



A Pint Light
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Voracious Vamps

A Total-E-Bound Publication



www.total-e-bound.com

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ISBN # 978-1-907280-37-5

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Edited by Jess Bimberg

Total-E-Bound Publishing

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Published in 2009 by Total-E-Bound Publishing 1 The Corner, Faldingworth Road, Spredlington, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, LN8 2DE, UK.

Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

Voracious Vamps

A PINT LIGHT

Devon Rhodes

Dedication

To my family, for your patience,
To Nicole, for your encouragement,
And to my go-to gals, for your loyalty and support,
Thank you all.

Chapter One

There must be an easier way. Valerian grimaced as he retracted his fangs, sealed the punctures with a flick of his tongue, and let his inebriated, middle-aged snack slide down the wall to rest in a heap at his feet. After a moment of wrestling with his irritatingly overactive conscience, he bent to prop the fellow up comfortably against the brick wall of the alleyway. Well, as comfortably as one could be, considering the lucky donor was not only drunk, but also a pint light. With one last glance around to confirm he was still unobserved, Val re-entered his club through the heavy metal door he had left propped open with a dairy crate. Low tech solution to the automatic lock mechanism, but anyone who knew Val also knew he wasn't one to waste magic on trivialities. Not that he had power to waste anymore. Middle-aged for his kind, it was getting harder by the decade to take enough blood to keep his power level up. *Middle-aged? Ugh.* Val shook off the disturbing thought.

That need currently sated, he was free to concentrate on the current crisis. *Or crises,* he corrected himself resignedly. Damn problems never came one at a time. No, they hammered at him like the waves on the North Shore of Maui. He stopped in his tracks at the tempting thought of Hawaii, and whipped out his cell phone, sending a brief text to his travel agent. With a bit more spring in his step, Val resumed his path through the back of the club, winding smoothly without pause past customers and employees alike as he headed straight into the office.

"Get that *lightweight* tossed out, Val?" Killian, his oldest friend and business partner, quipped from the couch.

Val rolled his eyes at the lame joke, but restrained the comeback K was obviously looking for, instead using a tiny push of magic to shove Killian's feet off the coffee table as he slammed the door behind him.

"Geez, relax Valerie. What's got your knickers in a twist?" Killian took a moment to stretch his endless, jeans-clad legs out in a quiver in front of him before dropping his heels right back on the table with a thump.

"Don't call me Valerie," Val automatically replied, before his gaze narrowed on Killian. His copper-haired friend looked entirely too innocent, and Val knew there was nothing more dangerous than K with that sweet look on his face. He gave a mental nudge, found nothing, and gave up with a grunt.

The ennui was starting to really get to him, but he also didn't need the upheaval that was about to land on his doorstep. "K, don't you ever tire of making the same tired jokes over and over again?" He began pacing back and forth in the confined space. "And sitting here night after night scuffing up my table with your damn boots before finding some overly endowed bimbo to take home and swap bodily fluids with?"

Killian stared at him with a sincere frown creasing his pale forehead. "Are you okay, Val? You seem a little, uh, tense."

Val continued as if he didn't register the question. "Meanwhile, I get to grab the occasional bite of horribly pickled drunkards under the guise of kicking them out. I must be getting old. I can never seem to take enough to get my power up anymore. I'm feeding constantly. It's all I do. How is this fulfilling?" He paused for moment, then perched on the side of his desk, running a hand over his short, dark blond hair. "Every night is the same thing. The *same*," he emphasised vehemently. "Do you know what I mean?"

Killian nodded, mockingly serious for moment, humouring him, then ruined it with a snort. "No!" He threw his hands out wide. "I have no idea what's gotten up yours. You need to get over it, whatever it is. This is not a fun look on you, Mr. Killjoy."

Val growled in frustration and decided it was past time to take his tense, joy-killing self somewhere else. "Fine," he threw back over his shoulder as he strode towards the door. "I'll be back in a few weeks. I'll be at the Maui condo if you need me."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa!" Killian made an undignified scramble to his feet, trotting to the door after his friend. "A few weeks? You can't leave now. What about the whole Delegate thing?"

Val spun around instead of opening the door. "Ah hah! See? That's exactly what I mean."

"Huh?"

Val gestured at Killian and raised his eyebrow as if to elicit a response. When it became apparent that none was forthcoming, he rubbed the back of his neck wearily. "You know all

about the Delegate? You're obviously one of the three? So why is this the first time you've brought it up? Why do *I* have to worry about everything? If I had known, I would've definitely skipped town by now and let you deal with it yourself."

Killian's green eyes twinkled at Valerian. "But I'm happy being single and working the bar angle, and you're not. It makes much more sense for you to take it on."

"But I don't want her." Val pouted uncharacteristically, causing a delighted and slightly devious grin to spread across his friend's face. *Uh oh.*

Killian retraced his steps purposefully to his favoured spot on the couch. "Well then, you'd better hope that the third makes a stellar impression on the Delegate. Because I'm not interested, so I'm already off the hook. And I have a strong feeling that you'll come out on top. Congratulations, bro."

Val gave up on his strategic retreat and returned to drop wordlessly to the couch next to Killian. He was silent for a few minutes as he remembered the nightly dream visitation. It had started coming last week and had silenced today. An eerie sense of expectation had been following him all day in its absence. Expectation and...disappointment? Longing? He shook his head. How could he miss a dream?

