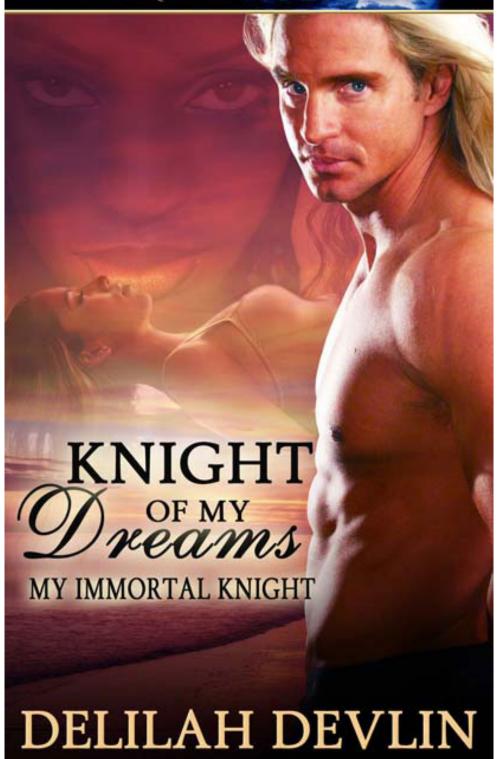
Ellora's Cave TWILIGHT



Knight of My Dreams

Delilah Devlin

Book 7 in the My Immortal Knight series.

For love, a man will do anything, even betray his beloved to save her...

Vampire Quentin Albermarle's wife Darcy lies in a coma after being savaged by a werewolf. Fearing she might never awaken, or worse, that she will return a maddened beast, Quentin returns to the Cayman Islands, seeking help from the one woman who might be able to save her.

A century and a half ago, this powerful vampire and witch seduced Quentin with magic and turned him into a vampire to provide herself a mate, but he freed himself from her spell and fled her influence, knowing he'd left behind a powerful enemy. Returning now, seeking Kamaria's help, he must resist her attempts to enslave him again. However, the price she demands may cause him to lose the woman he loves.

Reader Advisory: The battle to save a loved one is sometimes sexual. It can be hard, uncompromising and not for the faint of heart. Novel also includes a sensual scene of F/F petting.

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Knight of My Dreams

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KNIGHT OF MY DREAMS

Delilah Devlin

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Chapter One

"'Bout time you come home, husband."

Quentin Albermarle steeled himself against the sudden thrill that quickened his heartbeat and heated his sex. He couldn't see her yet, but the scent of honeysuckle and mint strengthened. "Don't call me that, witch!" he spit out.

"Husband," she enunciated slowly, closer this time. "Husss-band," she whispered into his ear.

He forced himself not to flinch away, but already her scent wafted, thinned. He relaxed as she moved silently away. Although his night vision was keen, he couldn't see her yet and knew she'd used glamour to tantalize and tease him. "We never married," he said, keeping his tone flat, emotionless.

"You called me wife."

"You played with my affections – tricked me into loving you."

"So angry still," she said in her throaty, lilting tones. "So scared." At last she circled to stand in front of him.

She was as lovely as the night he'd finally broken free of her spell. Nearly his height, her eyes rose only slightly to meet his steady glare. A deep, bottomless brown, her wide-set gaze stared back, unblinking.

Quentin knew her tricks and drew himself back, shifting his glance to look beyond her shoulders, sweeping the shadows of the tiled patio to see whether they were alone.

"All alone, we are," she said, lifting her hand to trail a long finger along the crest of his shoulder. "Aren't you going to ask me, husss-band?"

Quentin drew a deep breath, slowly, trying not to let her see how important his request was to him. A foolish wish, naturally. The witch "saw" everything. Had likely scried his arrival on the island in a bowl of blood-kissed water. "I need your help."

Her gaze swept sideways and her lips curved in a close-lipped, feline smile. "You know what I will demand, husss-band."

Knowing the cost might be more than he could bear, Quentin bit out, "What do you want?"

She turned, looking back at him over the shoulder bared by her loose, silk caftan. "Three times...you must bring me satisfaction. You must make me scream with want of you. Then, and only then, will I...consider...helping you save your other woman. The one who lies asleep. The one you fear will waken snarling over your betrayal."

Quentin closed his eyes briefly. She'd asked the one thing he most feared. Darcy would never forgive him. "Don't ask me this. I love her."

"You love her, yet you let them take the one thing she will never forgive you for losing."

"I couldn't save it," he said quickly. Too quickly.

"Perhaps, you did not want to save it. You chose her over his child."

"I chose life over inevitable death."

Her head canted in her odd way, as though listening to whispers. Her gaze narrowed. "Are you so sure the little one is lost?"

"He was pierced by a wolf's fangs. He's as good as dead."

"And yet you stand here, asking me to save her—when she too was savaged by a wolf."

Quentin ground his jaws together, so fierce was his desire to do something—anything—to save her. "She's strong. So are your powers. It's the only reason I'm standing here now."

"You want a chance," she said softly, moving again, pausing in the shadows beside a potted hyacinth to stroke its petals. "Maybe I can give it to you." When her gaze sliced back, her eyes glittered, her mouth formed a rigid line. "But first, you must please me. Do you remember how to do that, lover?"

Oh, he remembered. She'd enslaved him, taught him exactly how to ease the ache that accompanied a ravenous appetite for sex. Too many times, she'd left him drunk on the flavors of her arousal. He'd feasted on her feminine flesh countless times—still dreamed of it in his nightmares.

He'd been young, reckless...stupid. Led by his cock and his thirst for adventure.

She'd been elusive, mysterious. Appearing at the edge of Lewis' estate gardens then disappearing with the next blink of his eyes, fascinating him with fleeting glimpses of her long, taut body and lovely face.

He'd dreamed of her before they'd actually met. Made love to her in a dream world where every fantasy he'd ever conceived, and many more he'd never thought of, came true under her tutelage.

God, he remembered her taste, the feel of her satiny, oiled skin, the scent of honeysuckle, mint and her womanly musk. "Stop it!"

Her laughter was low and sultry. She stepped fully from the shadows into the moonlight and drew her shift over her head, dropping it to the patio floor.

Naked, her body was everything he'd remembered. Honed, powerful muscle. Sleek curves. Full, luscious breasts tipped with dark brown nipples, slightly oval. The stems were tight and long as though a lover had already plucked them.

Below, there was one change. Her pussy was waxed, the brown folds plump and glistening.

She trailed a finger between her nether lips and brought it to her mouth, licking it clean like a cat. "Yes, I knew you'd come. I've waited. Longed for this. Now you will taste my devotion, my lust for you."

Quentin's body tightened in rejection. "Don't ask this," he ground out.

"Because she won't forgive you?"

"Because I won't ever forgive you if you demand this."

Her hand speared the air, her fingers fluttering in a beckoning motion that tugged his cock into full erection.

So guickly, he hissed between his clenched teeth.

"You think you have a choice?"

His heartbeats growing leaden inside his chest, he knew he didn't. His resistance would be overcome, whether by her magic or by his need. To fight her now would only anger her.

And he had to please her. Make her come three times...screaming. He knew how to draw her arousal so tight her entire body would bend in a fierce arch, her fingernails would rake his skin, her pussy would clench around his cock so tightly he'd give up his seed, helpless to resist.

This was how it had always been between them.

Fierce. Fucking like animals. Once, long ago, he'd thought he found his soul mate in a dark-skinned woman. Instead he'd surrendered his soul to a demon.

* * * * *

1861 – Grand Cayman Island

Lewis laughed like a hyena when he was deep in his cups. The sound cut off abruptly behind him, and Quentin sighed. He turned and grabbed the back of his host's collar as he sagged toward the sand, still giggling, then let him go to land in an awkward sprawl. From one breath to the next, he was asleep.

Now what was he going to do? Carry Lewis back to the mansion? The tide was going out, so he wouldn't drown if he left him there beside the sea until morning.

It would serve the bastard right to wake up with sand scratching his private parts. Lewis had snuck his hand beneath the governor's wife's gown at dinner; slipped into the garden with Merry Anniston and come out smelling of that lovely rose; then managed to steal a kiss from the barmaid at the tavern where they'd stopped for ale.

Quentin supposed he could have had a bit of tart for himself, but couldn't be bothered. None of the women he'd seen of late appealed. None held a candle to the mirage that entered his dreams nightly.

None were as wickedly wanton.

Perhaps he was just bored, but of late, none of the entertainments he normally enjoyed...well, entertained. The women he met seemed vapid and pale. He sought his bed earlier and earlier each night to fall asleep...and into her arms. His dark goddess. The one who entered his dreams nude, her long, lithe body and taunting eyes drawing him down, down...into a deeper sleep that somehow never refreshed.

Each morning he woke trapped in twisted, soiled sheets, his cock aching, rutting at the air. Tantalizing snippets of memories lingered. The scent of a certain flower floated in the air, causing his attention to stray, to recapture the shimmering, fleeting dream of long fingers wrapping around his thick shaft and full lips suckling his balls.

Even now he yearned to hurry back to his bed to find her once again.

But Lewis snored, curled into a childlike ball, bottom in the air.

Quentin kicked him. "Wake up, you ballocks!"

Lewis didn't stir.

A soft scraping sounded behind him, and he whirled. At the edge of the palm trees lining the beach stood a woman. Moonlight sifting through the fronds striped the face and the tall body clothed in the flowing dress of an island girl.

She was of a similar height to the woman in his dreams and dusky-skinned. Quentin's loins stirred. If the girl was amenable, perhaps he could rid himself of his embarrassing obsession. He lifted his hand in greeting, but she stepped deeper into the shadows.

"Don't go," he called softly, hesitating to follow her and frighten her.

But she stepped fully into the moonlight, just long enough for him to see she bore the same face as his dream woman. Any reluctance he'd harbored to follow her fell away. He strode across the sand into the forest and stalked her as she wove between the trees, following the curve of the beach until she reached a small wooden hut nestled in a stand of palms, so perfectly entrapped as to be invisible unless one knew exactly where to look.

She ducked into the open doorway and Quentin didn't pause, stepping inside behind her.

She spun, her eyes widening in the moonlight.

"Don't be frightened. I won't harm you." He held up his hand. "Please, do I know you? Have we met?"

Her gaze flowed over him, from his blond hair, sliding down his body, pausing over the bulge he could do nothing to hide before gliding to his bare toes.

"We took off our shoes. Sand filled them anyway..." He let his voice trail away. Such a silly thing to mention. "I must have seen you somewhere...before."

Her gaze rose, her expression suddenly less demure, less wary. "Have you seen me in your dreams?" she asked slowly, her voice as thick and rich as cream, the island patois flavoring her tone.

"How did you know?" he asked, wondering if she'd only been wildly lucky in her guess.

"Because I come for you."

A shiver caressed the base of his spine, quickening his loins. Quentin narrowed his gaze, realizing more was amiss than finding a woman who'd haunted him. Some instinct warned him to back away.

Her hands lifted to the tie at the side of her simple dress.

His breath caught, any thought of fleeing banished as she drew apart the knot and opened the fabric, shrugging to let it fall from her shoulders and pool around her feet.

She stood naked, her body just as he'd remembered, her brown skin glowing with a healthy sheen, her breasts round and high, her hips swelling below a taut waist.

He felt as though his feet had grown roots in the rough wooden floor as her hands lifted to her breasts and squeezed the firm globes. Her fingers fanned over herself, and he stared into the shadows between them for a glimpse of her nipples.

Then she did a very odd thing that registered in his mind, but somehow didn't strike him as unnatural at that moment. She caressed the air with a hand, gliding it up and down, closing her long fingers into a ring, and suddenly he felt something wrap around his cock, squeezing firmly.

He gasped as his cock filled and rose, poking against his trousers. His whole body tightened, his jaws clenching as he watched her stroke down and up and felt a rippling along his shaft that followed her movements. Of their own volition, his buttocks firmed and flexed, driving his cock forward and back, as he thrust against the air into her tightening grasp.

Quentin shook his head, trying to clear his mind, trying to understand what was happening, but she squeezed tighter and he was helpless to do anything but follow her movements, mesmerized, his breaths shallow, his balls ripening.

The woman walked toward him, murmuring softly, her words whispering. He couldn't make them out, but his gaze fell to her lips and suddenly he had to taste them, had to feel them beneath his.

"Yes," she murmured as his head came down and their lips touched.

In moments his clothing fell away and they were kneeling on the floor, their bodies gliding against each other—her pointed nipples grazing his chest, her belly rolling against his erect cock.

She reached behind her and let down her hair then slipped one thigh alongside his hip. He cupped her bottom and sat back on his folded legs, letting her slide her other thigh along his side as she nestled closer, her head above his.

She leaned down and kissed him as her body settled downward, her pussy touching the crown of his cock, then lifting away, then touching again, moistening the tip, only to escape.

His arms closed around her back, forcing her closer still, pulling her down until her pussy pushed onto his cock, and slowly engulfed him.

He breathed deeply and kissed her shoulder, gliding his open lips along the curve of her neck and upward, sucking on her chin until she moaned—a deep, throaty sound that made his hands clench hard on her hips.

And then they were moving against each other, straining, undulating. He forced her downward, and then relented as she lifted to stroke his cock with her feminine channel, her inner muscles clasping him hard as she came up, relaxing as she fell and took him deeper.

Quentin was beyond thought, beyond anything but his need to rut deeply inside her. He fell forward, his arms encircling her to bear the brunt of their fall. Then he was poised over her.

She wrapped her legs around his waist, her arms around his shoulders and stared with triumph glittering in her dark eyes. "Take me," she commanded.

Quentin grunted, raised back his hips and stabbed forward, stroking deep and hard, then pulled back and thrust again, and again.

His knees ground into the planking and he came up on his hands for leverage to come back harder inside her, deeper still. He pounded into her, pushing her along the floor, following on his knees to crowd closer and thrust harder.

She remained silent beneath him, but her mouth opened and her breaths gusted into his mouth as he hammered the air from her body. Never had he been so desperate,

so driven to claim a moist, heated passage. Never had a woman made him feel this intensely drawn to her mysteries.

When at last his release washed over him, flushing her depths with his passion, only then did he realize he'd fallen in love.

His cock had found its sheath; his body had found the breasts he wished to rest upon forever; his lips had found the one mouth that tempted him as no other to know its secrets, explore its depths.

A kiss glazed his cheek. "I am Kamaria, husband."

Chapter Two

She came to awareness slowly, although she had no real sense of the passage of time. Oddly, she also had no sense of self...who she was or where she existed. She had a past, one with blurred-edged fragments of memory that sharpened whenever she approached, scraping her emotions raw. She learned to keep far, far away from the pain.

Her *being* floated in unrelenting darkness and a silence so deep her thoughts shouted dully as though muffled in thick cotton.

Was she dead, then? If so, death sucked.

But the longer she drifted, the easier it became to let herself just waft away, growing thinner, less substantial...losing herself gradually to peaceful, deepening night.

Yet something niggled at the edge of her consciousness. One memory that beckoned her closer, daring her to care whether she faded into the abyss.

Quentin.

A name. One that filled her with a powerful longing. If she concentrated she could see a face...beautifully angular...blue eyes filled with tender passion...but for whom? An expression so anguished she could feel his pain.

Pain. It lanced through her, striking her center, reminding her of something she'd tried to avoid...something she wanted to forget. Whatever emotion this Quentin evoked, it wasn't love. It wasn't comfort. Just a hurtful yearning.

Better forgotten.

* * * * *

Quentin awoke in a cloud of soft cotton bedding, something thin floating overhead. He shook his head, wondering what the hell had happened, then remembered. Kamaria.

Netting enveloped the bed like a spider's web. As apropos a description as any he could think of at the moment. His mind felt muzzy, his tongue thick, his mouth dry. Sickening dread filled his belly.

Soft, whispery pads neared the bed, and he turned to find the spider approaching. "I see you are awake, husss-band." Damn, or was she a goddamn snake?

"Call me anything you like but that," he said, his words losing their bite due to their slurred delivery. "What the fuck did you do to me?"

"You were exhausted. I helped you sleep."

Instantly, he knew he was naked beneath the sheet swathing his hips. "Did we...?"

Her full lips pursed in disapproval. "I want all of you, Quent-in."

He tried to sit up, but his head swam. "Have to get back. Darcy..."

Suddenly, she was inside the netting, beside him. Her hand pushed him gently back. "My man moved her here today. She rests."

"Moved?" Quentin tensed. "Did you chain her?"

"The full moon comes. Of course, I protect her from her true nature. She is bathed, comfortable as she can be."

