fail miserably. They all had a shaggy coat that was longer than your usual rodents, they varied in color from *crap* brown to *gawh* gray. Beady black eyes peered out from over their elongated, sharp noses and, even from this distance, Kane could smell their breath. It reeked of rancid meat and cigarettes.

The leader laughed around his razor sharp, teeth. "Do my eyes deceive me or is it actually the Toren brothers? Right here in Detroit with all the Drones and werewolves. Your Pure Vampire asses sure have sunk low. I heard you all had your dicks handed to you by the Vampire Regulation Force. Now I see that it's true. What would your pure blood mama and papa say, knowing you are slumming with the trash?"

The kubolds words came out wet and distorted and drool dribbled down his chin past his overly large canines. The rest of the kubolds started to laugh in equally wet *gwafs*. Kane tried hard not to roll his eyes when Dante started to join in with them, the vampire's laughter edged in madness.

Ever since that night ten years ago, Dante was prone to *fits* and it looked like he was neck deep in one now, which was good for the brothers and very bad for the rats. The kubolds all stopped chuckling one-by-one as they realized Dante was mocking them and his eyes had taken on a deadly chill.

Dante's arm came up in a blur of motion and, before you could say *Rat's ass*, he shot the kubold leader in the head. The creature landed in a heap, his blood spreading out on the dirty, oil streaked ground. Kane gave his brother a bored look.

"Are you done playing with the mice?" he asked as Dante flipped the rest of the kubolds off.

"I don't know," Dante drawled as he threw a disgusted look at the rats. "I'm kind of having fun with the livestock. It reminds me of the county fair."

"Fuck you," one the rats hissed.

"Not even on my worst day," Dante shot back.

When the kubolds attacked, the brothers moved as one highly-skilled killing machine. They didn't yell out or communicate their moves to one another because they didn't have to. They each instinctively knew what the others were doing and what they were going to do next. That was why they had always been such an efficient team and why they had lost only one battle in their entire lives. Within five minutes, all the rats were lying

dead in a neat circle around the three vampires. None of whom were injured in the least.

After he caught his breath, Kane flipped open his cell phone and called the client. When the human answered, Kane said curtly, "It's done."

"Are you sure?" a thin voice responded.

A picture of a scrawny human man wearing glasses and a cheap suit, popped into Kane's head. Kane curled his lip. "Of course I'm sure."

"We can't have any evidence left behind."

Kane eyed the mess, the blood was already starting to dribble down to the next level of the ramp. "Then you better send the maid."

"We won't pay until you've cleaned up the...remains." The human nervously cleared his throat.

Kane gripped the phone so tightly he almost crushed it. The asshole expected them to get rid of the bodies, too? This was the perfect cherry-on-top-of-his-shit sundae. He'd never wanted to attack a human out of anger before, but this dick was seriously tempting him to do so. "Fine," Kane finally snapped. "But there's a lot of blood. How do you expect us to get rid of that?"

"Well, you are vampires. Can't you just lick it up or something? I mean, it would be a free meal for you three."

Both Dante and Rafe picked up that comment, thanks to their heightened vampire's sense of

hearing. Rafe got a dangerous glint in his eyes while Dante cursed under his breath.

"We'll take care of the bodies." Kane made sure the anger he felt carried over into his voice. "You'll take of the blood, human. Unless you want to see yours mixed with it."

* * * *

It took them over an hour to load the carcasses into the back of a pickup truck and drive to the edge of the Detroit River. Once there, Kane drove to the darkest spot and turned off the engine. Another half hour passed as they unloaded the rats and threw them far into the water.

"Who's going to call Snuggles?" Dante asked as he wiped the sweat from his brow.

"I'll do it," Kane volunteered.

He pulled a dagger from his waistband and made a deep cut into his palm. With a wince of pain, he squeezed the wound as he held it over the water. His blood trickled from his fist and dripped into murky blackness. While there was plenty of kubold blood already swirling around the polluted, fetid water, only one thing would lure Snuggles to the shore—vampire blood. He didn't know what pact the vampires had made with the sea serpent all those centuries ago, he just knew Snuggles would come whenever one of them gave

a blood sacrifice.

Within seconds, a large brown head crested the surface, followed by a long neck. The sea serpent opened its huge mouth to reveal long, razor sharp teeth.

Kane couldn't be for sure, but he could have sworn Snuggles was smiling at them.

"We brought you a snacky wackey. Just because we love you, beautiful," Dante sang.

The slight manic edge was still on his voice and Kane wondered just how keyed up the battle had left him. Snuggles gave a large snort that soaked the brothers. Kane shuddered as sea serpent snot mixed with the kubold gore already on his clothes.

"That wasn't nice, Snuggles," Dante bitched.

Snuggles dipped its head into the water and fished out a kubold. All three of the brothers cringed when they heard the crunching of bones as it bit into its treat. The serpent let out a loud slurp as it sucked the rest of the body down its throat with a large gulp.

"Now, now, Snuggles," Dante chastised. "With manners like that, you're never going to get a date. I wonder, are you a boy serpent or a girl serpent?"

"Why don't you dive in and swim down under and check for yourself?" Kane suggested.

Rafe let out an uncharacteristic chuckle.

Dante pretended to be offended. "What if Snuggles sat on me and I got stuck in some orifice?"

You guys would be lost without me."

Snuggles retrieved another rat out of the water and stated to eat again.

Rafe's lip curled in disgust and he gave the sea serpent the same look one gave their shoe when they stepped on something foul. "Gross."

Dante shook his head. "Now look at what you've done, Snuggles. You've gone and made Rafe talk. You know it hurts when he does that."

Rafe looked out from under his hair at Dante, his eyes growing stormy with rage. "Dick."

Dante put his hand to his chest and pretended to stumble back. "Two words? I'm going to freaking faint here."

"Don't you ever shut your mouth?"

Dante's brown eyes registered annoyance. "I just have to make up for your emo, no talk, going-to-go-cut-myself-some-more ass."

"I don't cut myself." Rafe balled his hands into fists, but kept them down.

"You're one step away." Dante let out a sarcastic sounding laugh. "All you've done since we've come back is shut yourself away from everything. You act like you're still in prison."

"Dante!" Kane yelled. "Shut up, you're going too far."

"Oh, and your way is so much better? We've tiptoed around him for the past year, hoping now that we're free, he'll snap out of it and he hasn't.

Look at him. He looks like shit and he's looking worse every day. When's the last time he fed?"

Kane hated to admit it, but Dante had a point there. Rafe was pale and emaciated in a vampire way and no amount of human food was going to fatten him up. Although he was more muscular than Dante, that, too, would soon start to dwindle without substance. What Rafe needed was blood and the fresher the better. Both he and Dante had been bringing home the bagged crap they got from their local vamp connection, but lately Rafe was refusing even that.

Rafe sneered. "At least I'm not running around screwing everything on two legs like you, Dante."

"Just trying to make up for lost time, baby brother. Ten years is a long time to be without some loving."

"Nympho."

"Emo"

The two attacked each other at the same time, going down in a pile of fists, feet and fangs. Kane decided to stand back and let them vent their frustrations a little. After the crap fest of a night they'd had, he didn't blame them for wanting to blow off a little steam. Snuggles seemed to give him a disapproving look and he gave her a shrug in return. "I blame our daddy, he never showed us love," he called up to the sea monster.

After several minutes, Snuggles seemed to have

had enough of them interrupting her supper. She let out another snootfull of snot, this time completely coating all three of the vampires. Dante and Rafe both froze, mid-fight, their faces a mask of disgust.

Kane cursed loudly. Just when he thought it couldn't get any crappier, it did. Snuggle's snot was thick, sticky and stinky. He tried to wipe some of it off his clothes, only to find it wouldn't budge. He swallowed a gag that was coming up his throat and fixed his brothers with a glare. Kane grabbed both of them by the back of their necks and gave them a push toward the truck. "Enough, you two. We need to get going, the sun will be up soon."

* * * *

Back at their house, Kane sat in the truck and looked at the piece of crap that was their first real home since they'd been released. While it wasn't as bad as the prison had been, it wasn't much better either. It was a decrepit old dwelling that was two steps below a crack house. But it was all they could afford now that they were no longer on the agency's payroll. Working freelance jobs, they barely made ends meet. They couldn't even turn to their father for help. Pride, and the fact he'd disowned them, put a crimp on that.

Dante seemed to read his mind. "It's not so bad. At least we have a butler."

Kane couldn't hold back the smile. "Ozzie is a piss poor substitute for a butler. He's a stoner who only stays with us for free room and food."

"But he's a werewolf," Dante pointed out. "So he's also a wicked watchdog. Besides, he actually likes to sleep at night so he can watch the house during the day."

Kane had to concede, his brother had a point there. For all his faults, there was no way anyone would get to the brothers during the day while Ozzie was there. The werewolf owed the vampires too much, and it wasn't just the free grub either. They had saved Ozzie's family from a harpy attack a few months ago. Since then, the werewolf had been both a good friend and a thorn in their sides.

As soon as they walked inside the house, Ozzie grumbled, "You guys cut that one a bit close. It's only a half hour until sunrise."

Ozzie was sitting in front of the computer, the glare from the monitor accentuating the hard planes on his face. His long brown hair was pulled back into a ponytail with a leather thong, making him look more like a hippie than a supernatural being. The werewolf wore his usual t-shirt with tacky cartoon character. This time it was a cat engaged in some sexual act with a dog. That was

their Ozzie, classy till the end.

"You know us." Kane grinned. "We like to live life on the edge."

Ozzie's yellow eyes were dropped half-mast, but that was nothing new. The wolf seemed to live in a perpetual state of semi-awareness. Kane knew it was all an act. He had seen Ozzie in a fight and he was as lethal as any creature out there.

"I just don't want to have to go out and collect you all when you turn into itty-bitty piles of goo because you three decide to get a tan." The werewolf looked up from his porn long enough to point to the kitchen. "I made you all dinner and, because I care so fucking much, I even kept it warm for you. You might want to shower, too. You guys smell like piss and ass."

Dante turned to Kane with a smug look. "See, I told you that parking garage reeked."

Rafe shouldered his way past them and started up the stairs toward the only bathroom. Although Kane couldn't see Rafe's eyes, thanks to his hair, he knew his brother was rolling them at both him and Dante, maybe even at Ozzie as well. Kane started to feel sorry for Rafe. It must be hard to live with all of them at once. Then he realized his brother had beat them to the shower, leaving them covered in the kubold blood-Snuggle snot mixture a little longer.

His compassion died a swift death.

CHAPTER TWO

“Come on, Toni. You hit like a girl.”
“Shut up, Jonas, you freak of nature. I am a girl.”

Jonas smiled at her, sweat trickling down his face. He was a dark-skinned giant with a baldhead and menacing glare, solid muscle and a lethal killing machine if provoked. But Toni knew he was a big teddy bear, unless you really pissed him off. In his previous life, he had been a Marine before becoming a cop for the city of Detroit. He clapped together the punching mitts he was holding up and commanded, “Enough talk, let’s get back to work.”

She bent over at the waist and braced her hands on her knees. She was wearing a pair of black workout pants and a matching sports bra. Her waist-long blonde hair was pulled back in a ponytail, the way she always wore it whenever she was training or fighting. While Jonas had been blessed with tall, she had been cursed with short.

If she was wearing a good pair of heels, she could top out at five-feet-four inches. Not exactly assassin material.

Although, that was precisely what she had been at one time in her life. An assassin.

That was how she had met Jonas. Both of them were working for Corbin as his top secret killing machines. They had been the best, too, even though Corbin would never dare publicly acknowledge them. They were his dirty little secret.

Then Corbin had betrayed Toni and she had barely managed to escape with her life. Jonas had left with her and never looked back. Jonas always watched over her like a father. She took the place of his human daughter whom he had lost years earlier.

Which made him think he had the right to boss her around. Toni growled low in her throat. Not bloody likely. Nobody told her what to do. Not anymore. "We've been at it for hours." Which was true. They hadn't even slept. While the rest of the vampires in the clan had gone to their comfy beds, he dragged her to the large gym centered in the warehouse they had converted into living quarters.

"I'm not letting you go until I think you're ready or you change your damn mind," Jonas growled.

"We both know this is the only way we're going to have a chance at getting to Corbin."

"They're dangerous, unpredictable and rumored to be general all around assholes."

"So they should feel right at home with you, Eric and Brenden," she countered.

"Funny you should mention Eric." Jonas tossed the mitts to the side and grabbed two bottles of water, handing one to her. "I wonder how our clan leader would feel about you going after the Toren brothers."

Toni shot him an angry look as she took a swig of water. They both knew exactly how their leader would feel about one of his clan followers bringing a trio of Pure vampires into their mists. All the vampires in the clan were Drones, meaning vampires that were made, not born. In comparison, Pure vampires could trace their bloodline back generations. For centuries the Pure-run VRF had repressed Drones because they saw them as a blight on the race.

A year ago, Eric's group and a few other clans had finally taken up arms and fought against the VRF. Afterward, the Drones were forced to retreat to the werewolf-controlled city of Detroit. The only reason they were safe was because the wolves hated the Pure Ones even more than the Drones did and wouldn't tolerate a VRF presence in their hometown.

"At least let me come with you," Jonas pleaded as he wiped the sweat off his face with a towel. "You need someone covering your back with those three."

Toni shook her head. "They see you and they will feel threatened. I need them relaxed and willing to cooperate."

Jonas let out an aggravated grunt. "I don't see why you think we need them in the first place."

"They were born into vampire society and because of that they will know things we don't about the VRF." Even though they had both served under Corbin for years, there had always been things kept from them because of their Drone status, things she hoped to use against him. She drained the rest of her water and tossed the bottle to Jonas. "Just give me one day to convince the Torens," she reasoned. "If I don't come back by then, you have my permission to come in, guns blazing."

A suspicious look flashed over his face. "How can you be so sure you will even find these guys? I heard they've been elusive."

Flashing him with a grin, she supplied, "My brother just texted me, he managed to track them down an hour ago."

Jonas juggled the empty bottle between his giant hands and let out a tired sounding sigh. "You have half a day and then I am coming for

your white ass and taking you home even if I have to throw you over my shoulder and carry you all the way."

"Deal," she agreed with a grin as she sailed out of the room. Jonas tried to give her another glare, but she chose to ignore it.

Leaving him behind, she went through the old warehouse toward the communication office. The windows of the building were boarded up so no sunlight could leak through and the walls were painted dark, adding to the cavernous appearance. If it weren't for the various toys, bikes and a giant swing set, the dwelling would have passed for sinister.

Along one wall, various weapons, both man-made and vampire-made, were stored. Along the other wall stood a bank of computers. Since the sun was just beginning to set, there were only a few individuals manning the computers. Some were monitoring the vast security system protecting the warehouse, others searched for information on their friends and enemies.

The rebel group consisted of vampires dedicated to bringing down VRF. More specifically, to bringing down Corbin, the head of the organization. Thinking of her abusive past with Corbin, Toni rubbed the spot on her right inner forearm that bore the mark all Drones were required to get—a large *D*, branded into them so

they could never be rid of it.

Toni smiled when she saw who was working on the computer at the very end. Brenden, her brother. Her punishment. He spotted her and smiled widely, showing off his fangs, before waving her over.

"You're up early," she said as she ruffled his blond hair. He wore it collar length in the back and long in the front so that it flopped over his blue eyes. He looked just like their mother. Toni did, too. Fortunately, Brenden was lucky enough to inherit their father's tall muscular build. Otherwise he would have been stuck being small like Toni.

"I think I found them." He pulled over a chair so she could sit down at the screen with him.

"You found the Torens?" she breathed. "Where?"

"Right here in Detroit."

She felt her jaw drop. "They've been right under our noses all this time and we didn't know?"

Brenden shook his head, never looking from the screen. "They just came here a short while ago. It appears they were hiding out in Chicago before, never staying in one place too long. For some reason, they came out of hiding and have started working free lance cases."

"I wonder why they would come out after all

this time?" Toni wondered. "Why Detroit? They have to know the place is run by the wolves and it would be suicide for high-profile Pures like themselves here."

"Since they live with a wolf, I don't think that's going to be a problem."

She pulled back, shocked. "They live with a werewolf?"

"Yes, and the little puppy loves his porn." Brenden gave a small chuckle.

"How do you know that he likes porn?"

"The same way I knew where they were, I hacked into his computer," he replied blandly, without even a hint of guilt.

"Brenden!" Toni exclaimed. "That is so sneaky and devious. I'm so proud of you."

Brenden blushed and shrugged as he brought up three images. They were pictures of the Torens. All three of them shared the same dark hair and don't-fuck-with-me expressions. Brenden enlarged one so she could see it better.

"First off, they're really half-brothers. Although they have the same father, they each had a different mother. This one is Rafe," Brenden announced. The picture showed a young vampire with shaggy hair that shielded his face. Toni was just able to make out his bright green eyes. The glare coming from them was hard and dangerous looking. His aura was that of a stray dog that had

been kicked too many times and was now backed into a corner, about ready to attack.

"He's the youngest of the three," Brenden continued. "It's rumored he doesn't talk much. Some say it's because of the attack that almost killed him. I guess it really fucked him up when he wasn't able to save that human family, that they died while he lived.

"They didn't all die," Toni replied, softly. "He managed to save the baby."

Brenden gave a small nod before he clicked on another image. "This here is Dante."

This brother was wearing a cocky grin that barely concealed his fangs. His brown eyes seemed to be laughing at some joke only he knew, though, there was no mistaking the menace that lay just beneath the surface. His hair was styled so the front fell in soft graceful waves. He was good looking and he knew it.

"Dante is the middle child," Brenden continued to recite the information Toni already knew by heart.

"He's the whore of the group. If it has tits and two legs, he'll screw it."

"Brenden!" Toni was shocked to hear her normally soft-spoken brother say stuff like that.

He gave her an innocent look. "I'm just reporting what I read and heard."

She gave him a stern glare. "Continue."

When he brought up the last picture, Toni's heart gave a weird little gallop. This Toren seemed the meanest. His hair was cut in a clean, no-nonsense style, and the look on his face matched it. There was no smile playing at his lips or his intense blue eyes. His strong jaw was set, stern and hard, and he appeared coiled and ready to attack. He was a warrior through and through. "Kane," she whispered. Wondering why she was so drawn to this brother.

Brenden gave her a weary glance. "Yes, Kane. He's the oldest and the meanest. It's said his only weakness is his brothers. He almost died, saving Rafe."

She leaned in closer to the screen, taking in the high cut of his cheekbones and full sensual lips. What would it be like to kiss him? Did he like it slow and easy or hard and demanding? Intrigued, she reached out and traced the image of him, stopping only when she caught Brenden's frown. She snatched her hand back, shocked at her own behavior. With a fake smile, she tried to recover her wits and act unaffected.

"Mean is good," she replied briskly. "That's what we need if we want to succeed."

"How do we know we can even trust them? If only half of what is said about them is true, then they are worse than anything Hell ever spawned."

"We don't have to trust them, we just have to

use them."

"I don't see why it has to be you who goes to find them. Why can't Jonas go?" He tapped another button on his keypad and a picture of an old run down house came up on the screen.

"If Jonas goes, they'll perceive him as a threat right away and attack. Hopefully, they'll just see me as some small female and give me a chance to talk to them before they go into defense mode."

Brenden grunted his disagreement before he pointed back to his monitor. "This piece of shit is where they're living. It's the three of them and the werewolf."

Great, nothing like adding another species into the mix to liven things up. That wolf might present a problem and she didn't like problems. Still, she'd never backed down from a challenge before and she wasn't going to start now. She'd just bring her supply of Scooby Snacks.

Brenden looked down at his hands curled up on the keyboard in tense fists. "At least let me come with you."

"You know I can't do that," she said gently, not wanting to hurt his already battered ego. "They would recognize you as a male vampire and try to take you out."

"I'm not some weak, helpless fledgling anymore. I've been training with Jonas every day and I've been vampire for a year now," he argued.

"I know you have and Jonas says you're a quick study, too. It's just that you're still getting used to your new abilities and gifts. A year is not that long." Her bottom lip quivered as she remembered the night he'd been turned. Of how they'd tied her to a chair and forced her to watch as they dragged him in and converted him. How they had left him half way through the conversion and she had been forced to use her own blood to save his life, but at the same time bring him into this nightmare world. It was always painful when one went through the transformation and she still woke up at night, Brenden's screams of agony echoing through her mind.

"You need to stop blaming yourself." Brenden gave her a knowing look. "It's not your fault that they did this to me. So you don't need to go off on some dangerous mission to try and make it right."

"It is my fault," she argued breathlessly. "By having Corbin in my life, I brought him into yours. He knew the way to destroy me was to hurt you. My love for you was your undoing."

"I'm glad he did it. Because of it, I have you in my life and I wouldn't trade that for anything."

Gods, she wanted to believe those words, but how could she? Their clan were all refugees and in a constant battle to stay alive, having to watch their backs at all times because an attack could come at any moment. And it wasn't just the Pure

Ones they had to worry about. There were human hunters, witches, fairies and countless other creatures who would love nothing more than to add a vampire kill to their collection.

