

Kissing Orion

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Chapter One

Shifting the weight of the box to his hip, the deliveryman impatiently banged on the side door with his fist trying not to lose his clipboard balanced on top.

With a groan the metal door opened and a handsome auburn-haired man peeked out. "What do you want, love?" He asked in a thick English accent.

"Blood delivery."

Cool green eyes looked at him from head to toe before giving him a lusty grin. "You're not the usual driver."

He shrugged. "Guy was sick. I was called in. You gonna let me in or not. This box is heavy."

"Sure come on in." The man's smile inferred the words could be taken any way the deliveryman wanted.

"If you could sign here." He said, slamming down the clipboard with delivery paperwork back onto the box and sliding a pen out of his shirt pocket.

The bartender signed on the line but when the driver went to grab the clipboard back he kept a grip on it. "How about a kiss love, or don't they let cops do that on duty?"

To the bartender's surprise the driver tipped back his head and laughed loudly and cheerfully. When he was done he gave the bartender a cheeky smile. "What tipped me off? I thought I was doing pretty well. Did a little delivery work in college."

Smiling back the bartender leaned closer. "You smell too fucking good, mate. The bloke who usually delivers smells like three month old cigarettes." He took a deep breath and the driver saw his fangs peeking through his gums. "On the other hand you smell like sugar and sunshine and look like a gay bloke's best dream."

The cop laughed again. "You sweet talker. I'm Detective Aaron Bradshaw, first precinct." Aaron held out his hand to shake. "I told them you wouldn't fall for it but I didn't think it would be how I smelled that tripped me up. I'll have to remember that. The delivery's legit though. The rest of your blood is in the truck."

"Banner Hawkins." The bartender replied shaking Aaron's hand longer than necessary before reluctantly letting it go. "I'll help you unload if you tell me why the cops are trying to get inside the club."

"I need to talk to your master. Rumor has it he might have the answers I need and he's ignoring me through the usual channels. I hoped if I got inside some lovely man could help me out." Aaron batted his eyelashes shamelessly at the bartender.

"I can think of a lot of ways of helping you out." The bartender said with a smile, "starting with that kiss."

Aaron couldn't remember the last time a cute guy flirted with him. It felt good to be admired and he was more than a little tempted to give the man a kiss despite being on duty.

"The man came to talk to me." A silky voice said behind him. "I believe that kiss is mine."

Orion marched through the club. The minute the gorgeous detective walked into the bar he'd known. *He's mine.*

Before he saw the man he knew that this one was destiny. After seeing the man he knew he could easily be his obsession.

"I'm Orion." He offered holding out his hand.

"Detective Aaron Bradshaw." The gorgeous cop said shaking his hand. "Nice to meet you Master Orion."

The vampire groaned as their palms crossed. It was hard to resist the almost overwhelming impulse to yank the other man into his arms and sink his teeth into the sexy detective's neck. The urge to sample Aaron's flavor from the vein was so strong it was almost overpowering.

Orion was pleased when he was able to unclench his grip on the other man's hand. Stepping back he gave the detective what he hoped was a professional fangless smile. He could feel his teeth trying to descend. With effort he forced them back into his gums. He didn't want to scare off the detective. He had plans for the man and none of them included the gorgeous man running from the club screaming.

"Follow me and you can tell me what you need." Orion said.

All the things you need. He added silently.

There was nothing he wanted more than to be exactly what Aaron was looking for.

The detective was quiet as he followed Orion down the hall. If he didn't feel the man's aura behind him, Orion would've thought he walked alone.

Quiet for a human.

Orion entered his office and motioned for the detective to sit on the opposite chair. Presumably to speak with Aaron, however, it was the perfect angle to look at him. The ceiling lights shone directly on the dark head displaying streaks of red highlights hidden in the ebony hair, leaving the vampire to wonder if they were natural or cleverly tinted.

"I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me." The detective said, pulling Orion's attention from his hair.

"No problem."

He ignored the man's pointed stare. If he wanted to brush off Aaron's superiors it was his option. If they weren't such overbearing pricks he would've talked to them when they called the first time.

Aaron resisted the urge to take the arrogant vampire down a notch. If he wanted the man's help he'd have to play nice. His superiors would gut him if he lost the chance to talk to the city's most powerful vampire master because he lost his temper.

"We would like your help in catching a drug dealer we think is operating out of this club."

"My club." The vampire's eyes turned red with fury as he jumped to his feet and loomed over Aaron. "Someone dares to run drugs from here?"

“Well that answers the question about whether you knew anything about it.” There had been some discussion at the station whether the vampire master was part of the ring. From his reaction, Aaron would bet his next paycheck that the man knew nothing about the drugs.

“You doubted it?” The vampire master looked almost hurt.

Aaron found himself standing up and patting Orion on the shoulder. “Well I hadn’t met you and was only going by the evidence presented.”

When Orion gave an amused glance to where Aaron was touching, the detective snatched back his hand. “Sorry.”

“Oh honey you can touch me any time.” The vampire purred.

Aaron was taken aback. Was the gorgeous vamp flirting with him? Not that he minded. It was hard to be offended by flirting from six feet three inches of sleek muscles and hot manhood. Orion’s jet-black hair was long enough to cover his ears and nape and short enough to leave the sensitive portion between neck and shoulder bared. Totally his type if Aaron was into the bloodsucking set. However, the detective had known too many people who’d gotten involved with vamps and then completely lost focus in anything outside of their blood bound relationship. That sort of bonding wasn’t for him. He liked his job and didn’t need a bloodsucking distraction.

“With your permission we’d like to set up a sting operation in your club to catch the dealer in the act.”

“Well you don’t have my permission yet do you?” The vampire gave him a smug smile.

He could tell by the playful look in the vampire’s eyes that Orion was going to make this difficult.

“We will keep it as quiet as possible when we apprehend our suspects. If possible we will wait until they leave the premises before making an arrest.” Aaron said, trying to sweeten the pot. Maybe the vampire was worried about his club’s reputation. Though he’d never heard of rumors of drugs bothering a party crowd.

“And who are these officers who will be at my club? My club has a certain reputation and most of your ‘people’ will stand out and scare off anyone you’re trying to capture for drug trafficking. Drug dealers can spot a cop miles away.”

“Don’t worry I’ll make sure we have people who can blend.”

“Will you be here?”

Aaron shrugged. “That will be up to my captain.” He didn’t make the schedule. As far as the drug bust was concerned his part of it was over once he sweet talked his way inside and got a one on one interview with the vampire king.

“No. That will be up to me. I will allow your men here but only if I get a dance.”

“A what?” Surely he’d misunderstood.

“A dance.” Orion gave him a wicked smile. “You know dancing. Two people moving together to music.” He leaned over so his face was only inches from Aaron’s, “so close they could almost be one person.”

Aaron jerked back. “Ummm.” Shit. This assignment was important but he hated to give in. “One dance and nothing more. I’m not willing to whore myself out for the department.”

The wide smile he received was unsettling. "I promise you I'll never ask you to do anything for the department."

Wrapping his arms around Aaron, the vampire pulled the detective tight against his body. Aaron's lips were taken over in a bone-melting kiss. By the time the vampire released him his body was buzzing and his lips tingled.

Valiantly he tried to recapture his professional mode. "So is that a yes?" Aaron asked.

Orion traced his finger down Aaron's cheek. "Don't think we're through baby. But yes bring your little cop friends but remember what I said. You have to save a dance for me."

The vampire's fingers tangled in Aaron's hair, holding him still as Orion leaned over and whispered directly in the cop's ear. "And don't even think about flirting with other men, baby. I'm a very jealous man and you are mine."

* * *

"You look fabulous babe."

"You don't think it's over the top?" Aaron examined himself in the mirror turning around to look at how tightly the leather pants cradled his ass. "I don't want my partner arresting me for indecent exposure before the drug bust."

Aaron's best friend, Jack, laughed from his spot on Aaron's bed. "You said you wanted to hide in plain sight. Trust me everyone will be dressed just like you. Besides Claire will be too busy drooling to arrest you."

"Claire is married and Jeff is straight." Aaron said, naming the pair that would accompany him. Claire was his permanent partner and Jeff was on loan for the evening's events.

"Straight, gay, male, female. Trust me darlin' no one will be immune to your hot body in those pants. Hell, if we weren't such good friends I'd jump you."

Aaron turned to see Jack's handsome face leering at him. Bursting into laughter he went back to looking in the mirror. "I hope I don't get an erection because I could do some serious damage."

Jack walked up behind Aaron, looking over Aaron's shoulder in the mirror. "Put on the black wife beater, and your motorcycle boots so you can hide your pistol and I'll get your hair ready. Trust me you'll fit right in. I hear it's the hottest club and all the club babies cream their leathers to get inside. Is it true the owner is even hotter?"

"He's all right." Aaron wasn't going to talk about his meeting with the owner. Some details he was keeping to himself since he still didn't know how he felt about the gorgeous club owner's kiss.

Shaking his head, Aaron pulled on his tight shirt and let Jack gel his hair while putting a diamond stud in his pierced ear. He had to push hard because the hole had closed over since the last time he'd worn an earring.

Under Jack's discerning eye, Aaron gave a quick spin. "Well, do I pass?"

Jack leaned over and placed a kiss on Aaron's cheek. "Baby you will kill them all in that outfit."

"Only if I have to." Aaron said with a cold look in his eyes.