You don't even know what she looks like, idiot, he mentally chastised himself.

At irregular intervals, the inconsistency of which grated on orderly vampire nerves, the full-fledged vampires received a peace Offering of a demi-mortal Delegate, a mage, who was to become a life-mate to one of three candidates. How the candidates were chosen was wildly speculated about, but, to date, unknown to the vampires. The result, however, was that the three candidates would receive a series of dream messages from the Delegate, followed by an official in-person visit, during which the Delegate chose the successful candidate.

Most of the time, it was clear to everyone who the Delegate would declare the winner. Occasionally, however, in some Offerings, the choice was not so clear cut. In a few instances, candidates even fled the proceedings until it was all over, in effect, forfeiting their chance. But this was rare. The benefits of having a demi-mortal as a life-mate were twofold. Their blood contained potent elemental magic. The power to be had from the blood of a demi-mortal often elevated vampires in status tenfold above their previous level. And the demi-mortals were extremely long-lived, if not immortal. As loving and losing fragile mortal

lovers was frequently devastating to his peers, it was a very desirable combination to most of his ilk.

However, Val had severe qualms about tying himself to one person forever. He had never found a woman, mortal or immortal, who held his interest and produced the burning desire and need to possess that he had seen in successful matches. As tempting as the thought of access to that quality of blood may be, it wasn't worth giving up his precious privacy. Might as well leave the Delegate to someone who would appreciate her, and evidently that wasn't either he or Killian. *Congratulations, bachelor number three.* Yep, it was definitely time for a vacation. If he got a move on, he'd be gone before she got here.

But as he made that mental decision, the dream that had never been far from his thoughts this week came strongly back to him, insinuating itself into his consciousness. That beautiful ebony hair, waving down to brush just past shoulders. Soft, pale porcelain skin, almost translucent in its fineness. The supple, lightly muscled back tapering to a narrow waist, then rounding down to firm, smooth buttocks. He brushed aside the hair, exposing the vulnerable neck, the tempting pulse beating wildly at the throat. His cock swelled rapidly as he could smell, almost taste, the desire radiating towards him. His fangs dropped as he bent to take what was his...

"Pretty sweet, huh? Much better than those wino coolers you've been sucking down."

Val mentally shoved at his so-called friend as he turned his head to glare at him. *"Get out of my head, dimwit."*

"Nope." The cheerful tone of the refusal matched the wide grin on Killian's face. "I know who the third is, and that choice is *so* not going to work," he taunted Val aloud. "And moreover, I've already seen the Delegate and know why *you* get to take this one, not us. *And* why you'll *want* to."

Chapter Two

"Are you sure I look okay?" Raine fussed, as he checked his reflection in the tinted window of their rental car for the tenth time. "Not okay. I mean, *great*. I want to look fantastic." He finished buttoning his red silk shirt, quirking his head to the side as he studied the result, and then loosened two buttons, letting the top gape open to expose a vee of chest between his smooth, hairless pecs. "No nipples, right? That would be tacky."

"Hey, calm down. I think as long as he can see your neck, that's all he's going to care about." Brianne gave Raine a naughty wink in the reflection from her place behind him.

"Ugh, do you have to remind me?" Raine shuddered delicately, smoothing his hands down the black leather covering his lean thighs. "I'm not looking forward to being an open bar. You know how I am with blood. I don't know how you roped me into this," he grumbled. "Almost forever is a really long time to pay back a silly debt." He spun to face his sister head on, a determined look on his face. "In fact, I think that you probably owe *me* at this point!"

She arched her brow and, predictably, Raine caved without her having to say a word. "Fine! Anyway, it might be a moot point unless the third choice is completely wonderful. The first guy was a complete homophobic ass. And hairy. Did you see that unibrow?"

Brie giggled. "I know. I felt your pain, trying not to look at it. I could see your hands twitching like you were dying to tweeze him."

"Hot wax, honey, nothing short of hot wax." Raine shot her a suddenly serious look. "And what was up with the vibes flying between you and bachelor number two, hmmm?"

Brie's laughter shut off like a light switch. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Mm hmm. Okay, whatever you say. He was pretty cute," he mused aloud. "Funny and confident too. Maybe I ought to reconsider. After all, there are very few completely straight arrows on the continuum. I could probably seduce him over to the dark side eventually."

Brie refused to look at him while she shot back, "Are you blotchy?"

"What?" Raine spun back to his reflection with a gasp, then gave his sister a shove. "You're evil. Fine, I'll lay off cutie pie Killian for now. You'd better hope the third guy is hot

and hung if you want this whole power-structure treaty thing to work out." He looked one last time and, satisfied, turned away from the rental car, heading purposefully for the entrance to the club. "So are you certain that this is the guy we need?"

"Oh yeah. His raw power level is already off the charts." She followed along in his wake. "If he likes you, we'll have it made, big guy. Just think. We'll finally get those idiots off our back once and for all."

Raine slid his sister an appraising look. "That would be lovely. And a huge burden off your shoulders, I know." He stopped on the threshold and gave her a light kiss. "I will do my best to make this Offering work in our favour. For you. Alright?"