Brenden started to tap a pen nervously against the side of the table, almost like he could hear her thoughts, which was impossible. Only Pure vampires had the ability to read minds and communicate telepathically. He finally blurted, "I talked to Jonas and if you don't come back in the allotted time, we're both coming to get you. That's the only reason I agreed to let you go on this crazy mission of yours."

Toni tried hard not to roll her eyes. If there was any more testosterone thrown her way, she was going to start gagging. "I can take care of myself. I did just fine before you two."

Brenden spun in his chair and she was taken aback by the expression on his face. His eyes were glazed with fury and the lines along his jaw were more pronounced as his fangs grew longer with aggression. "You didn't do *fine*. That's just it. That fucker Corbin abused you in every way possible and I don't want to see you get hurt ever again."

Toni felt as if she'd been sucker punched in the gut as she tried to process the knowledge that her brother knew the truth about her past with Corbin. She'd deliberately kept the gory details from him, but he'd obviously found out somehow.

It had triggered the protective, predator side of him, which was the last thing she needed right now. She had to find a way to calm fang boy down and quickly. "The Torens are different than Corbin." She placed a comforting hand on his shoulder. His fury was so potent she felt him shaking. "They have a reputation of being honorable. They won't hurt me."

Brenden shrugged off her hand, refusing to be placated. "I've heard the rumors about them. They say the true reason the brothers were arrested and sent to prison wasn't because they failed to protect that human family."

Toni tried hard to ignore the nervous gallop of her heart. "What was the reason then?"

"It's said they were the ones who actually did the killing. The story goes the brothers were caught up in a blood lust and they went into that house and slaughtered the family one by one. When the VRF caught up with them I guess they were covered in human blood."

With a gasp, Toni brought her hand to her mouth. One of the reasons she wanted to bring in the Torens was because they were at one time the most skilled warriors in the VRF. What if they had given into their dark side so much they had turned feral killers? What if they were still that way? She could be walking right into a monster's den.

Glancing up again at Kane's picture, she tried to find her answers there. His menacing glare seemed to jump off the screen and into her soul. A shiver danced down her spine as she thought of seeing him in person. She had seen him only once before, when she'd been helping question a convict at the prison. She'd passed his cell, but hadn't gotten a good look at him. He'd sat on a corner of his bunk, deep in the shadows. She'd felt his presence though, a heavy, dangerous aura that excited her. That feeling came back as she stared at his image.

"A day," Brenden snapped. "That's all Jonas and I are giving you. If you're gone one second longer I'm coming in, and I don't care how badass these brothers are supposed to be."

CHAPTER THREE

“I would have thought our job last night would have paid us enough to buy a better brand of beer,” Dante bitched as he stared into the open gut of the fridge.

Kane didn’t even bother to look up from the stack of bills he was sorting through. “What the hell do you care? Aren’t you going out to the bar with Markus?”

Dante snorted as he shut the door, then threw himself in the chair next to Kane. “That doesn’t mean I don’t want to start my buzz before we go.”

“With as much as you drink, there’s not enough beer on the planet.”

Before Dante could fire back a comment, the front door opened and Markus came strolling into the kitchen. Dante couldn’t help but gape at what the Drone vampire was wearing. Usually their upper class friend wouldn’t be caught dead in anything less than top line clothing, but tonight he was clad in head to toe leather. Completing the

look was a pair of dark sunglasses that hid his brown eyes. His short blond hair, usually worn in soft waves, was slicked back.

For the first time, Kane noticed Dante was dressed in leather, too, complete with a black duster that reached the ground. "What kind of club are you going to?" Kane asked as images of Markus taking a whip to Dante popped into his head. *Ewww!*

"It's our regular place, they're just having a costume party tonight," Dante supplied, acting as though he was talking to a confused child.

"We're going as vampires," Markus added eagerly as he grabbed a cookie from the jar and broke it in half.

"Why are they having a costume party?"

Dante rolled his eyes. "Because it's Halloween tomorrow. Remember?"

"Who could blame him for not remembering holidays," Markus quipped to Dante, acting like Kane was no longer in the room. "If I lived in a pit like this, I wouldn't feel up to carving pumpkins and trick or treating either. I really wish you guys would just come live with me. My house is huge, there's plenty of room. Hell, I'll even let you bring Ozzie if you promise that he's housebroken."

Before Kane could even open his mouth to revisit this argument, Dante beat him to it.

"We appreciate the offer, but we're doing fine

on our own. This place isn't as bad as it looks, although if you want to bring me some decent beer next time you come, I won't argue."

Markus shook his head. "You Torens and your damn pride."

"You love us and you know it," Dante replied with a crooked smile. "I'm going to go wake up Rafe and make him come with us. He needs to get his grumpy ass out of the house."

After Dante left, Markus gave Kane a worried frown. "Rafe's still sleeping? So I take it he isn't feeding yet."

"No, and I'm really starting to get concerned," Kane admitted. Before they'd become reacquainted with Markus in prison, the brothers had known the Drone for almost a century so he felt comfortable enough to voice his worries to him.

"Hopefully, we'll be able to help him out with that then." Markus finished off the cookie and leaned against the counter. "Where's Ozzie?"

"He went to visit his family."

Markus gave that frown again. "Are you sure you don't want to come to the club with us? You're going to be home alone."

"I'm not a ten-year-old kid," Kane drawled. "I think I'll be okay. I'm looking forward to a night of peace and quiet."

"Fine, if you change your mind, you know

where to find us.”

“I won’t.” Kane turned his attention back to the pile of bills. “I’m looking forward to an evening without any excitement.”

* * * *

Toni shifted her weight as another cramp crept up her thighs. She had been crouched in the bushes like some kind of Peeping Tom for over two hours, keeping a close watch on the Toren house. The only action had been when a blond male entered a half hour after the werewolf stumbled out. The furball had been wearing a tacky shirt so obscene it made her blush. Other than that, it was quiet.

Movement from the house brought her alert. When she saw three of the males walking out the front door, she panicked at first, thinking the brothers were leaving and she had missed her chance. A wave of relief washed through her when she realized it was only two of the brothers with the blond she’d spotted ago. Good, she could approach just one of them and plead her case. Then when they got closer, her throat seized. It was the two younger ones. That meant she would have to approach Kane. The mean looking one. The scary one. The incredibly handsome one. Face to face, without any buffers.

She passed the next hour silently debating and mulling over the best way to plead her case. Her mind went back to the one time she had seen him, three years ago at the paranormal prison.

The night was gloomy and dark, but then all nights were if you were a vampire as far as she was concerned. Corbin was there to interrogate a prisoner and he had forced Toni to go with him. He'd claimed it was for company, but she had known better. Her lip curled in disgust. At that time she had been one of Corbin's top assassins, despite the fact she was a mere Drone. Corbin knew most of the prisoners had a grudge against him and would love to rip him apart. The chicken shit bastard had brought Toni along to protect his miserable hide.

Little did he know she was the biggest threat.

She was following closely behind, all the while thinking how easy it would be to grab her dagger and plunge it between his shoulder blades. Sure, the act would make her a permanent resident of this prison, but it would be a step up from the one she was currently in with Corbin as her sire.

She was so caught up in her homicidal thoughts that when Corbin stopped and turned to her, she took an involuntary step back. The vampire gave her a smug smile. God, how she hated it when he did that. Just once she would love to wipe it off his face. Even in those rank conditions he was dressed

like a politician, complete with dark suit and matching tie. His blond hair was immaculately styled, not even one strand strayed out of place. The only thing showing his true nature was his glare. The ice-cold blue eyes were awash with cruelty.

“Guess who’s in this cell?” He jerked his thumb toward a dark cave with rusted metal bars.

With a repressed grimace she plastered on what she hoped was an interested look. If she didn’t act like she hung on every word her sire spoke, there would be a punishment later and her body still ached everywhere from the last one. “Who?” she asked, taking care to add a dash of submission to her tone of voice.

“It’s the oldest Toren brother, Kane.” The smirk grew wider.

A ripple of real interest finally went through her. She had only been a vampire a couple of years at that point, but she’d still heard tales of the Torens. In the battle classes she took, they still taught tactics that had been crafted by the trio. Every soldier wanted to be like them, though none wanted to end up like them.

Unable to resist, Toni moved closer to the dank cell. She peered in, but saw only darkness. Somehow she knew he was there though. She could sense him, lurking in one of the far corners, staring at her. The hairs on her neck stood up as

she felt his gaze burning into her. Strangely drawn to his essence, she curled her fingers around the cold bars and pressed her face closer. A strange yearning shot through her body. *Just one glimpse, then my curiosity would be satisfied.*

Deep inside the cell, there was the sound of dirt shifting under someone's feet. Almost like he was trying to get closer to her, too. Her heart thumped in excitement. Suddenly, her supersensitive vampire hearing picked up the rhythmic rasping noise Kane made as he breathed. Was it her imagination or had it quickened to match her own breaths?

An iron grip enclosed her shoulder from behind, shocking her back into awareness. "I wouldn't get too close," Corbin's voice sounded calm enough, but Toni knew he was pissed. "Kane has already killed countless vampires and humans. I would hate to lose a valuable soldier."

His grabbed her right shoulder tighter, squeezing until the pain almost drove her to her knees. Toni bit the inside of her cheek to hold back a pitiful cry. "Sorry, Corbin. I was just trying to get a closer look at the garbage."

Corbin shifted his hold from her shoulder to the back of her neck and her skin prickled, repulsed by his touch. The only warning she got was a slight growl before he slammed her into the bars. Her head banged painfully against the iron as she

saw stars. With another growl, he pulled back and shoved her violently forward again. The friction of metal against the black leather pantsuit she wore made a squeaking noise and a cut on her scalp started to trickle blood.

Her natural instinct was to fight back, but she tapped it down. When Corbin got in this state, that only excited him more. Judging by the rock hard erection poking her back, he was already excited enough. Taking a deep breath, she willed herself to relax and allow him to manipulate her body. It was hard though, knowing Kane was watching. He probably thought she was Corbin's willing whore and that just wasn't true. She was never willing.

Giving her ponytail a jerk, he tilted her head back and exposed her neck. "When's the last time you had warm, fresh blood, Kane?" Corbin asked before he licked her throat.

As his slobber bathed her flesh, Toni barely suppressed a shudder as her stomach knotted up. The cold steel bit into her fingers as she gripped the bars in order to repress her natural fight or flight instincts. She hardly flinched when Corbin sank his fangs into her and started to feed. She tried to will herself into the numb state she always retreated to when Corbin used her body, but it was useless. For some reason, Kane being there made everything worse.

Even though she still couldn't see Kane through the darkness, she could feel the hatred emanating from him. It was rolling off him in thick suffocating waves. That alone was enough to break her just a small bit, a mere crack in her emotional wall.

One single tear streaked down her cheek.

A car driving by snapped her back to the present. Toni growled, angry at herself for letting the past affect her concentration on the present mission. So what that the only other time she'd seen Kane he'd affected her so much. He probably didn't even remember her. She could walk by him on a crowded street and he wouldn't even glance at her.

"Just walk up to door and knock," she said aloud. "You're not getting anywhere sitting in the bushes, worrying. You won't ever know if Kane will help unless you ask him." Great, now she was reduced to talking to herself and giving her own pep talks. That was one step closer to the rubber room and straightjackets. Next she would be running around, talking about her *precious*.

As soon as she stood, her unused muscles screamed in protest. Ignoring the pain, she started walking to the battered front door. With each step she took, the urge to forget the whole thing and turn tail and run grew stronger. Then she thought

of Brenden and how the Torens would help her get revenge. Her resolve to obtain their help strengthened. Once she reached the door, she only hesitated a moment before raising a shaky hand to knock.

A few seconds later, the door swung open as Kane answered it. The first thing she noticed was the dagger he held in his hand. The second thing was his menacing glare. It was ten times scarier in person than it had been on the computer. Before she had a chance to say anything, his eyes narrowed and a disgusted look appeared over his face.

“You? What in the hell could Corbin’s pet possibly want from me?”

Okay, so she had been wrong. He did recognize her and she obviously had not made a great first impression.

He raised his hand holding the dagger and attacked.

CHAPTER FOUR

“How can you sit idly and do nothing?” Markus belted back a shot of whiskey and tried hard to keep his annoyance off his face. The last thing he needed was to run into a Drone radical tonight and yet that’s exactly what happened. The idiot had spotted him sitting in the corner of the nightclub and had been spending the better part of an hour trying to make him *see the light*. Rafe who sat to his left ignored the male, while Dante was off doing what Dante did best. So lucky duck that Markus was, the male had him all to himself.

“It’s not my fight.” Markus signaled for the waitress to bring him another round.

“Not your fight?” the male echoed, incredulous. He was a young, with dark hair and seemed so eager to take up the cause. Even in the middle of a sea of humans, he was wearing the black uniform the Drone rebels had adopted. “Last time I checked you were still a Drone like me.” He cast a jaded look at Rafe. “Unless you’ve been hanging

out with Pure Ones for so long you actually think you're one of them."

"Let's get one thing clear, kid." Markus leaned forward and barred his fangs. "I know who I am and I'm not cozy with the Pure Ones, they put me in prison in case you forgot." The kid gave a pointed look at Rafe, so Markus added, "You'd better watch your attitude. I would give my life for this vampire here and I won't take you treating him with disrespect."

"Fine," the young vampire bit out, showing a flash of fang. "That still doesn't mean you shouldn't help you own kind."

"If you're looking for cash, you can forget it. The VRF took most of what I owned as restitution."

"We don't want your money." The vampire looked around to make sure nobody was listening. "You're one of the oldest of our kind and you have a lot of influence with the other elders. We need their support in this war if we're ever going to have to chance to win."

"War?" Markus let out a harsh laugh. "Since when has there been a war? Last time I heard, it was just your small pocket of Drones that revolted, then ran here to hide behind the werewolves' tails. The rest of the Drone community is content with the way things are."

"How can they be content? The VRF has

sanctioned where we can live, what jobs we can take and even who we can feed off. They've forcibly sterilized some of our females because they don't want us to breed."

"So what?" Markus replied darkly. "That stuff has been going on for decades. After a while you get used to it."

"You really don't get it, do you?" The vampire slammed his hand down on the table. "There've been rumors."

"What kind of rumors?"

The waitress came over and set down his drink and there was a moment of silence until she left.

"I've heard from a source outside the city. He says they've been taking away whole clans of Drones."

"Taking them where?" The hairs on the back of Markus's neck stood on end.

"Nobody knows and the Drones have never been heard from again."

"That can't be right." Markus gave a slight shake of his head. "Placing restrictions on us is one thing, slaughtering entire Drone clans is another. Not even the VRF would go that far."

"Yes, they would," Rafe replied.

Markus jumped, he'd almost forgotten his friend was still there. He waited for Rafe to expound on his statement, but the vampire went back to looking down at the table and didn't say

anything further.

"You need to listen to your Pure friend here." The Drone got to his feet. "You know where to find me when you come to your senses."

Markus watched him leave, a frown on his face. Arguing with the idiot had left him with a massive headache. The hard rock music at the nightclub was so loud he felt like his head was about to split into half, the drums seemed to be pounding inside his skull. He downed another shot of whiskey, hoping to self-medicate it away, even though it continued to grow by the minute.

After the bizarre conversation with the Drone, Markus was struck by a wave of trepidation. Not that he believed for a second the VRF was actually exterminating whole clans. The kid was just so caught up in his beliefs he was willing to listen to anything. Still, it wouldn't hurt for him to get in touch with some of his old contacts and check out the story, just to be sure.

Rafe didn't seem to want to talk about the conversation, but then Rafe never wanted to talk about anything. Even Barbara Walters couldn't have gotten the vampire to open up. Not that Markus blamed him for being moody, if he had gone through half the crap Rafe had, he would probably be a bit cranky himself.

He was worried though. Ever since he'd become reacquainted with the Torens two years

ago when they literally saved his back at the paranormal prison, Markus had felt a kinship to them. One that was stronger than what he'd ever felt for his human family. So it was hard for him to see the vampire let himself deteriorate. Even with the clubs poor lighting, he could still see how pale and sickly Rafe was. Crap, in the short time since they left the house, it seemed like he'd gotten worse. A fine sheen of sweat dotted his forehead and, whenever he picked up his drink, Markus could detect the tremor in the other male's hands.

"There's another vampire here. It's a female this time," Rafe said in that gravely, underused voice of his.

Not surprised Rafe had picked up the scent of another of their kind before he had, Markus opened up his own senses. After a few seconds, he was able to detect the dark, musky scent many of their females gave off. Turning his gaze in that direction, he picked out a petite blonde from the crowd.

She smiled at him, showing she knew what they were and she approved. He smiled back, letting his gaze linger over her curves, showing he approved, too. She made her way toward him, moving in that sexy way all female vampires seemed to excel at. The costume she had chosen was appropriate. It was a dark red, tight-fitting devil get up that showed more flesh than fabric.

A tiny pair of plastic horns, poked out from her mane of hair—hair that was messed up just enough to conjure images of what it would look like wrapped around his fist as he took her from behind.

Almost as if reading his thoughts, she ran her tongue over her crimson lips, showing just the briefest bit of fang in the process. His cock grew hard as he imagined that mouth caressing him in all the right places. She was only a few feet from him now and the view was only getting better. Her hips swayed sensually and the top of her costume hitched up, giving him glimpses of the creamy white flesh underneath. A low hiss came from him as his canines grew in blood lust.

The vampiress finally reached their table and, since Rafe wasn't bothering to spare her a second glance, she didn't give him one either. Her blue eyes never looked away from Markus. The smell of her arousal reached him and he inhaled deeply. Rafe had to smell it, too, but he still didn't show any reaction. That didn't surprise Markus, the brother was an empty vacuum when it came to showing any other emotion beside gloom.

"Get a girl a drink?" she asked. To any of the humans standing around, the question would seem innocuous.

"Fuck, yes," Markus replied.

She tilted her head to one of the back bathrooms.

Markus got up and took her hand. As they were leaving, he tossed over his shoulder, "I'll be right back."

"I don't need a nanny," Rafe replied, never looking up.

Markus took charge, leading the female through the congested dance floor and to the hallway, which led to the private bathrooms. He dashed into the closest one. Before he could get the door completely shut, she was on him like a cat in heat. Holy hell, she even purred like a kitten as she nuzzled him. There was a scrape of fang against his neck before her hand reached down to cup him through his pants.

Then an image of Rafe sitting in the booth looking sick and pasty, flashed through his mind. Rafe who was blood starved and wouldn't bother to go and get his own female. Rafe who had saved his ass countless times in prison.

Fuck! He wanted this so bad, but his friend needed it more and he would do anything for Rafe. Even this. It was going to hurt though. "I have a present for you," he rumbled into her ear.

When he led her out of the bathroom, her brow wrinkled in confusion, but she followed. Once they reached the edge of the hallway, he stopped where they could view the crowd and still enjoy the privacy the darkness afforded. Markus tucked her close to his chest so they were both facing

forward and wrapped his arms around her bare ribcage just below her full breasts, which were covered by a mere scrap of fabric. She arched forward, silently asking him to move his hands up in order to cup, tease and pinch those nipples he could see straining against the fabric. He resisted, though his cock screamed in protest. "Do you see the vampire that was sitting with me?" He ran his tongue up the thin column of her neck. The satin flesh tasted of smoke and arousal.

A soft moan slipped through her full lips. "Yes, the quiet one. He wouldn't even look at me."

"Do you know what he is?" With his right fang, he pricked her skin and sucked up the small drop of blood that came forth. It wasn't enough to really taste her, but it would heighten her arousal and prime her for Rafe.

"He's scary." Her voice grew even huskier and his cock jerked.

Down boy, this is for Rafe. "He's of pure blood." Slowly, he trailed his finger down her arm and caressed the D on her flesh in slow lazy circles. Markus had one just like it on his arm. Darting his tongue out, he licked her smooth skin before rubbing her mark again. A shudder went through her slender body. He could smell her arousal and knew she was wet and so ready to be fucked.

"He would taste good," she admitted, never looking away from Rafe. "I like how he's dark and

dangerous. Would he hurt me?"

"No, he's one of the good guys. Just do me a favor, make sure he feeds off you."

"I noticed he looked hungry."

Her hips undulated as she thrust her ass against his cock, but Markus knew her desire was now directed toward Rafe. *Mission accomplished, Rafe so owes me for this one.* "Yes, he needs someone to take care of him. He hasn't enjoyed someone as beautiful as you in a long time." All females loved to play nurse and take care of sad little puppies like Rafe, no matter what species they were. "Will you do it?"

A small whimper told him his answer. Oh yeah, she would take care of him and she would love every second of it. She rubbed herself against him again. "Are you going to play, too?"

It was so tempting, but Rafe had never been one for group projects. "I would love to, but he needs all your attention, sweetheart. Now, go to him," he whispered hoarsely. "He may play hard to get so don't take no for an answer." He gave her a gentle nudge watching with a twinge of regret as she made her way toward Rafe, that seductive swing back in her hips. Markus turned away, unable to look at the blatant sexuality. As a human, an unanswered hard-on had been painful. After he'd been turned, it was agony. A red haze began to obscure his vision as his blood lust grew. With a

low groan, he looked down, his forehead pressed against the wall as he tried to get in control of his raging hormones.

"I saw what you just did for Rafe."