* * *

Orion paced the confines of his office glancing from time to time out of the wide window overlooking the club. He didn't know why he bothered because he'd know as soon as the gorgeous detective walked into the building. Impressions of the man still clung to his senses. If he closed his eyes he could still taste Aaron's flavor on his tongue and smell the other man's fabulous scent.

Orion sniffed again.

Opening his eyes, the vampire lunged towards the window.

He wasn't imagining that smell. Eagerly his eyes searched the room. It took him a moment to realize the hottie walking through the middle of the dance floor was his man.

Damn.

Everything in Orion went hard and tight.

If vampires dreamed, this man would be his dream man.

Orion watched Aaron prowl through the dance floor with a primitive grace. The uninformed would think the sexy man was scanning the club for a pick up, but Orion saw him make contact with the other two cops in the bar before slinking his way across the dance floor.

The man's long muscular body was finely displayed by his tight clothing. Orion watched as one interested man stroked a hand down Aaron's arm. Rage filled the vampire. His teeth dropped as the need to protect what was his overtook his more cautious nature.

Someone was touching his man. It didn't matter that they just met. Aaron was his.

With a roar of rage Orion left his office to go claim his mate.

Aaron scanned the room in a continual pattern, careful not to let his eyes make contact with anyone who might construe it as a sexual invitation. Banner, the bartender, gave him a leer from behind the bar but Aaron just shook his head and continued dancing. He kept his body a moving target easily slipping between dancers and away from groping hands. It wasn't until his second circuit around the dance floor that he saw a viable suspect. A skinny guy with dreadlocks and a furtive air sat in the corner with his back to the wall.

He felt a tinge of sadness that Claire couldn't be there after all. Her husband was ill and she had to rush to the hospital, leaving Aaron in the hands of Jeff and another detective he didn't know very well. Claire would've loved the dreadlock guy. Aaron smiled as he imagined her snarky comments. His partner had a sharp tongue and a sharper sense of humor.

Still dancing, Aaron watched his suspect through mirrors and sideways looks as the man searched the room. He was looking for someone. Aaron kept moving but made sure to stay in the

general area. This was the first person he saw who looked like they might be up to something more than drinking, dancing or seducing anyone who walked by.

His cop instincts on high alert, Aaron watched to see if anyone approached Mr. Dreadlocks. He ignored the hands that brushed against him for a quick grope or a longer slide along his back. It was all part of dancing in a club of horny people. The club was friendly to gays but it wasn't by any means a gay club. Lots of mixed partners were doing the bump and grind as Aaron moved along the dance floor.

It wasn't only men who copped a quick feel.

One petite woman became extremely frisky. Her black kohl outlined eyes feasted on Aaron like she was a starving tiger and he was an all-you-can-eat steak buffet.

"Hello honey." She purred. "All alone?" She stepped closer sliding her black PVC'd body all along his taller form. "I can make sure you don't leave that way."

Before he could form a solid defense, much less a single thought, a low growl had the woman stepping back.

"Mine." Aaron heard Orion's voice behind him. The vampire's tone was low and mean, with a dangerous edge cutting through the techno-music of the club. Aaron didn't need to turn around to see Orion's expression. He could tell by the woman's reaction that Orion wasn't looking friendly.

"S-sorry." She said with wide, frightened eyes. In a show of great self-preservation she turned and vanished into the crowd.

"I don't think that's a great way to get return customers." Aaron said turning around.

Orion grabbed Aaron and pulled him into his arms until they were so close a piece of paper couldn't slide between them.

"I don't want anyone touching you." He hissed. Aaron got an up close view of sharp fangs before he was taken in a bone melting kiss. When their lips finally parted he blurted out the first thing that came to his mind. "I don't kiss on the job."

Orion smiled exposing full fangs. "Consider me camouflage."

With a fine disdain for Aaron's composure the confident vampire kissed him again scrambling the cop's ability to focus.

Aaron forced his hands to push the vampire far enough away that he could take a breath. Remembering the assignment he glanced to the dreadlock dude's table only to find it now occupied by a pair of giggling co-ed's who were eyeing him and Orion with lusty expressions.

Annoyed, he marched up to the pair of girls. "Evening ladies, would you happen to know where the guy who was sitting here went?"

One of the girls pointed towards the back hallway.

"Thanks."

Ignoring the large vamp towering over him, Aaron rushed down the hall signaling his co-worker at the bar as he went.

"I'm going with you." Orion said behind him.

Aaron would've argued but he knew enough by now to know he'd lose any argument with the gorgeous vamp, so he just nodded before rushing through the alley and out the back door. A metallic ping had him lunging for the nearest dumpster for cover.

"Orion, get down here!"

Aaron jumped up, grabbed the vamp's wrist and pulled him to shelter. A burning sensation in his shoulder told him that he didn't get away unscathed.

"I smell blood, what's wrong?" Orion asked sniffing at Aaron.

"What's wrong? That bastard is shooting at us!" Aaron shouted.

With a glare at the clueless vamp, Aaron pulled his cell phone out of one boot and his firearm out of the other.

Orion laughed. "What else do you have hidden?"

Aaron gave the vampire a hot look. "If we get out of this alive I'll let you find out for yourself."

Flipping open his phone, Aaron called the officers inside to warn them there was gunfire. He jerked away when he felt a tongue lapping at his wound.

"Stop that." He said closing his phone.

"Don't be a baby. I'm closing the wound." Orion waved a hand to indicate the alley. "I'm not one to have back alley affairs."

"Well excuse me, I didn't know you were so nice." Aaron sneered. His heart beat madly against his chest but he couldn't tell if it was because of the bullets flying or the feel of Orion's hot mouth against his skin. Adrenaline rushed through him like a live wire.

Orion gave the cop a hungry leer. "Oh I'll show you how very nice I can be."

A bullet hit the dumpster. "Shut the hell up." The shooter shouted. "You two make me sick."

Orion's eyes lit with a red fire. Before Aaron could say anything the vampire jumped up and over the dumpster in one clean leap. Astounded, Aaron just stared for a moment before the sounds of a struggle had him emerging from his hiding space, his gun held at the ready.

Coming around the corner, Aaron was greeted by the site of dreadlock guy dangling from Orion's hold a good two feet off the ground.

"Orion, drop him!" Aaron shouted running towards them.

The vampire turned to face him. "Did you just talk to me like I was a dog?" Orion continued to hold the shooter as if he was no heavier than a glass of water.

Aaron eyed the vampire cautiously. "Not intentionally. I don't want you to kill the guy before I get the chance to talk to him."

"Oh. Sorry." With an evil glint in his eye, Orion dropped the shooter to the ground where he fell with a loud crunch.

"I'd feel sorry for you." Aaron said to the man on the ground, "but you did just shoot at me." Just as he was about to interrogate the man, his back up appeared.

"About time. He could've been killed while you were having a drink." Orion said with a growl. He flashed a bit of fang at Jeff, making the man pale.

"Behave." Aaron said.

Orion folded his arms across his chest. "No."

The detective read the man his rights and put him in the police car they'd brought around. Detective Jonathan Zheng, a longtime friend and occasionally more walked up to them.

"I heard there was some shooting so I thought I'd come by. What's the story?"

"I think he knows something about the drugs moving through here." Aaron didn't question why Zheng would feel compelled to check on him. He would've done the same if a friend of his were shot at.

"Why do you think he knows something?"

Aaron shrugged his shoulders. "A hunch."

Zheng nodded. "I've had enough experience with your hunches to take a chance." He fiddled with the cuffs of his designer suit before looking up at Aaron through his lashes. Zheng inherited a lot of money from his Boston lawyer father and liked to dress well. With his dark hair and honey colored eyes the man always looked good. Aaron had reason to know Zheng looked even better out of his clothing.

"I was wondering what you were doing tomorrow night. I've got some tickets to that new Broadway play coming through here."

A low sound had Aaron turning his head to look at the vamp.

Orion's eyes glowed red and his fang tips showed between his lips. "He's going to be busy." The vampire said. A low growling came from his chest, the noise that distracted Aaron before.

Zheng backed away holding his hands up. "I'll call you later Aaron. Go home and get some sleep."

Orion wrapped his arms around Aaron growling low. He licked at the bullet wound on Aaron's shoulder while he glared at anyone who wandered too close.

"Come on Orion. Let's go get some rest." Aaron made sure his voice was low and soothing trying to talk the vampire back from whatever place he'd gone. There was something not quite sane in Orion's behavior and he didn't want to have to shoot the vampire to save a fellow cop.

He let Orion drag him away from the scene. Mr. Dreadlocks could spend the night in lockup and Aaron would go check on him in the morning.

"Mine." Orion muttered licking at the wound. "He wanted what was mine."

"It's okay the detective is going. It's just the two of us."

Aaron nodded his head to Zheng's concerned look. Zheng made a *call me* sign with his hand before getting in his car.

Before Aaron could say anything else he was whipped around and consumed. Orion's mouth took his in a carnal kiss that burned him down to his toes. Ignoring their surroundings, Aaron tried to get more friction to ease the pressure down below.

Orion released him with a smile. The freak out session was apparently over.

"My room. Now." Orion said grabbing Aaron's hand and dragging him back to the club.

Aaron dug in his heels.

Shit he was strong.

Orion turned to see why he was being held back and bared his fangs.

"I'm still on duty." Aaron explained. He didn't want Orion to get the impression that he didn't want him but he also wasn't going to get chewed out by his boss because he was having sex on duty. "I need to check in with my boss before I let you take me back to your lair."