"Have you looked at her?" he asked, hating himself for sounding so needy. "Can you help her?"

The back of Kamaria's hand smoothed over one cheek, beneath his chin, then up the other side. Her head canted and she stared, giving away nothing of her thoughts in her set expression. "Your Darcy floats in dreams, not tethered to her body. I can find her, but she shies away. She's afraid and losing hope."

Quentin felt a lump burn at the back of his throat. "Can you help her?" he asked hoarsely.

Her smile touched only the corners of her full mouth. "For my price, I will go to her and try to woo her back. For you."

Quentin let out a deep breath. Her price was too goddamn high. But how could he not give her what she wanted? He'd move the moon and stars to have Darcy back. "When do you want...?" His words bled away because he didn't know how to finish the sentence.

When do you want to make love? — Kamaria would know the lie. When do you want to fuck? — would only piss her off.

Kamaria held her hand in front of his face palm up, turned it over then back up. A small vial sat in the center of her palm.

Not impressed with the little reminder of her power, he snorted. "Resorting to aphrodisiacs?"

"Will you really need one, my stallion?" Her eyebrows rose, and her gaze slipped downward, dragging his along.

Quentin wished like hell he and his cock shared the same heart. The same mind. He hated how his body betrayed him, again, in her presence. Just a whiff of her unique scent wafting in the air was enough to tug his arousal into full bloom. Like Pavlov's stupid dog, his cock filled, poking at the sheet.

Kamaria's laugh was soft and husky, a sound that pulled his memory back to the early days of their relationship when he'd lived to make her smile, worked damn hard to earn a throaty moan.

"This is to clear your mind and waken your body. Then you may begin to please me, husss-band."

Preferring to believe it was an aphrodisiac, he scraped the vial from her palm, twisted off the stopper and poured the contents down his throat. It tasted like peppermint and did the trick.

Drawing a deep refreshed breath, he handed it back and pushed the sheet below his hips. He gave her an indifferent glance. "Ready to go?"

Her short, indrawn breath warned him he'd pushed too far.

Good. He hoped she'd gotten his message loud and clear. He'd fuck her. Bring her to orgasm—screaming her lungs out—but he didn't want to be here. Didn't want to be with her. She was just a cunt he'd screw.

Only he knew he was lying.

A part of him, the dark beast he kept leashed deep inside, howled for her. She'd given him his first bite, his first taste of blood. She'd introduced him to endless carnal delights. When he made love to any other woman, even Darcy, he recalled her tutelage to bring the fire to the surface.

If that wasn't betrayal, he sure as bloody hell didn't know what was. He was already damned—might as well save the girl before he burned in hell.

Only he knew he didn't want the fucking to be too reminiscent of the old days. He needed to show Kamaria he wasn't the same man, and that he'd never be hers, truly hers, again. "Take off your clothes," he ordered, lifting his chin.

He'd never commanded her before, always followed her suggestion, read her body and her expressions to know what she wanted next—and he'd been ready to slavishly provide whatever she desired.

To his surprise, Kamaria's glance dropped to the floor and her hands went immediately to the small buttons at the front of her loose, flowing dress. She made short work of them and eased the fabric over her head.

Standing inside the mosquito netting, the sheer white fabric contrasting with her bronze skin, Quentin's stomach knotted. He knew he wouldn't be fucking her for Darcy. Before she placed one knee on the mattress, his hand rose to help her. An ache lodged in his chest, a bittersweet yearning for the promise she'd been...for the choices she'd taken for him.

His first love, the one who'd made it nearly impossible to learn to love again...until a wary, scrappy young woman dared to hunt him and judge him based solely on the fact he was a vampire. Kamaria was the beginning and the reason he'd waited so long

for Darcy. He'd been ripe for love. Ready to shower all the sensual excesses he'd learned in this woman's bed.

When Kamaria had settled onto her knees beside him, he pulled her hand, yanking her down to his body.

Her lips parted, her eyes widened—delight dancing in their dark depths. "Are we eager now? I thought you'd drag your feet like a boy expecting a spanking."

"I remember, you know. I remember everything."

"As do I," she said, her gaze on his lips. "But I have no regrets."

"I've carried mine for decades. I'm learning to let go."

Her face tightened. "This woman. This Darcy. You love her?"

Quentin hated giving the heartless bitch a glimpse of even a fraction of the love he felt for his wife. "With all my being," he said softly.

Her head canted again, her gaze searching his face. He knew she sought a doorway inside his mind. "She may not forgive you."

Suspicion roused with her lazy, aimless tone. His gaze narrowed. "No tricks, Kamaria. No hidden traps. I do this with you, and you will save my wife."

"You have so many wives, Quent-in. How will you please us all?"

"There is only Darcy."

"In this long life we enjoy, there can be more than one..."

Quentin shook his head. "She won't share. I wouldn't ask her to. There's no room in our marriage for you."

Kamaria's lush lips pressed tightly together, and she laid her head on his chest. "Well then, you had best make this special. Enough to last another century."

"You make it sound as though you've had no one else in your bed."

"Don't be silly." Her head came back up and Quentin's breath hitched.

With her hair trailing to his chest, her breasts scraping his skin, he was reminded how lovely she'd been to him—how she'd captivated him from the start.

As though reading his mind, she smiled craftily. "Am I not beautiful?" she asked, her hips undulating against his. "I simply can't resist basking in a man's thrall for me."

Already so aroused he was fighting to keep his mind clicking, Quentin clamped a hand on her waist to hold her still. "You are lovely, but then you know that. You use it like a weapon."

She touched a finger to his chest, tracing a line down the center, following it with her gaze—an evasive action unlike the woman he had known. "There is one more thing I would ask of you."

Quentin grabbed her wrist and held her hand away. "No more stipulations. Our bargain is made."

"A request for you to consider when all of this is done is all I ask. Promise you will hear me out."

Quentin didn't like the sound of her voice. The tension she fought to keep hidden. "I promise to listen, but I give no guarantees of my answer."

She took a deep breath and widened her legs over his hips, her knees sliding to the sides of his hips. "Then we can begin? You are rested, no?" She bent and flicked one flat nipple with the tip of her tongue. "You are aroused. How that must madden you."

"I wish I were a stronger man," he admitted.

"To resist me? You think your attraction disproves your love? Silly Quent-in. Your body remembers me. Lusts for me. Has nothin' to do with your mind." Her hand flattened on his chest then glided down his belly, heading straight for his engorged cock.

Quentin sucked in a deep breath as her long, slender fingers wrapped around his shaft. Which way could he do this and not lose himself? Close his eyes and pretend it was Darcy?

Kamaria would know. She'd consider it a deal breaker. He had to be here. Had to be with her – open to her brand of seduction.

So, with his eyes wide open, Quentin reached down and pushed her hands away. He brought her directly over his cock and clasped her lush, rounded bottom and squeezed, rolling her hips against his, letting her folds slide cream along his length.

Kamaria's hands gripped his shoulders and her back arched, lifting her nipples off his chest, and suddenly Quentin had to have them in his mouth. Had to reacquaint himself with their flavor and texture.

He rolled her to her back, ignoring her gasp. He tugged the pillow from beneath her head, kicked down the covers twisting around his calves and straddled her hips.

When her hands reached between his legs again, he pushed them up beside her head. Then he bent over her breasts.

She'd wanted to come screaming. Time to get down to business.

He flicked out his tongue, capturing one spiked stem, then latched his lips around it, sucking it like a short straw.

Her belly vibrated, her eyes narrowed to dreamy slits.

He came off the nipple and brushed his whiskered chin against the soft pad of her oval areola, watching her white teeth bite her lower lip. He cupped her breast, lifting it, shaping it, then opened his mouth wide and sucked the globe into his mouth, drawing hard. He worked his mouth, pulling, tugging, burrowing to take more of her small round breast inside. Her skin tasted of mint.

When he lifted his head, his balls were so tight, snuggled against her lower body, he hoped he could make it last long enough to fulfill the first test she'd lain down.

Fighting his own arousal, he bent to the other breast and teethed the stem gently, pushing the flat of his tongue against the tip and swirling on it.

Her hands cupped his head and he growled a warning, but she thrust her fingers into his hair, sliding around his ears, not guiding, just caressing him as he nibbled.

When the urgency in his groin became too insistent to ignore, he drew off again and slid down, tonguing the tender underside of her breasts, following each indention

dividing her ribs, edging along the lower bones to her soft belly, nipping the flesh in soft, rousing bites that had her stomach trembling before he rimmed her navel.

Come screaming, she'd demanded. He'd give it to her. Use her passionate nature against her. Drive her to the edge and beyond until she was helpless to hold back her cries and deny him success.

His tongue lapped inside, following the curve of the soft button, then trailed lower, over her smooth, honeysuckle-scented mons, following the quivering outer lips. He glanced over the burgeoning nubbin at the top of her sex and slid lower, stroking between her thin folds, pressing the tip of his tongue inside. With her legs held closed by his knees, his frustration had to be only a fraction of hers. Her belly pulsed, pumping her hips in shallow, tense little rolls that did nothing for either of them except build the tension he needed to sweep her away.

When he nudged a knee between hers, her legs swept outward, bending to tilt her pussy toward his mouth, begging with her body for him to sip the cream smearing her inner thighs and glistening on her labia.

Quentin knelt between her splayed thighs, curving low to blow a stream of warm air against her. Her nether lips parted with a wet sigh. He gripped her inner lips between his thumbs and forefingers, spreading them, massaging them, then leaned down and licked at the whitish cream.

He couldn't stop the growling moan that broke from his throat. He remembered the way she tasted. Remembered the way he'd felt the first time he'd eaten her out—like a god because she'd writhed like a wild thing, her cries husky and stretching into groans.

She fought him, her body trembling against the effort of keeping her arousal muted.

Quentin wouldn't let her rob him of control. He stroked his tongue inside her, laving her, stroking into her channel, then lapping upward, gliding over her cloaked clitoris.

His teeth and lips nibbled downward again until he thrust his tongue inward, fluttering it inside her.

Her thighs quivered against him as he dove downward again, this time lower still, stroking over her small rear entrance, tunneling shallowly, then lapping upward, swirling his head as he circled on her clit.

Her fingernails dug into his scalp. Her thighs strained as she pumped her hips against his mouth, trying to deepen his mouth's caresses.

But Quentin came off again, pulling away from her grasping hands. He glanced up, letting Kamaria see the cream coating his lips, the redness of his cheeks—letting her see the proof of his arousal, hoping she'd forget her game just long enough...

Kamaria's lips parted, her breaths were shallow, hitching at the beginning of each shaky inhalation.

Quentin rubbed his thumb over her tiny, puckered asshole, exciting her further. Her fingers curled into the white sheets beneath her.

He pressed his thumb inside her, toggling it back and forth as he worked it past the tight ring of muscle. His cock jerked at the thought of her ass chewing his length as he thrust deep—but not now. Not when he was so close to success.

He worked two fingers inside her pussy, stroking quickly in and out to build friction and draw down more of her sweet cream.

When a fresh wash of hot, sticky liquid surrounded the digits, he thrust in a third, liking the way her channel clamped around him.

Her hips circled and jumped, seeking deeper penetration.

And he was only too ready to give it. Continuing to work her asshole with his other hand, he curved his thumb into his palm, cupped his fingers to curve them, then slowly, keeping his grip loose, he pushed his fist into her cunt.

Kamaria's eyes widened. Her hips stilled. Her breaths halted. "Quent-in, it hurts. Stop."

He knew she lied when a shudder shook her belly and worked its way down to her thighs. She clamped them around his arm, trying to hold him back.

He twisted his fist, scraping his knuckles inside her channel. He tugged backward then shoved gently forward.

Her thighs tensed and her bottom lifted slowly off the bed, widening to give him access. Her tense expression reflected anger and anguish...and finally, surrender.

As he began to work his fist deeper, dragging against her inner walls, he removed his thumb from her ass and slid two fingers inside, stroking them hard.

Kamaria bit her lip, but a groan tore from her throat. Her channel rippled along his wrist and he knew she was coming.

"No, you don't, witch," he whispered furiously then bent to suckle the top of her stretched labia until he felt the rigid little kernel. He bit it as he slammed his fist deeper.

Kamaria's body went rigid and a high-pitched mewl escaped her lips. Her mouth opened around a husky cry that tightened and grew louder as her orgasm clutched the fist embedded in her body, milking him, until at last a ragged scream pierced the air.

Quentin stopped all motion, leaving her hanging. His chest billowed, his body shuddered as he fought the lust rising up, loosening the beast within him.

Not yet. Save it. Don't give her the goddamn satisfaction. The silent mantra repeated until he found the strength to pull away. First his fist, drawing it slowly from her dripping, sucking cunt. Then his fingers from her ass.

He opened his jaws, releasing her clit and rose, settling back on his haunches, wary now that she'd lost the mask of her arousal.

A slow, rising fury hardened her features, narrowing her eyes to slits, giving her a feral appearance.

"Two to go," he said softly.

Chapter Three

Quentin slammed his forehead against the cool black-and-white tiles, hoping the pain and the scalding-hot water sliding over his skin would relax the hard-on the bitch had left him with. His balls felt impossibly full, his cock rigid to the point of agony.

Nothing seemed to dampen the painful arousal that had made the short walk from his bed to the shower stall seem unendurable.

Kamaria's revenge was as devious and *deviant* as any he'd anticipated.

Already aroused, already fighting his damnable attraction, he'd held himself still as stone after he'd pulled his fist from Kamaria's dripping cunt and she flounced off the bed in a rage.

Her fury at how he'd tricked her, arresting her *screaming* orgasm in mid-release, had him holding his breath while she spat and cursed, her body trembling as she paced the floor.

When at last she'd halted, dragging in deep ragged breaths, she was faced away. Her slender but strong shoulders squared, her long fingers clenched then rolled open. When she turned slowly toward him, her cat's eyes gleamed with malice. "Nicely done, husss-band," she said, a small tight smile lifting the corners of her lips.

"Thank you," he replied calmly, not bothering to tell her not to call him that again. Fighting to keep his features schooled in a bland mask, he waited, knowing there would be harsh consequences for his rebellion.

Her gaze flickered down his naked body, resting on his cock for a long moment. "You'd best shower if you want to see your woman without my stink on your skin."

Then he'd noted the shimmer of tears in her eyes. "Kamaria..."

Her lips twisted into a snarl. "You won...this round, at least. We'll see how you fare in the coming battle." Then her head fell back, her eyelids fluttered closed, her hands rose, turning in the air, her fingers dancing.

Quentin's jaws tightened. "Kamaria..." This time his tone warned.

Too late. The bunched sheets beneath his knees began to move, sliding softly, slowly, like gentle lapping waves on a lake. Lapping around him.

The folds in the sheets lifted, filling around cylindrical shapes that lengthened then began to writhe. Hissing sounds erupted around him, and suddenly the bed was covered with snakes.

Quentin held his breath, unafraid of a dozen goddamn snakes. If that was the best she could do...

But it was only the beginning.

The snakes glided from under the sheets, their sleek, black, unnaturally warm bodies winding under and over his bent calves and feet, encircling his thighs and skimming higher.

When the first asp's head reached his balls, he clamped his jaws tight, damned if he'd tell her to stop. He had to remind himself she couldn't really hurt him like this, not permanently, anyway.

But with the blunt nose of an asp that close to his testicles, he couldn't quite relax. His jaws clenched, his fists curled at his sides, and his chest rippled as every muscle in his body strained instinctively against his mind's command not to move, not to breathe.

A soft stretched hiss had his gaze dropping to his groin. One snake slithered from between his sac and his thigh, nudging upward along his cock. Silently, he begged his cock not to react, but he couldn't stop it. It twitched.

The snake's head reared back, its jaws opened to reveal two long, needlelike fangs. As a curse burst from Quentin's mouth, the fangs sank into the soft head of his cock.

Quentin winced. The pain wasn't so bad. However, the sound of her soft laughter made him mad enough to spit. When his gaze came back up to Kamaria's, he nearly lunged from the bed.

A broad, amused smile stretched her lips. "Now we see how you like being cheated of your pleasure." She left him, striding naked and triumphant from the bedroom.

After slinging the snakes, one at a time, from the window, Quentin sat heavily on the side of the bed, his head swimming. The poison working through his system was strong. His body quivered as though palsied, goose bumps lifted on his skin. Every part of him grew chilled—except the flesh between his legs.

His cock and balls held their erection, unflagged by the damage from the bite. Quentin soon suspected the snakes hadn't been natural asps at all when the chills bled into rolling waves of heat that washed his body from head to toe, each wave increasing the sensual tension threatening his sanity.