She gave him a grateful smile in return. "Thanks, baby. Now." She gave him a hard smack on his arse. "Go get 'em, tiger."

So, that was the first impression he made on his third candidate, rubbing his smarting arse as he walked through the door. As soon as the siblings entered the club, they spotted Killian's coppery red locks at the bar. He turned towards them and stood, immediately sensing their presence across the room, as did a beautiful, golden-haired stud that Raine knew right away was Valerian.

"Oh, pinch me," he muttered under his breath to Brie, who slanted a smug smile in his direction. "Okay, you can have Killian."

"I wish," she whispered a little sadly in return.

He winced at the reminder of the newly consecrated Acolyte status that had been forced upon her. A life of chastity was not how he envisioned his sweet, loving sister going through the rest of her long life. It strengthened his resolve to do whatever he could to help her find a way out of their family's current mess.

Tall, dark and dreamy looked a little preoccupied at first glance, but stared openly, eyebrows raised, as they approached. Raine preened a little under his regard, until he realised to his chagrin that he was still rubbing his arse. A hot blush coloured his face as he immediately dropped his hand, and Killian's booming laugh cut through the noise of the club.

"Raine! Brie! Join us," he invited with an anticipatory smile, indicating the stools that they had vacated when they stood. Brie glanced at her brother before sliding onto the seat in front of Killian, leaving the stool closest to Val for Raine. Raine gave her a wide-eyed

innocent look that apparently Killian caught, since he choked back a laugh as he unabashedly watched the duo.

Raine studied Val, looking up at him flirtatiously from under his lashes as Killian introduced them. Val shifted uneasily, shooting glances at Killian. Raine had the impression they were communicating, but he wasn't raised to be rude enough to sense their mental impressions. He smiled at the huge, bald bartender as he approached and ordered two ice waters.

With a quick surprised glance over his head at Val, the bartender shrugged and walked away to fill the glasses.

"Water?" Killian questioned with surprise. "I appreciate that one of you is the designated driver, but we do have other kinds of drinks."

Raine gave the vampire a wide grin, his whole being hyper-aware of Val standing just inches away from his back. "We're fasting. But thanks." He could almost feel the heat radiating from the larger male, and he rocked once on the stool, trying to adjust his pants around his growing erection without being too obvious.

The waters arrived, and the four were alone again. Killian once again picked up the conversational ball as Raine took a drink.

"Hot little tamale, isn't he, Val? Bet you can't wait to suck a pint outta that."

Raine choked as he gasped, inhaling water and crushed ice. He started coughing frantically. Eyes watering, he looked at Killian, and it was only then he realised Killian hadn't spoken out loud. Before he could do more than process that, Val's response came.

"You can't be serious, K!"

Raine straightened indignantly, clearing his throat continuously.

Val continued, *"It's not her? It's the man? A guy! Since when am I gay?"*

Raine's chin dropped slightly and his burgeoning cock wilted as acute disappointment shot through him. For all his teasing words earlier to Brie about converting Killian, he knew things like that just didn't happen. You either were interested in dick or you weren't. And by the sounds of it, Val was playing firmly on the not interested team.

He'd been interested during the dreams.

Raine thought about that, then shook his head. He had pinned a lot of hopes on the aroused response he had gotten from Val during the dream sequence. But dream actions

didn't always translate into consciousness. Val might be attracted to Raine somewhere in the depths of his psyche, but Raine wanted a nice hard fucking, not just a wet dream. Moreover, he needed more than a blood exchange. He needed Val's cum. And he didn't have time to seduce Val into it acting on his deeply submerged desires. He had to deliver before the new moon, two days away.

Raine felt Brianne touch his leg lightly. Mages couldn't communicate in words, just feelings and images, which was why he was so startled to have overheard the conversation between the two vampires. He knew she was feeling and sharing in his disappointment.

At this point, there wasn't any point in doing the getting-to-know-you thing anymore. Raine knew they had some serious decisions to make and the clock was ticking. Brie gave him a nod, and they rose as one to leave.

"Hey, where are you going?" Killian leaned into their path, effectively hemming them in. Val remained stoic and silent, an unreadable expression on his handsome face. Raine felt a flash of unaccustomed anger and vented it on the deserving party.

"No point in us hanging around. Obviously Mr. Silent Treatment isn't interested, and we don't have time to waste. Now if you'll excuse us..." Raine cupped his sister's elbow, as they attempted to sidestep the two men towering over them.

Val's first words and the timbre of his voice sent a shiver through Raine that immediately perked up his waning erection. "I am interested. And you're not going anywhere, Raine. Except maybe to my bed."

Chapter Three

Val watched as a completely stunned expression chased the haughty anger from Raine's beautiful face. He was absolutely shocked at his own primitive response. In his mind, he was railing against the alien thought of being with a man. *Sex with a man*. He shook his head. *Sex with Raine...* His insides tightened as his confused cock hardened to an alarming state. *What the hell?*

"Hey Val, my pal, get a room already."

He glared at Killian, who was lifting his amused gaze from the vicinity of Val's groin.

"Can you just leave me the fuck alone right now?"

"No prob. You can have the nice, cushy couch in the office all to yourselves. Sis and I will take a walk."