"Lair?" Orion's face took on a thoughtful expression. "I like it. Yes, I will drag you back to my lair." The vampire flashed his fangs at Aaron. "Now make your phone call while you walk."

Aaron checked in with his boss and assured him he was fine and that the bullet wound was just a scratch.

"I'd make you check in but Zheng called and told me you were being taken care of."

There was a question in there. "Everything's fine." He assured his captain. It helped when you chased your supervisor around the playground as a child. It cut back on a lot of the bullshit.

"Check in with me tomorrow before you interrogate the prisoner."

Code for I want to see your ass in person to make sure you're okay.

"Will do captain." He hung up.

"Come on sweet, let me look at your wound. I have a feeling that if I don't return you in perfect condition tomorrow I'm going to have the entire police force hunting me down."

"I'm not sweet." Aaron protested as he let Orion pull him back into the club and up a short flight of stairs.

Orion flashed him a toothy smile. "I've tasted you darling and trust me you're very sweet." The vampire frowned. "You're not diabetic are you?"

"Not that I know of."

"Hmm. Might want to have the doctor to check that out. When's the last time you had a physical."

"When did you turn into my mother?" Aaron asked.

The sudden change in the vamp from hot future bed partner to mother hen was disconcerting.

"Ummph." Orion's lips slammed into Aaron's sending jolts of desire sparking through his body.

A small whimper left him but he couldn't have stopped it if the entire police force was watching and had brought the fire department for back up. In fact the fire department might be handy considering the flames that were rising from his body.

He'd never had a kiss this heated.

Aaron was breathing heavy when Orion finally released him. There was a tinge of red in the vampire's eyes and his fangs were in full descent.

Damn that was sexy!

"I hope I've cleared up your confusion." Orion said with a wicked smile that showed off his extended fangs.

The fact that Orion could make complete sentences while Aaron's brain was completely scrambled made him want to punch the vamp.

"Completely. Now drag me to your lair and fuck me."

With a wide smile Orion lifted Aaron off his feet and held him like a child.

Before he had a chance to object the hallway blurred and Orion was setting him on his feet in a large bedroom with the biggest bed Aaron had ever seen. It was made out of dark wood and covered in extravagantly soft burgundy covers that looked like they were made out of silk.

“Nice bed.”

“Glad you like it. You’ll be spending a lot of time there in the future.”

“Will I?” Aaron felt an irresistible urge to tease the intense vamp. “I guess that will depend on your persuasive abilities.”

Orion pulled off his shirt exposing a set of wide shoulders and set of sexy six pack abs.

“Let’s just say I’ve never had any complaints.”

“I just bet you haven’t.” After all what kind of asshole complained about perfection.

Aaron sat on the bed and scooted against the headboard to enjoy the show but Orion had a different idea. He stopped undressing and went after Aaron’s boots. He carefully placed Aaron’s gun on the night table before tossing the shoes over his shoulder.

“Sit up baby, I want to take off your shirt but I don’t want to hurt your shoulder.”

“Baby?”

Orion gave him a wicked grin. “Honey? Sweetums?” He tilted his head to one side. “No? I’m sticking with baby. You’re just a young thing next to me. Get used to it.”

The teasing took away some of the need surging through Aaron but oddly it made the vampire more appealing. A man that was sexy and had a sense of humor was a greater temptation to Aaron than a man who got by on his looks. He’d have sex with the man either way, but the humor made him irresistible.

Not a good thing if he didn’t want to become involved with a vampire.

He was brought to the present when his shirt was torn apart and flung off the bed.

“Oops.” Orion said, looking up at him through dark lashes.

“You can’t carry off the innocent look.”

Orion’s answering smile flashed a bit of fang. “Good to know.”

Aaron watched the vampire’s mouth come closer. A tender closed-mouthed kiss was pressed against his lips before a trail of hot, wet kisses following the line of his neck ended at his shoulder.

“I should’ve killed the bastard when I had the chance.” Orion murmured against his flesh. Aaron had to concentrate to hear Orion over the desire rushing through his body as the vampire licked at his wound. He couldn’t even feel the pain in his shoulder any more.

“What are you doing?”

“Sealing the wound.” Orion said absently. “I want you well, so I can fuck you?”

“Who says I’m not going to fuck you?”

Orion’s head snapped up, his face a picture of confusion. “But I have to mark you. I can’t do that if you are fucking me.” He gave Aaron another brain-scrambling kiss.

Aaron came back to his senses when Orion’s hands transformed into razor tipped claws and shredded his leather pants.

“Those were expensive.” He protested with little heat.

“I’ll buy you another pair. Hell, I’ll buy you a dozen. Your ass looks great in leather.” Orion’s voice was distracted as he examined the flesh he’d uncovered. “Turn over.”

“Don’t you think you should take off your pants?” Aaron said with a smirk.

Orion looked down. “Shit.” He gave Aaron a rueful grin before standing up to shuck his pants.

Orion looked down at Aaron splayed on his bed and couldn’t help admiring the view. Clothed, the cop was handsome. Naked, Orion wanted to learn how to draw just to have a reason for Aaron to model in the buff for hours on end. It was too early to inform Aaron that he was Orion’s soul mate. But it was just the right time to enjoy what the man was offering.

Orion removed his remaining clothes so quickly he was certain he must have broken a land speed record.

Soon he was naked and sliding against the human of his dreams.

Two moans followed the contact of bare bodies hungering for each other.

“How do you feel?” He whispered against Aaron’s mouth. He wouldn’t continue if he were bringing the man any pain.

“Good.” A slow smile crossed the cop’s face. “I feel real good. Not as good as you.” Large hands slid up Orion’s bare back and pulled the vampire closer causing sparks of desire to flare up his spine. “But good.”

In two centuries of living, Orion had never desired a person more.

He bit his lip to hold back words he knew Aaron wasn’t ready to hear and he wasn’t quite ready to share.

“Hands and knees, or facing me?”

“What if I want to be on top?” The seriousness of the cop’s face told Orion that this wasn’t a casual question for him.

He stroked Aaron’s silky hair, relishing the texture beneath his hand. For a tough cop he had soft touchable hair. “You can top next time.” He gave the younger man a kiss that matched his gentle caress. “I can’t explain my nature but I have to dominate you this first time.”

Aaron watched him for a long moment as if determining his honesty. “All right, but I have to face you. I’m not comfortable having a vampire at my back.”

It would be a lie to say that statement didn’t hurt but he took reassurance in the fact that they didn’t know each other well yet. A good milestone of their relationship would be when Aaron felt safe with him. Orion knew he’d have to earn Aaron’s trust but he was eager to start.

Orion leaned over and pulled open his side table drawer. A bottle of lube slid into his grasp.

“Found it.”

“Condoms?”

“Don’t need them. I can’t transmit disease.”

Indecision filled Aaron’s eyes.

“What about vampirism?”

“You are either born a vampire or you’re not.” Orion said. His fingers stroked meaningless patterns across Aaron’s chest, his need to touch the other man overcoming his natural reticence. Orion’s usual lovemaking was fast and furious. Aaron made him want to slow down and enjoy the slide of flesh against flesh and savor the flavors that made up his lover.

Orion followed his fingers with his mouth, lapping at the salty flavor pooled at the base of Aaron’s throat. He let out a low hum at the taste of Aaron’s skin and the delicious smell of his lover.

He could just devour the man. Latching onto one nipple, he scraped a fang across the hard nub.

Aaron’s back arched and his long fingers slid into Orion’s hair holding him close. The vampire did it again smiling when Aaron’s fingers tightened in his hair.

“Yessss.” Aaron sighed.

Careful not to lose any hair, Orion slowly kissed down Aaron’s chest until he was even with the younger man’s cock.

“No fangs.” Aaron said, his voice low with warning.

“Never.” Orion vowed. He’d never do anything to damage this work of perfection. Long and thick its round head lured him to lick the tip, tasting the drops forming at its peak.

Delicious.

Orion popped the cap open and coated three fingers in oil. “Lift your legs.”

That fine ass flexed making Orion’s body even harder.

He inserted one finger, then two slowly scissoring his fingers to open up the other man until he could insert a third.

“Enough.” Aaron groaned.

“May I come inside?” Orion asked.

Aaron raised his head from the pillow. “Is that true?”

Orion frowned at his lover. “Is what true?”

“Do you have to be invited inside?”

Laughing Orion crawled back up Aaron’s body. “No. I was just being polite.”

He covered Aaron’s mouth with his own sharing the flavors of Aaron’s body with him.

Panting he separated their lips. “You taste delicious but if I keep kissing you I’ll come before I get inside.”

Aaron gave him a hard kiss. “I wouldn’t want that.”

Orion smiled. He couldn’t remember the last time he had fun with a lover. It was difficult to find a human relaxed around a vampire and other vampires rarely had a lightness of spirit.

Pressing against Aaron’s hole he supported his lover’s legs with his hands as he pushed inside. Once fully seated, Orion stayed still, savoring the sensation of the tight body surrounding him.

Aaron punched him in the shoulder.

“Ow.”

“Move dammit.”

“Don’t make me report police brutality.” Orion said.

“I’ll show you brutality if you don’t move.” Aaron warned.