Markus glanced up and to see Dante leaning against the entry of the hallway. The vampire was in the shadows so Markus couldn't tell if he was angry or not, but the gratitude in his voice was evident. "It was nothing," Markus rasped. "He would have done the same thing for me."

"Yes, he would have. But that was still good of you. I was getting something for him, too, but it would have been human and he needs to be with one of our kind. Our blood is better for him." Dante looked over his shoulder and motioned someone forward with his hand. Two beautiful human females came and stood on either side of him, one brunette, one blonde, both of them dressed as French Maids, complete with black fishnets and stiletto heels.

They wrapped their bodies around Dante and looked at Markus, interest in the overly made up faces. Dante rubbed the brunette's ass before flashing a devilish grin, not even bothering to hide his fangs since the humans thought it was part of his Halloween costume. "Since you shared with Rafe, I think it's only fair that I share with you."

CHAPTER FIVE

Kane was shocked as he was quickly introduced to Toni's exemplary fighting skills. He was barely able to duck the roundhouse kick aimed at his head before sweeping out his foot, taking out her legs. The move backfired when she used the momentum to do a neat back flip. With cat like agility, she landed on her feet while at the same time she reaching behind her and pulled a twin set of daggers out of the back of her waistband.

"I just want to talk to you," her voice wasn't even winded. She was a fit little assassin. The air whistled as she expertly spun the weapons, the streetlight reflecting off the steel and adding brief highlights to her rounded cheekbones.

"You can go back to Corbin and tell him that I don't feel like chit-chatting." This time it was he who had to twist out of the way as she brought one dagger upward. A ripping sound told him she'd cut his favorite shirt, right before a warm sticky sensation announced she'd drawn blood.

"I don't work for Corbin anymore, you jackass."

With a graceful yet deathly flip of her wrist, she brought the other dagger around, but this time he was ready. Like a whip, his hand lashed out and grabbed her arm. One twist stopped her assault. Another brought forth a gasp of pain from her lush lips. A third trapped her against his chest. He hoisted her up to make escape more difficult and she slid down his front over his cock. Kane sucked in a breath as his body went on high alert. Her back and ass seemed to mold into him, she struggled and he tightened his hold. With a roar of anger, she started to fight harder and harder, but she couldn't escape him. Again her ass made contact, brushing against his cock.

He briefly closed his eyes and fought for control as unwanted desire ripped through him. The last thing he needed was to get a hard-on over one of Corbin's assassins. It was useless, however. His mind was locked on how tight her body was and the way she'd moved during the battle. The skill alone made him hot. Add that to the way her muscles had rippled under her lush curves, he was in a near blood lust over her. The only consolation was the smell of her arousal broadcasting his affect on her as well. He couldn't see her expression because she was facing away. But he was willing to bet her face was bright red

with anger, she was shaking from it.

Yes, trembling with anger, not fear. He knew it was anger because if she was afraid, he would've been able to feel it from her. Now that was interesting, most of his opponents were begging for their lives by now. Up close, he noticed she smelled like fresh cut flowers. The top of her head just reached his chin, her hair felt like silk against his face and he had to resist the stupid urge to lay his cheek on it and rub against it.

"I need you to listen to me." She panted and each breath she took made the bottom of her breasts brush against him arm.

Yeah, and I need her in my bed and me between her thighs. It appeared that neither one of them was getting what they wanted. "I don't have to do anything for you, least of all sit around and have a heart-to-heart talk. If you leave now, maybe I'll forget you cut me."

She sniffed the air delicately. A low moan rippled through her soft body and told him she'd picked up the scent of his blood—and she liked it. Unbidden, an image of her from that time in the prison popped into his head. When he'd first seen her, he'd thought she'd been an angel sent from Heaven. Radiant blonde hair, complete with lush lips and the softest set of blue eyes he'd ever seen. Her hair was pulled back in a tight ponytail as it had been then, but he was willing to bet it reached

her waist.

His cock grew even harder as he imagined her naked, the only covering, those unbound golden locks. She had to feel his erection pressed into her, but she didn't struggle in his hold, if anything, she melted a bit into him. He had to bite back a moan of his own. The way she'd battled against him was so skilled, so deadly, so damned sexy. No female had ever turned him on this much. Was it possible she was as turned on as him or was it wishful thinking on his part? Maybe he'd just imagined the smell of her desire.

"Please, Kane." There was no mistaking the husky edge to her voice. Oh yeah, she was aroused too. "I need your help."

"In case you missed the memo, I'm not in the position to help anybody."

"You're wrong. With your battle expertise, you could help not only me, but my clan."

The curve of her ass brushed against his erection and a small hiss escaped despite his best efforts to hold it in. He noticed for the first time she wasn't dressed in the uniform of the VRF, but was instead in a pair of black cargo pants and a matching long sleeved t-shirt. Kane knew there was a rebel clan of Drone vampire that had taken refuge in the werewolf-controlled Detroit. Could it be possible she was telling the truth? Had she really left Corbin and was now playing for the

good guys? "What happened, did Corbin throw you out because he found someone better looking?" he asked, though he couldn't imagine anyone more alluring than her.

"No, he tried to kill me when he found out I betrayed him. First though, he brought in my brother, whom I hadn't seen in ten years, and turned him. I had to sit there and listen to Brenden's screams as he went through the painful transformation."

Kane found himself softening to her. That day at the prison she'd cried. It was only one tear, but it had haunted him all this time. That and the forlorn look on her face as Corbin pushed her against the bars. It was if she'd given up all hope to live and he had instantly been drawn to her suffering. The final years in prison he'd dreamed of her almost every night. He heard Corbin say her name and Kane often woke up murmuring it. He'd clung to the memory of her blonde beauty for the rest of his sentence, and knew it had helped him keep his sanity.

He winced in shame, yet he'd attacked her today without even bothering to see what she'd come for. The instant he'd seen her, he'd just assumed the VRF leader had sent her to kill him. Of course, Kane hadn't really fought full out with her. A small part of him had held back and that was why he was presently bleeding. He held her

tightly to him, refusing to break contact with her as he wondered why she'd sought him out now that she was free from Corbin.

It was obvious Corbin hadn't been kind to her. He thought of the hell she must have endured, watching her brother's turning. He knew exactly how it was to listen to a brother screaming and be helpless to do anything about it. Part of him wondered if this was some trap set up by Corbin, but he immediately dismissed it. Which was stupid if he stopped thinking with his cock long enough. A part of him knew the bastard was far from done with the Toren brothers. Yet, his heart told him Toni was telling the truth.

For someone so deadly, she was a petite thing. He could feel the highly tone muscles under her soft curves, the contrast reminded him of her persona. Soft, yet lethal. The soft side he'd seen when she spoke of her brother, the lethal he was still bleeding from. He kept a tight hold on her, but spun her around so she was facing him.

"Don't you want to make Corbin pay for what he did to you and your brothers?" she asked.

Her breath fluttered against his throat and it was all he could do not to beg her to bite him. "I suppose you're going to say you can help me with that?" Their lips were inches apart, just a whisper away.

"My clan is several soldiers strong. They're

good fighters, every last one of them, but they don't have inside knowledge of vampire battle tactics. I've been able to show them some, but I don't know as much as you do."

"Look, female, I just got out of prison and it wasn't exactly fun. The last thing I want to do is end up back there. Training a group of rebel Drones is a surefire way to do that."

A flare of anger lit her eyes. "So you are just going to hide away and let him win?"

He could hear her heart rate pick up as her anger increased and suddenly remembered how long it'd been since he'd fed. All of his attention had been directed toward his brothers so Kane hadn't thought to take time out for his own needs. He decided then he was going to take this female. Something was still nagging at him though and he needed it answered first. "That day in the prison, when Corbin drank from you, I saw you were crying. Why?"

Her brow wrinkled in surprise at the abrupt change of subjects. "What does that have to do with anything?"

Her tone was guarded, he must have touched a nerve. "I need to know you weren't with him willingly."

"Why should that matter to you?"

"It does. It matters to me."

Several tense seconds passed before she

admitted in a harsh whisper, "I did what I had to do to survive."

He'd thought that those words would bring him a measure of relief, but he'd been wrong. Instead he saw red. Corbin had forced her against her will and knowing the bastard, he hadn't been gentle about it either. He pulled back, surprised. Since when had he become so overprotective? They had been trying to kill each other a few minutes ago and now he felt like he would kill anyone who hurt her.

Before he knew what he was doing, he brought his hand up to cup her cheek. Part of him expected her to shrink away, but she didn't. With a small sigh, she closed her eyes and seemed to savor his touch.

Kane knew he should pull away. She was a virtual stranger to him and she'd once worked for his archenemy. But it was an impossible feat. Every time he touched her, he found he just wanted to touch her more. He did know one thing, he wasn't going back into the house alone and it wasn't so they could talk.

"I haven't been with anyone but Corbin," she whispered as her dark lashes fluttered open, revealing eyes smoky with desire. She'd obviously realized they were about to get to know each other real well, too.

"It's not important." He feathered his thumb

over her bottom lip, curious to see how it felt. *Soft, hot and prime for kissing.*

She grabbed his wrist and looked up at him, crystal tears pooling in her eyes. "It's important to me."

He brought up his other hand to cup the other cheek, framing her face. "I believe you." He did, too, though he knew he was six times a fool for trusting anyone again.

"You should know before we start, I'm a Drone. I know some Pure Ones don't like being with my kind."

"That sort of thing never bothered me." He brushed his lips lightly to hers before pulling back, teasing both of them. "When I look at you, all I see is a beautiful female. One who is so alluring that if I don't get my fangs into you quickly, I'll die."

Those must have been the right words because she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him passionately, claiming him with animalistic fervor. A possessive growl came from his chest as he wrapped his arms around her waist and brought her in even closer. This was heaven, her sweet mouth was everything he could have asked for. Timid at first, she quickly got caught up in the passion of the moment. Her tongue met his, sweeping, exploring, demanding. When she pulled her mouth away, he almost yelled in protest. Then she started to kiss his neck and he

moaned in appreciation instead. She licked his flesh, her tongue leaving a hot, velvet path with each pass. The anticipation grew with each caress. He'd never wanted to be bitten so badly in his entire life. "Drink from me." He noticed there was a slight tremor in his voice.

"We're right in the middle of your front yard," she argued, even as she took a bit of skin between her teeth and nibbled lightly.

"No one will notice in this neighborhood." He cupped the back of her head, urged her even more.

But she didn't need any more encouragement. With a small hiss, she sank her fangs into his jugular and started to take in deep, hard drags. Desire shot threw his body, like someone had injected it into his veins. Letting out a hoarse cry, he grabbed her by her ass and lifted her up. Never taking her mouth from his neck, she wrapped her legs around his waist.

He carried her to the house, slamming the door shut behind them.

CHAPTER SIX

Markus had developed a new motto. *All sex is good, even if it's done in the cramped backseat of a car with a female whose name he didn't know.* He'd chosen the brunette and he presently had her legs wrapped around his waist, hips tilted up to accept his thrusts. Her head was pressing into the side armrest, but she wasn't complaining. Soft moans, perfectly timed to his thrusts, erupted from her lips. While she was completely nude, he'd only lowered his pants down enough to get business taken care of.

The channel of her vagina squeezed his cock as she came. Always the gentleman, he bit her neck so her orgasm was more intense. Already she had two sets of puncture marks on her milky white skin. Markus had been careful to keep her in a sexual haze so she didn't realize his love nips were real actual bites. When it was all over, he would lick the wounds so they healed and Dante would use his physic skills to erase their memories of

tonight.

A scream of pleasure ripped from the front seat and Markus couldn't help but look up toward its direction. The blonde was sitting in Dante's lap her face toward him as she rode the vampire. Her gaze was full of desire and adoration, but Dante wasn't watching her. He was too busy looking into the review mirror he'd slanted so he could watch the action going on in the backseat.

Markus felt his cheeks grow hot when he'd realized Dante was getting off on watching him fuck. That still didn't stop Markus from thrusting into the human though. If Dante wanted to watch, so be it. Who was he to judge? Markus had a little voyeur steak in him so it was kind of nice knowing his friend was looking.

Really, Markus shouldn't be surprised. For as long as he'd known Dante, the vampire's sexual preferences had always run on the unconventional side. The brunette started screaming as she came for a second time and this time, Markus let down his wall of control and joined her, throwing back his head as his seed pumped inside her. Since vampires, weren't susceptible to human diseases and they couldn't get human pregnant, he didn't have to bother with a condom. So it was pure skin-on-skin contact.

The screaming from the front seat grew even louder. Unable to resist, Markus looked up again

so he could see the show. The blonde was riding Dante so hard her full breasts were bouncing. The vampire latched onto one of the nipples and started to suck. After a few seconds, he let go and started to lick the valley of her cleavage. Markus watched mesmerized as Dante flashed his fangs and bit her on the inside of one of her breasts.

He must not have been too hungry because he lifted his head after only a few seconds. Meeting Markus's look in the mirror, Dante smiled, showing off blood covered teeth. Eyes locked, Markus found himself unwilling to look away from his friend's sensual gaze as the blonde brought her and Dante to completion. The entire time, Dante never looked away from the mirror and, to Markus's shock, he could feel himself getting hard again. But it wasn't for any of the females.

The blonde sagged against Dante's chest, panting. Dante turned and flashed another wolfish grin. "You want to trade?"

Markus's heart thumped at the thought of being with Dante. Then he realized the vampire was talking about swapping females. *Shit, where did this attraction come from? I usually prefer females and it's never been that way with Dante.*

"Do you want to trade chicks?" Dante persisted.

Markus nodded dumbly and the females

switched places, doing acrobatic-like moves over the seats, flashing interesting places. The blonde settled on his lap, in the same position she'd been with Dante. As she lowered herself, she guided his cock into her moist heat. His nostrils flared as he detected Dante's scent all over the blonde's flesh.

The blonde started to ride him in a slow, gentle rhythm. Markus closed his eyes and let himself get lost in the passion. All the while trying not to think about what Dante was doing just feet away from him.

* * * *

As soon as Kane shut the door behind them, Toni knew she had gone to the point of no return. She was going to make love to a vampire she'd just met. One who was dangerous, and if rumors were to be believed, a possible killer. Sweeping her tongue over the pinpricks on his neck, she lifted her head so she could look him fully in the face. The pure desire she saw there made shivers of anticipation dance down her spine. The lines on his face were more pronounced, making him look handsome and dangerous at the same time. His blue eyes were dark with passion and his lips a bit swollen from their earlier kisses.

He let her legs go and, as soon as her feet touched the ground, he pulled off her shirt and

tossed it to the side. She took off his in return, flinching when she saw the bleeding cut that she'd left behind. "I'm sorry," she whispered as she reached out to touch it.

"Don't be. I've had worse." He closed his eyes and a peaceful look went over his face.

It seemed he desired her caress as much as she did his. *Niiice* A thin ribbon of blood was still flowing from the wound. She leaned forward and lapped it up like a hungry kitten going after cream. He moaned and held her close to him. Encouraged by his reaction, she allowed her hand to trail down to the fly of his jeans. With trembling fingers, she unbuttoned his waistband and pulled the zipper down. As soon as she was done, she slipped her hand in for some skin-to-skin contact.

He reacted as if she'd touched him with a hot iron, throwing his head back and groaning.

She ran her fingers over him again and couldn't help but smile.

He jacked his hip in response. "More, please," he begged, thickly.

So she gave him more. A drop of pre-cum was leaking from the tip of his massive erection so she used it to lubricate her path. Her mouth watered as she wondered how his cock would taste. After a few seconds, he stilled her hand and gave her a crooked smile.

"I don't want the first round to end too quick."

With expert fingers, he unclasped the front of her bra, sucking in a breath when she was bared to him. "I think you're the most beautiful thing I've ever seen." He dipped his head and took one of her nipples in his mouth, his soft lips sucked gently.

"Your brothers could come home at any moment," she protested even as she threaded her fingers through his inky dark hair and pulled him closer. "We should go to your bedroom."

"They won't come home until right before the sun comes out." He unzipped her pants and reached in to cup her. "Although, this would be nicer in a bed."

"Yes, yes, yes." She wasn't agreeing with what he'd said, she was chanting in pleasure because he'd just sunk a finger in her.

"Fuck, you're so tight and wet. I want to suck you dry and I don't mean your blood." With a primal growl, he jerked down her pants and underwear. As soon as she kicked them aside, he lifted her up and set her on the kitchen table. "Lie down and spread your legs for me."

Trembling with anticipation, she obeyed him. "Kane?" she questioned breathlessly.

"Trust me." He dropped to his knees so he was face level with her aching core. "Touch yourself." A velvet tongue caressed her clit. "Here, touch yourself here. I want to see you make yourself

come for me."

After a second of hesitation, she did as he asked, trailing her fingers down her stomach and to her clit. So aroused was she, as soon as she made contact, waves of pleasure washed over her. "Like this?"

"Yes. Now, stick one of your fingers inside. Fuck yourself for me."

A ripple of disappointment went through her. "Does that mean that you're not going to have sex with me?"

"Don't worry, I'm going to take you so many times you won't be able to see straight." He placed a feather-light kiss on her inner thigh. "I just want to watch you come first."

She slid one finger into her moist heat, never taking her gaze from him so she could see his reaction. A moan ripped through the room, but it was his not hers. At that moment, she became his slave, she would have done anything he asked. The pupils of his eyes flared with desire and his fangs grew so large they protruded from his mouth.

"That's it, baby, work it in and out," he encouraged and she obeyed, moving her finger in a slow easy rhythm.

When he dipped his head again, she fully expected to feel his mouth on her, but he licked the inside of her thigh again and again. She tensed

up, knowing what was going to happen next. Sure enough, with a soft hiss, he bit into her sensitive flesh. As soon as he started to take in her blood, a volcanic orgasm tore through her body. The table was hard against her back, but she barely noticed it as she arched up, offering up more of herself to him.

After he'd fed for several seconds, she nearly screamed, "Take off your clothes. I need you inside me now."

Before he stood up, he ran his tongue over the bite mark, stopping the blood flow. Once he had stripped off the rest of his clothes, she gazed at him, awed by his powerful build. She took in his strong, tan chest, then his taunt stomach, before stopping at his enormous erection. For a brief second, she worried he would hurt her when he took her he was so big. Then she noticed the tender, almost protective look in his eyes and she somehow knew he would never cause her any pain.

For the first time since she'd become a vampire, she felt safe.

He stood in between her thighs, leaving her on the table. Instinctively, she wrapped her legs around him, bringing his even closer. When the tip of his cock brushed against her opening, he hissed in pleasure. Yet he didn't answer her need.

"Are you sure that you really want this?" he

asked in a tight voice. His fangs were still long from blood lust and the lines on his face were more pronounced. "I don't want you to ever do something you don't want to again. I'll still see what I can do to help out your Drone clan, I promise."

"I've never wanted anything more in my life," she reassured him.

That was all he needed. Kane drove into her so hard the table scooted forward a few inches. He pulled back and slammed into her again and again. Taking the hand she used to pleasure herself with, he put her finger in his mouth and sucked it clean. "You taste so good. It's better than I ever dreamed of. I knew making love to you would be this good."

Making love. She doubted he even realized what he'd just said. Fucking was one thing, but making love meant there was a connection. Did she dare believe he really felt anything for her or was he just using her like Corbin had?

Pushing that worry aside for now, she squeezed her legs tighter around him so he was even deeper in her. The smell of woods, spices and male filled the air, mixing with the intoxicating scent of lovemaking. Sweat glistened over both of their bodies and she licked one salty drop off his shoulder.

Another orgasm started building up and she

screamed out his name as she came. At the exact same time, he moaned and released his seed in her. She tilted her hips in as she took everything he had to offer. As soon as he had finished, a panicked look came over his face. "I didn't use a condom. I can't get a human pregnant, but you I can."

She trailed her finger up and down his spine as she avoided his gaze so he wouldn't see the shame stamped in her eyes. "You don't have to worry. Corbin has all the Drone females that work with him sterilized. Once he heard Drones could give birth to vampires, he's been doing that." A bitter laugh erupted from her. "He doesn't want us tainting the Pure Ones precious bloodline."

"Toni, look at me," he demanded.

When she complied, she was surprised by the raw anger she saw there. His eyes were practically black and his fangs had elongated again, though this time it wasn't due to blood lust. It was out of fury, the need to fight, his body was preparing for battle.

"Not all of us are arrogant, bigots like Corbin and the VRF."

Hope flared in her. "So you'll help us?"

"When my brothers get back, I'll talk to them. I can't agree to anything until then, we work as a team." He ran his hand up her stomach and started to caress her breasts.

Instantly, she became hot, wet and ready. His cock was still in her and she could feel it getting hard again. There were some benefits to being immortal and having an intense sex drive was one of them. Eyes closed, he moved in her slowly and she gyrated her hips against him. "Does this mean you have more to give me?"

"I have more. Lots more," he promised before he pulled back and thrust into her again.

* * * *

"I think you have a little rug burn here," Kane observed before he leaned down and kissed the small of her back.

Despite the fact they had been making love most of the night, Toni still shivered in appreciation. They were both naked and in his bed, the crisp white sheets cool against her flesh. She was lying on her stomach and he was on one elbow, pressed close to her. A look of satisfied contentment was on his face as he traced on finger up her spine.