Killian adroitly separated Brie from her brother's now slackened hand and escorted her quickly towards the entrance. She made a slight protest at first, but then threw an apologetic shrug at Raine as they continued out the door.

Val turned his attention back to Raine, only to find the shock gone, replaced by a mocking sneer.

"Taking one for the team, are we?"

Val clenched his jaw as the shot hit home. Right or wrong, the guy had no business talking to him that way in his own place. "I don't want to talk about this out here. Let's go to my office."

"With the nice, cushy couch?"

A ripple of unease went through Valerian. How the hell did Raine overhear their conversation? What else did he know? That was an ability well beyond what he expected from the mage. His eyes narrowed. He was getting damn tired of this uncertainty. More had happened to throw him off balance in the last half-hour than he had experienced in the past hundred years.

Warring within him, the unexpected desire for Raine and the anger at feeling out of control finally brought Val to the boiling point. This was his club, his clan, and this damn kid

was looking at him like he was something beneath him. *Yeah, beneath. Him beneath you would be good*, his mind whispered from out of nowhere, bringing along the image of Raine captured under his body, his hardened shaft nestled against its mate, supple neck bared as Val prepared to feed...

With a growl that was partially a groan, Val picked Raine up, throwing him over his shoulder in a fireman's carry as he headed for the office. He could sense the surprise from his staff and amusement from the clientele as he passed out of the public area into the back hallway, but he kept his eyes on the floor in front of him. And off the too tempting leather-clad ass right beside his cheek.

"What. The. Macho. Fuck?"

Val shifted Raine's weight backwards just enough that the startled man began to slide off his shoulder down his back, and Raine frantically latched onto Val's belt with both hands. He kept his mouth shut for the rest of the short trip to the office, and Val rewarded his silence by setting Raine gently on his feet instead of tossing him on said cushy couch like he initially envisioned.

"Let me know if you have a problem with this," was his only warning as he pulled Raine flush against him and came down hard on his pouting lips in a heated kiss.

Fuck, I'm kissing a man.

It was like nothing Val had ever felt, the firm press of Raine's full lips slanting with fervour across his, not yielding to him but demanding in equal measure. Raine's breath fanned across his wet mouth as he pulled back enough to brush a rubbing caress across his cheek before returning to dip inside with his tongue, sleeking against his.

This time Val broke the kiss, coming up for air and buying time by sliding his lips along Raine's smooth cheek to his jaw, before trailing little kisses and licking nips down his neck.

He could feel the vibration as Raine spoke. "Not so fast, bloodsucker."

Val's lips froze near Raine's ear. *Bloodsucker?* "You've got quite a mouth on you, mage." He pulled back slightly with a scowl.

"Ah yes. The surly look again. You've done that one to death. Do you have any other expressions in your bag of tricks?"

Val strove to get a handle on his rapidly dwindling control. Oh, this guy was just begging for...something. Val had never felt so frustrated by another being in his life. And he

was supposed to take his guy on as his life-mate? *Forever with this attitude? Not fucking likely.* He closed his eyes in dismay even as he rubbed his aching cock against Raine's.

The dismay rapidly faded as the desire, only banked temporarily by the caustic comments, roared to life again. *Okay, enough thinking. And no more talking.* He did what he'd been itching to do ever since he laid eyes on the man. He tossed him onto the couch...*cushy couch*...and pressed down against him, thrusting in an effort to relieve the burning need rising within him to possess, to take.

The dream sequence came to mind again, and this time, it was as if a veil had been pulled away, leaving the picture crystal clear. The ebony fall of hair...Raine's. The smooth back and soft, pale skin...Raine's. It had been Raine in his dreams, Raine arousing him beyond anything he had ever felt before, to the point of pleasurable pain.

And despite what spilled out every time the Delegate opened his mouth, he was giving as good as he got, just as involved in this crazy heat as Val. He pushed back up against Val, at once yielding and demanding, moaning low in his throat, head thrown back as he cupped and squeezed Val's buttocks in his hands. His silky dark hair fanned out beneath him as he tossed his head back and forth on the cushion, his neck arched...

Val could no more resist the tacit invitation than he could stop his next breath. His fangs dropped a moment before he struck with less finesse than a youngling, clamping down on Raine's neck as if his life depended on it. The moment he tasted the rich, spicy ambrosia that was his life-mate's blood, he came with a groan, every muscle straining as he fed and climaxed, peaking again and again as the power surged within him. *My mate! Raine!*

Raine's body went limp as he lay beneath him. It was his stillness that finally broke through Val's power trip, and the sated, humming pleasure in the wake of their passion was replaced with dawning horror as Val withdrew from Raine's bruised neck and saw his expression, a mask of comingled pain and ecstasy. *A bruise?* He tried again to heal the puncture marks, but they were slow to close, and twin trickles of crimson trailed slowly down that fair skin.

"...What a brute."

Val winced at the deserved condemnation, his first and probably last mental message from the man who should have been his life-mate.

"I might not survive..."

Valerian scrambled to his feet and watched as Raine reached shakily to the bleeding wound and abruptly went limp as unconsciousness claimed him.

Oh fuck. Fuck! What have I done?