He stretched on his back on the cool white sheets and spread his legs wide to ease the ache. Cool air from the oscillating fan above him didn't help. He wrapped his fingers around his shaft, hoping to relieve the painful ache, but the first firm stroke nearly had him passing out.

Too sensitive to touch, too aroused to think of anything but the relentless, throbbing need between his legs, he'd crawled to the shower, turned the taps to the hottest setting and stood shivering under the faucet, damning the witch to hell.

All he'd wanted was to save Darcy. Now trapped in this sorceress's lair, beholden to Kamaria's whims and desires, he feared he was farther from his goal than ever. Darcy was somewhere inside this house, lying defenseless and alone while another forced him to give her vindictive satisfaction.

He couldn't function this way, couldn't help or protect Darcy if Kamaria kept him in this state. How long he stood there, his legs braced apart, his body reddening beneath the scalding spray, he didn't know.

When finally he admitted defeat, he whispered, "Kamaria, I submit."

* * * * *

Vero Beach, Florida

Joe Garcia stood at the iron gates of the compound, eyeing the new guards who patrolled two by two just outside. Their scent drifted to him, carried on the salty evening breeze, and he shuddered.

"It does take some getting used to." Navarro's voice came from just behind him.

Joe glanced over his shoulder toward the leader of the Northwest Council, who'd come only a week ago, bringing geneticists, who were also vampires, for safekeeping within the compound owned and run by the newly founded southeast division of the Vampire Council.

Everything had gone horribly wrong. The scientists had been kidnapped by the same wolf pack who killed Darcy Albermarle after they ripped her baby, *his child*, from her belly. The vampire responsible for recruiting the lycans, Zachary Powell, was nowhere to be found.

At least Lily was safe now, although they were seeking another doctor to see her through the births of their children. Their former physician had traded fluids drawn from her womb for cash, giving Zachary the genetic material he needed to mutate himself into the form of the original vampires—those born of breeders like Lily—winged creatures whose undiluted powers surpassed those of the turned.

"This Dark Mountain pack—how are we supposed to trust them?" Joe asked.

"You trust your old police partner, Max, and he's one of them," Navarro said, his words delivered in his trademark even tones that never failed to irk the shit out of Joe.

Did the guy have ice in his veins?

"Blood, same as you."

Joe snorted. No use trying to hide what he was thinking. Navarro's special gift allowed him to sift through the thoughts of those around him. He had to hand it to him

though, he was discreet. Looking into Emmy Harris' dirty mind had to be a constant form of self-flagellation.

"The woman does have a one-track mind, especially when she's within Dylan's reach."

Joe's lips stretched into a smile. A rare occasion these days. "He seems pretty adept at keeping her mouth occupied when she starts to run on." He turned back to glare at the armed guards. "The wolves who attacked us were from the same pack. Why the hell should we trust them?"

"Their own people helped us defeat the wolves Zachary paid. They want to make this right. They want Zachary and his people destroyed the same as we do. They also treasure their security and their lands."

"I just can't stand the smell of them." Joe shook his shoulders, trying to shrug off his unease. "They don't bother to try to hide their nature the way Max did before he came out to us. It's like they want to rub our noses in their fur."

"I understand why it horrifies you to know they're so close to Lily, but we've taken precautions. She never leaves the house. The new security system for the panic room answers to her voice alone. They won't get anywhere near her before the births of your children."

"I know she's safe. I just feel...uncomfortable. They're here while we sleep, they even invade my dreams. I can't escape them or the sound of them, the howling..."

The crunch of gravel alerted him to Dylan's arrival. "Quentin was plagued by nightmares of wolves," Dylan said, his Irish brogue roughening at the mention of his best friend. "He was attacked in London, chased down, ravaged. It's how we met. I came to his aid."

"In London?" Joe asked. "Must have been years ago. He said he hates the place. Too cold and wet."

"He went home just after he was turned. A disastrous visit, from what I understand. His family disowned him. I think they may have tried to destroy him—seems there was a history of vampire hunting in the family. He never knew."

"It's damn weird," Joe murmured. "I dream of a gas streetlamps lining a street—wet cobblestone, horse-driven rigs—"

"Joe," Navarro interrupted, "it's not unheard of for one who is turned to inherit memories from his sire."

Joe shook his shoulders, his face screwing with disgust. "So, when I dream I'm blond, I'm not just thinking I'm Fabio on some romance novel cover shoot? God, what a relief."

His new friends' soft laughter sifted through the air.

"Quentin's memories, huh?" Joe said softly. "Damn, I knew he gave me more than just fangs. He had a hard-on for a witch—a dark-skinned woman—a long time ago. I've been dreaming of her too." He shot a glare at Dylan. "Don't mention it to Lily. She'd skin me."

"The witch was the vampire who turned him," Navarro said quietly.

Their gazes locked.

Joe stiffened. "You don't think—"

"That he took Darcy to her?" Navarro's gaze sliced to Dylan. "Do you think he'd actually try it?"

"Fuck me. He never let any of us touch her body. No one saw her after..." Dylan's eyebrows drew together, his lips tightened. "He just might give it a go."

Navarro turned on his heels, his long strides eating up the distance between the gate and the house.

Joe hurried after him. "I'll go."

"You're needed here," Navarro bit out. "Lily's time draws near. I'll send Dylan. They're close. He might have a chance to talk sense into him."

"I'll have to lock Emmy in the panic room," Dylan said, his voice just as tight.

"There's no way in hell she'll stay behind willingly."

"Take her with you. You may need the buffer. Quentin will be bitter if he can't save Darcy."

Dylan snorted. "Bitter, I can handle. He might try to kill me if I get in the way."

Joe asked the question hanging in the air among them. "Do you think there's a chance she could be saved?"

"Quentin doesn't understand what he risks by keeping her alive," Navarro said, no hint of pity in his tone. "He's grieving. His judgment's clouded."

"But if there is a chance..." Joe tried again.

Navarro halted and faced Joe, but his glance included Dylan. "Darcy, God help her, was bitten by a wolf. Quentin fed her a vampire's blood. Add a woman's rage over the loss of her child..." His eyes filled with regret as he gripped Joe's shoulders. "If she awakens, she'll devour him."

* * * * *

As soon as Quentin whispered his surrender, the tension squeezing his balls and cock relaxed—enough he could slide his fingers around himself without wanting to scream.

He reached beneath his cock and cupped his balls, groaning with relief. He fumbled with the faucet, set the temperature of the water to a soothing warmth and began to work his hand along his shaft, thrusting shallowly inside his fist.

His foreskin glided up and down the rigid column as he remembered other, more enjoyable showers.

Darcy on her knees, her mouth suctioning hard around him, the hot swipe of her tongue over the smooth head as she made little choking sounds in her excitement while she tried to take him deeper.

Darcy with her belly swollen with child, her body bent over as she gripped the shower's sitting ledge to take him deep into her body.

He curved the pad of his thumb over his crown and gripped the sensitive flesh just below the glans and squeezed, pumping...close, so close.

When his balls released, he spewed cum into the drain, his mouth gaping as his body shuddered. *Shit*.

Would he have only memories of his love to feed his loneliness? He was a selfish bastard to worry about how he'd cope without her. He swiped a hand over his face, glad the shower hid his tears. His pain gave his adversary power. She'd wipe his nose in it.

Bathing implements lay in a wire basket in a corner of the shower stall. He chose a pumice stone and scoured his body harshly. After washing the scent of Kamaria from his body, Quentin wrapped a towel around his waist and headed back into the room she'd given him.

There, he found a visitor.

A young man sat on the side of the freshly made bed. His glare could have sliced slivers off Quentin's flesh.

Her latest lover, no doubt. He had the look. Tall and lean with black hair that touched his broad shoulders, dusky skin that betrayed a mixed heritage. Blue eyes narrowed to angry slits.

He rose slowly to his full height—his gaze level with Quentin's as he stepped close.

"I've no interest in taking your place," Quentin said easily while preparing himself mentally for a fight. The tension in the other man's body shouted his desire to wipe the floor with him.

"She wants you in the woman's room. *Now*," the man bit out then stalked to the door.

As it slammed shut, Quentin's mouth twisted. What did the bitch want with him anyway when she'd found a loyal replacement? Revenge served cold—a century and a half past the expiration date—made for a sour dish.

Quentin found his clothing already hung in the closet. He dressed quickly and headed down the corridor, tamping down his excitement and his hope. He passed an open doorway and spied the young man standing just inside. Kamaria stood over a figure draped in a thin blanket.

Darcy.

Quentin let go of his irritation, ashamed with himself for letting the man and Kamaria pull his thoughts from his first priority. He entered quietly, ignored the snarl from the witch's lover and stepped around the opposite side of the bed from Kamaria.

His glance went immediately to Darcy. Her features were still deathly pale, her expression lax. As though she were dead, her spirit already departed from her body. He hoped it wasn't so, that somehow the woman whose gaze burned over him from across Darcy's lifeless form would somehow be able to save his wife. His only love.

"What did you want?" he asked when he finally lifted his gaze from Darcy.

Kamaria lips curved into a smile that didn't reach her sloe eyes. "I've decided you should be here. You shall come with me into her dream world. She doesn't know me. She may shy away from me. I might lose her."

Quentin knew her explanation was a mask for her true intent. She wanted him to suffer. He just didn't know how she'd accomplish it. "Can it be done? Can you take me there?"

"We shall see." She turned toward a low hutch beside the bed and withdrew a burlap bundle from inside. "You must trust me, Quent-in. Follow my voice, no matter what approaches you and tries to lead you away from me."

Trust her? Quentin snorted. Well, if she wanted round two to ever happen, she wouldn't abandon him in the ether just yet. "Just tell me what to do."

Chapter Four

Kamaria's eyes narrowed as though she read the mental challenge he'd thrown down.

Quentin reminded himself to tread carefully around the witch. She'd already given him a powerful reminder of the extent of her abilities. His groin still throbbed from the arousal she'd held suspended, unabated until he'd whispered his surrender alone in his shower.

Her lips curved; her gaze grew sly. "Sit beside your other woman. Speak to her. Maybe she'll hear you."

Quentin glared with all the hatred and desperation that filled his soul. If he'd had any other choices, he'd never have come here. Still, he'd bargain with the darkest demon in hell for Darcy's life. He pulled a ladder-back chair close to the bed and sat next to Darcy, pulling her hand between his to warm her cool skin.

Ignoring the other two people in the room, he bent close to his beloved wife and whispered, "Hello, love."

He looked for some hint she knew he was there, but the same slackened expression she'd worn since he turned her as she lay dying greeted him. Without the spark of life to light her features, she seemed almost a stranger.

Yet, he had only to close his eyes and remember the glowing happiness that had animated her face just days ago as she'd walked near the ocean's edge wearing her pretty blue dress—the one she'd chosen because it matched the color of his eyes. The liveliness of her expression, whether spiced with anger or tenderness, had always made her beautiful to him.

"Hold on to those thoughts, husss-band," Kamaria said, her tone edging toward irritation.

"Don't call me that. Not here," he said, feeling suddenly tired. His wife lay in a coma, but Kamaria wanted to play games.

"What will you give me if I behave?"

Quentin drew in a ragged breath, not bothering to mask his anguish as he raised his gaze to hers. "All that we bargained for."

Her lips pursed, and her glance slid over him.

Quentin's body tightened in rejection of her possessive gaze, but bit his tongue against the acidic retort he wanted to lash her with. *Tread carefully*, he reminded himself.

Instead, he attempted to deflect her attention. "Must he be here?" he asked, jerking his head toward the young man who appeared to dance attendance to the bitch.

"When I begin the spell, I may have need of him to pull us back if we stray too far."

"I won't pretend to understand what the hell you mean," Quentin growled.

Her smile didn't reassure him. "You don't need to know anything—only this—follow my voice. Other...sounds, may draw your attention, but don't heed them. I will lead you to her."

Quentin swallowed. "Will she know me in this place?"

Kamaria shrugged. "That will be entirely her choice."

His jaw tightened. "I'll follow you."

Kamaria's gaze slid to the other man. Her expression softened instantly. "Adrian, pull away the coverings from the bed."

Adrian aimed a chilly glare at Quentin but stepped toward the end of the bed and gently drew away the blanket and sheet covering Darcy, leaving her lying on a crisp white fitted sheet in only a thin nightgown.

Kamaria laid her bundle on the bed beside Darcy and slowly unwrapped it. She extracted four fat brown candles and four shallow dishes then closed her eyes. Her soft, lush lips moved as she silently began her incantation.

The air inside the room cooled. A breeze filtered through the curtains at the windows, catching the hem of Kamaria's long shapeless silk gown, then licking at Adrian's hair before swirling around Quentin and Darcy.

Quentin shivered and his heartbeat quickened. Already, he felt the charged electric spark of her magic, heard the crackle of it as the breeze strengthened then suddenly died away.

Kamaria placed small plates at Darcy's head and feet then another beside her hands. She set the candles on top of each one. Then she unwrapped a long matchstick and scraped it against a roughened flint, striking sparks until it flared bright. She lit each candle, first the one above Darcy's head, the one at her feet, then the ones beside her hands. The wicks burned quickly then slowly melted the wax, which hissed as it heated.

"Pig fat infused with herbs," she explained. "It will hiss and spark while it burns. We don't want the bed catching fire. Another reason Adrian must be here to keep watch."

Next Kamaria drew out an ivory pipe and a small plastic bag filled with dried plant matter.

Quentin raised his eyebrows.

"Peyote and marijuana. For you. To ease you into a trance."

"Neither has much effect on me. Tell me, is this all you have in your bag of tricks? My vampire metabolism—"

"Added to my magic, this will help me draw you deep into her dream world." She lifted one black eyebrow. "Why do you doubt me when I have never lied to you?"

Quentin drew a deep breath. "I will trust you in this."

"You should have trusted me in all things, Quent-in. I never intended you any harm. Not before."

"You tricked me," he bit out. "You used your sorcery to blind me to what was happening as you turned me. You enslaved me with your witchcraft—"

"I shared everything I had to give—body, soul, magic and blood. I would have made you powerful beyond your imagination if you had stayed."

"After you sucked away my free will?"

"What did you do with your free will that you could not have accomplished with me? You whored and drank your way through Europe after you left me."

"Only until I found a friend who gave me a purpose. And at last, I found a woman I could love without any magical aid."

Her shrug said she didn't get his point. "You place too much importance on the means."

"I wouldn't surrender my soul to the beast within me. You tried to leash him, used him to hold me to you—fed his appetites to the point he overwhelmed the man who remained inside me. I couldn't stay and still retain the essence of who I was."

"Yet look at where you sit now. Across from the witch, the demon who made you, begging for my help."

"I'm asking you to do what's right," he said slowly, trying one more time to reason with her. "To help someone helpless and undeserving of her fate."

"You think I should do this to save my soul, don't you?" She canted her head, staring intently into his eyes. "Or are you trying to save yours?"

Quentin sat back, feeling as though he'd been struck. "I don't do this for me," he said hoarsely, but wondering if he lied to himself.

"You do this for the woman? Will she be happy when she awakens?"

"Perhaps, not happy with me. She'll be beside herself not knowing what happened to her child."

"Again, you claim no relationship with this child. How interesting I find that. Did she know you resented it?"

"I didn't resent it," he said quickly.

"But you resent *him* – the one who gave her what you could not."

Quentin didn't answer. What she said was true. Since the moment he'd discovered Joe Garcia had fucked her, impregnated her with his human seed before he was turned, he'd fought the envy growing like a cancer inside him.

He loved Darcy with all his heart and wanted every part of her for his own. He hadn't liked knowing Joe would be in their lives forever.

"Smoke the pipe, Quent-in," Kamaria said softly. "Let the narcotic fill your mind. I will add my own enhancement to ensure you sink deep into your vision. However, I fear the experience will not be pleasant. Your demons will greet you first."

"I'm not afraid. You don't understand, I would walk through hell to be with her."

"Hold tight to that thought. You just might."

* * * * *

Dylan O'Hara gritted his teeth as his wife squeezed her inner muscles and slowly sank on his cock.

Almost as interesting as her inner gymnastics was the expression she wore. Intense, turned inward, her white teeth nibbling her plump lower lip—she looked as though she studied a complicated equation.

"What are you thinking about?" he growled.

"I'm considering all the things you haven't told me about this little mission—and wondering how best to torture the truth out of you." A slim blonde eyebrow lifted, and her hazel gaze narrowed. She snuggled her thighs closer to his hips and rose, nearly coming off his dick.