"I think I have rug burns all over," she replied with a yawn. It only made sense since they'd made love on the living room floor, the stairs and the hallway before they'd finally made it to his bed. She felt worn out, sore and totally blissful.

His chest rumbled with laughter. "It it's any

consolation, I think I have a few of my own."

He gave her shoulder a soft kiss and she sighed in appreciation. She wasn't used to this, the lingering over each other after sex. It was nice. She snuggled deeper into the pillow as Kane continued to explore her body. "Can I ask you a question?" She hated to spoil the mood, but there was one thing she needed to clear up before she brought him into the fold of her clan.

His hand stilled and his body grew tense. "You want to know what happened that night?"

Mouth dry, she nodded her head. She looked into his face, afraid she'd see anger in his eyes, but there was none. Only a bleak sadness and somehow, that made her feel even worse for asking him.

"What do you think, Toni?" Kane asked. His voice was light, but there was a brief edge of emotion, just barely breaking through.

"I don't think you would ever hurt an innocent."

"How about my brothers?"

She swallowed, her mouth even more dry. She didn't want to insult him, but she wasn't about to lie either. "I don't know your brothers," she finally said.

He gave a slight nod of his head. "I guess that's fair enough. They're both good males who would never hurt an innocent. They were set up, just like

me."

"How?"

"We all had been working as soldiers for the VRF for years and we were loyal to the organization. Idiots that were, we thought they were loyal to us. Corbin wasn't the head of it then, he was just an upstart with big ideas and even bigger aspirations and he didn't care who he had to step on to get to them. Somehow he'd managed to get himself assigned as the leader of my battalion. On our first mission together, he got some good soldiers killed with his ineptness. So I did what I thought was the right thing, I reported him to our superiors."

Toni's hearted thudded, she knew exactly how Corbin would have reacted to that. "So he went after you."

"Worse, he went after Rafe. He knew that would hurt me even more. There was a report that a high-ranking government official's home was under attack by some Feral Vampires. As Rafe's commanding officer, Corbin sent him to investigate. It was a setup. There were Ferals there, but they were all Corbin's. As soon as Rafe showed up, they attacked him. He tried to save the human family, but it was already too late, the only one still living was a baby. The rest of them were slaughtered—the parents, the children, even their dog. Rafe's a good soldier, but he was so

outnumbered it only took a second for them to cut him down."

"How did you and Dante end up there?"

"All of us share a telepathic link, Rafe called to us and we got there as fast as we could. When we got there, the house was still and quiet, the only sound was that baby wailing. It was shrieking so loud and I wanted to comfort it, but I couldn't find it. I searched through all the rooms. They were a mess—all the furniture was trashed and blood was smeared all over the walls. The remains of the humans were crumpled here and there, most of them were on their stomachs because they had been trying to run away."

Her stomach rolled as she imagined how horrible the sight must have been. Kane's eyes were so dark and haunted, she wanted to wrap her arms around him and give him comfort, but she didn't know how he would react. "Where did you find Rafe?"

"The house had this huge sun room, we found him in there. He was curled up on his side, not moving and I thought he was dead. Then I saw them."

She sat up, wrapping the sheet around her chest. "Saw what?"

"There were vampire slugs all over him."

"Oh my God," Toni gasped. Vampire slugs were six-inch long parasites that latched onto a

host and would slowly, but surly, suck them dry. They were normally found in the wild. The only way for them to have ended up on Rafe would have been if someone had deliberately placed them on him.

"We started ripping them off him and the whole time Dante was freaking out and screaming at Rafe to say something, he didn't even move though. That baby's cries just kept getting louder and louder and then I realized it was because the kid was in the room with us. I found it under a couch. Rafe had shoved it there before he was attacked. Even facing death, he thought of the human first," his voice cracked a bit.

She couldn't stand it anymore and embraced him. He didn't pull back or shove her away, instead he leaned into her hold. "What happened next?" Somehow she knew this was the first time he'd ever spoken of that night and that it would be good for him to finally exorcise those demons.

"Corbin came in with a group of VRF soldiers and arrested us. They beat Dante almost to death when he begged them to get medical treatment for Rafe."

Nothing in the files had prepared her for this horrible story. "What did they do to you?" Her heart lurched at the thought of them hurting him in any way.

"They made me watch Dante's beating and

then they gave me my own."

That simple statement made her want to vomit because it reminded her of the time she'd been forced to watch her own brother suffer. "What did they charge you with? Your prison records don't say and Corbin never told me."

"Derelict of Duty." He gave a bitter laugh. "By allowing that family to die, we supposedly risked exposing vampire society to all the human race. Not just the few that already know about us."

She held him tighter as indignation went through her. "But you and Dante weren't even there and Rafe didn't do anything wrong. He almost died saving the baby, he should have been hailed as a hero."

"Does that mean you believe me?"

She pulled back so she could look him full in the face. "I believe every word."

The hard lines of his face softened. "Nobody believed us. Not even our friends and family. Our own father disowned us over this."

"They're idiots, all of them." She gave him a tender kiss because that was all she had to offer as comfort. The assassin in her wanted to hunt down everyone that'd hurt him and make them pay.

"Part of me feels like I deserved it," he confessed in ragged tones. "I should have protected my brothers better. I failed them."

"Don't talk that way," she commanded as she

cupped his chin and made him look her in the eyes. "You did the best you could for them and no vampire could have done better."

A crooked smile formed on his lips. "Why is it I feel like I can tell you all this?"

She didn't supply with him an answer, instead snuggled into his chest. She knew why though. All those years ago they had connected that day in the prison and, by meeting today, the bond had only grown stronger. Somehow, somewhere their souls had connected and heaven help both of them.

"Can I ask you a question?" He traced the outside of her hip. "How did you become a vampire?"

She stilled, he would have to ask that. "It's not a very interesting story."

"I bored you with mine, so now you can bore me with yours." He continued to caress her.

"My friend Sable was Corbin's pet before me."

"What does that have to do with you becoming a vampire?"

"Be patient and listen." She lightly tapped his arm. "Her and Corbin had a parting of ways and he was without a female. Well, if you know anything about Corbin you know that's unacceptable to him. He decided he needed to find himself a replacement." She wrinkled her nose at him. "He always makes a new female when he needs one, he never takes a Pure One. It

always struck me odd he would do that since he hates us so much."

"He likes playing God," Kane mused. "So how did you come to know him?"

"I never knew him before he turned me. I was your normal college girl, living on campus away from home for the first time in my life." She snorted. "I even belonged to a sorority and was on the cheerleading squad. I was walking back to my dorm one night and he blitz attacked me. Before then I didn't even know vampires existed."

"You must have been terrified."

"I was," she admitted. She burrowed further into his chest, taking comfort in his touch. "I woke up in this strange place with fangs and a thirst for blood. I thought I had lost my mind. Then Corbin forced me to learn how to become a soldier. I had never so much as taken a karate class when I was human and, all of the sudden, he was making me fight full-grown males. I caught on quick because I wouldn't have survived otherwise. That wasn't the worst of it though. The hardest part was he ripped me from my home and family and never let me go back. When I didn't come back, my parents looked for me for years before they gave up. They both died, not knowing I was still alive."

"I'm so sorry." He kissed the top of her head. "That must have been awful."

"It was. My brother, Brenden never gave up

though. He told me he knew I was still alive and he worked two jobs, just so he could hire a private investigator to find me. Instead, Corbin found him and took out his anger against me on Brenden."

"Why was Corbin so mad at you."

"I found out he was going to attack a Drone clan, the one I live with now. I went there and warned them." She felt a tear slip down her cheek. "I don't regret telling them though, they had children living there and I know Corbin's soldiers would have killed them along with the adults. My only regret was Brenden got dragged into it."

"Stop talking like that." He tilted her chin up so she could look into his eyes. "You are not to blame for what happened to your brother."

"And you're not to blame for what happened to yours," she countered with a whisper. A small smile curled his lips.

"I guess we both have to work on the whole guilt thing," he conceded.

"I guess we do," she agreed. She snuggled back into his chest. It felt so nice to be with him, she let herself fall asleep, completely forgetting her promise to Brenden to call and check in.

* * * *

Ozzie, in wolf form, trotted down the deserted street, the early morning sun beating down on his

brown fur. He knew he should transform back to his human state, but after a night of running with his pack, he just didn't have the energy. Besides, things were better in this body. The crisp fall leaves smelled sharper, the cool air felt softer against his face, everything came into sharper focus, thanks to his heightened wolf vision.

Being in the center of the city brought on other smells, too—diesel, humans and the river being just a few. Ozzie didn't even mind those because he'd grown up here and they reminded him of home. Part of him wanted to spend the whole day running through the city streets, but he knew he would be needed back at the house, those vampire brothers couldn't survive without him. So he put paw to pavement and continued back.

Come to me.

Ozzie cocked his head to the side, like a house dog who had heard a weird sound. There were no other noises, save for the usual morning drone. He gave a shake of his massive head that traveled down his furry body. He must have been imagining things.

Come to me.

Okay, there was no denying there had been a voice. But it hadn't been a normal human voice. This was something different, something supernatural and scary, which coming from a werewolf, meant a lot.

Come to me.

Ozzie had taken two steps in the opposite direction before he realized he was subconsciously answering the unseen summons. The hackles on his back stood on end and he whimpered.

Fine, then I will come to you.

A black clothed female stepped from the shadows of a nearby alley. She was beautiful, but there was the unmistakable odor of evil coming from her. A vision of sex in her tight skirt and long fire-red tresses, Ozzie didn't notice at first she was armed to the teeth with daggers at her hips.

Ozzie tried to launch himself at her, but his muscles refused to obey. The scent of evil was getting stronger and it was paralyzing him in fear. Panic set in. In all of his life, he had never once froze up in a fight and this was not the time to start. He caught the flash of a pentacle tattooed on her hand and some confusion joined his terror.

She was a witch. Despite all the human myths, witches were good. They would never willingly harm another soul. It went against everything they believed and held dear. What in the hell was going on?

She reached out and patted his head. "Nice doggy. You're just the thing I need for my blood sacrifice."

Ozzie saw her other hand was reaching for a dagger, but he still couldn't move. She raised it

over her head, there was a yelp of pain and then a sea of red.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“Ouch!” Toni hissed in pain as she hopped on one foot, the other one held in her hand as she tried to rub away the sting. “Shit, shit, shit,” she whispered as she searched for her pants. Last night Kane had thrown them somewhere and her cell phone was in the pocket.

Her pants were nowhere to be found, none of her clothes were. Not even her panties. The only thing she had on was one of Kane’s button up shirts that covered her to the knees. The loss of her skivvies was upsetting, but not nearly as much so as her phone. If she didn’t call Brenden immediately, then Kane and his brothers were in for an unpleasant surprise. She had no doubt Jonas and Brenden would keep their word and come blasting in here with the whole Drone clan. “Fuck a duck,” she cussed, frustrated.

“You could try it, but I think it might hurt the duck,” a gravelly voice said from behind her.

Toni gasp and spun around. Rafe stood behind

her, staring up at her from under the shield of his dark hair. His gaze traveled up her bare legs and his eyes grew slightly wider in surprise. Besides that, he didn't react, acting as if he found half-naked female vampires in his house every night. *Then again, he probably did since he lived with Dante.*

As if being called by her mental summons, the middle Toren came down the stairs. "Hot damn, someone ordered takeout."

"Where are my clothes?" She directed the question to Dante because, judging by the smug look on his face, he was behind the disappearance.

"Why? Are you looking for this?" He held up her cell phone in one hand and waved it at her. "Or these?" Panties, *her panties*, were in his other hand and he waved those, too.

Even though she wanted to run over and rip them from his hands, she stayed rooted in place. The arrogant bastard would just love watching her struggle for her unmentionables.

"Where's Kane?" Rafe asked, his dour tone at direct odds with Dante's snarky one.

"Oh, look at that, blondie." Dante flashed a smile that was all fangs and arrogance. "You beat out Snuggles. She only got Rafe to say a couple of words and you scored yourself a couple of sentences from him."

"Give me my phone." She tried to keep her voice even and controlled, but some anger must

have leaked out because Dante arched a brow.

"Why so you can call your boyfriend back?"

"What in the hell are you talking about?"

He started pushing buttons. "Someone named Brenden called ten times already this evening."

Oh shit, this was not good. Brenden and Jonas are probably already on their way. She looked over at Rafe so see if he was going to call off the bulldog, but he stayed back and kept his mouth shut. "That is none of your damn business. Now, give me back my phone." This time she didn't even try to hide the anger in her voice.

Dante sauntered over to her, but didn't hand her the phone. Instead, he leaned down and loudly sniffed. "I can smell Kane on you. Even if you hadn't come down here, with your tousled hair, bruised lips, bite marks and half-naked, I still would have known he'd fucked you. His scent is pouring off your body."

Fear pulsed through her veins and that made her angry. At Dante for getting in her personal space and herself for letting him affect her that way.

"Please tell me that wasn't what Kane screwed last night?" a new voice asked.

As soon as Toni saw who it belonged to, she groaned. It was Markus and, going by the fury in his face, he remembered her quite well. This situation was going to go from shitty to shittier.

When she'd seen him last night with the two youngest brothers, she had been so worried about Kane, she hadn't recognized her old friend. *Big mistake.*

"You know her?" Rafe asked, shooting her a suspicious look.

Oh course he would ask that. Now he wants to join in the conversation?

"She's the bitch who arrested me." The blond vampire crossed his arms over his chest and adopted a casual pose.

Toni knew it was just an act. He wanted a piece of her bad and not in a good way. "I was just acting on orders." Those words sounded lame even to her ears.

"That's bullshit, Toni." The familiarity in which he used her name reminded her they'd once been close. "You threw me in that hellhole of a prison all because I wouldn't bend to the council law and go live in a Drone clan."

"I wasn't given any choice in the matter." She hadn't either. When she'd initially refused to arrest her friend, Corbin had beaten her viciously. She had finally caved and she'd never forgiven herself for it. Obviously Markus felt the same way.

"You could have disobeyed the order." Markus uncrossed his arms and stalked across the room, joining Dante in the crowd-Toni party.

"And you could have gone to live with the clan.

You didn't have to be stubborn." She felt threatened and her hands itched for her blades, but they were AWOL with her pants.

"Those clans are nothing more than another prison," Markus scoffed. "Just because you were in a prison of your own at the time didn't mean I wanted to be in one, too."

Ouch, that comment was so close to the truth that it stung. Her phone started to ring again.

Dante threw it on the ground and stomped on it with his boots. It let out a squelch of protest as he pulverized it to dust. "How is it you were the one who arrested Markus?" he asked as he kicked the pieces to the side.

"I worked directly under Corbin," she whispered her confession, not out of fear, but in shame. Even though she hadn't been around when he'd set up the brothers, she still felt tainted for associating with the VRF leader.

Dante let out a snarl and stepped even closer until her back was bowed over a table. "Tell me why I shouldn't kill you right here and now?" The carefree, amused look was gone from his eyes, replaced by stone-cold meanness.

When even Rafe took a step forward, Toni knew she was in trouble. She was going to have to fight her way out, possibly hurting one of Kane's brothers in the process. Though they were assholes, he cared for them and it would upset

him if one of them was maimed and, for some odd reason, that mattered to her.

"Let. Her. Up. Now."

Toni almost wept in relief at hearing Kane's voice. Markus and Rafe stepped back right away, but Dante remained fixed in place. "You don't know who she is."

"Wrong, I know who she was and I know who she is now."

Dante still didn't let her up, but he now directed his glare toward Kane. "You knew who she was and you still screwed her? After what they did to Rafe?"

"She didn't do anything to Rafe." Kane barred his fangs

Toni could feel the anger coming off him. All of it was directed at Dante, too. Interesting, it looked like Kane was as protective of her as she was of him.

"That's true," Markus added in a docile tone. "She was still a human when all that stuff happened to you guys. She didn't start working for Corbin until he turned her."

Dante hissed and wrapped a hand around her throat. "So Corbin was your sire? This just keeps getting better."

"It really isn't her fault," Markus added.

Lucky her, he decided to become her ally.

"She was new to our way and didn't know

better."

"Really not helping here," Toni gasped. Dante's grip had become stronger so breathing was getting to be a bit difficult.

With a loud growl, Kane grabbed the back of Dante's shirt and tore him off her. The vampire flew across the room, hit the faded yellow wall and left a large crack in the plaster. Dante quickly recovered and sprang to his feet, his fangs had grown so large they hung over his bottom lip and his eyes were so full of rage they nearly glowed.

"I never thought you'd put a piece of ass before your brothers." Dante spit out a mouthful of blood and rubbed at his bottom lip, which had been cut open by the impact. "Not even I would do that."

"She's not just a piece of ass." Kane put his body between Toni and the rest of the vampires.

"Then what is she?"

"She's..." his voice faltered for a mere second, "mine."

The silence was so deafening that you could have heard crickets.

Dante finally broke it, "You still want to claim her even knowing what she's capable of?"

Kane grabbed one of Toni's arms and pushed up the sleeve. Embarrassment flooded her body. She'd never allowed anyone to see the damage done there, always making sure to wear long sleeves. Last night, she'd hoped he'd missed them

in the moment of passion, but he'd obviously seen them and now he wanted to show everyone.

"No." She struggled against him. "Please."

He turned and gazed down at her, his eyes warm and caring. "I trusted you last night when I told you everything. Now I'm asking you to trust me."

She wanted to nod her head yes, wanted it so bad her chest ached. But after everything that had happened to her in the past, she didn't know if she could.

"Please?" The look on his face was as earnest as his voice. Their gazes locked and at that moment it was as if their souls melded.

The air left her lungs as she realized how much this vampire had come to mean to her. "I trust you. Why is that?"

He gave her a crooked smile before he rolled up her sleeve, revealing a dozen circular scars. They were larger than cigarette burn would be, but then they hadn't been made that way. Wounds like that would have healed without any marks because she was vampire. No, these had been made with the same sort of device used to burn Drones. A specialized instrument that was made to heat at an extreme temperature so not even an immortal would be able to heal. If she had thought the silence was huge before, it was nothing compared to the stunned quite now.

Dante muttered, "Fuck."

Kane dropped her arm before he wrapped her in the comfort of his embrace. "She never wanted to be with Corbin." Kane pinned each of the males with a hard glare. "Everything she did was because he forced her."

"You never told me it was that bad," Markus said, his horrified gaze on Toni.

"How did you two know each other?" Kane asked.

If Toni didn't know better she would have sworn there was a hint of jealousy in his voice.

"Corbin used to frequent one of the clubs I owned and he always brought Toni to watch his back while he played. We used to keep each other company." When Kane barred his fangs and hissed at him, Markus rolled his eyes. "Jesus, not that way. We were just really good buds, that's all. Territorial much?"

A phone started ringing, but this time it wasn't Toni's, it was Dante's. The vampire frowned as he pulled it out and stared down at the screen. "It's your boyfriend, Brenden, again."

Markus sucked in a breath. "You're talking to your human brother?"

"It's a long story. He's one of us now." She held out her hand. "Give me the phone."

Dante tossed her that cocky grin again and flipped open the phone. "You're never going to

believe what my brother has been doing with your sister."

"If any of you have harmed her, you'll be drinking your meals through a straw for the rest of your pathetic lives," Brenden snarled in response.

Thanks to her heightened vampire senses she could hear both ends of the conversation. Unfortunately, so could everyone else in the room. The air became thick with anger as every male tensed.

"Tell you what, when were done using her, we'll send back her body to you piece by piece." Dante's face had taken on a mad gleam, like he was holding onto his sanity by a mere thread.

Toni lunged for the phone again, but Dante had already snapped it closed. "You idiot!" she yelled at him. "Now my whole clan is going to come gunning for you all."

"Clan? Since when do you belong to a clan?" Markus asked, paling. "Please don't tell me it's the one centralized in this city."

"Yes, it is and they are probably already moving in." And they were all going to find her here without her panties on. Her friend, Sable was never going to let her live it down.

As is on cue, every window in the room shattered at once as black clad soldiers burst through, guns drawn.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Kane stared at the soldiers surrounding him and his brothers and wondered just how they were going to get out of this mess. Every one of the intruding vampires were dressed in identical black cargo pants, shirts and ski masks that covered their faces, except for their eyes. Just so they were completely color coordinated, they each had a black semi-automatic pointed at them.

"Hey, who invited all the ninjas?" Dante quipped.

Kane closed his eyes and wondered if they would send him back to prison if he killed his brother. Really, he would be doing the whole world a service if one didn't count the dozens of females he serviced. "You invited them when you shot off your mouth."

"I was just playing with my new friend, Brenden." Too stupid to be intimidated by the weapons, Dante walked down the line of soldiers. "Now which of you Kung Fu Charlies is my

buddy?" When one of the vampires stepped forward and jacked his gun, Dante laughed. "I guess that would be you?"

One soldier standing toward the front, placed a hand on Brenden's shoulder and gave a slight shake of his head. That was all he did, no words were spoken and the male never broke eye contact with the brothers, but Brenden backed off and lowered his weapon. That was all Kane needed to know the male in front was the leader and he was one who had earned the respect of his followers.

That still didn't mean that he and his brothers were going to bend over and take it from this guy though. No one busted up their windows, invaded their space and pointed guns at them. Not at least without losing a limb or two in the process. Dante made brief eye contact with both of his brothers, silently communicating to go for the hidden weapons they had stashed in various places.