Chapter Four

Raine drifted in the aftermath of his completion, hardly caring about the sticky condition of his leather pants. *Wow, what a brute*, he thought dreamily. He had never had such a mind-blowing climax before in his life, and it wasn't even sex yet.

I might not survive it when we actually fuck. He mentally giggled as he floated in a happy place. He opened his eyes, and his happy place vanished like a bubble popping. Val wore a look of horror and dismay as he lifted his welcome weight off Raine, his eyes glued to the side of his neck. Raine lifted a hand, wincing at the slight raw pain as he lightly probed the punctures, then looked at his fingers. *Blood. Oh shit*, was the thought that followed him down into blackness.

* * * *

When he awoke, Raine was still on the couch, and the horror-struck visage of Val had been replaced by the worried faces of his sister and Killian. "What happened?" he croaked, then cleared his throat and tried again. "Where's Val?"

The two exchanged glances. "How are you feeling? Are you okay?" Brie asked, the concern deepening her voice to almost the same level it reached when she chanted. *Uh, oh. She's pissed*.

Killian held out a glass of water to Raine as he sat up. "Here, drink up. It'll help."

Raine waved it away. "Not thirsty. Where's the big guy?"

Killian took Raine's hand and placed the glass in it. "You're at least a pint light, guy, maybe more. Drink." The forceful tone took both Raine and Brie by surprise, and Raine took several long swallows as Killian continued. "What I want to know is why Val didn't heal you all the way...afterwards."

"Uh. Not sure what you mean."

"Your neck, the bite. Why didn't he finish healing you?"

Raine reached up to the throbbing area and touched it lightly. This time when he looked at his fingers, he felt cool fingers gripping the back of his neck, forcing his head down between his legs. He gulped in air as he fought the dizziness.

"You idiot." Brie sighed. "Quit picking at it, and definitely quit looking at the blood. You know you faint like a girl at the sight of it."

Ouch. "Only my own. Let me up," Raine complained weakly as he got himself under control. The hand tousled his hair before lifting away completely. Raine cautiously sat up again, breathing a sigh of relief when he felt mostly normal again.

"Please answer my question, Brianne," he requested with forced calm.

She touched his hand then took it in hers. "He left."

Raine's stomach churned. "Left...the room? Left the building? What?"

Brie deferred to Killian, who knelt down next to her. "Val called me, said that you were hurt and unconscious and needed Brie here. He was gone when we arrived. He's, uh, headed to Hawaii."

Raine burst into wild laughter that turned a shade hysterical as he wound down. "Hawaii? A fucking vampire in Hawaii?" He took a deep, steadying breath. "Well, I hope he has a good time." He staggered to his feet, and his audience jumped up as well, each taking him by an arm. He shook them off. "I'm fine," he declared. "Just peachy. Come on, Brie. We need to go."

"Raine, I think..."

"Need to go, right now." He felt Brie pull from his unwilling mind a flurry of images, of his post-encounter happiness being shattered by Val's revulsion at what he had done with Raine, of the look of horror on Val's face, the feel of the crushing realisation that his life-mate didn't want him, was disgusted by him. Brie leant against him briefly in empathy, then recovered her usual verve.

"Come on. Let's get you to the car." She dug in her pocket and all but threw the keys at Killian. "You go pull it around, vamp," she commanded. "White SUV. Move it."

"Hey, what's the rush? He needs time to recover."

Raine watched with alarm as Killian attempted to placate Brie by running his hand down her arm. *Bad idea, dude.*

He grabbed her hand as she brought it up towards Killian. "Let it go, Brie. I wasn't exactly stopping him. Now I've got to pay the piper."

She turned to her brother, ignoring the vampire. "That's not fair. He needs to give it back if he's not going to share."

"Give what back?" Killian refused to be excluded.

"It's okay, really." Raine took her arms. "We knew this was a long shot going in." He took a deep breath and tears glittered in his eyes as he continued. "I thought for a moment that it was going to be... Well, I was wrong. It was too much for him to take, being with a guy. Guess I'm not as seductive as I thought," he babbled. "Glad I didn't go after this one here. Although he probably wouldn't have run off to Hawaii afterwards. Hawaii... Could you *get* any further away? Maybe India..."

Brie slapped him lightly on the side of his head, halting his ramble. "Raine. Can you postpone the freak out until after the new moon? We need to think, come up with a new plan, something." She looked down. "I can't do this alone."

Her defeated look finally got through to him. She was his sister, his family. So what if his pride was bruised, hell, trampled? He had to help her.

Decision made, he turned to Killian. "You need to get Val back here pronto."

"I'm not sure if his flight's left yet. If he's already on it, it'll be hours before I can get through to him." Killian was pulling his cell phone out as he spoke.

Raine frowned. "I thought you guys could just *think* to one another. I heard you guys talking in the bar earlier."

Killian snorted. "Well, yeah, if we're within eye contact of each other." He cursed. "Right to voicemail."

"Tell him to call you." Raine turned to his sister as Killian left the message. "Don't worry. I'll get it back. You're right. If he's not going to share, he can't keep it. We need at least what we started with if we're to have any chance at all."

"What the hell does that mean anyway?" Killian demanded as he hung up the phone.

"It's a little hard to explain," began Brie, but Raine interrupted.