Giving into his body’s needs, Orion moved his hips back and forth nailing Aaron’s prostate until the other man was moving against him in a frenzy of need. Inhuman sounds poured from Aaron enflaming Orion to slam into his lover harder. Even in his fog of desire, Orion was mindful of his mortal lover’s fragility. He made sure he didn’t cause any permanent damage to his sexy mate.

Aaron’s hand reached down to grab himself.

“Mine.” Orion growled flashing his fangs. “Don’t touch.”

He wrapped his hand protectively around Aaron’s prick, Orion pumped his cock in concert with the movement of his hips.

Giving up his release, the vampire poured his essence into his lover marking him as his own. Any vampire that came close to the younger man would now know that he belonged to Orion. Aaron followed quickly inadvertently marking Orion in return.

Smiling, Orion pulled out and wrapped his body around his lover.

Aaron didn’t know it yet but he was now a claimed man.

Chapter Two

Aaron marched into the police station and headed straight to his desk ignoring the catcalls and whistles that followed his path.

“Looking good.” He recognized the voice of Reynolds calling from the sidelines. He made a note to punch that guy later. Damn Orion for his wardrobe anyway. He didn’t have time to change and it was either leather or designer suits.

There was no way he was going to arrive at the station in leather.

With a sigh he set down his large coffee and white pastry bag before sitting behind his desk.

“Rough night?” Claire, his usual partner, gave him a sympathetic smile from across the aisle.

“It had its high points.” Aaron shook the bag at her. “Apple fritter.”

Claire groaned. “My hips hate you but my taste buds think you’re a god.” She scurried across the aisle between cubicles and joined him by propping herself up on his desk.

Claire was a slightly plump, dark-haired woman with tired grey eyes and a ready smile. She also had a husband dying of a brain tumor, which was why he had different back up last night.

“I heard you were saved by a gorgeous vamp who has a thing for you.”

Aaron groaned. “Cops gossip worse than a group of old women in a quilting circle.”

Claire tilted her head. “Do they still have those?”

Aaron shrugged taking a bite out of his Boston cream donut.

“I hate that you can eat whatever you want and still stay so slim.” Claire complained.

“It’s called a gym. And any time you want to go, say the word and I’ll go with.”

“Uh huh.” She licked some sugar off her fingers. “I’ll put it on my to do list.”

Aaron laughed but quickly sobered as he put a hand on Claire’s arm to get her full attention. “How’s he doing?”

The look in his partner’s eyes told the story. She shook her head and he saw a flash of tears before she lowered her eyes. “They can’t do anything more. The tumor’s too big to operate.” She said in a choked whisper. “It’s a matter of hours now.”

“Then why the hell are you here?”

Claire sniffled prompting Aaron to hand over a tissue. “I had to get away. He’s so sick that he doesn’t even know I’m there any more.”

Aaron stood and gave her a quick hug. “You let me know if there’s anything I can do.” He said, rubbing her back before stepping away and giving her some space. Neither of them were huggy people and Aaron didn’t want to make her more uncomfortable than she already felt.

“Enough about me, though I have to say you’ve improved your diversion skills.” Claire said as she dabbed at the moisture in her eyes before pinning Aaron with a look that didn’t lose any of its power despite her watery red eyes. “Spill partner.”

“His name is Orion.” Aaron said, taking a long sip of his coffee to buy time. “He’s the club owner of that club we’re investigating.”

“Any conflict?”

Aaron shook his head. “No he’s not a suspect. He was cleared before we got involved.”

"You're involved." Claire squealed jumping up and down.

"What are you twelve?"

Claire punched him in the shoulder.

"Ow." Good thing his coffee had a lid.

"Wimp." Claire smiled. "Now tell me, is he fabulous in bed?"

Aaron pulled himself up to his full height. "What makes you think we had sex? Not all gay men jump right into bed together."

Claire gave him a superior smile. "Because with my excellent detective skills I was able to put together the free donut, the fabulous suit that I know for a fact isn't yours, and the enormous bite mark on your neck."

Rubbing at his neck Aaron gave her a wicked smile. "Then you should also be able to detect from my mood that it was fabulous."

Claire's eyes grew misty again. "At least your new lover can't get sick."

Aaron put his hand on Claire's arm. "Go back to the hospital Claire. You'll never forgive yourself if you don't spend those last few minutes with Steve. I'll make your excuses to the captain."

Claire tossed the rest of her donut in the trash and nodded. "You're right. Thanks partner." She gave him a quick peck on the cheek before going over to her cubicle and grabbing her purse out of her desk. With a quick wave she vanished down the hall.

Captain Warren appeared at Aaron's desk soon after. The man was tall with dark hair and a stern look in his eyes. He was also one of Aaron's best friends and a damned good Captain. His sharp eyes glanced over at Claire's desk.

"She gone?"

Aaron nodded. "They don't think he'll make it much longer."

"Damned shame." Warren said with a sad shake of the head. "I attended their wedding three years ago. They were a good couple."

"Yeah. She'll want to come back as soon as possible to get away from the memories."

That snapped the Captain out of his funk. "I had a feeling this would happen so I've decided to assign you a temporary partner until Claire returns. He can help you talk to the kid you picked up last night."

Aaron sighed. He hated new partners. "Who is it?" He asked with a sense of doom.

"Detective Zheng."

When the handsome face appeared behind the Captain's shoulder the first thing that occurred to Aaron was that Orion was going to have more than one word to say about his new partner assignment. He doubted he could keep the information from his vampire lover for long."

Zheng gave him a cocky smile. "I told the Captain I'd be happy to be your partner." The way he said partner promised all kinds of things mostly done between the sheets.

Aaron returned the smile with one of his own that showed more teeth than friendly. "I hope you've stocked up on garlic."

Zheng stopped smiling.

* * *

Aaron settled into his chair and looked at the map he made on his cubicle wall. An increase in drug incidents made a ring around the vampire's club. There had to be some connection.

"Your vampire's neck deep in this trouble." Zheng said beside him.

The two of them were sitting together in Aaron's cubicle looking at the map where Aaron and Claire had outlined the streak of observed criminal activity. There were reports of drug deals in the marked areas but the police hadn't been able to witness the events. Only eyewitness citizens were able to report the transactions.

"Orion's not involved." Aaron said although inside he privately had to wonder. He only knew the vampire a few days and most of that was in his official capacity.

Sighing he picked up his coffee cup to take a sip only to find it was empty...again.

"Let's go out and get some java." Zheng said standing up and stretching. His shirt rode up exposing a slice of washboard abs.

Aaron looked resolutely away. "Sounds good."

He'd agree to anything to get out of that small cubicle where the other man sat too close. Zheng didn't bother hiding his attraction to Aaron and Aaron wanted to keep all his limbs. He had a feeling that Orion would rip off his arms if Aaron came to him smelling of another man.

He stood and grabbed his jacket. "Let's go to Nellie's. I could use some food."

Nellie's was the local cop diner across the street. She had good old-fashioned breakfast food twenty-four hours a day, just what Aaron needed. Suddenly he was starving. His donut was just a memory of hours ago.

"Might want to get some steak and eggs." Zheng taunted. "I hear vampire sluts need their protein."

Aaron jabbed his elbow backwards pleased at the sound of a crunch and Zheng's howl.

"Fuck Aaron I was just kidding."

"Maybe you need better jokes."

He didn't look back as he exited the station. Zheng caught up with him at the restaurant's door.

The detective was holding an expensive handkerchief up to his nose.

"Bleeding?" Aaron asked more out of curiosity than concern.

Zheng lifted the napkin. "No." He admitted reluctantly tucking the cloth in his suit pocket.

"Doesn't that bother you?" Aaron asked.

"What?"

"Tucking a snot rag into your pocket."

"At least I'm not killing forests by using disposable tissues."

"Just wasting a natural resource to wash them."

"Is this how it's going to be? Us sniping at each other the entire time?" Zheng asked, his eyes searching Aaron's as if he could answer the unspoken question lying between them. Questions having more to do with a sporadic romance and dreams left unfulfilled than deforestation.

Aaron didn't answer as a busy waitress waved them toward a booth.

"I don't want it to be. I've always liked you Zheng." Aaron confessed facing the other man. Zheng's eyes held a world of regret. "A few times you more than liked me."

"That was a long time ago and I get the feeling Orion won't share."

Picking up a menu the detective gave him a smirk even as his honey-brown eyes remained sad. "I get the feeling your vampire would drain me dry if I tried to be anything more." He opened the menu but didn't look at it. "I'll cut back on the vampire cracks if you promise to tell me if you find yourself in over your head." Zheng gave Aaron's hand a little squeeze. "I'd hate to see you get hurt."

Aaron returned Zheng's squeeze before releasing his hand.

"Deal. Now let's have some food then we'll go rip that asshole apart."

Zheng flashed his gorgeous smile. "Fabulous. I love to have attempted cop killers for an afternoon snack."

* * *

The suspect sprawled insolently in the wooden chair tucked against a long wooden table. He flashed quick looks at the cops as they walked in. Aaron caught a flash of surprise in his eyes before the suspect looked away.

Lurid bruises marked the kid's neck, a perfect physical memory of Orion's fingers.

Good thing Aaron's lover wasn't a cop or there would be charges of police brutality.

"I want my lawyer." The kid said, his black eyes glowing with hostility. "I'm not going to tell you a goddamned thing without my lawyer."

"All right." Zheng said agreeably. "I'm sure we can get you a lawyer. Did you have one in mind or would you like a public defender?"