"I haven't kept a thing from you," he lied. "There just wasn't time, what with packing and prepping the flight—"

Emmy slammed down his cock then wriggled to close in on the last inch or two her cunt hadn't enveloped. "You poked your head in the bedroom door, shouted for me to

pack for a warm climate, then disappeared until the limo came 'round to pick us and the suitcases up. You were avoiding me."

His hands closed around her fleshy buttocks and he lifted her, forcing her up then down, not allowing her the freedom to torture him with another of her slow glides. He pumped her up and down, hoping to reach his climax fast so he could think, and knowing he had only to help her creep toward her own before her mind became completely consumed with her pleasure.

Emmy was a true hedonist. Sex was her greatest pleasure.

Followed closely by organ meats and pizza delivery men.

"Oh. My. Gaawwd!" Emmy flung back her head, rubbing her breasts on his chest, jouncing vigorously on his lap as her channel rippled up and down his shaft.

"That's it, darlin'," he crooned, watching her face contort in an agony of ecstasy.

Then his own orgasm ripped through him, sucking the air from his lungs. He kept her forcefully thrusting onto him, her silken pussy consuming and surrendering his cock until she hung limply in his embrace, her forehead nodding toward his shoulder.

Only then did he let the air whistle between his teeth as his balls emptied, seed spurting warmly in pulsing surges against her cervix.

Emmy wrapped her arms around his shoulders and cuddled deeper against his chest, a low throaty groan reverberating along his neck. After several long, gasping breaths, she cleared her throat. "So, sweet thing, what haven't you told me?"

Dylan's embrace tightened, knowing it was time to level with her. She deserved to know the entire truth of their mission.

Soon after they'd boarded Navarro's jet, he'd dismissed the attendants, appealing to Emmy's lustful nature to distract her from asking too many questions. They'd sated their passions twice already, but he couldn't put off the hard news he had to impart a moment longer.

Emmy sat up, which forced his waning erection deeper. She gave him another wicked glance and swiped at the soft, blonde wisps that stuck to her moist cheeks. Then her nose wrinkled in disgust. "Baby, I love you, but you do know we're both going to have to bathe in that teeny-weeny bathroom before we deplane."

"I'll just have the attendants bring us complimentary washcloths—dampened and warmed."

Emmy's mouth slid into a sly smile. "Will you let the cute one do the honors? I'm a little stiff."

"If Carlo even gets a glimpse at what needs washing, I'll spank you."

Her grin widened. "Promises, promises..."

Dylan felt a heavy ache settle inside his chest. With her sweet face hovering just above his, her lips still moist from his kisses, he knew just how lucky he was.

Emmy's gaze remained a little unfocused, as it tended to be long after her orgasms slammed through her. Their bodies were still joined since she refused to release his cock from her ferociously gripping cunt.

Emmy loved basking in the afterglow and only reluctantly, sometimes petulantly, let him ease her away.

"You know," she whispered. "I could do Kegels until you come again. Squeeze you like a tube of toothpaste with my vaginal muscles."

Dylan felt an answering smile tug at his lips. "From which end?"

Her snort was lazy and hinted at a bone-deep satisfaction that kept her body pliant, if not her mouth, which began to tighten. "It's amazing the superpowers I'm discovering inside myself."

"Always had a hankering for a pussy of steel?"

She shot him a glare. "It's better than Wonder Woman's golden lasso for forcing the truth from a man."

"Squeeze me like that again and I'll lose the ability to speak."

Knight of My Dreams

"I'm squeezing your cock, not your vocal cords, darling."

"You're squeezing the only part of me that can think at the moment."

Her inner muscles relaxed around him, but the rush of liquid heat that surrounded him didn't bode well for their ability to continue the conversation. Dylan grasped her by the waist and lifted his hips, spearing deep one last time, rocking his hips to give her sheath a side-to-side caress, then lifted her off his cock. He sat her sideways across his lap.

Emmy's lush mouth pouted. "You sure know how to spoil a girl's fun."

"You wanted to talk."

"I did. I do." She sighed and wrapped an arm around his shoulder. "Tell me now. What's this secret mission we're undertaking all about?"

Dylan sighed and tipped her chin to lock his gaze with hers. "This may be the hardest thing I will ever ask of you."

Emmy's eyes widened. "You're frightening me."

"I'm pretty terrified myself."

Her expression grew troubled. "Does this have to do with Quentin?"

Dylan closed his eyes for a long moment then opened them to find Emmy's eyes already filling with tears. "Yes, baby. And Darcy."

Her gaze slid away, and her lips trembled. "Lily, Pia, and I have been wondering..." she said, her voice thickening, "if it was possible...that Quentin tried to turn her..."

"Navarro and Joe think that's just what he did."

"Pia said it would be no use."

"If she's still alive when the full moon rises..."

"She'll become a wolf...with a vampire's blood." She swallowed hard. "Pia said she'd be worse than a rabid beast."

Dylan couldn't reply. His throat was too tight to force out his agreement.

Delilah Devlin

Emmy's chin lifted. Anguish lay in the darkening hazel of her gaze. "She's my best friend, Dylan. Are we going there to destroy her?"

His nod sent tears rolling down her cheeks. "Why did you bring me?"

Dylan combed his fingers through her hair and forced her head to his shoulder. "Because I don't want to lose Quentin too," he whispered.

Chapter Five

Quentin's head swam. Every breath, every heartbeat thundered in his ears. Still the buzz wasn't unpleasant, neither was the sickly sweet flavor of the smoke he pulled into his lungs.

"Adrian, take the pipe before he sets the bed on fire."

Kamaria's voice, laced with dark amusement, filtered through his mind. Setting aside the pipe, he met her avid gaze. The smile that crimped her full lips gave him a moment's pause.

Then he remembered. He needed to be cautious. She laid some sort of trap for him here. However, the narcotics sweeping through his blood made it impossible to hold that thought, any thought, for longer than a second.

She'd handed him the pipe and told him he must use the drugs to enter a trance.

To save Darcy. That was it.

He laid a hand on the mattress, nearly upsetting the hissing candle the witch had lit beside Darcy's hand. When he tried to move his hand away, he discovered he couldn't.

Suddenly, the hand and the arm attached to it weren't his to command. And he was drawing away from his arm, away from the pale, blond man seated beside Darcy's still body. *Floating toward the ceiling*.

Below him, Kamaria seated herself on the opposite side of the bed and closed her eyes. Adrian, her assistant, crossed his arms over her chest, his expression losing the hard edge of anger that had sculpted his features every time he'd entered Quentin's presence.

Quentin could no longer hear his heart, couldn't feel his breaths. He hovered near the ceiling then passed through it, floating upward toward a dark, starless night. There you are... Kamaria said, in her melodic voice. Are you ready?

Ready for what? he asked, the words elongating, twisting, as though his tongue couldn't wrap around them, but he didn't speak with his mouth and vocal cords. His words simply existed. Would she be able to hear every thought that crossed his mind?

Why so alarmed, Quent-in? We have no secrets here. Laughter drifted around him.

Without a body to anchor him, he wondered how he felt the chill her soft chuckles elicited. Then again, how could he see? But he could. Only the world around them as they rose higher was painted in shades of gray and black.

The house, the beach, the glistening waves below, all drew farther away as he felt himself pulled along in her wake.

Where are we going?

To find your love. But first we must enter The Darkness.

Before he had a chance to even form a question, their ascent slowed, and then they rapidly lost altitude, spinning as they fell. Wind whistled past in an eerie whine. Grays swirled like liquid in a blender. When the whirling slowed, the ground beneath them approached at an alarming speed.

They touched down together, and Kamaria, corporeal again, stepped past him in her flowing gown.

Glancing down, he found he too had a body again and lifted a foot experimentally, then gaining confidence he could follow, planted his feet carefully, one step at a time through tall silver-tipped grass, the tips waving in an insistent breeze.

He cupped his palms and let the tops tickle his hands, taking in the dark world he'd entered. The moon above him was impossibly large and bright. Thick clouds circled it, draping the edges of its bright surface, but never crossing its pitted face. A dark thicket of trees, bare limbs like spindly, aged fingers stretched in front of him.

Kamaria reached out to caress the trunk of a tree at the edge of the woods and looked over her shoulder, a smile curving her lips.

As he entered the thicket, a rasp of static electricity lifted the hairs on his arms and at the back of his neck. Darkness deepened around him. His footfalls sounded overloud in the stillness as dried leaves crunched beneath his shoes.

Kamaria moved more quickly now, her gown a pale glimmer against the stygian darkness.

Wait for me, he called out, but she didn't slow. Fighting a lethargy that entered his limbs, he increased his pace.

Suddenly, he crossed from the woods into a clearing. Moonlight, splintered by the trees, shone onto a small circular field. A figure sat on a carved bench in the center of the clearing, draped in a veil of thin, luminescent gauze. Her slender body bent at the waist, her arms folded over her belly.

"Darcy?" he whispered as he paused at the edge of the dark wood.

A quick darting glance around showed no signs of Kamaria. He remembered her warning to stay close to her but dismissed it just as quickly and took a step closer to the woman in the pale robe.

Suddenly, something wrapped around his arms, looping around his forearms, streaming upward to encircle his chest and neck then his legs, holding him immobilized. He strained against them, glancing down to find thin, ropelike vines twined around him.

Something scraped the edge of his jaw. "Quent-in...did I not tell you to keep me in sight?" Kamaria whispered into his ear.

"Is that Darcy?" he asked, his gaze on the woman in the glowing veil.

"She waits. But not for you."

"Can she see me?"

"If she opens her mind to you, then yes."

Something painful twisted inside his chest. Darcy was here. Within reach. "Free me from these vines. I have to speak to her."

She walked around him, trailing her fingers along his chest, scratching hard enough to sting through his clothing. "Someone isn't pleased."

"Stop with the games," he bit out. "Release me."

"I'm not the one holding you, Quent-in. This is her world, her nightmare."

"But you're playing inside it, twisting it."

"And so can you, but you must learn how."

He flexed his arms and jerked at the vines, but they only cinched tighter. "I want to talk to her. If what you say is true, why can't I simply will myself to go to her?"

"Because she doesn't want to see you."

Quentin struggled anew, trying to imagine the vines falling away, but their hold didn't ease. This wasn't like any dream he'd ever had; he couldn't influence the outcome—at least not consciously. Was that the secret? Did his own subconscious hold him back? He was frightened of facing her, of answering her questions concerning her child and his conduct bringing her to the Caymans. Was he subverting his mind to avoid the confrontation?

"You come closer to the truth, but not quickly enough," she rasped into his ear. Without another word of warning, she shredded his clothing with silvery, daggerlike fingernails until it fell in tatters around the vines. "Three times, you promised," she hissed. "This time, I shall have full satisfaction."

Quentin's skin grew clammy as his heart thudded dully in his chest. "Darcy is here. Not here. Please." He hated begging her, hated giving her the satisfaction that even now curved her feral lips.

"If she doesn't see you already, perhaps she will never know," she said in her wicked, lilting tone. "But you must remain quiet so that you don't gain her attention."

Grinding his jaws shut, he wrestled against the vines, against the hands that tracked down his chest to his sex.

Yes, he was aroused, but once again, not of his own choice. The bitch had used her weapons, her magic, to bring on a massive erection.

"How can this be satisfying to you?" he whispered harshly. "You force me. You'll have to climb over me to even get to me."

"But, darling, there will be no climbing..."

The breeze picked up. Naked tree limbs creaked as they bent to the force. The vines around him tightened, binding his rib cage so that he couldn't draw a breath. Then he felt himself tilting, being lifted off his feet until he was suspended by the vines wrapped around his hands and feet, his waist supported by another thick vine.

Kamaria's smile was eerie, her teeth protruding beyond her upper lip. Her face glimmered as though bathed in crushed, iridescent pearls. And then she was floating upward, her clothes torn away by the wind, her long hair whipping around her upper body like thick black snakes.

She drew up her knees, spread them, then floated toward him, toward the cock that pointed toward the moon.

Quentin bucked wildly against the vines, trying to avoid her, trying to rid his body of her as she settled above him, her legs hooking around his waist, her pussy shoving down his hard cock.

She gripped his shoulders and began to rock. "Three times, you promised. If you make me come, there will only be one left."

Sweet Jesus, no! "Not here. Please not here," he gritted out, trying to will his body not to respond. But his cock remained painfully rigid, tensing, pulsing in reaction to the strong caresses of her cunt.

"She need never know," Kamaria crooned, leaning closer to rake his skin with her teeth. "Shield yourself from her mind, hide from her. If you can."

His head turned to Darcy who still bent double on the bench and begged silently for her to remain in her pose, for her to wait to awaken until he could come to her.

Then he turned back to Kamaria, a snarl twisting his lips, and forced his body to remain still, defying her the only way he could—every ounce of the wild fury roiling inside him, setting his body to quivering violently as she took him.

Kamaria flung back her head and laughed, riding his fury, her cunt melting around him like honey, the liquid bathing his cock, his groin, and trickling downward to slick the crease between his buttocks.

Then she was transforming, her body growing heavier, straining the bindings around his feet and hands, ridges pushing outward on her forehead, her teeth elongating—wings stretching behind her back, curling to capture the wind.

"What the fuck?" he gasped.

The wings cracked, angling downward, then wrapped around his body, their weight and strength holding him immobile.

Something whipped behind her, long and dark—a sharp tensile tail lashing outward then flicking, cracking the air then folding, diving downward.

Quentin gave a muffled scream as it lashed his ass, leaving a wet, sticky trail as it drew back then came again, this time with the wicked, tapered end diving straight between his buttocks, burrowing, parting him. It pierced him there, entering him smoothly, wriggling its notched point into his puckered hole and thrusting deeper.

Quentin fought to hold back his screams. The bitch, the fucking bitch wasn't just a witch, wasn't just another turned soul, but a goddamn Ancestor. One of the ancients, long thought extinct—unless, she was only using this night dream, this frightening nightmare, to manipulate his mind as well as Darcy's.

But he didn't know how to manipulate this realm, couldn't fight the beast sitting on his body, raping his ass while she used his cock to milk him of seed. It came in a flood that didn't end, spurting hot and thick from balls squeezing so hard a vicious cramp began in his groin.

He moaned, his body sweating, but she didn't relent, didn't let him finish—the hard, clamping cunt pumped his semen into her body until he thought he might pass out from the painful pulling suction.

Then she screeched, flinging back her head, the snakes of her hair whipping his skin as she shuddered and squeezed and pumped...then at last fell against him.

A scent like the ripest bordello surrounded them, sex, sweat, blood, urine. Her tail pulled slowly from his ass, scraping the tender tissues, leaving him shaken, his lungs heaving with the effort to draw a deep breath, his stomach clenching around the urge to retch.

Her great black wings opened, flapped down once, and the beast lifted from his cock and his body, shooting upward to hover above the trees, her deep black glance raking him, a feral, gloating smile stretching over jagged fangs. Then she was gone.

He fell to the earth. His body crunching on a bed of leaves. Quentin stared at the bright moon above him, knowing he could never approach Darcy like this.

He curled his legs inward, hugged his knees and wept like a baby.

* * * * *

Darcy heard sobs in the distance. Harsh, hiccoughing cries that tore at her. She wanted to close out the sound, reenter the soothing darkness where pain was only a distant memory.

Instead, she opened her eyes and found herself peering through thin fabric. She swept aside the gauzy cloth that cloaked her head, wondering faintly if it was a shroud and she was dead.

She glanced around, looking for the source of the wretched cries. Moonlight bathed a clearing in silvery light.

Why the weeping? Did someone mourn her passing?

She shoved off the bench, following the sounds to the edge of a dark woods and found a huddled creature lying on its side, but the closer she drew, the more she focused her sight, she realized it was a man, his body curled into himself, his broad lean back stretched, shining with sweat, his buttocks damp, a trail of dark liquid dripping from a long shallow mark.

A wound? Was he hurt? She hesitated, turning to stare back at her bench and wishing she didn't feel obligated to investigate. She really didn't want to think. Didn't want problems, mysteries, to intrude upon her rest.

But there was something about his voice. Although his sobs were harsh and ragged, something about them felt familiar, as though she should remember him.

She reached out and touched his shoulder. "You're making too much noise. Please be quiet."

His cries cut off, but a shudder shook the shoulder she clasped.

"That's better." She started to turn away. "Are you cold?" Maybe she could offer him her shroud before she returned to the bench.

"Don't touch me," he whispered.

Her hand pulled back. "Fine," she said. "It's not like I want to, you know. Besides, you reek." And he did, of sweat and sex—and blood. The scent filled her nostrils as she inhaled.