"I'll give you the gist of it, but only so you know why we need your help. Val jumped the gun, so to speak, by getting all hot and bothered without giving me a chance to give him the four-one-one. He got off, bit me, brought me off, and in doing so, mated me for life."

Raine took a deep breath and continued, "The problem is that he only did one half of the exchange. So essentially, he stripped me of my magic without giving me anything in return. Normally, we would balance and accentuate each other's powers."

Killian looked confused. "Exchange? You mean a like a blood exchange, right?"

Raine blushed. Brie rolled her eyes at his embarrassment and opened her mouth to explain. Raine collected himself and cut her off. "Oh stop it, I'll tell him." He paced over to the window and looked out at the cloudless, early evening sky. "You can exchange many things at many levels of power. A breath. A kiss. A touch. Most beings think that blood is at the top of the list. But when we did some research, we discovered that blood is only the second most powerful exchange. Process of elimination, you can probably figure out the richest, most concentrated source." He unconsciously rubbed at his groin, where the dried cum was sticking his softened cock to his leather pants.

Killian's eyebrows climbed towards his hairline, then he snapped his fingers in excitement. "So *that's* why it had to be a guy and not Brie that you sent. But why take that step? Is power such an important thing to you two?" He looked slightly disillusioned at the thought.

"It is right now. There is another faction within our ranks that we are fighting for control. It has literally come down to an exactly equal balance of power. That is, the sum total of power held by members on both sides is precisely the same. The easiest way to change it is to convince someone to switch sides. But since the faction splits along family lines, that isn't going to happen. The other faction is...misguided and, we think, dangerous."

He exchanged a sober look with his sister, who nodded for him to continue. "The only other way is to bring power into the fold by adding to a member's power, which is only accomplished in a handful of ways. The Offering of a Delegate and resulting binding with a powerful vampire has been the best source of inflow over the years. We thought that if we could invoke the Delegate offering and bring in a power exchange on our side, we could finally stop the threat. But unfortunately, they had the same idea. Both of our offerings will be consecrated tomorrow on the night of the new moon."

Raine clasped Brie's hands as he continued to explain. "Brie's already given up so much, becoming consecrated as an Acolyte to gain power for our side to keep us evenly

matched with the other faction. And so we sought out the vampire with the most raw power we could find. Valerian."

Raine laughed shortly, without humour. "To super-size the prize, we even took the gamble on presenting him with me instead of a woman, which would have been more of a sure thing. If we could have gotten him to complete the exchange, we would have been victorious and finally had peace. But now..." He trailed off, weary to his bones.

"When Val left without doing at least a blood exchange, he not only stripped Raine's powers, he stripped us of any hope of even keeping the other faction in check," Brie concluded with a sigh. "We only have one day until we lose everything."

Chapter Five

Val sat in the airport waiting for his flight to L.A. to be announced. From there, it would be five hours to Maui for a much needed vacation. His chest was tight with self-loathing, his body pulsing with unaccustomed power, his mind in a whirl. What the hell had happened earlier? Beyond the shock of his unprecedented attraction for a man, the strong pull, the feeling of rightness when he was pressed up against Raine had stolen his breath away and made him long to keep the man forever.

He swallowed as he closed his eyes in shame. Which made what he had done even more appalling. The pain he had inflicted, the choice he had taken away. Raine wasn't a nameless, faceless victim to be bled and set aside. He knew that. His own fucking life-mate. And yet somehow Val had ended up treating Raine worse than any stranger.

He suddenly wondered how Raine was feeling right at that moment. He pictured Raine as he had left him, supine on the couch, his neck bruised and bleeding, unconscious. Val winced as he pictured Killian and Brie walking into the room and seeing him that way, rushing to wake him, comfort him. Raine's pitiless condemnation as he recounted Val's attack.

He sat up straight as a niggling thought suddenly clarified itself. What if Raine was dying? He had said right before dropping unconscious that he might not survive. Val knew he hadn't taken enough blood to harm a human, but he'd never dealt with a mage before. What if Brie wasn't able to help him? Val dropped his head in his hands. The picture in his mind changed to Raine's face, pale, eyes closed as he fought to hang on to life. This finally drove him to his feet. He was a base coward, he castigated himself as he strode out of the gate area. He couldn't run away from this. He had to face and take responsibility for his actions.

Val pulled his cell phone from his pocket and turned it back on as he continued walking through the main terminal. Three missed calls, all Killian. He hit voicemail, and his friend's voice came on, urgency clear in his tone.

"Val, turn your fucking phone on and get your ass back here, pronto. You have no idea what you've done. Get back here and make it right. Do not get on the plane. We don't have time to chase you all the way to fucking Maui."

He frowned at that last as he emerged from the terminal and crossed to the short-term lot where he had left his car. They didn't have time? He hit speed-dial and almost dropped the phone as Killian roared in his ear.

"Where the fuck are you? Tell me you're still on the ground."

Val's eyes widened. "I am. I'm coming back, getting in my car now. What's...uh...how's Raine?" he stammered, beyond shame to have to ask someone else for information on his own damn mate.

"Thank fuck! Raine needs you here. We'll be at your house." He hung up without another word.

Val looked at the phone, incredulous. K hung up on him? He reviewed Killian's few words. Apparently Raine was alive and well enough to be moved.

Fine, he huffed mentally. His house it was. Time to straighten this all out.