The kid blinked, obviously not expecting such a pleasant response. "Ummm, public defender I guess."

"Okay." Zheng gave Aaron a look. "I'll just go get one. After all I'm sure you'll get out on bail soon since you just shot a cop. A cop whose vampire lover has seen your face and knows you tried to kill Aaron here, not to mention dealing drugs through his club. I'm sure he'll be real understanding." He turned to face Aaron. "How long did you say you knew Orion?"

"A couple days."

"Have you had sex?"

Aaron looked at Zheng. "What does that have to do with anything?"

Zheng gave him a wicked smile.

"Gross dude." The suspect said wiggling in his seat. "I don't need to hear that crap."

The detective spun on his heels and leaned over the table. "But it is important to your health because my partner here has been claimed by the very vampire who tried to kill you earlier. How long do you think you'll live if you walk out of here after trying to shoot a vampire's mate? Hmmm."

The suspect turned three shades paler.

“Fuck. What do you want to know?” He asked, his voice a high squeak.

Two hours later the men left the interrogation room with wide smiles on their faces.

Captain Warren was waiting for them in the hall.

“Good job men. Clever idea bringing up the vamp.”

“We’ve got the name of the leader but no way of contacting him. The kid said he’s never met him in person just given instructions over the phone.” Aaron said. “He’s terrified Orion will finish him off. Unfortunately I think this drug ring is just the tip of the iceberg.”

“Why do you say that?” The Captain asked eyeing Aaron with interest.

“Because Orion said he didn’t know the guy was dealing. He’s a powerful vampire and he didn’t feel someone coordinating drugs through his home base. I suspect we’ll find another vampire is involved.”

“Territory wars?” The Captain asked.

Aaron shrugged. “Or just another asshole trying to eradicate the human race. Some vampires will promise anything or even hypnotize their subjects to get them to do what they want. I think that is the case of the kid in there. He wasn’t aggressive and he didn’t have any thoughts of drugs or vengeance in his mind while he was in Orion’s club or the vampire would have picked up on it.”

“So what’s the plan now?” Captain Warren asked looking from one man to the next.

“We trap a vamp.” Zheng said rubbing his hands. He leaned over and nudged Aaron with his shoulder. “Do you think your lover will help?”

Aaron smiled. “I have no doubt that Orion would love to capture a vamp moving into his territory. Vampire’s hate people moving into their territory.”

Zheng gave a wry smile. “So I noticed.”

* * *

Orion paced the confines of his office watching the view screens with a careful eye. He told his staff to alert him as soon as Aaron walked through the door but he didn’t trust that his staff would remember, or realize the importance of his lover.

He let visions of his beautiful cop fill his mind. Aaron had called earlier and asked him not to kill the guy who attacked him.

It was only the newness of their relationship that had him agreeing. Once his lover knew his place at Orion’s side he wouldn’t ask for such ridiculous requests. After the police investigation was over the punk was fair game. He couldn’t let it get around that anyone could hurt his lover and live.

No one hurt Aaron.

“Boss, your mate is here with his partner.” Banner said with a cheeky grin.

Orion scanned his mind and learned that the bartender still yearned for Aaron.

“Forget about ever touching him and send him back.”

Banner gave a resigned shrug. "Guess I should've shagged the bloke when I had a chance."

"Good thing you didn't, I'd hate to lose a good bartender."

"And I'd hate to be lost." He said with a laugh. "I'll send back your baby."

Banner left the room with a cheerful wave.

Orion didn't check the monitors. He was acting enough like a love struck teenager. He was excited to meet Aaron's partner. This visit meant that his cop was willing to introduce him to the important people in his life and Claire sounded like a nice lady.

A knock broke into his thoughts.

He pulled open the door. His eyes didn't see anyone except Aaron as he pulled the detective into his arms where he belonged.

"I missed you baby." He said, before taking Aaron's mouth in a hot, hard kiss. Need slammed into him, he wanted to crawl into Aaron and merge their two bodies together for all time. He craved Aaron. His lover was more of an addiction than any drug could ever be.

The sound of a throat clearing broke into his lustful haze. He ignored it in order to get another taste of ambrosia.

Another sound. Orion licked at Aaron's mouth savoring the flavor of his lover who apparently had eaten a chocolate bar before coming in. He made a mental note to stock up on dark chocolate.

"Excuse me gentlemen. I'm going to have to ask you to stop or invite me to join."

Orion's head snapped back as he wrapped Aaron completely in his arms and growled at the interloper. Through the red haze of anger he recognized the other detective. It was the same detective who had propositioned his lover last night.

"What are you doing here?"

Aaron made a motion to separate them. Orion tightened his grip but quickly relaxed it when he realized his lover was trying to get air.

"Sorry babe." He whispered planting a kiss on his lover's silky head.

"Didn't Aaron tell you? I'm his new partner?"

"What happened to Claire?" Unexpectedly Orion felt a pang for his lover who he knew was fond of his female partner.

"Her husband has taken a turn for the worse."

Orion stroked a hand up and down Aaron's back in an unconscious soothing gesture. "Sorry to hear that baby." Privately he vowed to see if there was anything he could do to help Claire. He didn't have any feelings for the woman but anything that upset his lover needed to be taken care of.

"Anyway, I'm Aaron's temporary partner until Claire comes back. I trust that won't be a problem." Zheng said.

Orion bared his fangs at the handsome detective. "As long as you realize it's only a professional partnership I don't have a problem."

He felt Aaron squirm uncomfortably against him.

“Understood.” Zheng said. The lingering sadness in the detective’s eyes told Orion his silent message had been received.

Touch his man and die.

The men settled into an uneasy combination of Aaron and Orion on the office couch and Zheng perched on a corner of the desk. Aaron could feel Zheng giving him searching looks as if wondering if he should intervene.

Orion had his arm wrapped around Aaron as if determined to keep him there. Occasionally the vampire would rub his cheek against Aaron marking him with his scent.

“If he decides to pee a circle around you, I’m out of here.” Zheng said watching the pair.

Orion gave a low growl.

“Stop it you two.” Aaron pulled away to look at his lover only to be yanked back into the vampire’s arms. “Orion, I can’t talk to you like this.”

His lover’s hold weakened slightly so he was able to sit a foot away. Who knew vampires could pout?

“Zheng and I interviewed the guy we arrested last night. We think someone is trying to set you up and get you closed down so he or she can move into your territory. The idiot we arrested hadn’t met the vamp but he said the guy who gave him the drugs referred to the vampire as Antonius.”

Orion jumped to his feet. “I thought he was dead!”

The vampire’s agitation made Aaron uneasy. “You know this vamp?”

His lover nodded. “Yeah he was the head vampire of a group in Ontario but I heard he was killed in a fire by some anti-undead agency.”

“Guess he survived.” Aaron said.

“Or someone wants you to think he did.” Zheng offered. “Would it be usual for him to try and get you to leave this way?”

Orion shook his head. “No, Antonius and I didn’t always get along but he was a straight shooter. If he wanted me gone he’d come and tell me face to face. His base was huge in Ontario it makes no sense to come here and try to take over my small bit of the city.”

“Maybe he’s just a greedy fucker?” Zheng said swinging his leg idly.

“Maybe.” Aaron agreed. Something about this whole thing didn’t set well with him. “I think it’s a trap. Someone wants you to think it is Antonius and is hoping you’ll just run. I mean really, what would happen if the police thought you were dealing drugs. They’d investigate you, send someone like me to check you out and then when we found out you were innocent let you go. So it wouldn’t really do anything. But if they had some crack head try and deal in your club, got him caught and then spread the rumor that a bigger and badder vamp was in the area, then you might start sweating.”

“Vampires don’t sweat.” Orion said giving Aaron a fond smile as he snuggled in beside him. “But I get what you are saying. You think a weaker vamp is trying to get me out of here with psychology instead of force.”

The men nodded.

“Then I guess you detectives will have to try and figure out who it is.”

“You don’t have any idea?” Zheng asked, impatience stamped on his face.

Orion shrugged. “Despite what people seem to think vampires aren’t a dying breed. There are many of us and we like to spend our time making the others fight for their bit of land. I have a sweet deal going, there are probably lots of vamps interested in taking me down. You might want to try Howard Nikels. He’s a vampire that runs Blood Runes on the east side of town.”

“I’ve heard of that place.” Zheng said.

Aaron turned to him in surprise. “Really?”

Zheng shrugged. “I get around.”

Aaron couldn’t resist a dig. “And I thought you were so buttoned up and proper.”

“You of all people should know I’m not proper.”

Orion’s flashed his fangs at Zheng. “If you need more of a reminder that he is mine just let me know.” Aaron made a note to himself not to engage in flirtatious banter with his temporary partner, especially when his possessive vamp was in the room.

Zheng held up his hands in a placating gesture. “Sorry, flirting is a habit. I mean nothing by it.”

Orion nodded. “I’ll work on controlling my possessiveness if you work on controlling your flirting. It will make our relationship less difficult.”

Zheng nodded, his face serious. “Understood. Come on partner, let’s go check out Blood Runes.”

Orion reached over and grabbed Aaron by the back of the neck. Without warning he spun Aaron around and plunged his teeth into Aaron’s jugular. Aaron yelped but quickly relaxed as Orion pumped a tranquilizing toxin into his blood stream. The world started to fade as Orion released him.

“What did you do that for?” He heard Zheng ask.