Her mouth watered. How odd she should be suddenly hungry. She bent closer, taking another deep draw of his scent.

"Get the fuck away," he said.

This time, his voice was stronger, thicker, with a delicious edge to it that caused a curl of heat inside her. "I didn't invite you here. You're the one intruding. What happened to you, anyway? Are you dead too?"

"You aren't dead. Neither am I—although at the moment, I'm wishing I was."

He didn't sound particularly distraught, more irritated than anything if she had to choose a tone—but she really didn't want to think this hard. He needed to go away.

She shrugged off her shroud. "Take this and wrap it around you. Then leave. Please."

Dropping it on his shoulder, she waited while he reached a hand around to snag it and wrapped it around his shoulders and head then slowly stood, his entire body trembling.

"Not what I expected you to want to cover," she murmured, taking in his lower body in a curious glance. His cock was flaccid but long and thick—and gleamed with seminal fluid. Something about that cock pricked at a memory.

Her gaze shot back up to his head, swathed in the gauze. "Take it off," she whispered. "Let me see your face."

He shook his head.

"Why?"

His fingers clenched the edges of the fabric, holding it tighter. Then he slowly pulled, letting it slide from his head.

Again, not what she expected, although she wasn't quite sure what she had thought he might look like.

A metal helmet completely enclosed his head.

Chapter Six

From between two narrow eye slits, Quentin watched Darcy's beloved face while she scrutinized him, her head canting as her eyes narrowed. He recognized that look. The shrewdness and natural curiosity he'd always admired still existed, even if it was a little fragmented.

Then her gaze dimmed and she looked over her shoulder toward the lonely bench in the center of the clearing again. "Go away." She ambled toward the seat, leaving him behind.

Because there was no way in hell he could do that now that he had her attention, he followed, winding the gauzy fabric she'd given him around his naked hips since his head was enclosed in the metal helmet.

He didn't know how he'd managed that feat. Hadn't envisioned a helmet of any sort, but it was precisely what he'd needed to hide his features from her. The shield must have been pulled from deep inside his subconscious.

Grimly, he shoved away the shame of what he'd endured. Kamaria would pay for using him that way. His body would heal. His pride would too. His injuries were inconsequential when compared to what Darcy had gone through.

"Wait," he said, tying a knot at his hip and rushing after her. At least her attention wouldn't be focused on the hard-on he couldn't keep from begging for her attention.

She didn't acknowledge his call, simply placed one foot in front of the other in a steady gate, her head faced unwaveringly forward. When she reached the bench, she lowered herself like an old woman and closed her eyes.

Quentin would have liked to give her that moment's quiet she seemed to crave because it offered him a moment to stare at her features, animated with a hint of color in her pale cheeks, so different from the slackened expression she'd worn since she'd slipped into her coma.

But he didn't know how long he could linger here. Didn't know if Kamaria would return to tear him away and give him another dose of punishment for his past sins.

His ass was still raw and sore from where she'd raped him with her tensile tail. His flesh stung from the wounds she'd opened as she whipped him.

Despite the sting from the stretched and bloody welts, he knelt beside Darcy and reached for her hand, cupping it between his, warming the cool fingers that fluttered inside his grasp. "Do you know where we are?" he asked.

A frown pulled her dark brows together, but still she didn't open her eyes.

He tried again. "Can you tell me your name?"

Her eyes sprang open. "What part of go away didn't you understand?" she said testily.

Quentin pressed his lips together to hide his smile. Warmth spread through him at her show of spirit. She'd been like this when they first met. Mouthy. Annoyed with his attentions even while her heart pounded as quickly as a bird's because she'd been scared. After all, she'd thought all vampires were bloodsucking murderers.

"I'm alone here," he said, trying to appeal to her own loneliness—anything to reach her.

Her eyes slowly opened, but her expression was heartbreaking, her eyes pooling with tears and her free hand pressing against her belly. "And I'm empty," she whispered.

Quentin's heart thudded against his chest. Some part of her knew about the baby. The one he'd allowed to be taken while he'd tried to save her.

Then her head turned toward the dark sky.

"Darcy," he whispered, sensing she was willing herself far away from him.

A line, like jagged tearing paper, appeared at the top of her forehead and quickly fled down her neck, disappearing inside the shroudlike garment she wore.

As he watched, horrified, her skin slid away from the tear, opening and falling to either side until her body slid in a loose skin sack to the bench. From inside the gaping hole, a bird fluttered its wings and took to the dark sky.

Quentin backed away from what was left of her body, shocked, grieving, and unable to touch what remained of her, because he knew it wasn't really her. Knew she wasn't there with him anymore. If she'd wanted to stay on this bench in her dream world, he would have remained with her for however long she needed...until they both faded away into the darkness.

Then he heard the bird's piercing cry in the distance and closed his eyes as the significance of her choice of escape pierced his sadness. All was not lost. She'd chosen the body of a tern to escape inside. The same as the birds she'd told him about every day after she'd returned from her solitary walks on the beach back home.

She remembered them even though she'd reacted with pain to his presence and his questions. She might think she wanted to float away in this dream world of hers, but she'd already felt more emotions in the few moments they'd been together than she was comfortable with. Darcy was no longer numb.

Satisfied that he'd accomplished at least that much, he shoved up to his feet and wondered how the hell he was supposed to wake up now.

As soon as the thought entered his mind, he was back inside the bedroom in Kamaria's house, seated beside Darcy's still body. He was still clothed, his body unscathed. The candles the witch had lit had long since sputtered out. Kamaria was gone. Thankfully, so was her young boy-toy bodyguard.

Because he wasn't ready to face her, and because he wasn't ready to lose the connection he'd made, at last, with Darcy, he swept the candles from the bed and crawled onto the mattress beside her to sleep.

* * * * *

Emmy bent over the concierge she straddled, enjoying one last draw of the lovely man's blood, rutting her sex against his clothed cock as his pulsating orgasm waned.

Her belly was full, but her appetite was far from appeased. She was horny now. The dark man beneath her with his short, spiky locks and lilting voice had unleashed her hunger so quickly she'd risked discovery behind the counter as she'd lowered herself on him and begun her feast.

"Emmy, we do have work to do," Dylan groused. "Quit playing with your food."

She ground down on the man's spent cock, eliciting a long, tortured groan. "No more," he moaned. "Gone dry."

Emmy giggled and pressed her lips to his. "Thanks, hon, but you're not gonna remember a thing even if you do wake up sticky."

She gave Dylan a heated glance over her shoulder and slowly climbed off the concierge's lap. Lifting her hand, she fluttered the card key she'd gotten from him before she'd asked him if he'd ever done "it" sitting.

Not that he'd had any clue what she'd really meant.

"I have Quentin's room key. But he's moved out. Someone came in and cleared out his things."

Dylan raked a hand through his hair. "Not good, love. Did he say anything about a woman with Quentin?"

"He didn't know if he was alone or not. Quentin never allowed housekeeping inside the room."

"We're going to have to hit the courthouse or library and try to follow the clues to the witch's whereabouts. Try to piece it together from Joe's dreams and the things Quentin let slip about his time here. Maybe we can find Louis' old estate, and then follow the beach to get to the hut." "Do you really think she'd be in the exact same place?" Emmy asked, feeling frustrated and knowing Dylan's emotions had to be that much more disturbed. Quentin was his best friend.

"If she was waiting for him to return, wouldn't she want to make it easy?"

"But it was so long ago. Wouldn't she have moved on?"

"This bitch is vengeful, but she didn't hunt him. My bet is that she knew some day he'd need something from her. And aren't all women better strategists than men?"

Emmy arched her brows. "If it had been me, and Quentin had left me, I'd have followed him to the ends of the earth."

Dylan's eyes narrowed. "Got a thing for Quentin, do you? I could be all right with that."

The low growl underlying his casual words made her pulse leap. "You're just horny. Any mention of perversion will appeal."

"Well, daylight is approaching," he drawled.

"Not much we can do until we can get to the library or city hall or whatever," Emmy said, loving the hunger glittering in his eyes. "And I have this teeny-weenie card..."

"After watching you dry hump that man into an orgasm, I don't think I can be gentle, love."

"You always like watching me feed."

"I do, because I know you take your pleasure with them just to incite me into violence."

"You could have stopped me at any time," she murmured while she lifted her breasts to redistribute them inside her formidable underwire cups.

"Seemed cruel when he was so close, so fast," Dylan said, his gaze on the pale, pink flesh mounding over the tops of her cups. "I know how he feels." Emmy bent toward the concierge, giving him and Dylan an eyeful of her tits and gave the slim black man a quick kiss. Then she leaped to the top of the counter and to the floor. Giggling, she ran across the tiled foyer of the hotel toward the stairwell, Dylan on her heels.

He was faster, but he was running with a hard-on and cussing because it hurt.

She was up the stairs in seconds, twisted the handle to the door for the second floor rooms and slammed it shut behind her to stall him for a moment.

Emmy made it to the door of their room and slid the card into the reader. As soon as the light blinked green, she shoved the door open. But Dylan was already behind her, his hands gripping her hips and pushing her roughly through the door.

She'd wanted to make it the bed, but Dylan had other ideas—his hands were already at her waistband, dragging down her trousers. A rasping unzip and his cock was pressing between her buttocks, thrusting lower between her wet and swollen folds.

She bent, bracing her hands on her knees and groaned as he slid inside her.

He grunted. "You're too short."

"Shoulda waited until I got to the goddamn bed. Come out and I'll get my clothes off."

"Can't. Feels too good."

Emmy smiled and bent over. She pulled her shirt over her head, letting it drop to the floor. Then she reached for the back of her bra, but Dylan was already there, undoing the hooks, his hands coming under her breasts immediately to cup them. "Ahhhh...Jesus, Em..."

So, she was halfway bared, and he wasn't going to help her finish getting naked. So she tried shuffling her feet forward, which was hard since her pants cinched her thighs together, and he was still rutting shallowly inside her. But she made it to the dresser, grasped the edge with one hand and slid the other down her thigh to shove down her pants.

How the hell was she going to get them off?

An arm slipped around her waist, and Dylan lifted her, cock still embedded inside her, and strode toward the bed.

Emmy sighed when he lowered her and grabbed for pillows.

So, the pants weren't going anywhere, but her bottom was raised, high enough for him to brace apart his legs and aim straight into her cunt.

Her juicy, warm, very wet cunt. "Kitty's hungry," she purred.

"Kitty's getting the shit slapped out of her." Dylan's hands tightened on her ass, pulling her toward him each time he slammed into her, shoving her away when he withdrew. His belly and balls did indeed make very juicy slapping sounds—a very nasty spanking.

"God, I need to spread my legs," she said.

"Not here to please you, sweet."

"Bastard."

"You dry humped the guy."

"Couldn't help myself. He tasted so yummy, and he uses the same cologne as you do."

"I'm not mollified. And he wears Old Spice."

"That's not your brand?"

"Shut up, Em. Talk about him for a second more and I swear I won't be answerable for my actions."

"His cock was quite...substantial."

"Arrrrgh!" His cock came out, and he rolled her off the pillows, grabbed her feet and jerked off her boots, stripped her pants away, and then he was on top of her, crushing her to the bed. "Can you breathe?"

She shook her head, eyes bulging.

"Good." He rooted with his cock, still pressing down his chest to keep hers deflated, and then curled his belly to stroke inside her.

Emmy blinked once for yes.

"Going to use Morse code?"

She blinked again, feeling blood rush to her cheeks. She felt like her head was ready to explode, and not in a good way.

"Promise you'll be quiet and I'll give you some air."

She blinked then sucked in a deep breath as his weight shifted off her.

Before she had a chance to blast him, he'd hooked his arms beneath her legs and lifted her ass off the bed. He raised and lowered her incrementally, watching his cock slide into her pussy.

She watched the way his biceps flexed so deliciously. But the cock sliding into her was lovely as well—thick, blue veins streaking around it, ropes of her creamy excitement slathered like runny butter all over.

"Ready?" he asked silkily.

"Ready? I'd say you've already started," she said, a hum of contentment washing over her.

That was all the warning he gave. He shook his head and transformed into the beast—one second to the next—his face crackling as the bony structures of his forehead and brows protruded, distorting his handsome face, his body bulking outward as muscles thickened. His cock expanded to cram itself against her walls.

She had a tree trunk shoved up her cunt – minus the bark.

Emmy's back arched. The orgasm that had been gliding steadily on a flight path toward the stars exploded.

A low, growling roar ripped from her lover's lips, and he hammered her—no mercy shown as his buttocks flexed, slamming forward to shove so deep she thought she should be able to feel him at the back of her throat.

Her hands fisted in the bedding beneath her, her body shuddered, over and over, palsied quivers that rattled along her frame, squeezing rhythmically along her passage to clasp him deep inside.

He didn't relent, even after she'd collapsed against the mattress, moaning, her head thrashing because it was too much. He'd kill her with this one. Suck the life force out of her like a giant alien leech attached to her cunt.

The image surprisingly didn't alarm her. Instead, she laughed, a broken sound that resembled a sob, but she stared at his great, thick cock and imagined the leech attaching to her uterus and zapping her with electricity-loaded prongs, because another orgasm piled on top of the one she'd just survived, and her womb clenched, cramping hard, almost painfully, and she couldn't do anything, just lie like a suffocating fish on the banks for a roaring river while he continued to plow her depths.

At last, she felt the scalding spurts, washing through her, emptying his lust inside her. Because she didn't want him withdrawing, she wrapped her thighs around his hips, which was difficult because he wouldn't remove his arms from beneath her knees and continued to rock forward and back.

His features relaxed, his body deflated. His cock, spent but still turgid, returned to a meaty human size, filling, but not too many calories.

She giggled.

Dylan's face screwed into a frown and he fell over her, his chest once again weighting down hers to squeeze the breath from her. "Why are you laughing?"

"Because I was imagining your dick..." she gasped, "as a foot-long éclair. Creamy filling and all."

"Still hungry, I take it?"

"Starved."

Knight of My Dreams

Dylan came off her, jerked her by the shoulder to bring her upward then clasped the back of her head and sent her face straight toward his cock. "Open wide. See if you can laugh with your mouth full."

Emmy grinned. Dylan was so damn predictable. Fuss with his fussiness and he had to retaliate like the manly man he was really was.

She opened her mouth and swallowed him down, creamy topping and all.

Chapter Seven

Darcy sat on the bench in the middle of the dark field again. The man with the golden helmet was gone. She should have been glad that he'd finally left her alone, but she wasn't. Before he'd come, she'd been content to drift—through the dark, airless night, in her thoughts—floating like a feather without the heavy burden of worries or fear, but he'd awakened something inside her.

His body had been beautiful despite the bloody tears cut deep into his skin. His smell had been familiar and comforting even though the musk of sex and tang of urine had clung to him. His pain had been palpable. And she'd felt drawn to him to provide comfort.

Which had really pissed her off, because she hadn't wanted to care—not about her beautiful stranger or about herself. But here she was, unable to let go and simply drift because she wanted to wait for his return.

Restless though she was, longing for his company, another force pulled at her, anchoring her to this open field.

The moon, overlarge and dominating the inky sky, rose high above the dark tangled branches of the trees surrounding the clearing. The silvery light it cast warmed her skin like a noonday sun but exerted a strange and magnetic draw. Her skin began to itch, her restless body felt infused with hectic energy. She left her seat and began to pace.

A faint howl rent the quiet, coming from deep inside the forest. And she knew what it was. From somewhere deep inside her, she found the image of a wolf, sleek-bodied and powerful. The image caused a shiver to crawl up her spine, followed by a restless yearning to seek out the creature. Which confused her.

Had she known wolves before or was the knowledge of their nature born inside her? She shook her head. It wasn't important how she knew, just that she resist the call.

Instinctively, she knew that following the sound, surrendering to the allure of the night and the moon, would change her forever, and she wasn't ready to move on. The beautiful man might return and she would miss him.

So she drew deep, calming breaths, sat again on the cool marble seat and closed her mind to the call that grew insistently louder and closer. If she didn't respond, if she didn't enter the woods, she would be all right. Soon, her helmeted companion would return for her. She knew that as surely as she knew only horror awaited her if she heeded the wolf's call.

* * * * *

Quentin awoke with bright sunlight streaming into the window. He judged it to be late afternoon by the lengthening shadows. Feeling lethargic, knowing he needed to rest for the coming night, still he pushed off the bed and headed to the window where curtains billowed inward with the light sea breeze.

He closed it, pulled the curtains to shield the room from the dangerous rays and turned back to Darcy's bed, freezing when he saw the two figures standing beside her still body.