"I don't think so, boys," the leader snapped. "You move for those weapons, we start shooting."

Damn, this guy was good. Kane almost regretted having to kill him. "Tell you what. You take your soldiers and leave now and I don't kill you all."

"I'd love to see you try, Pure One."

The way the vampire said the title was not flattering. If anything, he acted as if the words were a foul taste in his mouth. Kane couldn't see

his face, thanks to the mask, but he knew it was twisted in disgust.

"We aren't your typical Drone Vampires who bow down to their betters."

"Eric, Kane, why don't we—" Toni ventured.

Both males cut her off with a simultaneous, "Not now."

"There doesn't have to be any bloodshed," the leader, obviously called Eric, said. "Just give me back Toni and we'll leave peacefully."

"She isn't going anywhere." Kane snarled like a tiger would if someone tried to take a steak from it. "She's mine."

"What the hell?" Brenden shouted. "Jonas, do something."

A huge tower of muscles and anger standing next to Brenden growled. "Don't worry, kid. Nothing is going to happen to your sister."

"I can take care of myself!" Toni shouted. That was a huge mistake. Every vampire in the room fixated on her and they all seemed to notice her state of undress for the first time. There was a snicker from a female, but the rest of the group just stared in dumb horror. Toni turned a bright shade of red. "There has been a huge misunderstanding," Toni said as she moved to stand between the soldiers and the brothers.

"I'll say. You seem to have lost most of your clothes."

"Shut up, Sable," Toni said between clenched teeth.

"I found her panties," Dante piped up helpfully, holding them up as evidence.

Kane close his eyes and counted to ten very, very slowly. Leave it to his brother to take an already bad situation and make it worse.

"So you have." Sable leaned forward to inspect them. "Who would have thought a hardass like Toni would wear Mickey Mouse undies?"

"I willingly came to the Torens and asked for their help," Toni addressed Eric, ignoring the others. "They know things about the inner workings of vampire society we, as Drones, do not. They could help turn the tide of for our favor."

The clan leader's eyes narrowed in anger and Kane had to put a damper on his protective side. Somehow he knew going into a jealous rage and attacking the vampire for simply making a face at Toni wasn't going to defuse this tense situation.

Ever so helpful, Dante curled his lip. "What makes you think we would want to help you?"

"This jerk is an ass, but he has a point," Eric grumbled. "Why would they be interested in helping us?"

"Because I already promised Toni I would." Kane put a possessive hand on her shoulder.

"Fuck a duck," Dante cursed, borrowing Toni's

earlier phrase. "Why would you do something stupid like that? Wasn't ten years in prison enough for you?"

"You and Rafe don't have to come if you don't want to, but this is something I have to do."

Dante pressed his lips together and his gaze shifted from Kane to Toni, then back to Kane again. "No, we stick together. Remember?" His tone was calm and almost caring.

Kane released the breath he hadn't realized he was holding. "Thank you. I owe you for this."

"Yes, you do," Dante shot back. He sized up the clan soldiers. "Does this mean I get a snazzy black outfit, too? I always wanted to be a ninja when I grow up."

* * * *

Ozzie cracked his eyelids open and blearily took in his surroundings. He was in some dark chamber of sorts, with all dark furnishings and draperies. The only lighting was from several large black candles that were scattered throughout the room. A nearby table had an athame and silver chalice on it. A chalice he instinctively knew was filled with blood. *His blood*. Closer inspection revealed dark magic symbols were chalked in white on all the walls. A shiver slipped down his spine at the sight.

The air was rich with the scents of burning wax, various essential oils and the acrid stench of black magic. Panicked, he tried to run away, only to realize he was strapped down to a table of sorts. He was in his human state, naked, and there was a burning wound in his side right below his ribs.

The witch, she had hurt him and she must have been the one to bring him here. A shudder went through him. Somehow he didn't think it was for milk and cookies. He tried to shift to his wolf state, but was only rewarded with an electric surge that fizzled. The witch must be binding his powers, making it impossible for him to shift.

"I heard the wolves were hung, but I never realized how true the rumors were," a male voice commented.

Ozzie turned toward the source, blinking until a blond male vampire came into focus. A couple more blinks let him decipher it was Corbin. Why was the head of the VRF playing with the Wicked Witch of Detroit?

"If you want to have a little play time with him, I'll be happy to leave the room." The witch came into view. She went behind Corbin and wrapped her arms around his shoulders.

He shrugged her off, his perfect features momentarily marred with disgust. "Not all of us are driven by our animalistic needs, Serebella. Get your dick back in your pants and focus on your

job.”

Her black painted lips curved into a pout. “I don’t have a dick. If you had taken a few minutes to play you would have known that.”

Ozzie closed his eyes in disgust. Not only was he going to get killed by a witch, but she was as dumb as a box of rocks to boot. No wonder he had never been able to make alpha in his pack.

“It was an expression, you idiot,” Corbin snapped. “You can open your eyes, wolf. I know you’re awake.”

Ozzie cracked his lids, hoping to hell that anger showed in his eyes and not fear. “I heard you were stupid, but this really takes the cake.” He growled, showing more bravado than he felt.

“How so?” Corbin cocked a brow.

“When my pack finds out you’ve captured me, they are going to tear apart this city looking for you.”

Corbin leaned forward so their faces were only inches apart. “What makes you think your pack is going to know who took you?”

A ball of ice formed in the werewolf’s stomach. With that sentence Corbin had all but promised Ozzie wasn’t going to live long enough to tell anyone who had attacked him. “They’ll be able to smell you on me, even if I’m dead.”

“By the time Serebella here is done with you, there won’t be a body for your pack to sniff. Her

ghouls will have taken care of that.”

At the mention of ghouls, Ozzie jumped so high the bindings cut into his skin. All supernatural creatures feared ghouls. Cannibalistic monsters, they would eat anything dead or alive they could get their claws on. If that weren’t disturbing enough, the things possessed brute strength and were near impossible to kill. But surely Corbin was wrong. There hadn’t been a ghoul sighting in centuries.

The he looked over at the chalice and the ritualistic markings chalked into the walls. All the air left his lungs as a sickening realization slammed into him. “Fuck, witch, you’re going to bring forth the ghouls?” Serebella’s smug smile was all the answer he needed. “Why would you do that?” he asked, horrified.

“By using your blood, we are hoping they will attack those closest to you first,” Corbin answered.

Ozzie let out a howl. “What has my pack done to you?”

“It’s not your pack I’m after, although their destruction will amuse me. It’s the Toren brothers I want killed.”

“You sick bastard.” Ozzie fought harder against the restraints. “The ghouls won’t stop there, they’ll destroy the entire city. Innocents will die.”

“What innocents?” Corbin shot back savagely, from between clenched teeth.

A bit of spittle hit Ozzie in the face.

"The Drone clan that is rebelling against me? The werewolves who gave them sanctuary? Or the disgusting humans who keep multiplying like rodents? You don't get it, wolf. Detroit could burn to the ground and I wouldn't shed a tear."

He pivoted away and stormed out of the room, not giving Ozzie or Serebella another glance. The witch watched him leave and Ozzie was intrigued to see the thinly veiled hatred on her face. She may work for the VRF leader, but she obviously didn't like him.

"Why are you doing this?" Ozzie couldn't help but ask. "What would your coven say if they knew?"

Her dark eyes flashed with anger as she hissed. "I don't have a coven any longer, wolf. I just look out for myself now and Corbin offered up a lot of money for my magic."

She reached out and traced a nail down his chest. Ozzie sucked in a breath as her hand traveled lower until it was caressing his cock. Despite the danger that he and it faced, the thing still stood up to attention. The witch smiled when she noticed his erection, her eyes grew smoky with desire and, for the first time, Ozzie saw a way out.

"If you like it so much, why don't you suck it?" he suggested. Even though the idea of being with

her revolted him, he hoped that he could get her so worked up, she'd undo his bindings. *Talk about taking one for the team though.*

At first he thought he'd gone too far too soon. The witch looked up at him, her expression unreadable. Then her tongue darted out to lick her lips and the wolf could smell the arousal coming from her. She leaned over and wrapped her lips around his erection and he bit his lip to hold back the moan of pleasure.

Her tongue ran along the sensitive tip before she sucked in deep. So deep that he could feel the back of her throat. He wanted to see the action, but her red hair was spread out over him, making a curtain and obstructing his view. Ozzie yearned to grab those locks to urge her on, but the restraints prevented him from doing so. When she reached under and gave his balls a gentle squeeze, he gave in and let out a yell of pleasure.

She laughed at the response. "I like playing with my prey before I kill it." A pink tongue darted out to lick off some of the pre-cum leaking out of the tip of his cock.

Ozzie glanced over at the athame. Its silver blade glinted in the candlelight, almost as if calling him. Another shudder of disgust went through him before he steeled his resolve. He could do this. He *had* to do this to get away. If he had to kill her in the process, well so be it. He

could smell death lingering to her, proving she was a stone-cold killer herself. Besides, she was a threat to his pack and he couldn't have that.

"You taste so good," she exclaimed as she pulled back. "It's going to be a shame when I have to kill you."

Then don't, bitch. He didn't say anything aloud for fear of provoking her to violence. He needed to get away, not only so he could live, but so he could warn the others. The witch lifted her tight skirt, revealing she wasn't wearing anything underneath. Ozzie couldn't help but growl in approval. Despite his disgust for her, she was attractive in all the right places.

He eyed the athame again, attraction or not, he was still going to drive that thing through her black heart first chance he got. She climbed up on the table, straddled his hips and slowly impaled herself on his cock. They both yelled in pleasure as her moist heat enveloped him.

"That's it witch, ride me hard," Ozzie encouraged.

Serebella closed her eyes as she started to use his body to bring herself to orgasm. The entire time, Ozzie was revolted with himself, but he was able to go on because he thought of his pack and what he was going to do with that athame.

CHAPTER NINE

“Damn,” Rafe muttered as he snapped his phone shut. “Ozzie still isn’t answering.”

Kane sat on top of the only piece of furniture in the small office, a small desk, and tried hard not to worry. After they were stripped of the weapons, the Drones had escorted the brothers back to their clan and asked them to wait while Eric decided what to do with them. Toni told him on the way over, the Drones lived in an old factory that had been abandoned by the humans. Kane hadn’t been able to see much on his way in, but from what he could tell, the Drones had made this place a combination training facility-home. Even now he could hear the giggles of children drifting through the air, along with the carefree banter of the adults.

It reminded him of his own childhood when his brothers and he would run through the mansion, playing and getting into all kinds of trouble. A strange ache built in him as he thought about how

happy and innocent Rafe and Dante had been then. *Look at them now.* Rafe was ducked into the furthest corner of the room, his back wedged against the wall and face toward the door, so nobody could sneak up on him. Dante, in the meantime, was twitchy as hell, almost like he was about to jump out of his skin. He kept adjusting his pants and darting annoyed looks at the door.

"It'll be fine, guys," Kane soothed. While they all made sure to put on brave face in front of others, he knew his brothers better than anyone. They were worried about being in the middle of a Drone clan that may or may not be friendly.

"Why do you think I can't reach Ozzie?" Rafe asked, abruptly changing subjects.

"He's probably still with his pack."

"Maybe he found some tail," Dante laughed nervously at his own lame joke.

"Ozzie can take care of himself." On a lark, he tried the doorknob and was pleasantly surprised when it turned. They hadn't been locked in so maybe they weren't prisoners after all.

"No, something's wrong." Rafe gave a hard shake of his head, his green eyes bright with panic. "There's something in this city. Something evil. I can feel it."

Kane and Dante both paused at that one. Rafe's mother was a witch, something that usually didn't come up in everyday conversations. In fact, as

children they were forbidden to even talk about it. They all suspected Rafe had magical abilities, but this was the first time he had shown them.

"What exactly do you feel?" Kane asked in even tones. The last thing he wanted was to show how nervous he was.

"It's black magic and it's already drawn blood." Rafe's eyes glazed over and sweat beaded his forehead. "There is going to be much death tonight."

"What the fuck is he talking about?" Dante stammered. "Better yet, how in the hell is he doing whatever it is he's doing? His mom left right after he was born, so nobody ever taught him how to use magic."

"Do I look like Wikipedia?" Kane snapped. "Are you sure it wasn't a witch he fed from at the bar?"

"No, it was pure vampire."

Kane would have liked to ask Markus just to be sure, but they hadn't seen the vampire since they'd gotten to the compound. "Do you think we should tell the Drones what Rafe just sensed?"

"Boy, you really are pussy stupid," Dante said, incredulous. "Like they aren't going to be froggy enough with three Pure Ones running around the home. Let's just add fuel to the fire by telling them one of them is half warlock."

"But what if Rafe is right and Ozzie is in

trouble?" Kane felt like an idiot, because for once, Dante had a point. The less everyone knew about Rafe's magical side, the better.

"Ozzie can take care of himself, you said so yourself earlier."

Kane went over to Rafe and touched his hand lightly. His brother's skin was cool, clammy and he was able to detect a small tremor going through his body. "Hey, Rafe, why don't you come back to us, buddy."

At first, he didn't think Rafe was going to snap out of it, but with a deep shuddering breath, the younger vampire's eyes cleared up and the color started to seep back into his complexion. Kane let out a sigh of relief and he could hear Dante do the same thing behind him.

"That was freaky," Rafe commented.

"A little," Kane agreed. "Do you have any idea how you did it?"

Rafe gave a slight shake of his head. "I don't plan on doing it again." The revulsion on his face was clear. It was no secret he resented his mother. Both Kane and Dante's mothers had died right after their respective births, whereas Rafe's had just up and left him. Although Rafe never talked about it, it had obviously cut him deep.

The door opened and Toni came in. Kane quickly scanned her up and down, but saw no injuries. Her lips were curled in a relieved smile.

"Eric has decided to welcome you to the clan."

"Lucky us," Dante went deadpan.

Rafe backhanded him in the gut to shut him up.

"Come on," she gestured through the door. "I'll show you around."

She led them through the center of the living quarters with was an enormous open area. Several vampires stopped dead and stared at the brothers, open astonishment and fear on their faces.

Dante smiled and waved at a couple of the females and they timidly waved back. It was obvious someone had told everyone who they were and their tainted history. "I think I'm going to like it here," Dante snickered, eyeing up a leggy blonde.

Rafe snorted in response.

His head was down, but Kane could see his eyes were looking through his shield of dark hair, scanning every inch. Dante scoped out the place, too, despite the fact he looked like he was doing nothing more than flirting.

"How are you guys doing?" Toni asked, Kane.

He was pleasantly surprised when she slipped her hand in his. "Adjusting," he replied. He planned on telling her about Rafe's incident, but not until they were alone. "Where's Markus?"

"Eric's trying to convince him to move to the compound."

"He won't do it, he sees living in a clan as a

prison."

"I understand." A sad, wishful expression passed over her face. "But he's safer here with us. In fact, we would like all of you to stay, permanently." She didn't look at him, perhaps fearing his rejection.

"Let's take it one day at a time," he conceded, squeezing her hand. "After a couple of days of Dante, you guys may end up kicking us all to the curb."

A small giggle bubbled from her lips and several vampires stopped to stare at her in surprise. "We could always duct tape your brother's mouth shut."

"Rafe and I tried, he just gnaws through it."

This time she laughed loudly. The gawking vampires all looked like they'd been bitch slapped. "Somehow, I can imagine him doing that. I haven't seen anyone piss Eric off that much since the time Sable and Ryan snuck away to watch the figure eight derby at the 4-H fair."

"Two vampires went to a country fair?" He chuckled himself.

"They were both raised in small towns and even though they're now vampires, they can't shake those roots. I guess that's why they are so disgustingly perfect for each other. Those two are so lovey-dovey they make you want to puke." There was no malice in her words, only a kind

affection that showed how much she cared for the pair.

"Yeah, because you two aren't lovey-dovey at all," Dante scoffed.

A slight blush formed on her rounded cheeks as she seemed to notice for the first time her and Kane were parading through the building holding hands. "You're just jealous," she tossed back playfully.

"Yeah, I think I am," Dante replied so softly Kane wondered if he had just imagined the words.

"I want to formally introduce you to my brother." She paused outside a door before she turned and gave Dante a warning glare. "Be nice to him."

Dante put on an innocent face that didn't fool anyone for a second. "Why does everyone always assume that I'm going to cause trouble?"

"Because you always do," Kane replied with a growl. He lifted Toni's hand and grazed her soft knuckles with a kiss. "Don't worry, my brothers will behave. They know if they don't, I'll kick their asses for it."

"After this, I'll show you where our quarters are," she said coyly as she looked up at him from under her heavy lashes. "The bed there is so big and comfortable."

Not caring his brothers and half the Drone clan were there, he pulled her into his embrace. "I can't

wait to test it out.”

An image of her naked and spread out underneath him flashed into his mind and he grew hard on response. When they had been together at the house her body had been so soft as it yielded to him. It was no accident his brothers had smelled his scent on her. He’d made sure to rub against every inch of her so they would know she was his as soon as they got near her.

As is to prove that to the clan members watching, he slanted his mouth over hers in a possessive kiss. She didn’t pull away in protest, quite the opposite. She wrapped her arms around his neck and returned his kiss with the same hot need. Her stomach brushed against his cock and he barely suppressed a moan. The fluttering pulse on her throat called to him and he brushed the back of his hand against it. Even though he’d just fed from her, he wanted to taste her sweet blood again.

“Ah, Kane,” Dante said out of the side of his mouth. “You know I’m usually all up to PDA’s, but you’re starting to cause a real stir here.”

Kane reluctantly pulled back and saw his brother was right, the vampires around them were now whispering to one another. Another flush appeared on Toni’s cheeks. “They aren’t used to seeing me touch anyone, let alone make out in public.”

Kane wiped his mouth and took in the hostile glares being thrown his way. "I think it has more to do with who we are. We don't exactly have the nicest rep and I think they're protective of you."

She pulled back, a surprised look on her face. It was obvious she'd never known her clan cared about her that much. She gave a nervous tug of her ponytail before opening the door.

Kane followed her into a large room that had several computers lining either side of it. At the far end was a male, his blond hair all messed in sweaty spikes. He had tossed the hat and mask aside, but he was still dressed in his black uniform.

Sitting next to the young vampire was a mammoth African-American male that looked like he was made from bricks and steel. He'd taken off his hat, showing off his shaved scalp. As soon as he saw Toni, his face lit up. "You had us worried, girl."

"Jonas, you worry more than an old woman," Toni declared as she embraced the giant. He glared at Kane over her shoulder. Once she'd pulled away, she gestured toward the brothers. "Brenden, Jonas, this is Kane, Dante and Rafe."

"We already know who they are," Brenden said darkly, making no move to shake hands.

Yeah, this was going well.

The only blessing was Dante was actually

keeping his yap shut and not making things even worse. Toni looked from one group to the other before she let out a huff of exasperation. "Honestly, would it be that hard for you guys to get along?"

"Sorry I said all that crap to you over the phone," Dante mumbled to Brenden. "I sometimes don't think."

Kane exchanged astonished looks with Rafe. Dante never, ever apologized and here he was doing it to a virtual stranger.

I'm doing it for you, Dante sent out, telepathically. *I know what she means to you and I want her clan to accept you.*

The tension in the room seemed to go down a few notches as Brenden gave a slight nod. Jonas came over and shook each of the brother's hands, saving Rafe for last. "I heard about how you saved that baby and those bastards still set you up. I worked with one of the VRF soldiers who was there that night. As far as he was concerned, you were a hero who got screwed over. Just thought you'd like to know not everyone believes the rumors."

Rafe stiffened slightly, but didn't seem offended Jonas brought up such a sensitive subject. "Do you know what happened to her?"

"The baby?"

"Yes, the baby." Rafe's hands balled into tight

fists at his side.

"Her grandparents took her in. She's really happy and has a good life."

"Whoa, look at this!" Brenden exclaimed as he looked at the computer monitor. "The cameras outside are picking up something."

They all crowded around the screen and looked. A fuzzy picture showed some figure staggering toward the building. It stumbled a few times before it struggled back to its feet. Whoever it was, was obviously hurt bad.

"That's the hippie werewolf who lives with you guys," Brenden observed, squinting his eyes.

"Fuck," Kane snarled, already turning to run out. Toni, Brenden, Rafe and Dante were hot on his heels.

"Go get Eric," Brenden ordered Jonas.

"Bring Dahlia, too," Toni added.

Jonas shook his baldhead. "That would be a no go. Our scouts found an injured soldier right by Heart Plaza. She went with them to help."

Toni let out a growl of frustration. Dahlia was their only doctor and, judging from the way the werewolf had looked over the monitor, they were going to need her. "Do we have any idea when she may be back?"

Again, Jonas shook his head. "They left not too long ago so I don't think it will be anytime soon."

They ran out into the cool night and almost

stumbled over Ozzie, who had somehow managed to drag himself to the door. Kane dropped to his knees next to his friend. The vampire's stomach clenched at the wounds on his friend's naked body. Jagged stab wounds were covering his torso and there was very little blood leaking out because there was nothing left in him.

"What happened to him?" Dante demanded.