“Because I’m not letting him go into the territory of another vamp without my mark. His energy will return by the time you get to the club, but to other vampires he’ll still have the glow of one who is favored.”

“Don’t you think it will be difficult to talk to another vamp if he knows we have ties to you?”

Orion shook his head. “It will let him know that I am on to him and he will either cease the attacks or tip his hand. I’ve been around long enough to have learned something about vampire politics.”

Aaron blinked, his eyes hurt a little and the world had a strange tint as if he was seeing everything through night vision goggles.

“That will pass in a moment, my love.” Orion whispered in his ear. “Go with your partner and we will talk later.”

“Damn right we’ll talk you should’ve warned me.”

Orion kissed him sending tingles through his body.

“Ah, but then you might have objected.” The vampire chuckled in his ear. “Let Zheng get you to the car. The effect will wear off in time.”

“It better,” Aaron said. “Or you’ll find yourself with a very angry lover.”

“Come on partner.” Zheng wrapped an arm around Aaron’s waist and helped him out the door under the gaze of Orion’s sharp eyes.

By the time Zheng parked in front of Blood Runes, Aaron’s head had stopped spinning. He hoped Orion didn’t feel the need to mark him too often. It wasn’t that the process didn’t feel erotic but it left him feeling out of control for a while afterwards.

Aaron needed to have his wits about him if he was going to deal with vampires.

“Remember when we only had to deal with human criminals.” Zheng mused getting out of the car.

“Ahh. Those were the days.” Aaron said.

In step the two men approached the door to the club scanning the area with a careful gaze before entering.

Aaron noted there wasn’t a bouncer at the door and even the higher up windows had bars.

“Obviously not as high class as your boyfriend’s place.” Zheng muttered as the pair cautiously reached the door.

“Well, I do tend to pick men of class.” Aaron said with a smile.

“Yes you do.” Zheng agreed.

Zheng opened the door with Aaron automatically covering his back. The smell of smoke and unwashed bodies wafted through the door.

Aaron had to control his gag reflex as he followed his partner inside.

The room was packed with people with red eyes and unfriendly looks. He saw a few take a sniff towards him but he didn’t know how they could smell anything through all the smoke.

They headed to the back towards the bar. If anyone knew where the owner was it would be the bartender.

As Aaron walked beside Zheng, people moved out of his way. The area around Zheng stayed crowded but Aaron’s side cleared as soon as he walked.

“I guess your vampire mojo is working.” Zheng whispered.

“Guess so.”

The bartender easily passed the six-foot mark and hovered comfortably around seven. Greasy blond hair straggled down his face and his eyes had the yellow glow of a wolf. It wasn’t difficult to tell the man was a shifter it was harder to tell that he was a man.

“What can I get you?” He asked his eyes slitting to an unfriendly scowl. The patrons closest to them found other, less hazardous places to sit.

“Information.” Zheng pulled out his badge and flashed it to the were.

“I don’t have any.” The bartender said. A second later his nose twitched and his head snapped towards Aaron. “What can I do for you?”

“We need to talk to Nikels. Police business.”

“I’ve heard of Master Orion’s troubles.” They were respectfully looked to the left of Aaron’s shoulder.

Aaron nodded quickly changing his approach. “Master Orion has sent me to talk to Nikels he’s disturbed that your boss might have something to do with his little problem.”

They were paled. His eyes widened and he forgot for a moment and looked Aaron in the eyes. “I hope you’re mistaken.”

“But you don’t think we are?” Zheng pressed.

The bartender shrugged struggling to gain his nonchalance. “It’s not for me to say. You can find him in the backroom.” He nodded his head to a door to the left of the bar.

“Thanks.” Zheng said but the man’s eyes were on Aaron.

“Please tell Master Orion I helped.” He said.

“Will do.” Aaron replied following Zheng to the door.

Zheng lead the way blocking Aaron with his body. Aaron was beginning to feel that Zheng was more his bodyguard than his partner.

He made a vow to talk to his partner about that later.

The room they entered was dark but surprisingly didn’t hold any of the smoky smell of the bar. A thin-faced man with glowing red eyes and an unpleasant expression sat behind a large wooden desk.

“I have no need for cops.” The vampire said.

Aaron wondered why Orion’s eyes didn’t glow constantly like that. He’d have to ask him.

“We are here on official business.” Zheng said flashing his badge. “We have reason to believe you know about the drugs being dealt in Master Orion’s territory. Are you Howard Nikels?”

“Oooh. Now he has the cops on his side.” The vampire mocked. His beady eyes latched onto Aaron. “Yeah I’m him. What do you want?”

“We want to know why you’re setting Orion up?” Zheng said stepping further into the room.

The vampire shrugged. “It’s just business. I hired a few goons to move drugs through Orion’s place and throughout his territory but they weren’t my drugs and it wasn’t my idea. I’m what you call a pawn.” He waved his hand to indicate his office. “Does it look to you like I’m making big bucks selling drugs?”

“Maybe you’re just incompetent.” Zheng offered.

“And maybe you’ll meet a bad end in a dark alley.”

Aaron stepped forward as he felt Zheng’s muscles bunch beside him. They didn’t need charges of police brutality and he could feel his friend getting ready to beat the crap out of the vamp.

“Maybe you could be a good citizen and tell us who put you up to it.”

“Yeah, and what would you do for me.”

Aaron gave him an evil grin. “I won’t share with my lover who tried to set him up.”

Howard shifted in his chair. Aaron had never seen a vampire sweat before. “Maybe we can work out a deal.”

* * *

Aaron and Zheng left the bar with a name and more questions than when they went into the place.

“What do you think?” Zheng asked when they got to the car.

“I don’t know. Either he’s being honest and there really is a vampire mafia moving into the territory or he’s full of shit. But I don’t think he’s lying.” Aaron said. “He was too scared to lie.”

“Crap.” Zheng opened the door and got into the driver’s seat. Aaron followed suit on the passenger’s side.

“I think we need to face facts. We need to bring Orion in as a consultant. We don’t know enough about vampires to deal with a turf war.” Aaron said.

Zheng looked Aaron in the eye, his face serious. “Do you think that’s a good idea? I could ask around and get someone else. There has to be another vamp we can talk to.”

Aaron thought about it for a moment. “But will we be certain the new vamp isn’t in on it? This is the only way we can be certain that.” He waited impatiently for Zheng to speak. The other man stared at him for a long while.

“You’re really into him aren’t you?”

“Yeah. I think I am.”

Zheng patted Aaron’s leg. “Don’t get in too deep. I’d hate for you to leave the force to become some vamp’s pet.”

Aaron laughed. “Do you think Orion’s shopping for a pet?”

“I think Orion would take you any way he could get you.” Zheng said in a serious voice.

Aaron didn’t know how to reassure Zheng. The more he saw Orion the more attached he became. He didn’t know if it was because of some supernatural mojo or because he was sincerely attached to Orion.

He turned to Zheng. “How do you know if you’re in love?”

Zheng gave him a quick glance before returning his attention to the road. “You’re not in love.” He said in a flat voice.

“How do you know?” Was there a sign he was missing? A secret handshake?

“You just met the guy. Love takes time.”

Curiosity had him ask. “Have you ever been in love?”

“Once.” Zheng’s abrupt answer didn’t encourage questions.

They traveled the rest of the way to the station in silence.

It was late by the time he convinced Zheng it was in their best interests to involve Orion. He left the station planning to stop by the hospital to visit with Claire and her husband. He knew he should go tell Orion what was going on but he wanted to bounce his ideas off of his normal partner. Claire had a sharp mind and between them they had solved more than one crime by just talking it out.

Wrapped up in his thoughts Aaron didn't look around the garage when he headed towards his car, and even if he had the footsteps of the supernatural wouldn't have reached his ears.

A hand on his shoulder caught his attention, as did the arm that came up binding his arms. A deep sensual voice spoke in his ear so close he could feel the man's breath across the fine hairs of his skin.

"Orion found himself a pretty, pretty play toy. Let's go and have a little chat, you and me."

If there was one rule Aaron subscribed to it was to never let a psychopath take him to a remote location. Taking a deep breath Aaron snapped his head back slamming it into the man behind him.

He felt something break beneath his skull as his attacker screamed and released him.

Swinging his leg out Aaron used a round house kick to knock the man's legs out from beneath him sending his assailant crashing to the ground. It was only then that he saw three other men all in black watching him.

Vampires.

They all had shiny blond hair and unnaturally pale skin. The vamp on the left was the tallest of the three as Aaron watched the vampire clapped his hands, breaking the silence.

"I see we underestimated you. Give Aaron our regards and tell him he chose well."

He reached into the inner pocket of his well-tailored suit and brought out a crisp business card. "Have Orion give me a call."

Aaron cautiously reached out and took the card.

Benjamin Fraiser was written on the card in elegant calligraphy with a number embossed beneath it, nothing else.

"I'll give it to him."

The trio picked up their wounded who was still unconscious on the floor and vanished.

Aaron blinked at the empty spot where four men once stood.

"I wonder if Orion can do that." He mused flicking the business card with his nail. "I'll have to ask him."

Unsettled, Aaron decided he'd talk to Claire later. He'd already missed visiting hours. Besides he needed to get to his lover and find out what was going on.

Chapter Three

Banner greeted Aaron at the delivery door. The bartender got one look at Aaron's disheveled appearance and gave him a grim smile.