* * * *

"He's on his way," Killian reported to the siblings in the back seat of the SUV.

Raine wondered at his mixed feelings at the news. He knew realistically that he had to see Val, convince him to at least complete the blood exchange to regain his magic and bring his power level to whatever the other faction could hope to garner tomorrow. Best case scenario, though, involved him getting through one more sexual encounter with his horrified and reluctant life-mate, maxing out the power exchange and putting the threat to the peace of their family behind them. *Raine saves the day.*

A faint flow of positive outcomes trickled through his mind. He spoke without turning to Brie, "Not like you to try to influence me as subtly as that, love." The stream cut off abruptly as she shifted next to him.

"Sorry," she offered sincerely.

He gave her a smile and a wink, "Didn't object to it, just commenting on the new approach. Usually you slam me over the head and knock me silly. You must really be worried about me."

Brie took a deep breath, and Raine interrupted before she could speak. "I'm gonna go for broke. The hell with my pride. He won't know what hit him. Then when all's said and done, we'll leave him be. He can go on his merry way and be just as straight as he wants to be. After," he added with a hint of steel in his tone, "he gives it up the one requisite time for me."

Brie looked relieved and guilty. "Are you sure?"

"Sure as sure. It's only sex, babe. I can take it."

Even Killian had to laugh at that, and the three were smiling as they pulled up to the house. "Here we are," Killian announced. "Val's newest home sweet home."

"Wow." Raine gasped. "It's gorgeous."

They had been winding upwards on a gravel road for some time, and now Raine knew why. The house stood at the crest of a hill without another dwelling in sight. A mixed forest bordered one side, and an open field curved around the other, sloping to a large river in the distance. Beyond that was a range of mountains, the setting sun beginning to approach the tops of the peaks. The rustic house had a deck wrapping completely around itself. *House? Cabin?* Whatever it was called, it was inviting and blended in seamlessly with the natural surroundings. Raine could feel his cock twitch as he envisioned Val standing on the steps, pyjama pants hanging low on his lean hips, his impressively muscled chest bare in the weak morning sun, love and desire shining from his dark eyes, beckoning Raine...

Quit torturing yourself, lamebrain.

His eyes were next drawn to a shaded glen on the forest side of the house. He drew in a breath. *Magic.* He could feel the elemental power lingering there, waiting to be tapped, and one sidelong glance at his sister told him she sensed it too.

...Welcome home...

Raine jumped a little as the pulse from the glen startled him. The combined reactions of the siblings finally seemed to catch Killian's attention.

"Do you see something?" he asked, following their gaze to the glen.

Raine pulled his attention with effort back to the house. “Nope. So, Valerian hasn’t been here long? How did he find this place?”

Killian shrugged his wide shoulders negligently. “He was out for a hike in the National Forest near here a few months ago, and found himself taking a shortcut that brought him here. It was unoccupied, and he fell in love with it. Pretty uncharacteristic of him. Moved heaven and earth to track down the owner, made an offer and bought it. Just moved in last week.”

Raine shook his head in wonder and tried to suppress his excitement. *A fucking unclaimed wellspring of power. And it called to a vamp?*

Chapter Six

Val pulled up the long driveway in the dark to his new home. *Home*. Over all the centuries, he'd owned dozens of houses. But none had been a home, rather just dwellings in which to keep his belongings. Yet, from the first, there had been something compelling about this place that had drawn him in. Now he couldn't get the enticing picture of Raine in his home out of his head. Would he be lying on the couch? His bed? Val shuddered as a wave of desire tightened his frame at the thought of Raine spread out across his sheets.

Yeah, you'll be lucky if he doesn't run screaming out the door when he sees you.

Now that the rush to get here was over, he found himself hesitating on the porch with his hand hovering over the knob. No other cars... Was Raine even here? A hand settled lightly on his back and gave him a nudge. Val whirled around. No one there. His eyes flew as he scanned his surroundings, finding no movement at all. Unsettled, he tried to push the incident from his mind and walked into the house.

Val inhaled deeply and caught the reassuring, enticing scent of Raine permeating the house. *Where are you?* He looked at the stairs, curving up to the right, and ascended with growing speed until at the top of the steps, he was taking them two at a time. He tore around the corner and stopped cold at the threshold of his own bedroom.

Raine was indeed lying on his bed, sprawled out asleep on his stomach in nothing but a pair of what looked like Val's black boxer briefs, head turned away from the door. He was hugging Val's pillow like a child with a favourite toy and had one leg cocked at the knee. He slept deeply, breathing long and completely even, and now that Val knew he was okay, he was loath to wake him.

He quickly slipped his own clothes off, down to a matching pair of boxer briefs. *We're already dressing alike*. His mood was almost euphoric as he climbed into bed next to Raine, careful not to wake him. He could barely control the temptation to run his hand up that lean, muscled thigh pulled up so enticingly to the hint of his balls lovingly cupped in the black briefs.

Val turned onto his back and smiled in the darkness. Raine must not be completely terrified of him if he was in Val's bed. Clinging to that hopeful thought, Val let the exhaustion caused by the turmoil of the day finally catch up with him, and he slid into a dreamless sleep.