"I don't know." Kane lightly tapped the werewolf on the cheeks, but didn't get a response. Kane knew things weren't good though. Ozzie's chest was moving in shallow irregular intervals and the vampire in Kane could hear his friend's heart fluttering wildly instead of beating in its normal steady rhythm. Ozzie was dying and there was nothing he could do to save him.

"The dark witch did this." Rafe ran his long fingers over the werewolf's chest. "She took his blood for something, but I don't know for what."

Okay, these visions and inside knowledge of witch activity thing was really starting to annoy and freak Kane.

"What the hell is going on?" Eric bellowed as he came outside, his gun out and ready.

"Our friend is hurt," Kane explained.

"How did he know to come here?" Eric's eye's narrowed suspiciously. It was obvious he still didn't trust the Toren brothers.

"He must have followed our scent here. He

needs medical attention, please.” That last bit was hard for Kane. All these years he had always been the one to take care of everyone, to ask someone for help was something he hadn’t done in years.

Toni knelt down beside him and lightly touched his face. “Of course we’ll help you.” Her calm tone soothed him.

“How can anyone help him? It’s obvious he’s dying,” Rafe nearly screamed.

The sudden outburst, from his normally withdrawn brother, shocked Kane. Rafe’s eyes were wild with fear and he shook from head to toe. Kane wondered if seeing their friend on the ground was bringing back memories of the night they had found him nearly dead. “He’s been drained dry.”

“Werewolves are immortal,” Toni reasoned, although she didn’t sound convinced.

“That doesn’t mean he can’t be killed. Immortal or not, he needs blood to live,” Rafe was hysterical now.

Dante went to put a reassuring hand on him, but the vampire shrugged him off.

“What if one of us feeds him our blood. Vampire’s blood is stronger than other species and it will heal him.”

“It would also make him into one of us. He would be half vampire, half werewolf.” Kane shook his head. “He would rather be dead than

that. You know how both kinds would look down on him." Kane didn't know how to handle his youngest brother's meltdown. He was still babbling under his breath, completely out of control of his emotions. He shared a worried look with Dante. Rafe was acting out of his mind in grief. Shit, he'd talked more in the past two sentences than he had in the past ten years.

"Why would the witch take his blood?" Rafe asked in a choked sob.

"So she could bring forth the ghouls. They needed a blood sacrifice."

Everyone looked up at once to see who had spoken. A petite female stood a couple of feet away. A green cloak covered her from head to toe and she pulled back the hood to reveal raven hair that framed her radiant face. Large green eyes, the same shade of the cloak, looked back at them unflinchingly. Her gaze traveled over all of them before locking onto Rafe.

"Tell me we heard you wrong and you did not just say ghouls?" Dante growled.

"You heard right, vampire. They're on their way now and they can fly, which means they will be traveling fast. You have only moments to get your young to safety." She looked briefly at Dante before returning her gaze to Rafe.

The intense way she was staring at his youngest brother made Kane worry. *Was if possible she knew*

what he was?

"Who or what are you?" Eric asked, his grip tight on his gun. It was obvious he didn't like it that she'd been able to sneak up on them.

"She's a witch," Kane replied, spotting the pentacle tattooed on her right hand in black ink.

"First werewolves and now witches?" Eric snapped. "Who in the hell decided to throw a party?"

"I did," Dante drawled, although his playful tone didn't match his eyes. They were almost black with fury. "Since I'm stuck with your clan for Lord knows how long, I decided to sell Amway. I thought I could broaden my customer base by including a pack and coven. Now, can we get my friend inside or are you planning on letting him die on the street?"

"I don't think we'll have time for even that," Toni whispered. Her hand was on Ozzie's chest. "He's getting worse."

She raised her eyes and Kane was touched to see that there were tears in them.

"I'm so sorry."

Kane reached over for himself, not wanting to believe it. Ozzie's body was still, his chest barely moving and his heart rate had slowed to near nothing. A deep despair filled him. He'd failed a loved one again. He should have known his friend was in trouble. While he'd been asleep at the

wheel, one of the few individuals he cared about was being tortured to death. No wonder Corbin had been able to take him down so easily. Kane was weak, a failure, nothing. Ten years ago, his father had spoken those words to him as he was being led away to prison and they were as true today as they were then.

"Do you guys hear that?" Brenden asked, breaking the silence.

"Hear what?" Eric scanned the streets.

"It's like a ton of voices whispering at a distance." The young vampire now had his gun up and pointed it out into the night.

A loud, ear-splitting shriek ripped through the night before something white streaked out from the dark and tackled Dante by the chest. Kane jumped to his feet to help his brother. He would be damned if they would lose someone else tonight. Angry and near blood lust, he didn't even hesitate when he got a good gander at the monster. The thing on his brother looked human at first until one looked closer. It was ghastly white, with ratty gray hair and tattered rags for clothes. It opened its mouth and let out another high-pitched shriek, showing off razor-sharp yellow teeth. Red eyes were burning from its deep dark sockets.

"There's more," Brenden yelled as several more white figures started to shoot out of the dark.

"Aim for the heads," Eric ordered. "Immortal or not, that will take them out."

Brenden shot the one on Dante's chest and it went down with an unearthly scream. The dark-haired witch pulled a small gun from the folds of her cloak and used it expertly. Toni had her blades out and was already in the middle of her own fight. She moved with the fluid grace of a jungle cat, her muscles rippling under her black clothes. Kane let out a growl of appreciation, her skills matched any of the males out there. Eric handed Kane a Glock and the vampire took it gratefully. Gunshots rang through the air, mixing in with the shrieks of the ghouls.

"That ghoul really seemed to like you, Dante. You find yourself a new girl-toy?" Brenden acted happy that he finally had something to rib Dante about.

"Not in a million years. They freaking smell like dirt," Dante observed as he staggered to his feet. "It's like they just climbed out of the grave." He shuddered. "Even their flesh feels cold and dead."

"So I take it you didn't invite them to your party?" Brenden asked as he squeezed off another shot. The vampires had formed a tight circle so they could protect their backs from attack. Ozzie was in the center so the ghouls wouldn't start eating him.

"You never invite ghouls to a party, kid." Dante

took the gun Brenden offered him and started shooting. "They never bring a dish to pass and they drink all the booze."

"I'd heard that, but I thought that it was okay because they were good at karaoke so they're still the life of the party," Brenden shot back with a laugh.

Kane rolled his eyes at the idiots before checking on Toni again to make sure she was okay. Not that he had to worry about her. She was more than holding her own. She'd traded the blades for a gun and she was taking out the ghouls with impressive precision. Satisfied, he looked next for Rafe, it was a natural gesture after being in so many battles with his brothers. When he finally spotted his youngest brother and saw what he was doing, he almost dropped his weapon in shock.

Rafe had sliced open his wrist and he was holding the bleeding wound to Ozzie's mouth. Ozzie was thrashing against his hold, trying to push him off, but Rafe had his knees on the werewolf's shoulders so he could hold him in place. Normally, Ozzie would have easily tossed Rafe since werewolves were one of the strongest of immortals, now his injuries made him too weak to do much more than make a few more feeble attempts before going slack again. Kane could see two pinpricks on the werewolf's neck where Rafe

had bit him so there could be a complete blood exchange.

Fuck, not good. Not good at all. Despite his order, Rafe was turning Ozzie. "We better move and get everyone secured in the building," he yelled to Toni. "We're about to have one pissed off werewolf on our hands."

Toni followed his gaze and her eyes widened in shock. "Oh my God. Has he lost his mind?"

"Yes, I think he has. If we don't have Ozzie restrained when he starts going through his transition, he is going to attack the nearest blood source. I'm not about to take him on like that. It's bad enough tangling with a straight vampire, when you add werewolf strength to that, it's not going to be pretty."

Toni whistled for Eric and jerked her head in the direction of Ozzie. When the clan leader saw what was happening, he let out a stream of cuss words that would have made a rapper proud. At that moment, there was a break in the ghouls assault and the leader took advantage of it.

"Everyone inside, now!" Eric yelled.

Kane and Dante scooped up Ozzie's still body and dragged it in. Rafe ran alongside, never taking his wrist off the werewolf's slack lips.

"What in the hell were you thinking?" Kane asked.

"He's not going to die on me." Rafe looked up

at him, his eyes bright with anger and determination. "I won't ever let anyone die on me again. If I can save them, I will. No matter what."

Eric slammed the door shut and the witch started to speak a soft chant as she ran her hands along the doorframe. When she was done, she explained, "This is a barrier that will repel the ghouls. It will only work for a little while though. We have even less time if Serebella does a counter spell."

"Who is that?" Toni asked.

"She's the dark witch that started this. Since she originally came from my coven, we feel it is our responsibility to undo what she has started. That's one of the reasons I came here today. My main duty in our coven is to judge those who have gone bad and deal out their punishment." The witch's eyes grew dark. Ozzie had started to let out low snarls and his eyelids flickered open before the witch placed the palm of her hand to his forehead and muttered a few words that Kane didn't catch. "I enchanted him to sleep," she supplied. "It won't last for long, so you better get him restrained before he wakes up again."

Kane nodded grimly as he thought about how Ozzie was going to be. Newly formed vampires always woke up in the throes of blood lust and they didn't know how to control it like older vampire could. Rafe had really created a monster

when he'd turned Ozzie. What in the hell had he been thinking?

Toni stepped in. "I'll take him to infirmary and look after him. We'll set up some blood transfusions and those should help him through it."

"Should?"

Her brow wrinkled in worry. "It helps some of the Drones when they were turned. I honestly don't know if it will help Ozzie though. We've never had to oversee a werewolf before, only humans. I wish really wish Dahlia were here, she would know what to do."

"I'll go, too," Rafe volunteered. He looked down at his feet and refused to meet Kane's gaze.

"You're going to be the last one he wants to see," Kane growled. Even though Rafe had all but begged for forgiveness, Kane wasn't about to make it easy for him. Rafe needed to be more responsible, they just didn't have themselves to think about anymore. He had put the entire clan in danger tonight.

I know and I really am sorry, Rafe said telepathically. He must have picked up Kane's angry thoughts. I wasn't thinking. You have to know I would never put children in danger.

Kane's head snapped in his direction. *Ozzie may not be right in the head when he wakes up. He may be more monster than werewolf or vampire. Are you*

willing to take him out if necessary?

A look of pain crossed over Rafe's face. *If it needs to be done, yes. I won't let him hurt your mate's clan. It's my mistake and I will clean it up.*

Dante joined in the conversation, *Let up, Kane. You saw how broke up he was about Ozzie. He did agree to come here with you and you know how hard it is for him to be around this many strange vampires.*

A sharp jab to Kane's rib reminded him they weren't the only ones in the room. Eric, Brenden, Toni and Jonas were all giving them looks of annoyance.

"Do you realize how rude that is?" Toni asked, her eyes snapping with anger.

All three of the brothers said, "What?"

"Talk to each other in your heads like that," Jonas grumbled. "It's going to give us all a complex."

They all looked sheepish. Since they had always talked to each other that way so often in the past it was easy to slip into that mode of communication. "Sorry." Kane shared a chuckle with Dante. Rafe was back to brooding, so he didn't join in. "We'll try to watch it."

"I guess that's a start." Toni rolled her eyes, but there was a small grin playing on her lips. "Come on, Rafe. Let's get Ozzie to the infirmary." When Kane opened his mouth to argue Rafe's presence again, Toni cut him off, "Rafe is his sire, so that

makes Ozzie his responsibility.”

Crap, she had him there. Ancient vampire customs dictated that when you made a new vampire, you were the one who had to teach them how to survive and use their new powers. A triumphant gleam was on Rafe’s face because he knew there was no way Kane could fight this argument.

“Fine,” Kane conceded with a snap of his teeth. “Just don’t pull anymore stupid stunts.”

Rafe nodded curtly before he took off after the stretcher being wheeled into the infirmary. The werewolf was so large, his feet hung over the edge. It didn’t help Kane’s anxiety when he noticed the witch’s gaze remained locked on Rafe. Her eyes were narrowed in a thoughtful expression. She didn’t say anything though as she tucked herself into a chair that was in the far corner of the room. Eric gave her an annoyed glance, but didn’t kick her out, yet. It was clear to see the leader didn’t want her there. In fact, she seemed to be more unwelcome than a feral werewolf-vampire.

“We’ll have to call the wolf pack and warn them about the ghouls.” Kane wasn’t looking forward to that conversation. “They have a dwelling outside of the city they can take their young to until the threat is over.”

“Do you think they would be willing to help us

out?" Eric asked, his voice tight with concern. Toni had mentioned the clan leader had a daughter and he was no doubt worried about her.

"Not once they find out about what happened tonight. We'll be lucky if they don't put a price on Rafe and Ozzie's head." Kane looked down at his boots. "I'm really sorry about what Rafe did. He was just trying to help out a good friend."

"There's no need to apologize," Eric said brusquely. "I would have done the same thing if one of my friends was dying."

Kane nodded his thanks. Markus came into the room, his face shocked. "I just heard about Ozzie." He looked over at Dante. "I would have expected you to do something stupid like that, but never Rafe."

Dante flipped him off. "Where have you been?"

"After I got done talking with Eric, I ran into an old friend." A sly smile spread over his face. "We spent some time getting reacquainted. I think I could get comfortable here."

"So does that mean you're moving in?" Dante asked, incredulous. Their friend had always vowed he would rather die than live in a clan.

"For a while." He looked out of the corner of his eye at Eric. "I thought I might be able to help out here."

"Well, while you were putting your chocolate in some chick's peanut butter, you missed all the

fun.” Dante then filled the vampire in on the ghoul attack and about the dark witch. By the time he was done, Markus had turned an unhealthy shade and his jaw had dropped.

“The ghouls will find a way into this building,” he pointed out. “We have to do something about the children.”

Even as he spoke, Kane could hear the tinkling laughter of the children playing. His gut grew tight at the thought of the ghouls converging on innocent clan members. Then an idea came to him. “The escape tunnels. The ones under the city.”

The only ones that nodded in understanding were Dante and Markus. Dante knew because all Pure Ones had heard tales about them and Markus knew because, Drone or not, he was old enough to be around when they were built.

“What tunnels?” Jonas asked. “When I was still human, I was a Detroit City Police officer and I don’t recall anything about escape tunnels.”

“Our kind built them decades ago when there was a surge of human vampire hunters,” Dante supplied. “All around the city there are various entrances and exits that are hidden from humans. We had them commissioned so vampire families could make a quick escape no matter where they lived.”

“We don’t even know if they are still passable,” Markus argued. “They haven’t been used in years,

not since the werewolves took control of Detroit."

"We're going to have to try. I don't see any other option." Kane glanced over at Eric. "That is if you agree?"

"I think you're right." Eric ran a hand through his hair. "How are we going to know where to go?"

"I helped design them," Markus supplied. When Eric looked surprised, he added, "I used to be an architect and the Pure Ones weren't always too proud to work with Drones."

"If I could make a suggestion," Kane started carefully. Eric was the leader of the clan and the last thing he wanted to do was usurp his authority. "My brothers and I can stay behind with a few others until we have Ozzie stabilized while you and Markus take the clan down to safety."

"I don't like the idea of leaving you guys unprotected," Eric argued.

"We can take care of a few ghouls." Dante flashed a cocky grin.

Kane was shocked when Markus growled in anger. Their friend was usually so laid back. "I'm not leaving you guys behind," he snapped.

"You need to get those kids to safety." Dante placed a comforting hand on his friend's arm. "No one knows those tunnels like you do." After a couple of seconds, Markus reluctantly nodded his

head.

The vampires put their heads together and started to plan.

* * * *

"I hope these are tight enough." Toni pulled on the padded four-point restraints holding Ozzie down to the hospital bed. "If not, we are in for a world of trouble when he wakes up thirsty."

"He can use me," Rafe offered in a harsh whisper.

The forlorn look on the vampire's face tore at her heart. All the others had left to help with the evacuation, but he'd refused to leave his friend's side. The sorrow coming off Rafe was so thick Toni could almost taste it. "Why did you turn him?"

"I couldn't stand to see someone else die." His face crumpled a bit before he composed himself. "I thought that maybe if I saved Ozzie, then I wouldn't hear that baby's cries every night in my sleep."

Toni sucked in her breath. No wonder Rafe was always so quiet and withdrawn. He truly blamed himself for that human family being slaughtered. Even though she thought it impossible, her hatred for Corbin increased. "Kane doesn't blame you." She wanted to cry for them all so bad her throat

ached. *No, because he is too busy blaming himself. That's something it appears you Toren brothers excel at.*

A low rumble told them Ozzie was awake. He opened his eyes to reveal amber irises that were speckled with black. "Why?" he demanded in a harsh voice, his glare boring into Rafe. "Why didn't you let me die with dignity?"

"I thought you deserved a second chance," Rafe spoke so low, Toni had to strain to hear him.

"By turning me into a freak?" Ozzie bellowed, the tendons in his neck stood out as he fought against the restraints. There were loud popping sounds as they threatened to give. "It would have been better for you to let me die!"

Toni ran to the door and yelled, "I need some help in here!"

A hand pushed her on the small of the back and she fell headfirst into the hallway. The door slammed shut behind her before the click of the lock being placed echoed in her ears. She scrambled to her feet and tried to open it. On the other side, it sounded like Armageddon. Howls mixed in with the sounds of screeching metal and breaking glass. The door shook when something that sounded suspiciously like a body rebounded on it.

"What happened?" Kane demanded as he came running.

"Rafe is in there with Ozzie and from the sounds of it, the werewolf broke the restraints." Toni tried kicking in the door, but it didn't budge.

"Move out of the way." It was the witch. Even though there was a quiet, ethereal aura around her, there was the unmistakable determination, too.

She held up the palm of her hand and muttered some words Toni couldn't make out. A ball of energy shot from her palm and blasted open the door. Before Toni or Kane could recover, the petite female was already in the room. Toni followed in time to see her shoot off another energy ball at Ozzie, who was crouched over the prone body of Rafe.

Ozzie let out an unearthly howl as he flew across the room and crashed into the table that had the shredded restraints still hanging from it. He rebounded quickly to his feet and barred his fangs with a hiss before launching himself at the witch. At the last moment, Rafe jumped up and dragged her out of the way.

Ozzie slammed headfirst into the wall behind them with a sickening crunch. Instead of being incapacitated by the blow, he staggered to his feet before shaking his head, in a canine manner.

"Why are you witches so hard to kill?" he asked in a gravelly voice. "I couldn't finish off Serebella either. I barely managed to wound her enough to

get away."

Toni whipped out her gun, unsure of what to do next. By all rights, she should shoot the werewolf-vampire dead. Rafe was already sporting a gaping neck wound, courtesy of the crazed being. Yet, she couldn't. She'd seen how much Kane and his brothers cared for the male and she didn't want to be the one to put the poor creature down. Beside her, Kane had his own weapon drawn, but he wasn't shooting either. His face showed he was facing the same inner dilemmas she was.

The witch however, didn't seem to any qualms about fighting back. She grabbed one of the guns from Rafe's holsters and emptied the clip at Ozzie. He howled in rage as his body jerked from the gunshots. Letting out one last snarl, he spun around and dove out a large window in the back of the infirmary.

Toni ran over to the window and looked down at the street below, it was deserted. There wasn't even a broken body at the bottom.

Kane joined her, his eyes dark with fury. "Where in the hell did he go?" he asked.

"He got away. I think the combination of werewolf and vampire is making him even stronger than immortals usually are," even as she spoke the words, she shivered in fear. Ozzie would be almost impossible to take down.

"He's the least of our worries tonight," the witch said as she handed Kane the now empty gun. "Serebella may have been wounded, but I can feel her magic growing again. More and more of her ghouls are awakening as well."

"How would you know that, witch?" Kane asked.

"My name is Morgan," she snipped. "I would appreciate you using it, especially since I just saved your collective hides.

"Fine, Morgan," Kane enunciated each syllable of her name carefully.

Toni knew he was fighting hard to keep his patience. It was next to impossible to get any information out of her.

"I can sense Serebella's dark magic, the same way Rafe here can sense it. Witches and warlocks always know when there is a rift in the magical balance." Morgan crossed her arms over her small frame and squared off with Rafe. She didn't even flinch when the vampire sent her a look so chilling it could have frozen water.

Toni was stunned, vampires and witches despised one another. She'd never heard of any of them getting along well enough to have a civil conversation, let alone the length of time it would take to breed. The only reason Morgan had even managed to get inside the clan building tonight was because of the stir the ghoul attack had

caused. It was only a matter of time before Eric kicked her out on her fine witchy behind.

"You don't know what the hell you're talking about," Rafe growled as he held a hand to the wound on his neck. "I'm a vampire, not a warlock."

Morgan let out a soft laugh that was almost flippant. It didn't seem to faze her at all that there was a vampire giving her a death glare. "You can't hide your other half from me, Rafe."

"This isn't up for discussion." Kane moved his body protectively between his brother and the witch. "Now, get out of here and forget you ever saw him."

"Listen here, big, tall and scary," she punctuated her words, by stabbing her finger at Kane. "I didn't just come here to take care of Serebella. I came here to find Rafe."

"Go away, I don't want to be found by your kind," Rafe snapped. He glowered up at the witch from under his dark hair.

"I can't leave. I promised your mother."