He swallowed, noting the moisture welling in Emmy's hazel eyes and the stubborn, firmed edge of Dylan's jaw. "How did you find me?" he croaked, stepping closer to the bed, his body tightening as he prepared to defend Darcy because he knew why they were there.

"Does it matter?" Dylan asked, his voice gruff.

Emmy moved toward him, her hand lifting.

"Em, stand aside," Dylan said softly, gripping her upper arm and pushing her behind him.

Quentin gazed at his old friend, remembered all they'd shared, but felt a warming hatred build within him. Before he'd let either Dylan or Emmy harm his wife, he'd kill them. Stone-dead. And he thought he might actually feel some satisfaction from the act.

The thought chilled him. He should have been taken aback by the rising anger spiked with adrenaline that coursed through him. He'd spent his entire afterlife fighting the beast inside him, but he'd held his emotions at bay since the first outpouring of numbing grief when he'd held Darcy's still body in his arms.

The journey, his battles with his memories, his guilt and Kamaria's wicked deal combined in a deadly lust for vengeance.

"You should leave," Quentin said quietly. "This isn't any of your business."

"You belong to the council; you belong to your family. To me," Dylan said. "Navarro sent us to retrieve you."

"He sent you to murder my wife."

"She's not Darcy. Not anymore."

"Darcy is still inside her. I've spoken to her."

Dylan's eyes narrowed but never left his face. "She woke from her coma?"

Quentin clamped his jaws tight.

"What? Did you see her in your dreams?" Dylan snorted. "She's gone, Quentin. If the creature inside her awakens, it will kill you."

"She's not lost," Quentin ground out.

"Do you think your witch will help you? Can you trust her? She wove enchantments around you the last time, kept you here to serve her. Do you think she will do this for you out of the goodness of her heart? For old times' sake?" His hands curled into fists. "What did you promise her in return?"

Quentin shook his head. "That's none of your business. But she's already proven she can be of use. I tell you, I've been with Darcy. There's still a chance—"

"A chance to turn her back? A chance to awaken her? Whatever the witch has done, it's a trick. Can't you see that? Darcy can't come back. She will never be the same. It would be kinder to let her go now."

"Let her go? You make it sound like she'll just drift away. What you're talking about is murder." Quentin raked a hand through his hair. "She's your friend too, dammit. How can you even consider it?"

Mossy eyes shimmered with moisture, and Dylan's throat worked around a hard swallow. "I can do it because I know it's what she'd insist on, if she could."

"Baby, what if he's right?" Emmy said, pressing closer to his side. "What if there is a chance she might make it through?"

Dylan must have sensed the emotions boiling inside Quentin. His gaze turned deadly. "Em, get out of here."

Her chin jutted upward. "I won't. You two will kill each other. He's your friend even if he doesn't remember it right now. When the dust clears, nothing will ever be the same."

"It's already changed," Dylan said, his voice even, his gaze never straying from Quentin's. "He broke the rules. He knew what must be done, but he defied God and Darcy's fate. He's made a pact with a demon. Already fucks her. She's changed him—and he doesn't even know it."

"Dylan," Quentin said, keeping his voice even so as to not incite further tension. Let them think he was willing to talk. That he might change his mind. Kamaria might awaken. Her lackey might be seeking weapons even now. "Dylan, I've been with Darcy. Her spirit still lives—but she's confused. We can lead her back..."

Emmy's lips trembled. "Tonight's the full moon. If you haven't already reached her, it's too late."

Dylan remained unmoved, his body tightening subtly. "Get out, Em."

"I...can't. Maybe we're wrong."

"You should listen to your woman," came Kamaria's lilting tone from the doorway.

Quentin took a deep breath, relieved as never before to see her.

She strode into the room, dressed in one of her long, opaque caftans. Her expression was alert, her lips curling upward. "Your Darcy inspires great loyalty. I've only seen her shadow. I find myself curious to meet her."

"Kamaria..." Quentin growled, stiffening as she drew near and traced his forearm with a long, sharp nail.

"They mean to kill her. Your other wife, husss-band. How would you like me to handle them?"

"I don't want them harmed. I just want them gone."

Dylan's lips curled into a snarl. "We won't leave without finishing this."

Kamaria's head swiveled toward Dylan. "Dusk comes soon. Can you not give your friends a few more hours? For him to say goodbye or for her to open her eyes and greet you herself? She's chained. What do you fear?"

Dylan turned his head toward her. "I know who you are. What you are. You can't tell me you intend to help him. You want revenge."

"Of course, I do. Don't I deserve it? He deserted me. Left me without a word. He wounded me. But I have already exacted a bargain, which provides me great satisfaction. We've made our bed. I promised to bring her back to him. I keep my promises."

"Quentin," Dylan said, seething, "you really should have been more specific. She could bring her back a beast."

Kamaria's laughter raised goose bumps on Quentin's skin.

"You think me such a monster. I am only a woman who happens to be a vampire like your own sweet Em. Should I be flattered you think I could be so much more?"

"Navarro warned me about you."

"Navarro." Her eyes closed, a smile stretched her full lips. "Navarro has always been a fussy old woman. Such a waste. All that intense power...and he withholds himself, neuters himself."

She didn't know about Navarro's mate Sidney. Interesting. Quentin had always thought Kamaria was omniscient. Perhaps he'd ascribed to her powers she didn't possess. Maybe she was playing him after all. "Kamaria, tell them. Tell them you can bring her back."

"Why don't I show them? We can all make the journey to her dream world. Perhaps her friend," she said, staring at Emmy, "can persuade her to return."

"No fucking way," Dylan bit out.

"What are you saying?" Emmy said. "You'd put me in a trance?"

"Something like that. Ask Quent-in. He's already traveled there. He spent time with his Darcy. Spoke to her."

"No games," Quentin growled. "You won't do them any harm."

"Still smarting from the wounds I left on your backside?"

A flush of heat filled his cheeks at the reminder of how she'd taken him. He'd been helpless like never before, invaded, raped. "You will do them no harm."

"And what more will you give me in return? You still have one more promise to keep. How would you sweeten our agreement?"

Quentin swallowed. "I would surrender completely. Give you everything you want of me."

"No clever games of your own? Full satisfaction? Will you even let yourself enjoy my company?"

"Jesus, Quentin," Emmy said, her eyes widening. "If Darcy doesn't wake up a monster, she's still gonna kill you."

"What choice do I have?" he asked, all his raw anguish there for the room to see.

Emmy shook her head. "Do you think she'll be any happier knowing you thought you had to do this? She loves you."

"And your relationship is entirely monogamous?"

"I don't cheat Dylan. He's always there to watch."

Quentin snorted. "Call it what you want. I will move heaven and earth to save her."

"You never mentioned hell..." Dylan's face was set, his posture rigid.

Kamaria chuckled and arched one brow. "You shouldn't be so hard on Quent-in. He resisted. But my will is stronger." Her smile slipped away, replaced by a sinister sneer. "As you shall soon discover."

Quentin gave Kamaria a fierce glare. "Leave them out of this."

"They trespassed on my home. Why should I show mercy?"

"Because you don't care about them. Only about me."

"That's where you're wrong. I care about Adrian..." she said, a sly glint in her eye.

As though she'd conjured him, Adrian cleared his throat, announcing his presence.

All gazes turned to eye the tall, dark stranger. "Mistress," he said softly. "Will you be returning to bed, or are you ready to begin?"

"Since we are all here, there's no reason to wait. Please take seats around the bed. Adrian, take our guest's weapon."

Dylan's hand slipped behind his back, but he stiffened instantly, his breath catching.

Kamaria stared, her eyes narrowing, then she lifted her hand and curled her fingers. The gun Dylan had hidden behind him flew across the room. "Don't defy me. You'll regret it."

Emmy's breath hitched and she stepped forward. "We'll go with you. Enter her dreams. Tell us what we have to do."

While Adrian retrieved the weapon, Kamaria strolled toward the end of the bed. "The candles, Quent-in. You know how it must be."

Quentin exhaled and felt his body tremble with relief. He gathered up the candles he'd swept to the floor and returned them to the bed, placing them on their plates at Darcy's hands and feet. Then he lit them and stood back.

The room darkened instantly.

"Stand beside the bed," Kamaria said. "Place your hands on her body then close your eyes."

Emmy moved immediately, laying her palm on Darcy's shoulder.

Dylan glared at Quentin, but touched Darcy's thigh. "If she awakens first..."

One side of Quentin's mouth lifted. "Afraid?"

Dylan grunted. "Of course. You should be too."

"I've been terrified since the moment I heard her screams."

Dylan's expression softened. "I do understand, you know. If it were Em, I'd fight for every last one of her breaths, but I'd expect you, as my friend, to do the right thing."

"You are. You're here. Keep an open mind."

With a sharp nod, Dylan closed his eyes.

Quentin gave Kamaria one last glance, pleading silently for her help.

Kamaria's lips twisted. "The things I would do for you..."

"Just keep your promise. I'll keep mine."

He closed his eyes, and just as quickly was swept upward. This time he didn't need the drugs to relax him and didn't fear the journey. Rising through the roof of her villa then slipping upward toward the full moon, he felt free. For a long moment, he was suspended in the sky, and then he began the crazy fall toward the blending grays until he saw the woods and the clearing beneath him. He landed on his feet and began to run.

Behind him, he heard Dylan calling to Emmy and her breathless reply. "I'm here. Don't let him out of your sight!"

A howl ripped through the night and his heart kicked into high gear. God, was he too late? But he then he saw the pale figure sitting on the bench. Before the others reached her, he was already on his knees beside her, capturing her hand in his—his face exposed this time.

Darcy's eyes widened. Her mouth opened and she reached a shaking hand toward his cheek. "Quentin," she whispered.

Chapter Eight

Darcy stared hard at Quentin's beloved face, drinking in the familiar lines and planes, noting the creases etched deep around his mouth that hadn't been there before.

She began to smile, but footsteps racing toward her made her back stiffen. At last, she tore her glance from Quentin's face and watched as Emmy raced toward her, her long blonde hair floating behind her, and Dylan's burly body on her heels.

Dylan's grim expression sparked a memory that she shoved back, but she remembered them all—Quentin, Emmy, Dylan. Remembered another place with long white beaches and a sky so blue and free of clawing branches that once upon a time she'd felt happy.

"Darcy?" Emmy whispered, out of breath.

Darcy turned to Quentin again. "Why are we all here?"

"Do you know where you are, love?" Quentin said softly, squeezing her hand.

She tried to concentrate, but beyond the three people standing within her sight, and the fact they shared a friendship, a deep love of one another, she couldn't remember much else. "I don't know."

Quentin's hand tugged her onto her feet and he pulled her against his chest. The broad expanse, so tense and solid, should have made her feel safe. Instead, a deep uneasy tension flooded her.

"Relax. We have you now."

She shook her head. "Something's wrong."

"What is this place, Dylan?" Emmy asked, her voice small and tight.

"It's her dream world." Quentin's deep tone rumbled beneath her ear, but the sound still didn't soothe.

"No, it's not," Dylan said flatly. "This is purgatory. A step away from hell."

"This is where her mind drifts," Quentin said, his words hardening. "This is the place she feels safe from her nightmares."

"Do you feel safe, Darcy?" Emmy asked, closer this time.

Quentin's arms tightened around her, as though shielding her from Emmy. But why? Weren't they friends?

A howl ripped through the darkness and Darcy pushed away from Quentin's chest. The urge to run toward the sound was strong, mesmerizing.

Quentin's hand clamped around her arm. "Ignore it."

"Can't..."

"Why should she ignore it?"

Darcy didn't know this voice. Female. Strong. An edge of menace. She turned to find a woman standing behind her. Tall, slender—so dark the shadows around them seemed to collect in her skin. She shook back her long black hair and stepped closer. Her teeth flashed white.

Darcy tried to back away, but Quentin's arms pulled her closer again.

"Your promise, Kamaria," Quentin said.

"In time. Have patience, husss-band."

She sounded like a snake.

"Husband?" Darcy shook free from Quentin's hold and turned.

His jaw clenched tight as his gaze lifted to the other woman. "Not my wife, Darcy. You are my wife, my love."

"And yet...you know her? How?"

His gaze dragged slowly down to her again. "I told you about her once. A long time ago. The woman who made me what I am."

"What you are?" She felt stupid, as though her mind sifted through sand. Memories lingered just out of reach. Painful. Ugly.

Something he'd done was ugly.

The wolf howled again, this time closer, more insistent. Darcy's body shuddered in response. She swung toward Emmy and Dylan then the woman whose smile stretched wide, teeth gleaming like sharpening fangs.

Darcy's body convulsed and she gasped, her hand clutching her belly. She stared down at herself, at her empty belly. *And she knew*.

The wolf. The searing pain. Her blood flowing out to soak the ground beneath her. Quentin's anguished howls. Pain so intense, she wished herself dead. Her body ravaged...a baby torn from her flesh and crying.

Her baby...

Quentin knew the moment she remembered it all. Her gaze fell to the hand pressing against her stomach then crawled back up to lock with his.

"You did nothing," she whispered.

A muscle alongside his jaw rippled. "I saved you."

"My child..."

"Already lost when I found you," he ground out.

Darcy stared, memories swamping her. The thin, warbling cry of her child fading as the wolf loped out of the room where she lay bleeding. "Carried off in the mouth of wolf. Alive, Quentin— *Alive!*"

His eyes squeezed shut. His head tilted toward his chest; his hands clenched at his sides.

The woman he'd called Kamaria laughed. "Quent-in makes terrible choices. I know. What will it be, Darcy? Will you stay here? Do you want to run with the wolf?"

Another howl. Closer. At the edge of the trees.

She turned from Quentin, from the group standing, staring at her, giving them her back. She sought out the creature, found it, paused at the edge of the dark woods, its golden gaze glowing against a dark, furred face.

Another convulsion racked her and she bent, doubled over, pain tearing at her belly.

Her hands curved, and she stared as hair sprouted on her knuckles and her fingers shortened, her nails lengthening, sharpening. She fell to the ground, her back arching as agony ripped through her bones. They cracked and broke, reshaping her body. Her knees and elbows bent back, locking into a new position. Her white shroud floated down, and suddenly, she shook herself, felt bristles wave on her back and flanks. She cringed as her mouth widened and stretched and her teeth slid from her gums.

A quick, sharp bite clacked them together and she shook her head and turned toward Quentin whose features contorted in horror.

"Darcy, no love. Don't give in."

The wolf at the forest's edge whimpered.

Her ears quirked toward the sound. Then she drew in a long breath through her snout, breathing in the scents of resin and sweat...and fear.

Footsteps rushed toward her, but she spun on all fours and faced Dylan whose hand was raised. A revolver materialized, clasped in his grip, pointed at her.

"Don't, Dylan," Quentin shouted, leaping toward him and shoving Dylan's hand upward.

A shot rang out, and Darcy bolted, heading toward the trees and the lone wolf waiting for her. The male spun and raced deeper into the dark tangle of forest, and she followed on his heels, moving swiftly, her body freed of pain, her mind letting go of the jagged memories of her past.

Then she heard Kamaria's laughter filtering through the night, rising higher until it shrieked—triumphant, gloating.

Darcy paused and looked behind her. Quentin's tall figure crashed through the trees, but before he reached her, vines shot up from the ground and wound around his legs, pulling him down. He reached a hand toward her, raised his face.

Blue shards of light glinted from his eyes, softening quickly by the tears spilling down his cheeks.

Darcy felt a moment's sympathy. A last regret. He'd changed her. Tried to save her. Sacrificed the child he'd never really accepted even though he'd known she'd hate him forever.

The wolf beside her nipped at her flanks, his breaths short, his whimpers eager for her to join him.

Dylan and Emmy crashed through the clearing, halting as they spotted Quentin then lifting their gaze to her. Dylan's hand came up again, still gripping the gun. Darcy held perfectly still. Let him end this, she thought. Let him take me now.

No more pain.

"Dylan, please don't," Quentin begged.

"She wants this. You know she does."

"She's alive. She's sentient. Let her speak her will." Quentin's face swung toward her again.

Darcy stared at him, lying on the ground, trapped by the vines, his expression pleading not for his own freedom, but for her to respond.

She didn't want to. Wanted to hold on to her fury, her hurt. But his pain, so palpable...reached her. Although not ready to forgive him for his terrible choice, she couldn't close herself off from him.

No sooner had the thought formed that she couldn't hurt him, her body transformed. Standing on two legs now, she straightened her spine. "I don't know how I feel about you, Quentin. But there's something you can do. Something you owe me. I'll come back to you, but you must promise to help me."