"I hope you've got a good excuse for being so late, mate. The Master is about to tear the walls apart waiting for you. And here you come in looking mussed and smelling of other vamps."

Aaron ignored the expectant look Banner gave him and brushed past him to the inner sanctum. He slunk around the bar and headed for Orion's office. He didn't get more than a few feet before his lover appeared.

From the look in his vampire's eyes he was less than pleased.

"Where have you been?" Orion demanded.

"Let's go to your office." Aaron yelled. He wasn't going to explain himself over the loud music.

With one last glare, Orion spun on his heel.

Aaron let out a sigh of relief as the pounding music faded behind the closed door. His head was beating to a pulse of its own and sending shards of pain throughout his skull. Blinking back his weariness Aaron tumbled into a guest chair to face his lover over a desk.

"Do you want to explain to me why you look like you could be pushed over with a feather and reeking of other vamps?"

Aaron almost snapped but the look in Orion's eyes was more concerned than angry.

"I was on my way back to you when I was jumped by four vampires. I was able to take one of them out but the others didn't engage. I was given this card. Does the name mean anything to you?"

He pulled out the business card and handed it over.

Orion looked at the card and stilled.

"Do you know this man?" Aaron asked when Orion didn't say anything further.

"We've met. He used to date my daughter."

"You have a daughter?" It struck Aaron that he really didn't know anything about Orion.

Orion laughed. "I'm over four hundred years old Aaron. Of course I have children."

"How many? I thought you liked men?" This new insight into his lover was unsettling. Aaron had never known anyone who was truly bisexual and he wondered if Orion would toss him aside when he felt an urge for softer flesh.

"I like both my sweet." Orion stood up and pulled Aaron out of his seat. "But right now the only one I like is you and I have a feeling that will be for a very long time."

Aaron let Orion fold him in his arms and tried not to feel like a needy prick. After all what business was it of his if his ancient lover had children. A sudden thought had him jerking out of Orion's embrace.

"You aren't married, are you?"

Orion laughed and reeled Aaron back into his arms.

“No. I’m not married. I have never been married.”

“And children, how many children to you have? I notice how you didn’t answer that question.”

Orion laughed and gave Aaron a kiss scrambling his thoughts.

“How many?” He whispered against the vampire’s lips.

“Four. I have two girls and two boys.”

“And how is this Benjamin guy involved?”

“He’s never forgiven me for having my daughter break up with him. He’s not the sort of man I want Terese mixed up with?”

“How old is your daughter?”

“Two hundred.”

“She’s old enough to make her own mistakes.” Aaron said between breathless kisses.

Orion leaned back. “Funny that’s what she said. But why should she suffer when she doesn’t have to?”

Aaron couldn’t stop his smile. It was cute. The big, bad vampire was a devoted father.

“So this Benjamin dude is getting back at you by having drugs run through your club?”

Orion shrugged. “He’s just trying to get my attention.” The vampire’s eyes darkened. “He bruised you.”

“No. His minion grabbed me and I didn’t appreciate it. I must have gotten a bruise when I knocked him out.”

“You knocked out a vamp?”

Aaron shrugged. “He was asking for it.”

Orion laughed. “Well as long as he was asking.”

Before Aaron could say anything more Orion wrapped him in his arms holding him close and burying his face in Aaron’s hair.

“I’m so glad you weren’t injured. I would never forgive myself if something happened to you.” He felt Aaron’s head for damage, his long fingers searching for any signs of injury but other than a small bump he didn’t feel anything.

For the first time in many years, Orion felt fear. Fear that his lover would die in the line of duty. Fear that he would bring his handsome lover some danger he couldn’t handle. Love welled up in his chest almost suffocating him in its intensity.

How he adored this man. Blinking back tears he didn’t even know he could shed, Orion gave Aaron a squeeze until the man gave a gasping breath.

“Sorry.” Apparently he needed to be careful how hard he squished. “Let’s go back to my apartment and I’ll take care of you.”

Aaron stopped him with a touch to his face. “What are we going to do about this? I can’t just drop the investigation because you know the guy. He’s dealing drugs. Obviously you were right about not letting this guy near your daughter if he’s all right with helping humans get addicted and ruin their lives.”

Orion stroked a hand over Aaron's head relishing the contact. His cop was so intense it was adorable. "Do you have any proof?" He didn't want to make Aaron look bad by crushing his investigation but he didn't think he could come up with proof. Benjamin wasn't necessarily a bad guy just not the vamp he envisioned for his daughter.

Terese needed a lighter touch. Ben was too intense and controlling for her. At least that's what she said when she dumped the guy and returned the ring. Benjamin had always blamed him for the breakup but in reality his daughter made the decision on her own.

"I still have the guy in lockup. He says he was dealing for a vamp. The vamp in question gave me Benjamin's name and then Benjamin all but admitted it himself. What else do I need to know?"

Orion couldn't help smiling. His lover was just so cute. "No, I meant can you prove he was dealing to humans? Vampires often take drugs for the high but it doesn't last. Our systems metabolize things too fast. If I took a snort of cocaine I would have the high and detox within a few minutes. If Benjamin was dealing to vampires there's no case. Drugs have no lasting or ill effects on vamps so there is essentially no reason against vampires taking drugs. It's like if you felt a little tipsy after a drink. We shouldn't necessarily be driving or operating heavy machinery but that is all."

"So you're telling me it matters who he was selling to, not necessarily that he was selling at all." Aaron said.

"Exactly." Orion gave his cop a quick, hard kiss to reward his brilliance. "If he's dealing drugs to vampires there is no crime recognized by the vampire council. If he's dealing drugs to humans that's a different matter. The council frowns on that behavior and will punish him severely for that act."

"Human laws don't exactly approve either." Aaron said in a dry tone.

Orion shrugged. He didn't bother telling his lover that if the council found Benjamin dealing drugs to humans they would take care of him within the parameters of the vampire law and he and his cohorts would never be heard of again.

"So I need to determine who he's selling the drugs to."

Orion nodded. "Exactly. I bet that man you have locked up can give you a view on that." He pulled Aaron back into his arms. "Tomorrow. You can deal with that tomorrow. Tonight you are all mine."

The vampire let his fangs flash while he held the cop tight. "All mine."

Orion only lied a little when he told Aaron he was keeping him for a long time.

He was going to keep him forever.

With that in mind he dragged his lover out of his office and off to his bed.

Chapter Four

Aaron walked to his desk only to find Zheng lounging in his chair.

"I was hoping you'd be in early. How was your night?" Zheng gave him a leering smile.

"It was fine. Orion thinks that the guy who's selling is a man named Benjamin." Aaron outlined the events of last night smiling when Zheng started to curse. He was startled when the handsome detective grabbed his arms.

"You weren't hurt though, right. They didn't bite you or anything?"

"No. Zheng. Weren't you listening? They let me go and when I talked to Orion he thought it was just a warning."

The tension in Zheng drained away and he released Aaron. "Good. I was just worried. I mean you look fine, just fuck." He ran a hand through his hair rumpling his usual smooth style. "I was worried. I don't trust these vampires."

"I know." Aaron patted Zheng on the back. "It'll be all right. Let's go talk to the kid."

Zheng pulled a file off of Aaron's desk. "Henry Addison. Kind of a plain name for a cop-shooting, drug dealer. Maybe we should give him a pet name like Blade or maybe Vampire Snack."

Aaron laughed, "yeah, I'm sure that'll get him to talk."

"It did before."

"True, so true."

Aaron's phone rang on his desk. "Detective Bradshaw." He spoke into the phone.

"Aaron, it's Claire."

She could hear her crying across the wire. His stomach sank as he realized what must have happened.

"I'm so sorry."

"Why. He's healed. David's healed. Your lover saved him."

"What?"

"Orion's his name right. He said he was your vampire and since I was someone you cared about he wanted to help. I don't know what he did to David but the doctor just left. The last x-ray showed the tumor's gone. Completely gone." Claire sobbed across the wire but this time Aaron knew it was for joy. "You are the best partner ever. I've gotta go. Don't tell anyone how David was healed I promised Orion I'd only call you."

"Congratulations Claire." Aaron said. He didn't know what else he could say, he was stunned that Orion went out of his way to help Aaron's partner. Saying all the proper things he hung up the phone after promising to come and see the couple when David made it back home.

"Problem?"

Aaron looked up to see Zheng watching him closely.

"No. No problem. Let's go chat with Henry. I want to hear what the kid has to say about his clients."

Henry was waiting for them in the interrogation room. The cockiness he had yesterday was completely missing.

“You told Orion that I’m cooperating right!” He exclaimed as soon as he saw Aaron.

“Yes, I told him. He thought you might be able to help me just a little more.”

Henry nodded frantically.

A stray thought drifted through Aaron’s head.

“Henry, did you have any dreams last night?”

Henry paled. “Yeah, but I don’t remember them. I just remember I’m supposed to help you.”

Aaron could feel the headache approaching. It lurked behind his eyes waiting to pounce. His lover had been a busy, busy vamp. “I only have one question. Who was it you sold drugs to?”

Henry frowned. “What do you mean?”

“I mean were they human? Vampire? Who did you sell your drugs to?”

“Vampires. It was always vampires.” Henry said still frowning. “Now that you mention it. That is strange.”

“Real strange.” Zheng said.

“For you it’s a good thing.” Aaron said getting out his cuff keys and snapping open the metal bracelets.

“Why’s that?”