Rafe shoved Kane to the side so he could storm up to Morgan. Toni couldn't help but admire the witch when she didn't take a step back in fear. Rafe looked ready to kill and all his anger was directed at her. The only reaction the witch gave was a slight tremble in her body.

"I don't have a mother," he growled.

"That's funny because I talked to her before I left."

"Then you can go back and tell her to stay out of my life. She's been doing a pretty good job of that since I was born."

"Maybe things aren't the way you think they are." She moved to touch his wound, but a snarl from him brought her up short.

"And maybe I don't give a damn. You just need to leave." He took another step closer to her.

"No."

"You're seriously beginning to piss me off, witch."

"I seem to have that affect on people so that's nothing new. Besides, you owe me." She tilted her chin up.

Rafe leaned forward until their faces were inches apart. "I don't owe you crap."

"I saved your life a few minutes ago. So I figure you owe me big time, Mr. Moody."

Toni could feel the corners of her mouth twitching into a smile. There weren't that many individuals who would dare stand up to one of the Torens. This small slip of a female was doing more than that. She was basically giving Rafe a verbal spanking. What's more, she was finally making the brooding vampire come out of his shell.

"I'll send you an e-card."

"Come home and meet your witch coven. All I'm asking for is this one itty bitsy favor." She held her thumb and forefinger an inch apart for emphasis.

Rafe snagged her hand with his. His fingers were covered in blood from his wound and Morgan stared at it as if mesmerized. Still keeping his hold on her, he brought their hands up to his mouth. With slow, deliberate moves, Rafe licked his own blood up, never once taking his piercing gaze off her face. Her pink lips parted in a surprised gasp, but she didn't fight his hold.

"See," he whispered. "All vampire."

He seemed to completely forget Toni and Kane were still the room. Toni glanced over at Kane to see if he was going to intervene.

He was taking the whole scene in with a grim expression. It wasn't until Rafe brought his hand up to his mouth again that he finally barked, "Enough! Let the witch go."

There was a pregnant pause as the two vampires locked gazes and Toni knew they were communicating telepathically. The witch continued to remain frozen in place, her face a strange mixture of confusion and fear. With a sudden snarl, Rafe's head snapped back in her direction.

"We may as well talk out loud, big brother." Rafe dropped Morgan's hand like it had burned

him. "I can feel this little witchy burrowing around my mind. Somebody should teach her it isn't nice to eavesdrop."

Toni wasn't too surprised, she'd heard some witches were telepaths. A guilty look flooded the witch's face, betraying her.

"I'm sorry," she stammered. Her gaze moved from Rafe to Kane before settling on Rafe again. "I didn't mean to."

"You didn't mean to?" Rafe echoed. He stepped forward and this time she backed up. He moved like a lion stalking its prey until he'd backed her up against the wall. "Witches, you never can trust them. I should send you back to your coven, a husk, drained of all your blood. Maybe then they'd learn not to mess with me."

As he barred his fangs, Toni realized that he wasn't speaking empty words. With Ozzie, the attack and finding out his mother was looking for him, the vampire been pushed too far. She had to do something quick before Rafe did something they all regretted. "Rafe, stop," she didn't yell for fear she'd provoke him even more. Instead, she kept her voice smooth and gentle. "She's not worth it. We already have the Pure Ones, the ghouls and probably the werewolves mad at us. We don't need to instigate the witches, too."

Rafe paused, his lips hovering inches above Morgan's jugular. "I have a feeling this one is

going to be nothing but trouble though. She's going to dig and push until everyone knows about my mother."

He did have a point there. If the vampires found he was half warlock, then he and his brothers would become bigger pariahs than they already were. Toni slowly made her way over to his side and put a gentle hand on his arm. "Don't worry, nobody is going to know because the witch will be leaving. Even if I have to physically carry her ass out myself."

Rafe's eyes had grown black and his fangs were large with blood lust, yet when his gaze searched her face, there was a gentle touch to them. "Don't hold this against, Kane. It's not his fault what I am."

"Now why would I do that?" she soothed. "I would never hold this against Kane and I would never hold it against you either. You are a good male and I'm honored to know you. That's how I know you won't kill the witch. Now let her go and we'll just walk out of here. The others have already evacuated and we need to leave before more ghouls show up."

She half expected Kane to come and try to persuade Rafe to leave, but he stayed on the other side of the room, an awestruck look on his face. The black was starting to slowly switch back to green in Rafe's eyes, but he still kept and iron grip

on Morgan. The witch was being smart by not saying anything. Toni could tell she was scared though, because her pallor was almost as white as the ghouls and her heart was fluttering wildly in her chest.

“Ozzie was one of the few friends I had and I totally fucked him over tonight.” Rafe’s voice was ragged with grief.

He finally looked at Toni fully and her stomach lurched when she saw the despair and anguish in his eyes. She almost found herself wishing he was back to the old, brooding, quiet Rafe. This new side of him was heartbreaking.

“After we take care of the ghouls, we’ll go find him and bring him back, I promise.” She started to make a slow circle on his arm, in hopes she could tame the savage beast. “Come with me. Please.”

“Dante and I need you,” Kane finally said. He started to edge his way toward them. “We always fight together. Remember our promise to each other?”

Several tense seconds ticked by as Rafe appeared to be debating with his inner predator. With a low snarl, he finally pushed himself from the witch and let Toni lead him away.

As they passed Kane, she could hear him whisper, “Thank you. If I hadn’t already loved you before, I would now.”

Her heart did a little flip at his open declaration

of devotion.

"You're going to need me," Morgan called, although her voice had lost all its previous bluster. "I'm the only one who can kill Serebella."

"We'll manage on our own, thank you," Kane snapped.

"She just took two of your soldiers and is holding them captive."

They all stopped dead in the tracks, the air thick with suspicion and fear. "How would you possibly know that?" Kane asked.

"Serebella just told me." Morgan pointed to her temple to indicate how the dark witch had communicated. "She even told me their names."

Fear clogged her throat as Toni wondered who might be in trouble. There was no doubt Morgan was telling the truth. She had to know they would kill her if she started playing mind games. "Who is it?" she asked past the lump in her throat.

"She says their names are Dante and Brenden."

CHAPTER TEN

Dante struggled against the several pair of hands that dragged him through the filthy floor of some decrepit building. He could hear the grunts and scuffles coming from Brenden who was receiving the same treatment. Even though a burlap bag had been placed over his head when he was attacked, he knew by the smell of stale dirt who had them. ghouls.

How he'd managed to be taken so easily was still a bit of a mystery to him. He and Brenden had been working guard duty one minute, walking parameter outside the clan dwelling and the next, they were jumped and thrown into a van. Who knew that freaks who spent most of their time hanging out in cemeteries knew how to drive. He had a fleeting image of them standing in a long line at the DMV, waiting to get their pictures taken for a driver's license.

He tried to send out a mental SOS to his brothers, but he ran into the same brick wall, he'd been getting ever since he'd tried when they'd first

been attacked. The dark witch must have put up a magical barrier. He continued to fight violently even though the vise like grip the ghouls had on him made it futile. Scuffles to his right, told him Brenden was doing the same thing.

"That's it, kid," he encouraged. "Make them work for it. Just don't bite them." ghouls' blood was toxic to vampires because the grave diggers feasted on corpses so death flowed through their veins. Several muffled thumps followed, each of them punctuated by a grunt from Brenden.

The hands lifted him up in the air and threw him roughly into a hard-backed chair before they took his arms and handcuffed them behind him. They stretched his protesting limbs so tight, he had to bite back a scream of pain. The hood was whipped off his head and he took in several gulps of fresh air. He shook in relief even though the air was still rank with ghoul stink.

Automatically, he started to size up every inch of the room, looking for weaknesses he could use so they could escape. The dark room revealed none. Even though the floor was covered in dirt and various other scrapes of trash, the walls were all lined with heavy black drapes that had white symbols chalked on them.

The scent of blood filled his nostrils. It was two distinct types – the more earthy type that signified werewolf and the rich, spicy one screamed

vampire. Ozzie! This must have been where he'd been tortured, then when he'd escaped, they must have brought the Drone soldier they found injured here as his replacement.

He frantically searched, looking for the dark witch, but all he saw was the ghouls who stood in a semi-circle around the vampires. They were making a weird sort of humming moan that started to grate on his nerves. He could smell the fear rolling from Brenden, but the vampire didn't show it. His face was a cool mask of indifference. Dante couldn't help but feel some admiration build for the vampire. He almost felt guilty for giving him such a hard time earlier.

The ghouls parted so the dark witch could come through. She may have been hot if it hadn't been for the limp, cut lip and circle of bruises around her throat. In her right hand, she held a silver dagger that was already rusty from dried blood. Once she stepped closer, Dante picked up the scent of her blood and the stench made him openly gag. Hell, this was worse than even the ghouls. She smelled of death, darkness and putrid evil. He could hear Brenden's breath hitch as he fought back his own nausea.

"Just be quiet and follow my lead," Dante whispered to him. "I'll get us out of this. Toni would never forgive me if anything happened to you."

Even though it shouldn't matter to Dante what she thought, it did. Although he wasn't ready to trust anyone, especially someone who once worked for Corbin, Kane did. Hell, Kane more than trusted her, in the span of hours he'd grown to love her. Dante had been able to see that from the way his brother looked at the female. So Dante would make sure Brenden survived because it would upset Toni if he didn't and if Toni was upset, then so would Kane be.

He knew without a doubt his brothers would come and find him, telepathic link or not. It just may take them a bit longer and that meant the witch was going to have some time for fun. Judging by the sadistic glint in her eye, she was good at it. He just needed to make sure she directed her fury at him. Maybe by the time she was done working him over, the rescue party would be there and Brenden could get out of this unscathed.

"Where's Corbin?" Dante made a point of sniffing. "I would recognize his oily scent anywhere."

"If I were you, vampire, I would be more worried about yourself," her voice had a slight manic edge to it.

It sounded so similar to his voice at those times when he let his dark half take over. Now that was a real pleasant thought. He was in the same

mental health league as this bitch. "I take that to mean he left you to do all his dirty work. Meanwhile, he will sit at the VRF headquarters and keep his hands clean. That's what he does best—use others to do his scud work."

She backhanded him, her long nails scoring his cheek. "Shut up, you don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh my God." Dante shook off her blow as he gave her a disgusted once over. "You actually think he has feelings for you? You're even more stupid than I thought." That earned him a one—two from her fists. His face jerked from the blows and the blood started to run down his face. She grabbed two handfuls of his shirt and jerked him closer, the chair making squeaking noises against the floor. Damn, she was a lot stronger than he gave her credit for. Of course, since witches were immortal that should have been expected. Still, she was really, really strong.

"I am not stupid!" she screamed in his face.

He tried not to flinch when her hot breath fanned his face.

"I managed to get you two, didn't I?"

"Yet, you allowed a werewolf to slip from you tonight," Dante gloated. "Does ol' Corby know about that? By the way, Ozzie talked. He said you were the lousiest lay he'd ever had." That one worked. The witch went into a frenzy, beating the

ever living crap out of him. The ghouls stayed back, but their strange humming started to get louder as more of his blood flowed. They were probably anticipating feasting off his still warm corpse when she finished him off. Somewhere along the way, the chair tipped over. He couldn't hold back the scream of pain when his body weight fell on his already overstrained arms.

She was on him, instantly, her feet taking over for her fists.

One kick in the gut took away his ability to breathe, while another to his face broke his nose. *Not the teeth, please, I need those to feed.* A high-pitched gasp burst from his shredded lips as he struggled to get in some air. Even a small amount would be good.

His vision started to get hazy and he fought to stay awake, knowing if he went under it would be the end of him. He'd underestimated the witch and her strength and it was going to cost him big. There was no way he was going to be able to hold out for his brothers.

"Hey, witch! My clan is going to find you and rip you to shreds!" Brenden yelled.

What in the hell was the kid thinking? It he kept yapping like that Serebella would only direct her attack at him. Then his heart stilled, that was *exactly* what Brenden was trying to do. He must know Dante was almost done and he was being

brave. *What an idiot.*

"I'd like to see you try to take us with our hands undone," Brenden continued with the taunts. "I heard witches were weak so you're probably afraid of doing that. It won't matter though, when my clan gets here, I'm sure they'll have fun draining you dry."

With a screech, Serebella abandoned Dante and was on Brenden in a flash. Dante closed his eyes and flinched when the sounds of flesh being hit assaulted his ears. After a few seconds, Brenden's grunts of pain started to fill the air. The scent of freshly spilled vampire's blood assailed Dante's nose. Just when he was about to totally give up, he felt it. The magical barrier blocking his telepathy slipped.

Hot damn, maybe there was hope after all. He closed his eyes and tried to focus around the pain. *Rafe, Kane, help us.* There was no response and the despair hit him so hard his stomach clenched. *Please, Kane. I need you bad.* He was vaguely aware his tone had taken on a pleading whine. *She's killing us.* He opened his lids enough to see Brenden was sagging in the chair now and no longer responding to the beating. This witch was strong, even for an immortal, which meant she had to be using her dark magic to enhance her strength and powers.

Kane's voice finally came, *I'm here, don't worry.*

Just keep the contact up and Rafe and I will be able to follow the link to you. Is Brenden with you?

Dante let out a sob, which came out garbled. *Yes, but he's not doing too well. You better hurry.* The edges of his vision started darkened again and he fought to stay alert.

How about you? You sound bad.

I'm...Dante hesitated, I'm not doing too well either. I think you better get here quick. Be ready for the dark witch, she on some sort of mystical form of steroids.

Don't worry, we have our own secret weapon.

The sounds of the beating stopped and Dante strained his ears in the hopes of hearing if Brenden was still breathing, he even listened for the young vampire's heartbeat. He couldn't hear anything because his ears were still ringing from his own beating.

So instead, he worked hard to make sure he stayed alert enough to keep up the telepathic link. All the while he waited for the sounds of footsteps that would tell him the witch was coming back to kill him. Instead, he heard something else even worse. The humming moan coming from the ghouls got louder and more excited. The smell of dirt got stronger as they got closer and closer.

Dante who had never once shown fear in the heat of a battle opened his mouth and let out a scream of terror.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Kane gripped the steering wheel and fought to get control of his emotions. Toni was in the passenger seat, her own face tight with anger. Ever since he'd told her what Dante had revealed in their telepathic communication, she'd become silent and distant. Rafe and Morgan were in the backseat of the borrowed car—Rafe plastered to the side so he was as far away as possible from the small witch.

"Are you sure, it was Dante who contacted you?" Toni asked, breaking her silence.

Kane didn't feel annoyed at her aloof manner. She was as worried about her brother as he was about Dante. "Yes, he talked to me. He said Brenden was with him." He deliberately left off the part about both of the captured vampires being beat. He also left out that, while the telepathic link was still up, it was weak and waning by the minute. Dante wasn't talking anymore either, no matter how many times Rafe and Kane had tried to get a response.

"Are you sure we shouldn't have waited for backup?" Morgan asked.

No, I'm not. In fact, I'm pretty sure we should have. We're all probably going to get killed. The only other backup they had was Jonas and the handful of Drone soldiers who had stayed behind to help secure the others' evacuation. Not nearly enough to justify an ambush on a heavily ghouled witch's lair. Toni's hands were balled up in tight fists and he wanted to pull over and wrap her in his arms so bad it hurt. It was torture to have to watch her suffer this way.

"I hate watching you suffer this way," she said, echoing his thoughts.

"We'll get them back," he promised both of them.

"And then we'll tear apart that bitch for touching them," she finished. Her eyes were set and a cold fury was rolling from her. Her body was coiled and tense, ready to strike and kill.

Despite the wretched situation they were in, his mouth curled into a small smile. He loved her assassin side.

"Do you vampires at least have a plan?" Morgan asked from the backseat.

If Kane didn't know better, he could have sworn she was scooting closer to Rafe, almost taunting him for trying to keep his distance. "Yes, we're going to go and get Dante and Brenden out

of there while Jonas stays behind and plants a few surprises."

Her mouth opened and closed several times as she looked incredulous. "How are the four of us going to get them out? We can't possibly beat Serebella and her ghouls alone."

"We don't need to defeat them. We just need to fight them long enough to drag Brenden and Dante out. After that, our boy, Jonas, back there will take care of business."

"How?" Her face was pale.

"Some well planted C-4 explosives," Rafe supplied. He seemed to be taking delight in the witch's discomfort.

"We're hoping that too many of the ghouls haven't infiltrated the city yet and, by taking out the building, we will be able to kill them and Serebella at the same time," Kane said. He couldn't help but wonder why Rafe was so talkative all of a sudden. For years, both he and Dante had been struggling to get Rafe out of his emo shell and this small slip of a female had managed to do it in the span of a few hours. Granted, Rafe opened up so he could inform her he wanted to kill her, but hey, progress was progress.

"That is the stupidest plan I've ever heard," Morgan nearly screeched. "It's going to get us all killed."

"If you're so afraid, then stay behind." Rafe shot her a malicious grin similar to the ones Dante gave.

"I already told you." Morgan acted like as if she was talking to a child. "I am the only one who can defeat Serebella's magic. I just wasn't planning on getting killed in the process."

"Then sit back and shut up. I won't let anything hurt you, I promise." Rafe closed his eyes and mouthed a curse word as soon as the last sentence slipped out.

Kane looked at Toni out of the corner of his eyes. She didn't appear aware of the exchange. Still a ball of anxiety, her hands were in fists and her jaw was clenched. "This will work," he told her. *Sure, why wouldn't it? They had a whiny witch, a depressed vampire, and a handful of Drone soldiers on their side. Who could lose with those odds?*

"Stop!" Rafe yelled. "He's here, I can feel it."

Kane screeched to a stop in front of a huge deserted warehouse. Set in the middle of nowhere, it was dark, run down and had most of the windows busted out. The decrepit hulk stood on the edge of the river and the lights from the city reflected on the water causing an eerie glow. Rafe was right, Dante's mental beacon was coming from this place. Even though it looked empty, Kane knew without a doubt this was the witch's lair.

"I can feel the black magic." Morgan shuddered. "Serebella is in there, too."

They all got out of the car and stared up at the husk of building. The only sound was the distant honking of cars and the gentle lapping of waves hitting the pier. The four Drone soldiers joined them, they were all ready in their black battle gear. Jonas had a large duffle bag over his shoulder.

"You three come with me." Kane motioned with his hands which ones he was talking about. He pointed his finger at Jonas. "You, stay and do your thing. As soon as we're clear, you light the place up."

"Are you sure you know what you're doing?" Morgan asked the giant suspiciously.

Jonas gave her a huge grin. "I could do this in my sleep. You just worry about getting our boys out of there. When I tell you to run, you run though. We're not going to have much time to play with."

"Okay." Morgan let out a loud gulp. "Run. No problem. Why couldn't I have just stayed back at my coven? Now I'm stuck with a group of psychotic vampires with an explosive fetish. I really should have stayed in college like Mom wanted."

Jonas looked at Kane. "I'm serious about not having much time. Normally I would detonate the explosives remotely, but I can't risk the ghouls

taking me out before I have a chance to set them off. I'm going to have to use a timer to be safe, we can't let even more of those fuckers loose on the streets. They have to die even if we..." he trailed off.

"Even if we have to die with them," Kane finished. "We all understand—one way or another, this ends here."

"Speak for yourselves," the witch grumbled. "I didn't sign up to be kindling wood. My kind tried that in 1692 and it didn't turn out so well."

They ignored her as they all got their weapons ready. All of them were going in with M-16's, even the witch who seemed to have combat training. Kane turned to the Drone soldiers. "Are you ready?"

"Yes, Sir," they all snapped back. Kane was brought back to the days when he'd led others. It was kind of nice taking charge again.

"Sir?" One of them asked permission to speak. When Kane nodded, he continued, "Will you tell your brother we have his own set of ninja pajamas waiting for him?"

"He'll be ecstatic," Kane replied with a smile. Sad thing was, Dante probably would be.

"Promise me you'll be careful," Toni said.

Kane gave a nod. All the vampires were dressed in black, even he and Rafe who were both wearing the same cargo pants and top as the

Drone soldiers. The only bit of color was the deep green cloak the witch wearing, she pulled up the hood so her profile was covered. They all looked ready to do some serious damage and Kane was proud to go into battle with them, he just wished there were more of them.

A scream tore through the darkness, it was long and raw with terror. Kane stilled, his heart hammering in his chest. Even from this distance he recognized it. Dante. He had never heard his brother scream like that before, not even in all those hellish years in prison. They had gone through some pretty horrific things then, too. A cold sweat broke over his body and he had to fight hard to temper his emotions. If he was going to win this battle, he needed to be in control of his emotions.

He slapped a cold mask on his face as he turned to look at the others. Rafe wasn't so controlled. His eyes had turned black and his canines were large and ready to do some damage. A growl came from deep within his chest as he gripped his gun in a death's hold.

"Let's go get them," Kane ordered as he took the lead. They started at a cautious pace, even though the scream still echoed on his head and made him want to run. He had to be careful though, the last thing he wanted to do was walk headfirst into a trap. They made their way to a set of double

doors that marked the entrance of the building.

At first glance, it appeared the doors were chained shut. It was only on closer inspection that Kane could see the links were merely looped together. He pushed the warped wood doors and they opened without so much a squeak, showing they had been used a lot recently. Then they entered into hell.