"Anything," he sobbed.

"Find my child."

He swallowed, and more tears leaked from his eyes. "Your child is dead."

"He's not, you know." The sly voice sounded from behind her and Darcy turned her head to watch Kamaria—Quentin's witch—she remembered the story he'd told her once. The woman he'd sworn he'd never forgive, never wanted to see again.

But here she was. And she would help—if Quentin asked her.

"You know this for a fact?" Darcy asked, her words clipped.

"I've seen him, your baby boy."

A son? Her heart melted at the thought of the small boy with Joe's dark coloring and eyes. "He lives?"

"He's like you," Kamaria said, the corners of her full mouth curling—but the smile never reaching her eyes.

"Do you even know what you are?" Dylan choked out.

Darcy rounded on Dylan. "What I am? What do you mean?"

"Do you remember what happened?"

She nodded slowly. "Everything. I remember it all."

"Then you know you have vampire and *were* mixed in your blood. Your humanity isn't...sustainable."

"Not sustainable...?" Darcy asked. "How do you know?"

"It's happened before. Long ago."

"Then you witnessed this person becoming a monster?"

A shadow of doubt crossed Dylan's face, deepening his frown. "No, but I've heard the tale. You will have the power of a vamp, the ferocity of a *were*. Your nature will be vicious, murderous."

Darcy shook her head. Even though she'd seen the proof herself, having succumbed to the pull of the moon and the lone wolf, she'd been the one to pull back at the last moment. She had control. "But I'm still me..."

"You're not in the real world here, Darcy," Dylan said. "The first time you were faced with a painful situation, you transformed and ran. What will happen when you're back among humans? You will turn and savage them."

"Is that why you're here? To destroy me?"

"To make sure you stay asleep, Darcy."

"And my child?"

Dylan's bleak expression had her shaking her head.

"If he lives, he too will be destroyed."

Her glance went to Emmy, her best friend. "You'd let him do this?"

Emmy shook her head, but her gaze went to Dylan, the tears glossing her eyes at war with the tightening of her lips. Emmy wasn't sure.

Darcy felt her stomach sink as she gazed again at Quentin, whose ravaged face seemed every bit as uncertain. Was she truly alone in this?

Kamaria's low, throaty laughter pulled her attention. The woman's watchful, smoldering expression raised hackles, but she was Darcy's only hope.

"Please," Darcy whispered.

The dark witch nodded. "I will take you from here. Restore you to your body, my promise to Quent-in met. I'll hold them here until you're gone."

"I'm going with her," Quentin gritted out.

Kamaria's gaze never left Darcy, but her eyelids dropped. "You owe me, lover."

"Kamaria, no. She needs me with her."

"She must find her own way. Learn to keep her beast leashed. If you try to govern her, you will die. Is this what you want, Darcy? To leave now? Alone?"

Darcy swallowed to wet her dry mouth. "I want to be freed. To wake up and find my child."

"Darcy, wait for me," Quentin pleaded.

Wait for what? At Kamaria's sly smile, Darcy thought she knew. Quentin sleeping with this woman made her feel ill. "You will have to follow," she rasped, unable to continue looking at him. "Keep them here, Kamaria, until I'm gone."

The witch nodded again then stepped toward Darcy, her hands coming up to cup her cheeks. She leaned so close Darcy felt her warm breath against her mouth, smelled her minty scent. "Close your eyes, little wolf. Close them and follow me."

Kamaria's warm, wet mouth kissed hers, suctioning. Taking her breath and her mind. Then Darcy was rising above the trees, spinning in the air, her hair swinging around her shoulders.

When next she drew a breath, her eyes popped open and she was lying in a bed, her hands and feet bound in chains, candles glowing all around her. Quentin, Emmy and Dylan ringed the bed, swaying on their feet, their eyes closed as though in a trance.

Kamaria stood at the end of the bed and nodded to a tall, darkly handsome man standing beside her. "Free her." To Darcy, she said, "He will clothe you and get you aboard a plane tonight. You must travel in darkness now. You know that, yes?"

"I'm part vampire. I can't travel in sunshine even though I'm part were as well?"

"I'm not sure," Kamaria said, her eyebrows rising. "But it's best you not learn the truth when standing in sunlight."

"I'll need cash. Hell, do I need a passport? I don't even know where I am."

"All are in Quentin's room. Adrian will get them for you. Go with him now. You haven't long. The three of them are arguing." Her lips tipped upward at the corners.

And although Darcy didn't trust her, didn't like her one bit, the two women shared a fleeting smile.

Then Adrian touched her elbow, and Darcy followed him out of the room.

Chapter Nine

Quentin opened his eyes and his gaze slammed into Dylan's. Both of them glanced downward. The bed where Darcy had rested was empty. Kamaria and her manservant were also gone.

Quentin backed away a step then ran for the door, determined to find Darcy before Dylan had a chance to finish her.

But even as he raced through the house, he knew she was gone. Her scent had aged, was drifting away.

Kamaria waited for them in the patio that led to the beach. She leaned against a stone wall, her hands braced against the wall. "She is gone."

Dylan cut a glance to Emmy. "We leave now."

"I'm coming with you," Quentin said.

"But you can't," Kamaria reminded him.

"You would let them leave and gain ground on Darcy?"

"Why should I care whether they find her first? Besides, your Darcy is crafty. She will not be found until she's ready."

"She's still dazed, just recovering."

"Different, don't you mean? Enhanced."

Dylan grunted. "Quentin, we've been friends a long time. Listen to me now. Stay here. Let us do what must be done."

Quentin trembled, feeling helpless, caged. Wanting to follow, but knowing the consequences would be too great. He knew full well that Darcy was still in danger from his friends, but especially from his bitch of an ex. "Don't harm her, Dylan. If you find

her, hold her. But please God, don't hurt her. We don't know. Not for sure. You saw her."

Dylan's jaw tightened. "I saw her turn into a wolf, answer a primordial call and change without hesitation. You know as well as I do that chances are this will end badly."

"Promise you won't harm her, not until I've had a chance to get there. If this does end badly as you believe, I would be with her."

"What is it you are staying to do, Quentin?" Emmy asked, her glance going to Kamaria. "Just what sort of devil's bargain have you made?"

"Yes, tell them what you agreed to do, Quent-in," Kamaria said, her face canting.

"Tell your friends how you've pleasured me with your second wife just doors away."

"You fucked the bitch?" Emmy said, her face screwing up with disgust.

Quentin felt heat climb over her face. "She helped me. Brought me to Darcy. Brought her back."

"You're a fool," Dylan said, although his voice was less cutting.

Maybe he understood.

"I'm in love," Quentin said, staring at his best friend. "Tell me you wouldn't do anything, any goddamn thing you could think of to save your Em."

Dylan sighed. "You're right. I would. But I'd expect you to follow through. If I have to, because I'm your friend, I will destroy you too."

Quentin watched as Dylan led Emmy away, hurrying down the beach. A hand stroked his back, sliding up to pull at his hair. "Your promise."

Quentin hung his head, wishing he had the strength, the power to destroy the witch, because he knew he had to hold to his promise. He'd pleasure her, this time without reluctance, give her everything he'd bargained away. His pride, his fidelity. But when he was done, he would never look back, never enter her dark, twisted sphere again. "How do you want it?"

When he raised his eyes, his stomach knotted hard. She stood in front of him, but she wasn't wearing her own beautiful but sinister face, she wore Darcy's.

"Fucking bitch! Change back."

Darcy's—no, Kamaria's masked face—tilted in just the way his beloved wife's always had whenever she got stubborn.

Quentin quivered with rage for a long tense moment, knowing he'd lose this standoff. And what the hell did it matter if the bitch wanted to play games? Did she think wearing another woman's face would make him want her more?

But, Jesus, it was working. His body hardened instantly. He'd resisted wanting her before, resented every part of her attempts at seduction. Still, hadn't he promised to give her pleasure and vowed he'd give it willingly?

So maybe he would pretend, would think back to happier times, even if was a betrayal of the woman he loved, the woman he might never have again.

One corner of her mouth lifted in smirk. She'd read his mind, knew exactly when he'd conceded the battle.

I'll fuck that smirk off your face.

He strode for her, keeping his face deliberately blank, walking so close she took a step backward before she caught herself and lifted that chin, *Darcy's chin*, higher.

Quentin raised his hands and slid them around her waist, rubbing his palms downward and clutching her backside to jerk her closer. Her breath left in a trembling gasp, but she raised her face.

He stared into her eyes, trying to see the woman inside, trying to look past the familiar doe brown to see the hard, cold gleam of Kamaria's, but she was good. He'd always known that. Always underestimated her.

And because he was hungry to connect with Darcy, had been beaten down with guilt and regret, had suffered pain upon pain, he bent his head and kissed her more gently than he should have, teasing her lips to open beneath his, then surging inside to claim her, because, dammit, she tasted like his wife.

Darcy was his life, his center, the only reason he stood here, still alive.

Grateful now that Kamaria had given him this gift, even unknowingly, he embraced her, groaning deep in his throat and gripping her ass to lift her from the ground.

Her legs encircled his hips and he strode into the house, passing Adrian whose brows lifted then settled into a dark scowl, past the bedroom where he'd slept, to the one that still held Darcy's scent.

He climbed onto the mattress with Kamaria still clutched close and lay over her, rubbing his thickening cock against her center and deepening the kiss to stroke her tongue with his, rotating his mouth to suck at her lips and claim the deep recess of her mouth again and again until they were both breathless.

Only then did he pull back. Kneeling between her legs, he stripped away his clothes then hers, until naked, he had to cover her, had to claim her warm, melting sex.

He forgot he should woo her, should pleasure her, seeking only his own satisfaction as he aimed straight toward her core with a thrust so powerful her back arched and the air left her lungs in strong gust that warmed his neck.

But she didn't ask him to slow down, didn't shove at his chest as he began the steady, sliding thrusts that eased and intensified the tension riding his body, tightening his balls.

Again and again, he slammed against the cradle of her sex, felt moisture envelop him, rush to meet him. The wet slapping only calmed his heart, filled his ears with a pleasurable rhythmic drumbeat that grew louder, more insistent with each passing moment, each powerful stroke.

He gathered his knees beneath him, needing to be deeper, needing to spear toward her heart, and hammered so fast, so hard the bed shuddered, legs jumping across the tiles and the headboard thumping loudly against the plaster. Until at last, a rush of ecstasy swept through him, carrying him high. He shut his eyes and issued a deep, sobbing moan, pressing his mouth against her cheek as his hips slowed and he emptied himself deep inside her.

Long nails raked his back and he stiffened, jerking back his head to find Kamaria's face beneath him. Not gloating as he expected. Her expression was softened; her eyes gleamed with moisture.

"I would have loved you forever," she said, her voice suspiciously ragged.

"You never loved me. You chained me, trapped me with lust. I was never given a choice."

"And if I had seduced you without magic?"

"We'll never know, will we?" He pulled free and rolled to his back beside her. "Let me gain my breath. I didn't bring you to a screaming orgasm," he said, suddenly tired.

"It was enough," she said, her voice soft, distant.

He gave her a sharp glance. "This isn't a trick? I'm free?"

"Go."

He jackknifed to sit beside her, wanting to run, but still unsure. Something about her stillness bothered him. "Kamaria...I can't...hate you. Not anymore."

"Because I brought your lover back?"

"Because I'm not the same man I was. I think I've learned that not everything is black and white. Not good or evil. That we make choices, and sometimes we make the wrong ones."

"I grieved for you. And I did regret entrapping you. I regret...hurting you...in the woods."

He grimaced, remembering his helplessness. But he understood her need to lash out. "I believe you."

"You should leave now."

Quentin stilled beside her. "You asked me to entertain a request. Something beyond our agreement. I haven't much time, but I'll listen."

She sat up, and her eyes widened. She seemed...fearful...an emotion he'd never have imagined her owning. Kamaria swallowed then closed her eyes.

The door to the bedroom opened. Adrian stepped inside, glanced at them lying on the bed side by side. His expression shuttered and he crossed his arms over his chest. "Kamaria, why did you call me?"

Quentin glared at the other man then turned to the woman beside him, who eyed him with trepidation, seeming suddenly younger and strangely vulnerable. "Quent-in, I want you to take Adrian with you."

Adrian's arms dropped and his face screwed up into a fierce scowl. His blue eyes flashed. "I won't leave you. You need me."

"I managed well before you. And I won't be alone for long."

Quentin shrugged, not really caring whether her boy toy came or not. His mind was already racing after Darcy. "He doesn't seem all that eager. Are you sure?"

Kamaria blew a long breath between her pursed lips then nodded. "A son should know his father."

* * * * *

Vero Beach, Florida

Darcy left the rental car a quarter mile from the compound's gates. She'd thought about how she'd orchestrate this confrontation since she'd taken her seat in coach on the airplane and pondered the many scenarios that might play out.

Foremost among her concerns was how to live long enough to convince Navarro she deserved a chance. The best way was to prove to him that she had control, that her will was indomitable. *She would find her son*.

Darcy left the road, deciding to approach the mansion from the beach. Strolling along the stretch of pale sand, she listened to the water lapping as the tide rolled in, felt the pull of the moon, tugging at her soul.

The urge was certainly there to shake out her hair and run wild. The second urge, the one she hadn't noticed inside her when she'd stood among the vampires, had leapt front and center when she'd been surrounded by living, breathing, blood-swollen creatures on the plane. The scent of the nectar flowing through their veins had made her nearly mindless until she'd decided to give in to the impulse, but as discreetly as she could.

Remembering how Joe Garcia had acted during his first bloodlust, the harrowing need for blood and insatiable lust, she'd studied the passengers surrounding her until she'd discovered that she hadn't been so subtle. One woman in particular had reacted to her stare. Her cheeks flamed, a leg crossed atop another bare thigh, scissored steadily, only it hadn't been out of annoyance.

Darcy knew it as surely as she did that the woman had used a peach-scented body wash. Her heartbeat fluttered, blood spilling through her veins, swelling her sex with a luscious heat that wafted the scent of her arousal around the cabin. How any red-blooded man around the woman hadn't noticed, well...they were only stupid humans.

Darcy had risen from her seat and slipped into the empty one beside the woman, turned off the overhead light, then sat angled toward the woman whose blue eyes rounded, but who didn't seem opposed to the company.

Darcy smiled and leaned close. "You smell amazing," she whispered, drawing in the woman's ripening aroma and letting her eyelids drift half closed.

The woman's leg rocked faster.

Darcy placed a hand on her knee, uncaring if anyone around them noticed. Most were sleeping anyway, she could tell without looking from the sleep sounds they all made.

The man across the aisle wasn't. His breath had caught and held, and Darcy smiled again because she knew he wouldn't utter a sound to alert the two women that he watched.

Feeling powerful, sexier than she ever had in her life, she'd leaned her head against the chair and turned the woman's face toward hers with her thumb. "I'd love to eat you," she said softly.

The woman's eyelids dipped and she stared at Darcy's mouth. "Someone would see."

"I know. It's why I'll just kiss you."

The woman's lips curved slightly, her gaze was interested. Awareness tugged the nipples pressed against her thin cotton blouse into taut little points.

"Wonder what I'll kiss?" Darcy locked glances with the other woman, knowing instinctively she held her spellbound.

The woman couldn't have broken the stare if she'd wanted to.

Darcy dropped her hand to the woman's breast and toggled the swelling nipple with a fingertip. She leaned forward, and the woman's mouth opened, her tongue peeking between her lips. Darcy kissed her, stroking that pink tip with her own tongue and rushing inward to taste her.

She'd drunk a cola. The acidic sweetness lingered in her mouth. Darcy stroked twice along her tongue then suckled her lips, trying to keep the moist sounds muffled, but enjoying it too much to care. Heat and blood were too close, too tempting. "Give me your neck."

The woman moaned and tilted her head and Darcy licked her, finding the pulse beneath her skin. She angled her head, let her teeth begin their downward slide, but realized her mouth didn't feel quite right. She wanted to shake her head, let fur sprout, slash at tender skin until it opened, parting like a zipper.

She sank her forehead against the woman's shoulder and concentrated, letting just enough tooth slide down, then tensing to halt the growth. No need to overdo. She could do this. Could maintain the beast lurking inside.

She sank a single fang into the woman's tender neck, ignoring her sharp gasp, then latched her lips around the wound and drank.

Because she struggled, Darcy stuck her hand beneath the woman's short skirt and scraped upward, thrusting fingers between her legs and stroking her moist sex until she muttered restlessly and began to rock against Darcy's hand.