“Because apparently selling drugs to vampires isn’t against the law.” Aaron leaned over to get Henry’s attention before the kid could run from the room. “But if I were you I’d find a new place to pedal your wares. Orion doesn’t like his club being used as a drug haven and if he sees you there again I don’t think I can stop him from hurting you.”

Henry rubbed his throat. It still showed an imprint of Orion’s fingers.

“Good to know. Thanks.” Henry gave them a shaky smile and stood up. “I know I was stupid to deal those drugs but vampires are crazy. I won’t be doing that any more. Maybe I’ll go back to school.”

Aaron stared at the kid in surprise. “What would you go to school for?”

“Law.” Henry said with a smile. “I can be one of those slime ball lawyers who gets people like me off on a technicality.”

“It’s good to have dreams.” Aaron said as Henry gave a laugh and walked out the door.

“How much do you think your vampire hypnotized him?”

“I don’t know but if it works on everyone maybe we can use him for rehabilitation.”

Zheng laughed. “It could be a whole new wave of criminal reconditioning.”

Aaron thought about Claire’s husband and Henry’s new attitude. “I guess sometimes being a vampire can be handy.”

Zheng grabbed his arm. “Don’t get any ideas. I don’t want you vamping out on me.”

“I can’t vamp out.” Aaron said yanking back his arm. “Orion told me you’re either a vamp or you’re not. I can’t become a vampire.”

“Good.” Zheng said, “I like you as human.”

Aaron smiled. "I like me as human too. Now get your fancy jacket on I think it's time to give Mr. Benjamin a home visit."

Chapter Five

It was almost too easy to get into Benjamin's home. Aaron flashed his badge at the security booth but the guy was more interested in his name than his badge.

"Your names are on the list. You and your partner are cleared to go in."

Zheng and Aaron exchanged glances.

This could either go very well or extremely badly. They drove through the iron gates and Aaron pulled up in front of a massive mansion.

"It pays to be a vampire." Zheng quipped as they exited the car.

"Apparently so."

Whatever Aaron expected when he went into the vampire's mansion it wasn't the scene that met their eyes. A couple dozen vampires sat around in a large lushly furnished room drinking glasses of red liquid and chattering among themselves. Apparently they walked into a vampire dinner party. But it was the sleek dark-haired woman sitting at the head of the table that caught Aaron's attention. He'd eat his badge if she wasn't his lover's daughter.

The vampires grew silent as Aaron and Zheng walked into the room but it wasn't a threatening silence. It was like a group of spectators waiting to watch the game indifferent to the outcome. Aaron didn't feel any animosity from the group just a cool curiosity.

"You must be father's newest pet." The woman said eyeing Aaron with curiosity.

"That's what he tells me, Miss Terese."

She gave him a smile that was eerily like her father's. "I see papa's been talking."

"He says he doesn't approve of your boyfriend." Aaron said nodding towards Benjamin who lounged beside her with an amused smile. "Apparently drug runners aren't on the top of his list of men his daughter should date."

Benjamin burst out laughing. "I'm not a drug runner, I just wanted Orion to know I was in town."

"Out of calling cards?" Zheng asked. Aaron noticed that Zheng positioned his body so that he was between Aaron and most of the vampires in the room.

"Vampires do things differently." Benjamin said and for the first time since they walked in the room Aaron felt animosity from the man.

Terese leaned forward. "What are you doing here Detective Zheng? My father's lover doesn't need any protection despite your wish to be his knight in shining armor. No vampire would be stupid enough to touch Aaron, my father has made his displeasure quite clear."

Aaron stepped forward. "Zheng is my partner." He patted the other man on the shoulder. "He's with me because he's doing his job as am I. Now Terese why don't you go and have a talk with your dad about your choice of men? I told him you were old enough to make your own bad decisions."

Terese burst out laughing. "You really told him that?"

"I'm a bad decision?" Benjamin said sitting up straight to glare at Aaron.

“Benjamin since I’ve known you you’ve dealt drugs in my lover’s club and assaulted me outside of a police station I wouldn’t put you on my top ten list of favorite people.”

“Hmm.” Benjamin said sipping from his glass. He gave Aaron a disgruntled look like a young child pouting.

Terese looked at Aaron with wide eyes. “Would you come with me?”

“Why?”

“Because he won’t kill me if you are there. He doesn’t want to frighten you off.”

“He’s not going to kill you.” Aaron said throwing up his hands. “You just need to go over to his club and talk to him. He’s probably not going to change his mind about Benjamin but maybe you can make him understand what you see in him.” Aaron’s eyes raked Benjamin up and down. “Besides the fact he’s gorgeous.”

“Thank you Aaron.” Benjamin said with a wide smile tipping his glass towards him. “At least Orion has excellent taste in lovers.”

Terese let out a frustrated groan. “You don’t understand! I’ve tried to explain to him that Benjamin is my treasured one but he’s closed to the idea. I thought since he found you he might be more understanding.”

Aaron reflected on Orion’s opinion of Benjamin. “He did say I wouldn’t need to arrest Benjamin since he only dealt drugs to vampires. He didn’t have to explain that part to me if he wanted Benjamin thrown in jail.”

“That’s true.” Terese said with a wide smile.

A door slammed open and the vampire Aaron had injured earlier stomped through the room. Events unfolded almost faster than Aaron could follow with his eyes. Catching sight of Aaron the vampire leaped towards him fangs and claws extended. Before he could react, Zheng threw himself between Aaron and the oncoming vampire. Zheng went down beneath the vampire with a loud thud.

The vampire sank his fangs into Zheng.

Zheng screamed.

Instinct had Aaron pulling out his gun. Without hesitation he shot the vampire in the head. Despite rumors perpetuated by Hollywood a simple bullet through the skull will kill just about anything.

Except zombies, only a witch doctor could kill a zombie.

With brutal efficiency Aaron shoved the vampire off of Zheng with his foot.

“Shit, call 911.”

Zheng’s eyes were wide with shock as Aaron fell to his knees beside him.

“Shhh, it’s okay partner we’ll get you help. Don’t die on me Zheng.” Aaron said through a flood of tears. “Call 911.”

“You’re all right.” Zheng whispered through his torn throat, his hand fumbling for Aaron’s. “He didn’t hurt you?”

“No.” Aaron swallowed the lump in his throat. “He didn’t hurt me.”

“Good.” Zheng closed his eyes for a second before opening them and focusing on Aaron with a fierce intensity. “You were the one, Aaron. I’ve always loved you.”

Aaron wiped away tears with the back of his hand. “I know. I’ve always known.” That was the reason he broke it off between them, but he wasn’t going to share that information with a dying man. He leaned forward and placed a soft kiss on Zheng’s forehead unmindful of the blood.

“Stay with me, Zheng. Do you know how much paperwork is involved in losing a partner?”

Zheng gave a faint smile and closed his eyes.

“Don’t you dare!” Aaron shouted. He looked up to see the vampires circled around him. “Did anyone call an ambulance?”

“It’s too late for that.” Benjamin said. “He won’t make it.”

Aaron knew there was nothing he could do. He’d already killed the vampire that attacked Zheng and his partner was dying as he watched.

He felt a body kneel beside his.

“Let him go darling.” Orion said in a husky voice kneeling beside him.

“Isn’t there anything you can do?” Aaron asked, his voice laden with tears.

“You know there isn’t. I can’t turn him into a vampire we have to be born. I won’t turn him into a zombie because that’s no way for anyone to exist.”

“There has to be something.” Aaron sobbed stroking Zheng’s head.

“You could bind his soul.” Benjamin offered coming to stand over Zheng’s body.

“What would that do?” Aaron asked wiping his tears away.

“Save him until there is a body available. I can bind it into a necklace so you can have it with you if you find a body.”

Aaron gave a broken laugh. “What about that guy?” He pointed to the dead vampire.

Orion shook his head. “The mentality of a vampire is different than a human. To have to suck blood to live would snap his mind. It’s better to wait until you find a human body.”

“Maybe I should just let him go.”

Zheng’s eyelids fluttered and his hand latched onto Aaron’s with surprising strength.

“Bind me. I want to stay with you.”

Aaron blinked back the tears. “All right.”

“It’s best to do it now while the spirit is still close to the body.”

Aaron knew there was no way Zheng was going to survive but it still felt strange to give permission to have his friend’s soul sucked from him.

“Okay.” He said at last. He could feel Zheng slipping away and he wanted it done before it was too late. “Do it.”

Benjamin pulled off the necklace from around his neck. It was a hollow square mesh pendant made of gold filigree. “Since I feel responsible for your friend’s death I will use this necklace I got from a Babylonian Queen. It was made to carry the spirit to the land of the dead.”

Aaron didn't recognize the words that were used or the symbolism attached to them but he could feel the pull of power. Zheng's body convulsed as a golden glow surrounded him then, as the brilliant light slowly faded, he lay still.

"It is done." Benjamin said. Aaron felt the chain slid across his skin and connect behind his neck.

"How do I get him back out?"

"You don't." Said Orion wrapping him in his arms. "He will release himself when he is ready to move on."

Aaron nodded blinking back tears. He felt his lover stroking his head. "He died to save you so I will never regret your friendship." Orion said. "But if he tries to seduce you when he gets a new body I'm going to kick his ass."

Aaron laughed through his tears. "Deal."

(Coming Soon: Zheng's Story)

To learn more about Amber Kell and for a complete list of her books go to
<http://amberkell.wordpress.com>