* * * *

Markus led the large group of clan vampires down the tunnels that formed a spider web under the city of Detroit. Their footsteps made wet echoes off the damp, brick walls. It was dark—the only light coming from the lanterns some of the woman and children held. Their path was often obstructed by debris and garbage, forcing them to waste time when they had stop so the soldiers could move it. Markus felt his frustration mounting at each delay, already their pace was much too slow for his liking because the children couldn't run as fast as the adults.

"I knew you'd come around," a voice from his left said.

Markus recognized him as the young vampire who had tried to recruit him at the nightclub. *God, had it only been a day ago? It seems like it'd been forever.* "Don't get too excited yet," Markus

grunted. "I could be leading you all into even more trouble."

They turned the corner and the water at their feet grew deeper. The already slow pace decreased to a crawl as some of the younger vampires had trouble slugging through.

"We're not going to make it, are we?" Eric asked, he was holding the hand of a small brown-haired girl he'd introduced as his daughter.

"It's not much further," Markus promised. The hard truth though was he wasn't sure how long it would take them to get out. It had been so long since he'd been down in the tunnels and his memory had dimmed.

They turned another corner and Markus let out a curse. The tunnel had collapsed and their path was completely blocked. Even with their vampire strength, there was no way the soldiers would be able to clear the way in time.

"What now?" Eric asked.

"I guess we have to double back and see if there is another way out." Which meant more wasted time. Markus wanted to punch one of the nearby walls in frustration.

Eric's radio crackled to life as a communication came through. "There is a group of ghouls coming up behind us." It was the group of soldiers that had been positioned at the rear of the group. "I don't think we can hold them back." The sound of

gunfire echoed through the open communication followed by the sounds of screams.

Eric's face grew hard as he talked into the mike. "Are you there, Kurtis?" Nothing. "Kurtis, report your status." Nothing, again. He knelt down and looked at the small girl. "Misty, I need you to go with Dahlia for awhile."

"Be careful, Daddy," she said solemnly before running off to do as he asked. As soon as she was gone from his side, the clan leader started barking orders. "I need all the civilians behind the soldiers. Everyone else, arm up and get ready to fight. We are not going to let them take us!"

Everyone scrambled to follow his orders and soon the civilians were clustered together—the wreckage from the cave protecting one side of them, the soldiers protecting the other. Markus joined in with the armed vampires, going down on one knee and pointing his gun down the dark passage. Water seeped up through his pants and made him shiver in cold. Eric joined him and they both stared into the darkness and waited.

Markus couldn't help but see the bitter irony in the whole situation. Twenty-four hours ago, he wanted nothing to do with this Drone clan and now he was probably going to die with them. Funny thing is, he had no regrets. For the first time in his miserable life, he was willing to die for a cause. Damned if it didn't feel so right.

CHAPTER TWELVE

As soon as they entered the building, the ghouls were on them like white on rice. Kane squeezed off several rounds from his M-16 as his gaze darted around, looking for Dante. All he saw were the pale bodies of the ghouls. *Please, don't die on me you, jackass*, he silently pleaded to his brother. Dante still didn't answer him and Kane's stomach clenched when he realized not even the razor thin telepathic link was there anymore.

A ghoul lunged.

He brought up his gun and shot it full in his face. When the gore splashed into his face, his flinched a bit. It was hot and bitter tasting, which made his gag reflex kick into gear. This was even worse than the Snuggle snot. Unfortunately, he didn't have long to linger on that thought before another ghoul attacked him.

The clatter of gunfire rebounded all around him as the others fought off the enemy. Kane was pleasantly surprised to see the witch was more

than holding her own. He'd worried she was going to be the weak link in their group. A ghoul jumped at her and Rafe shot it at the last moment, saving her from being taken down. She turned and smiled at him right before a small glowing red ball of magic shot through the air and sent her flying across the room.

It was the dark witch and she must have decided Morgan was her biggest threat so she took her out first. Kane swung his gun around and shot at her, but his bullets were deflected by some invisible shield.

Serebella threw back her head and laughed in a low husky voice before her black lips curled into a sly smile. "Nice try, but you're going to have to do better than human weapons. There is no way they can get through my magic." She looked over in the corner of the room. "Oh look, my pets have found some num-nums to gnaw on."

Everything seemed to move in slow motion. Kane turned and saw the crumpled bodies of Dante and Brenden. Neither one of them was moving amongst the broken furniture that lay splintered around them. Kane spotted a handcuff attached to one of Dante's wrist and his heart dropped. There was so much damn blood pooling around their still forms. Dimly, he could hear Toni's scream of denial and Rafe's anguished sob. He took two steps toward the fallen vampires

before a group of ghouls converged on him and took him down.

The thick bodies crushed him and his lungs choked up when the smell of grave dirt filled them. Toni's muffled oath reached him and he realized they had taken her down, too. He fought madly, desperate to get to her, but he couldn't get past the pile of ghouls. An imaginary clock ticked down in his head as he wondered how much time they had left before Jonas set off the explosives.

"No!"

Morgan's one word denial reached his ears, over the humming of the ghouls. There was a bright green light and the bodies were thrown off him. Kane scrambled to his feet and ran to where Toni had been standing. He started to shoot at the ghouls, making sure to aim for their heads so they could never get up again. There was another flash of green as Morgan fired off magic at the pile that was attacking Rafe. Kane was relieved to see his youngest brother struggling to his feet. As soon as he was free, he started to help out the Drone soldiers.

Serebella screeched in anger and raised her hand to shoot of her magic, but Morgan beat her to it this time. She hit the dark witch square in the chest with a blast of magic. Serebella spun in the air, landing on her side with a loud thud. She didn't stay down for long. The evil witch shot to

her feet before returning fire. Morgan ducked behind a corner and the two started to exchange magical blows at a blurry pace.

Kane ignored them and continued to fight his way to Toni. When he finally saw her blonde hair through the sea of bodies, he wanted to weep in relief. Then when he noticed what she was doing, his couldn't help but grin. She may have down, but she was still fighting. Her dagger was swinging and each pass drew more ghoul blood. When he reached out to grab her, he almost lost a limb in the process. Her eyes grew wide when she realized it was him.

"Brenden?" Her hair was mussed, there was a small cut on her chin, but other than that, she was unscathed. "Brenden?" she repeated, more urgent.

Kane knew she was asking if he was alive or not. "I don't know," he replied honestly, his own voice hitching.

At that moment, Morgan hit Serebella with a magic bolt that was larger than all the others combined. The dark witch was thrown into a table that was coated in blood and it tipped to its side, taking her with it. When she landed, she didn't move. The ghouls stopped their attack and started to mill around in confused circle. Kane blinked in confusion at their behavior. Even though the dark witch's hold on them was broken, they should still be attacking. It was the natural behavior of ghouls

to not play nice. He would think about that later, right now he wasn't going to look a gift horse in the mouth. The whole place was going to come crashing down on their heads any minute, they needed to haul ass. Kane and Toni ran to their brothers, skirting around the ghouls.

They reached them at the same time. Kane grabbed Dante by the front of the shirt as Toni gathered Brenden in her arms. Kane choked back a sob when he saw the condition his middle brother was in. Deep bite marks covered every inch of exposed skin and his face was a swollen mass of bruises and lacerations. When Dante's eyelids cracked open as a deep shuddering breath went through his body, Kane felt tears of relief build up.

"Tell her I'm sorry," Dante slurred. "I tried to make sure they didn't hurt him, but I fucked up."

Kane picked him up gently so he wouldn't hurt him more. "You can tell her yourself when we get you out of here."

"I didn't mean to fail her. I know how much she means to you."

More words slipped past his swollen lips, ones that Kane missed because he was doing a low ramble.

Rafe ran over and took Brenden from Toni. At first Toni held her brother and refused to let him go. "I've got him, sister," Rafe said in gentle tone

Kane never heard him use before. "I'll make sure he doesn't suffer any more pain."

Crystal tears pooled in her eyes as she released her hold and let Rafe pick up Brenden. "Thank you."

He held the young vampire tenderly to his chest as he started to carry him out. "We need to hurry, I don't know how much longer Morgan can hold back the ghouls."

It was then Kane noticed the witch was in a trance and her hands were held up, palm sides out. Whatever she was doing caused a slight breeze to run through the dark room and her cloak flittered in the breeze. Her magic was doing the trick the ghouls still didn't attack. Kane exchanged admiring looks with Toni—they would have to take a witch with them more often.

"Let's go," he ordered. Even though the ghouls weren't attacking, the Drone soldiers were still shooting them and the vampires seemed reluctant to leave their fun. They obeyed though, although they shot a few more ghouls on their way out. Morgan came last, dropping her hands before she hauled ass out the door.

As soon as they had cleared the doors, they heard Jonas yell, "Take cover!"

Kane dove for behind the car, grabbing Toni and bringing her with him. He couldn't help but land on Dante since he'd still been carrying him.

The vampire let out a garbled moan, but otherwise didn't react. Heat blasted over Kane's back as the explosives went off. He tried to cover Dante and Toni as much as possible with his body as debris rained down on them.

As soon it was clear, Kane shot to his feet, helped Toni up, then picked Dante up again. "We need to get out of here. The humans will be sending their police and fireman to investigate." He looked back at the building and saw nothing but rubble. Some of the old wood had caught fire and smoke was rising into the air.

"Damn, Jonas," Toni exclaimed. "How much explosives did you use?"

"A shitload," the vampire grinned proudly.

A red light suddenly shot from the burning building and hit Morgan in the back. Instead of being thrown to the side like before, the witch remained locked into place as her body convulsed. Her eyes were wide in terror and her mouth moved in a soundless scream. That deep husky laugh overrode the sound of the crackling flames, breaking glass and falling wood. Despite the heat, Kane felt a shiver slide down his body as he recognized it as Serebella.

She stepped from the burning building, walking through the flames as if they were made of water. The fire cast an orange glow over her alabaster flesh, making her look even more evil,

almost as if she had stepped straight from the bowels of hell. The soldiers sprayed gunfire in her direction, but the bullets rebounded. Meanwhile, she continued to hold Morgan with her sorcery. Morgan's eyes were now rolled back into her head and her face was devoid of any color.

Something the dark witch said earlier flashed through Kane's mind, *Nice try, but you're going to have to do better than human weapons. There is no way they can get through my magic.* What they needed was another witch, but the only one they had was currently having her insides being scrambled. All they had was Rafe, who was only half magical and he'd never been shown how to harness his powers.

A low snarl came from his right and Kane turned to see Rafe crouched, ready to attack. He was in full blood lust, his eyes black and his fangs so large he couldn't have closed his mouth if he had wanted to. He barred them even more with a hiss, right before he launched himself at Serebella.

She realized the danger she was in too late. Rafe had already landed on her chest and ripped into her throat before she had a chance to defend herself. The torturous hold she had on Morgan was broken and the witch crumpled face first into the ground. The evil witch screamed in pain right before she and Rafe tumbled backward into the flames.

"Rafe! No!" Kane screamed and tried to run to his brother's aid only to be driven back by the heat. Desperate, he tried again several times, only to have the flames push him back each time. A frustrated scream ripped from his throat as he felt the skin of his hands start to blister. He peered frantically in the flames, hoping for a miracle even as he knew there was no way his brother could have survived.

No he can't be dead. We can't survive without Rafe.

He collapsed to the ground, vaguely aware he was still screaming his brother's name. Soft arms came up and pulled him into an embrace. It was Toni. Even in this hell he was in, he would recognize her smell anywhere. He let her pull him against her chest and he cried. He had never allowed himself to do that before, not even when they had sent his brothers and him to prison.

"We need to leave," she urged in a soft voice. She was right, he could hear the distant wail of sirens.

"I can't leave him." He wrapped his arms around her waist and held on tight.

"Oh my God," Toni breathed. "Look."

Kane obeyed her and saw a figure emerging from the flames, much like Serebella had a few moments ago. At first, he thought it was her again, but he realized the form was too big to be her. He waited, his breath held, not daring to hope. The

figure took a couple of more steps and Kane whooped in joy.

It was Rafe and there wasn't a scratch on him, despite the fact he was walking through open flames. Sure there was blood on him, plenty of it. Somehow Kane knew it was the dark witch's though. A strange blue light was surrounding Rafe, protecting him from the fire, and soon he was clear and stood in front of them.

"How?" Kane stammered.

"I honestly don't have a freaking clue," Rafe shrugged. "I thought I was dead and then all of sudden this happened." He cocked his head toward the sirens. "We better get out of here." The strange blue light was still surrounding him and Kane wondered if it was permanent.

"You're still lit up like a cell phone screen," Kane pointed out stupidly, his mind whirling from everything that had just happened. It appeared Rafe could tap into his magical side after all.

"That's because there is one more thing I have to do," Rafe said almost regretfully. He went over to the witch, dropped to his knees and pulled her limp form into his lap. "Come on, Witchy, wake up for me."

Morgan remained still, her head lolling back.

Rafe lightly tapped both of her cheeks with the back of his hand before muttering, "You would

have to make this hard.”

Whatever Kane had been expecting next, it sure as hell wasn't for Rafe to dip his head down and press his lips to the witch's. At first nothing happened, then the blue light grew to envelope both of them. A small gasp came from Morgan right before her arms wrapped around Rafe's neck and she began to return the kiss in earnest.

A small growl came from Rafe, but this time it wasn't issued in warning, it was one of want. Even over the smell of smoke and burning building, Kane could detect the arousal coming off his baby brother. The witch wasn't exactly complaining either, she had her hands fisted in Rafe's hair and her slender body arched up like she was seeking more of him.

Kane grunted in disgust, Rafe was the last one he would have thought would make out in public, with a witch, while human EMS were on their way. The only blessing was that freaky blue light had faded until it was gone. Rafe pulled back from the witch. “I only did it to save your life, it meant nothing.”

The witch nodded, a stunned look on her face. She brought a shaky hand up to touch her lips. “Who are you trying to convince, Fangs? Me or you?”

Rafe curled his lip in disgust before he got up and went to the car. After a few seconds, Morgan

got up and followed him. Her gait was a bit unsteady, but she seemed to be perfectly fine otherwise.

Kane watched them leave, curious. He had a feeling things were long from over between those two. Kane pulled Toni back, tight to his chest and gave her a hug. "Let's go home," he whispered

* * * *

Kane and the rest made it back to the Drone dwelling just as the rest of the clan were coming back from the tunnels. A tall dark-haired female instantly peeled from the group and ran to the injured Brenden and Dante. She wore the usual cargo pants, except hers had various medical supplies sticking out of the pockets instead of weapons. Her calculated gray eyes scanned the rest of them, assessing. When she moved to take Dante out of Kane's arms, he instinctively pulled him closer.

"It's okay," Toni assured him. "This is our doctor, Dahlia. She'll take good care of our brothers."

Kane set his brother on a nearby stretcher and the female went over to inspect the injuries. "These are some pretty deep bites," she observed. "It will be a miracle if they don't leave scars. Damn ghouls."

"Are there a lot of casualties?" Kane asked. They'd heard the civilians had been cornered in the tunnels, but they didn't know much more.

"Not as many as there could have been. The soldiers were able to fight them and then your friend Markus led us back out," there was evident admiration in her tone.

"You should see the places I could lead you, sweet thing," Dante mumbled between broken lips. "I taught Markus everything he knows."

Kane grinned, it looked like Dante was on the road to recovery. Brenden was on another stretcher next to Dante and he laughed.

"You better watch out for Dahlia, I hear that she bites and not in the good way."

Dahlia curled her upper lip, showing off one fang. "I only bite little puppy vampires who can't control their hands. Maybe this time you will keep your fingers off my ass, Brenden."

Dante hooted in laughter as he reached out to hit fists with Brenden. All around them the air was festive as the survivors cheered and celebrated. Eric came up, his weapon still cradled in his arm. "Thank you, the entire clan owes you."

"How many did we lose?" Kane asked, noticing how easy the word *we* slipped out.

A flicker of grief went over the leader's face. "We lost three soldiers that were guarding the rear. We would have lost a lot more had it not

been for your tunnels. We did manage to take care of off the ghouls on our end so I don't think there will be any loose on the streets. I have some of my soldier doing patrols, just to make sure."

"We'll be better prepared next time," Kane vowed. "Between your Navy Seal training and our knowledge of supernatural creatures, we'll be ready for anything the VRF throws at us."

Eric raised a brow. "Does this mean you and your brothers are going to stay with us permanently?"

"As long as you'll have us." He wrapped an arm around Toni's shoulders and gave the top of her head a kiss. "I can't think of anywhere I would rather be. Are you sure you don't mind having three Pure Ones living with you?"

"After tonight, I consider you part of the clan. You guys are one of us now." Eric gave a small salute with his weapon before going off to join the festivities.

Someone had found candy and they were passing it around to all the children because, vampire or not, Halloween was a time to gorge on sugar until you got sick. Brenden and Dante were finally deemed stable enough to be carried to the infirmary. Dante made sure to smack Dahlia on the ass as they were being carried out.

Rafe and the witch were doing their best to ignore each other. All the other vampires seemed

perfectly at ease with Morgan being in their mists since she had almost died saving them. The witch was making a small ball of flame dance on her hand to the delight of the children. Occasionally her gaze would seek out Rafe.

There was still no sign of Ozzie and Kane was wondering if his friend would ever come back. A wave of sadness hit him as he thought about how alone Ozzie was. His pack would never let him back in now that he was vampire, too. It would kill Ozzie because werewolves were brought up together and their pack was everything to them.

Another group of children were bobbing for apples and Kane couldn't help but grin at the way they used their tiny underdeveloped fangs to their advantage. Toni came over with two mugs and handed one to him. He wasn't too surprised to see that it was hot cider.

"The clan always gets into Halloween," she explained. "It's one of the few holidays our youth can celebrate openly in the human world. This party has been planned for weeks. Everyone is thrilled we can still have it."

"We liked it growing up, too," he remembered. "Rafe always ate so much candy, he got a stomachache."

"Can I show you something?" she asked, setting down her mug.

He nodded and set his down, before he took

her hand. He was confused when she led him to a supply closet and shut the door behind them. It was so small they didn't have much room to move and her body was pressed against his. It was dark, but his vampire eyes let him make out enough to see the sly smile playing on her lips.

"What did you want to show me?" he asked as he reached up and caressed her silky cheek.

"I wanted to show you how good I was at bobbing for apples."

Despite the cramped space, she somehow managed to drop to her knees in front of him. His breath hitched as he realized what she was going to do with a clan full of vampires on the other side of the thin door. He let out a low groan, this was so wrong that it made him rock hard with desire. As her hands fumbled with his zipper, he worked her hair free from her ponytail. He wanted the golden tresses loose so he could hold them while she sucked him. She worked his cock free and ran her tongue up in one delicious lick. He let the back of his head drop against the wall as he moaned in pleasure.

"You weren't kidding, you are good." He licked his lips and his fangs started to grow as he thought about tasting her.

"I'm just getting warmed up." To prove her point, she wrapped her lips around him and took him fully in her mouth. Her pink lips stretched to

take in his girth while her hand reached under to cup his balls.

He fisted his hands in her hair, just like he'd imagined doing as she gave him the best blowjob of his life. Her tongue seemed to be everywhere at once, hard when he wanted it and gentle when he needed it. When he came, he didn't even bother to fight it, releasing himself inside her sweet little mouth. She swallowed softly, taking every bit he had to offer. When he was done, she stood and looked up at him from under her sooty lashes.

"You better take your pants off before I ruin them by ripping them from you," he ordered in a harsh voice. His cock was already hard and ready to go again. He was going to pin her against the wall and take her so hard she would scream his name.

Her eyes grew dark with desire. His look must have told her what he intended. She quickly shimmed out of her pants and put her arms around his neck. "Put your legs around me," he commanded. She did as he asked and he cupped her bare ass with both his hands to help hold her up. "You're mine, forever. Do you understand?" his words were coming out harsh because lust had taken over.

"Yours forever and you're mine," she vowed back. Her fangs were long too and he grew even harder at the thought of her biting him as he bit

her. "I love you, Kane."

He entered her in one hard thrust and they cried out together. Kane pinned her to the wall and used that as leverage while he made love to her at a fast hard pace. At first, he was worried he was being too rough with her, but she squeezed her legs tightly around him and bit him in the neck with a feral sounding growl.

A growl of his own came out before he bit her back just as savagely as she bit him. Kane had heard of this before—two vampires being so drawn to each other blood lust made them attack one another in an irresistible urge to claim each other. It was primal, it was vicious, it was carnal.

Toni threw her head back with a scream of pleasure. Her lips were slick with his blood and he couldn't resist kissing her. Their lips met in frantic frenzy of passion, he could taste both of their blood intermingling in their mouths. Her blood was inside him and he could feel its essence reaching every inch of him. His balls tightened as he reached his pinnacle. Throwing his head back, he released his seed into her hot passage.

Her muscles tightened around him as she came. He continued to thrust into her as his semen shot inside her. It took several minutes for either one of them to recover and the first thing he noticed was the deep bite mark on her slender neck. A satisfied smile curled his lips before he licked the wound.

"I love you so much," he whispered against her flesh.

"I love you, too, Kane. Happy Halloween."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephani Hecht is a happily married mother of two. You can usually find her snuggled up to her laptop, creating her next book.