The woman stopped trying to escape, moaning softly and gripping her shoulder to hold Darcy.

Shhh. Shhh. I won't harm you. Let me have this.

The woman nodded as though she heard, and maybe she had. Darcy grabbed the hand clenched around the corner of her shoulder and shoved it downward, working it under the hem of her long skirt until her slim fingers touched her own pussy.

Darcy eased open her thighs and the woman slid her fingers underneath the elastic of her panties to touch her.

My clit. Work my clit. I'll make you come. Do the same for me.

Every motion of Darcy's fingers was mirrored by the woman's. Together, they stroked between damp, silky folds then circled upward to tease their clits.

Sensual tension shuddered through the woman. Their heartbeats quickened.

Darcy sucked the salty, copper-tinged blood, loving the feel of the thick, hot liquid spilling down her throat. She trembled, wanting so badly to tear open the artery to increase the flow and surrender to her hunger, but she kept a leash on her desire, taking only so much until she felt the woman begin to swoon.

She lapped at the wound on her neck and closed the puncture, kissed her neck, licked her ear, her jaw, until the woman turned her head and claimed her lips.

Darcy pumped against the woman's greedy fingers and thrust her own deep into redhead's cunt, swirling, stroking until her body vibrated, sending Darcy's into a spiral of completion that left her dazed and breathing hard.

When they both pulled away their hands, they leaned their heads against their seats and stared into each other's eyes. "Did I please you?"

The woman nodded.

"Are you frightened?"

She shook her head. "My name's Deb. Can I see you again?"

Darcy grinned. "We've had a watcher," she whispered then looked over her shoulder at the man whose hand rode an erection tenting his dark trousers.

Deb laughed softly. "Take him."

Darcy smiled at the memory of how she'd crossed the aisle to take the seat beside him and wrapped her hand around his thick cock. The rasp of his beard against her face as she kissed him, still burned her cheeks. He'd been delicious. So excited he'd come the second she'd pierced his neck.

But she'd fed her belly. Fed the beast. And now she felt strong. More certain of her ability to keep the maddening bloodlust at bay.

And if she'd had a moment's concern that she'd betrayed Quentin, she reminded herself that he'd given so much more to the witch, his first wife.

Morning broke on the horizon, limning the ocean's edge with gold. She picked up her pace, knowing she didn't have any more time to think. She was only a hundred yards from the compound's patio entrance when she caught the scent of wolf.

Darcy didn't bother trying to sneak up to the walls, she stood at the edge of the surf in sight of the men guarding the compound. While they leaned to speak into the mikes at their shoulders and more poured through the gate, she lifted her dress over her head, dropped her panties in the water and shook out her hair.

The change came instantly this time, the pain less than she'd felt the first time in her dream world. Weapons lifted, aimed her way, and she leaned back against her haunches then launched, landing twenty feet away, and racing toward the tall concrete walls. Bullets peppered the ground, raising sand, but she zigzagged, moving so quickly, they didn't have to time to adjust—and then she was leaping, clearing the tall thick wall and landing on the manicured lawn. French doors on the ground floor were opened, an invitation to death, but she wasn't trying to stay alive, her goal was to impress Navarro—with her courage, with her control. So she ran straight for the gaping doorway and halted, giving the people waiting there a full view of her body, head to tail, the largest target possible.

Then she transformed, shaking back her hair and standing proudly nude. Navarro and Joe stood weaponless. More wolves in SWAT gear aimed down the long barrels of their rifles.

"Do you really want blood spatter in this room? You'll upset Lily," she said, directing her comment to Joe who had loved her once and fathered her child.

"I won't let you near her," Joe said, his voice soft, his eyes wary.

Navarro tossed back his shoulder-length black hair and canted his head as he stared.

She felt the subtle mental push as he tried to enter her head. "Why did you come here, Darcy? You have to know we can't let you live."

"Why is that, Navarro?" she asked, striding forward. "Do you think I'm a monster? That I can't control my urges?" Without giving away her intent with a flinch or a blink, she leapt at him and took him to the ground.

She tuned out the shouts and lifted her head to snarl when Joe reached down to pull her away. She let her fangs descend and dropped her gaze to Navarro who lay passive on his back, his arms outstretched. *Tell them to back away. You know I'm stronger than you.*

His eyes narrowed. "I also know you don't intend to kill me," he said softly. "Lower your weapons. Joe, step back."

A commotion sounded from beyond the large family room. More people spilled into the room. She didn't need to look to know that Quentin, Emmy, Dylan and the man from Kamaria's home had arrived. She smelled them.

"Darcy," Quentin said, his tone urgent. "Let him up."

She lifted her head to meet his gaze.

His raked her nude body then locked with her eyes. "I won't let them harm you. I'll stand with you, love." He strode toward her and offered her his hand.

Darcy deliberately paused, giving Navarro another mental warning, then lifted her hand to place it inside Quentin's.

He drew her up then unbuttoned his cotton shirt and slipped it around her shoulders.

Not that she felt the need to hide herself. She was here to let them know she'd changed, that she embraced what she'd become. That she was strong and determined.

Navarro rose. His deep sigh mirrored the shadows in his eyes. "What do we do with you, Darcy? How do we trust you?"

"I could have cleaved your head from your shoulders with a single snap of my wolf's jaws—if that was what I wanted."

"But you want something else from us, otherwise why return?"

"You already know what I want."

"The child is lost," Navarro said flatly.

"He lives and he's like me."

"Because the witch told you so?" he asked, punching through her thoughts—but only because she allowed it now.

"She had no reason to lie. Not to me."

Navarro's hands landed on his hips. "It's not good that Zachary Powell has him."

Darcy nodded, realizing he was at least entertaining locating her son—if only to kill him. She held still, hoping with all her heart that he'd agree to help, because she needed his resources, needed the council's reach to find Zachary and her little boy.

Emmy shouldered past Dylan, ignoring the hand he reached out to restrain her. When she stood close, she placed her hand against Darcy's cheek and gazed deep into her eyes. "It's still you, right? We're still good? Forgive me?"

Emmy's face blurred, and Darcy blinked away her tears. "Help me."

Her friend's face hardened and she turned, facing the men surrounding them. "Anyone lifts a hand to harm my friend, better wish I never get hold of your ass."

Navarro's lips twitched and he drew a deep breath. "She can stay. We'll figure this out. But, Quentin," he said, aiming a glare past Darcy's shoulder, "you broke the rules. You've lost our trust."

Quentin stiffened beside her.

Darcy was too drained to be concerned about his problems. Sunlight strengthened, brightening the room. The vampires winced, but Darcy turned to stare out the window then strolled to the open doors.

"Darcy," Emmy said behind her.

Darcy waved her off and stepped outside, lifting her face toward the sunshine.

Nothing happened. A smile tugged at her lips. She'd lived in a shadow land for so long, the warm pure light touching her skin lifted her spirits. Gave her hope.

Quentin's heavy footpads came up behind her, but he halted in the shadows at the doorway. "You should rest. Come to bed."

She stepped into the sunlight and didn't look back.

Chapter Ten

Taking the familiar trail to the beach, beyond the softly rolling dunes, Darcy walked, watching the birds hop at water's edge, watching the sun rise steadily above the water and letting the sunshine sink into her skin.

The last time she'd been here, her belly had been large, round. She'd felt happy and free and so in love with her life that she hadn't a clue how quickly that would change.

However, she couldn't linger over the memory of that black day or she'd be lost again. She'd nearly died. She'd slept, her mind and body hibernating, healing...preparing her for this day.

A different woman inhabited her skin now. A new kind of creature, eager to learn her strengths and limitations. The others inside the compound would be wary until she proved herself, showed them what she could bring to their team. Before, she'd felt a little handicapped, less than the extraordinary beings she'd worked and played beside. Now she was a melding of them. Whether that mix was good or bad, she understood was entirely up to her.

The sun climbed higher and she turned back, knowing Quentin wouldn't rest until she returned.

She needed to see him. However angry she was with him, she still wanted him, needed his support. He'd never given up on her, had betrayed his friends, his vows to save her.

Part of her wasn't happy about how he'd saved her, but another part warmed with gratitude. If he'd let her go, there would be no hope for her child. Zachary Powell would have kept him, used him for his own purposes. That wasn't going to happen.

She'd accept Quentin remaining in her life, enjoy his company, slake her huge, unquenchable lust with him, but it would be a long time, maybe never, before she'd ever feel the same as she had before.

Yet, deep inside, she acknowledged that she still loved him. They'd lost that first blush of romance. Now the real work of maintaining that love, learning to trust each other again, would begin.

Quentin stood inside the door when she returned. He held out his hand and she grasped it, letting him pull her toward their old rooms. They may have passed guards, friends, but she didn't seem them. She saw only the warmth shining in his eyes, the relief softening the harsh lines around his lips.

"Thank you for coming back to me," he whispered as he drew her into their room.

"I love you," she said, her throat feeling thick, but holding back from the embrace he offered.

Tears glittered in his eyes and he unbuttoned the shirt she wore and pushed it off her shoulders. "I missed you. I missed this." He knelt in front of her and wrapped his arms around her waist. His face nestled against her belly and he kissed it. "I'll help you find *our* child."

Her eyes filled with relief and she combed her fingers through his hair, tugging to tilt back his face. Cupping his cheeks, she wiped his tears with her thumbs. "Love me," she said softly.

"Forever. Until I die." He stood and picked her up, carrying to their bed. He laid her in the center then removed his clothes. "I want to make love to you."

"You don't have to ask. I want you too. Make me feel alive."

Quentin joined her on the bed, settling his long, muscular frame over hers. He framed her face and lowered his head, his eyes open as he kissed her.

She breathed into his mouth, her sigh coming from her heart. Wrapping her arms around his back, she stroked his tongue, lifted her knees and nearly wept when he thrust inside.

Quentin paused, sighing deeply, then shook his head. "I want to make this right. Make it the best we've ever had."

"You aren't tired? The sun is rising," she teased, stroking his skin.

"I've barely slept since..." A ragged breath shuddered through him.

Darcy pressed a finger against his lips. "We're together now. I don't care what happened while I slept. You did what you had to. I know it cost you."

"I'll never betray you again."

Looking deep into his eyes, she believed him. Deep, dreamy blue...like the color of her beloved ocean. Constant. Cleansing. "Remind me how it was between us," she whispered.

Quentin pulled free of her embrace, and she groaned in disappointment.

His laughter sounded a little rusty, but it warmed her and she felt a smile stretch her mouth as he scooted down the bed.

He bent over her mound, a thumb stroking her clit. A hint of mischief gleamed in his expression and he opened his mouth and suckled her there.

Her body arched, breath leaving in an anguished rush. This was what they'd had. Endless passion—hot, quick, soul-consuming.

Strong hands pressed her legs farther apart and he nuzzled into the crease of her thigh. His tongue stroked her pulse there then he bit.

Pleasure washed through her, soaking the bed beneath her bottom with her pleasure as he pulled her blood into his mouth and moaned.

Her mind floated toward the ceiling, darkness closing around the edges, and suddenly she saw them...on the beach where they'd first met when he'd captured her and covered her body, teasing arousal from her even as her police officer buddies had

rushed to her rescue...in the shower when he'd first taken her against the cool tiles...in his arms when he'd plucked her from the river and sobbed because he'd thought he was too late to save her, until she'd coughed and opened her eyes.

Those were his thoughts, she realized. The moments he treasured. She saw herself as he did, strong but afraid, aroused but fighting the attraction. And she felt the warmth building inside his chest, unlocking his heart. To her.

When she came down, he kissed her belly, eased upward to tongue her nipples and glide his lip along her neck, her jaw and at last her mouth.

Joyfully, she returned his kiss, and then pressed against his chest.

Quentin lifted his weight from her and broke the kiss. His wary glance told her more than the memories they'd shared that he still wasn't sure about her heart.

"I've never had the pleasure," she said softly, waiting for a sign that he understood.

He blinked then his mouth crimped up on one side. Rolling to his back, he placed his hands beneath his head. "I'm yours."

Darcy crawled over him, letting her teeth slide down and lifting her lips in warning. His eyebrows rose, but his breaths remained even.

She could take him, kill him where he lay. And he knew it.

"Just so we're clear, *husss-band*," she said, rubbing her breasts against his. "You may feed from any neck, but your ass will only be mine."

"Do I get the same privilege?"

"No." She narrowed her gaze. "But I'll let you watch."

Quentin's chest rose and his jaw clenched, but he gave her a short, sharp nod.

"You've had decades of women to learn what you needed to know about this life. It's only fair I have the same."

"You'll fuck them?" he bit out.

She wanted to say yes. Wanted to make him angry—and again, she realized there was a deep well of anger inside her that she'd not easily overcome. But she couldn't lie.

"I have no desire to sleep with another man...not my husband. But I will take from them what I need...short of that."

Quentin swallowed and drew one hand from beneath his head to cup her cheek. "I'll share this new world with you, teach you how to navigate. I won't fetter you. You deserve all the pleasures you can find."

She canted her head. "You'd do that? You're a jealous bastard."

"I've been a selfish one."

Her eyes filled. "I don't want to hurt you."

"I know."

"Quentin?" she said, her voice thickening with tears.

"Yes, love?"

"I need you. Now."

His thumb brushed the edge of her fang, drawing blood. He painted her bottom lip with it then smiled. "Take my life, it's yours."

Darcy's tears slid down her cheeks, and she stroked her bottom lip with her tongue, tasting his blood. Her heart thudded against her chest and blood surged. Her pussy swelled and she felt her face tighten, bones crackling as her face transformed.

She controlled it, tightening above him, stopping short of extending her snout, letting only soft bristles of hair sprout to cloak her skin. She wanted blood, but only to fill her vampire's appetite. The wolf she kept tightly leashed.

His nostrils flared with excitement and his entire body grew rigid beneath her, but he turned his head, offering his neck—surrendering to her. She sank her teeth deep, thrusting her fingers into his hair and rocking her cunt over his hard cock, stroking, stroking, but not lifting her hips to take him inside.

She knew her limits. Ease the edge of her hunger then seek sexual fulfillment. Only when one appetite was appeared could she seek to slake the other.

His blood was sweeter, richer than what she'd tasted before, but she didn't know if it was because it came from a vampire or because it was flavored with love.

His fingers bit into her shoulders, and she gasped, the air clearing her mind enough so that she knew she'd taken enough. She licked his wounds then kissed him, letting him taste himself on her lips.

"Darcy," he growled, his words muffled against her mouth.

Take me. Fuck me now!

His breath caught, his eyes widened, but his mouth stretched into a smile beneath hers. He had her on her back in the very next heartbeat.

"This telepathy thing can be very convenient," he murmured.

"For when my mouth is full?" she said, arching her brows.

His smile was pure Quentin—full of devilish charm. His cock nudged her folds, and she couldn't help the wet caress her body offered in return. The sound was succulent, seductive. She gave him a silent waggle of her eyebrows, relieved that they could find humor in each other again.

His forehead dropped against hers and he thrust deep. "I've dreamed of this," he moaned as he ground deep.

Darcy scratched her nails down his back, remembering how he loved it. When she reached his ass, she dug deeper. "Move already."

"Bossy!"

She grinned even as her eyes filled again. This felt so familiar, but they weren't the same, nothing was the same as it had been before—except for the searing heat and solid weight of him—and the intensity of the love beaming from his wonderful blue eyes.

When he began to rock, his cock driving deeply, urgency building quickly, she closed her eyes and gave herself over to his mastery.

They had a long way to go before things were right between them, but this was a fine start. She wouldn't look back. Only forward. Later, they'd gather with the others

and make their plans. But right now, she renewed her vows with this man who'd captured her heart from the first night she'd met him.

Quentin couldn't exist without her; she knew her life wouldn't be as full or happy without him. As a pair, they were stronger than their separate selves. Whatever tests lay in their future, they would see them through together.

About the Author

Delilah Devlin dated a Samoan, a Venezuelan, a Turk, a Cuban and was engaged to a Greek before marrying her Irishman. She's lived in Saudi Arabia, Germany and Ireland, but calls Texas home for now. Ever a risk taker, she lived in the Saudi Peninsula during the Gulf War, thwarted an attempted abduction by white slave traders and survived her children's juvenile delinquencies.

Creating alter egos for herself in the pages of her books enables her to live new adventures. Since discovering the sinful pleasure of erotica, she writes to satisfy her need for variety—it keeps her from running away with the Indian working in the cubicle beside her!

In addition to writing erotica, she enjoys creating romantic comedies and suspense novels.

Delilah welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her <u>author bio page</u> at <u>www.ellorascave.com</u>.

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