When Valerian woke up at dawn, he found himself staring into sea-green eyes that seemed to take his measure and find him wanting. He fought to clamp down on his initial gut reaction of defensiveness. After all, Val *had* been the one in the wrong. Keeping his face neutral, he let his gaze wander over the details of Raine's face—the dark, inky lashes and brows that framed his light eyes, the full, expressive mouth, strong jaw line covered with just a hint of a shadow. That realisation that this was a man whose face he was devouring didn't cause anything more than a small flip in his stomach. Moreover, this was *Raine*, in his bed, just inches from him.

"Are you okay?" he managed huskily, feeling absurdly emotional.

Raine blinked, and his eyes narrowed just a bit. "Were you concerned?" The query was seemingly casual, but Val sensed the trap.

If he said yes, then he would look like a jerk running off like he did. And he obviously couldn't say no.

Val decided on a strong offence instead of answering directly. "I'm sorry I disappeared like that." A faint softening of Raine's expression. "I was really upset and sickened by what happened." Immediately, the walls slammed back up on Raine's face, but before Val could do more than take a breath, Raine was sitting up. Val prepared to make a grab for him to keep him from leaving, but instead of moving away, Raine surprised him by settling over the top of him, straddling his hips, hands braced on the bed on either side of his head, eyes still pinning his.

Val's body saw the possibilities here immediately, and his morning erection perked up at the oh-so warm pressure. However, that reaction exacerbated a different problem, one that was even more delicate given the circumstances. Normally, Valerian had almost complete control of his need to feed. But for some reason, his iron will melted away in Raine's presence. He knew, *knew* that even broaching the subject right now was the worst thing that

he could do. But after what happened last time, he was afraid giving into his increasingly burning desire would trigger another frenzied attack.

His hands rose of their own accord and settled on Raine's morning-warm skin, just above the elastic waist of his boxer briefs. Val closed his eyes and savoured the feel of Raine's cock aligned with his, holding onto Raine in counter-pressure while circling his hips upwards in little thrusts. With only the thin material of their briefs between them, Val could feel the heat of Raine's shaft, the moist warmth of the growing spot of pre-cum soaking into the fabric. He imagined the smooth heat of the skin hidden from view, and suddenly couldn't wait another minute to feel that weight in his palm. He slid his hands smoothly, fingers first, under the waistband and down Raine's hips, his thumbs learning Raine's hipbones in passing before he reached around to cup his firm, bare buttocks.

"This is where things got out of control last time, wouldn't you agree?"

Val's eyes flew open at the unexpected and incredibly coherent question. He tried to get his brain to formulate an answer, but couldn't manage more than, "Uh..."

Raine sighed heavily, "I can see that I'm going to have to have conversations with you before you're turned on. Obviously, all the blood must leave your *big* head when you're aroused or something."

Val couldn't agree more. He could barely process what Raine was saying, only revelling in the fact that he was still sitting on top of Val's pulsing cock. He continued to push up against Raine, now trying in earnest to remove Raine's tight briefs without letting him move off his cock, an impossible task, unless he were to rip them...

He turned thought into deed, and three yanks later, the briefs were in tatters and Raine's erection popped up, slapping against his own belly, leaving a dab of pre-cum behind. Before he even consciously decided to, he reached out and rubbed the spot off with the pad of his thumb, bringing it to his mouth for a lick. He watched those celadon eyes darken with desire as Raine focused on Val's tongue sliding over his thumb, cleaning it of Raine's cum.

The musky, briny taste, with the same notes as Raine's amazing blood, hit his senses like a shot of adrenaline. Val reacted without thought, flipping Raine over, grinding down against him as he reversed their positions.

"If you're going to nail me with those teeth again, you're going to have to let me suck you off first. Take it or leave it."

Chapter Seven

Raine held back a smirk as he watched the progression of reactions cross Val's face, confusion, lust, back to confusion. He waited patiently, knowing the bait was more than attractive, but also realising he wasn't in any position to call the shots right now. Valerian was incredibly strong and fast, and even if Raine had his magic to call on, it would be difficult to make him do anything against his will. But what male in his right mind would pass up a blow job? Even from, shudder, another male?

Apparently not this one. Val lifted himself off, and Raine found himself missing the weight of Val's heavily muscular body cradled in his thighs. Oh, he could tell already it was going to be brutal trying to get over this arrogant, beautiful, conflicted vampire.

Val rolled to his back and shucked off his briefs in a smooth movement, then turned back to Raine, pulling him into his arms. Raine went with a sigh, nestling into Val's bulk, wishing he'd gotten a better look at his nude body, but enjoying the feel of it flush against him. Val's hand returned to his ass, cupping and smoothing, tracing the crease at the top of his leg with a finger.

Raine's body reacted predictably, and he moaned at the feel of his erection rubbing against Val's equally bare, hot flesh. He raised his top leg, hooking it over Val's hip, leveraging himself closer still, enjoying the proximity, storing away memories of the feel of their bodies pressed together from head to toe.

Don't let yourself forget how sickened he was by what happened yesterday. This is not going to be an all-male revue of Happily Ever After.

I know, but holy shit, he fires me up.

He's going to hate himself afterwards. He's not into dick, Raine.

Feels pretty into it right now.

Val brought his hand to Raine's mouth, running his finger over his lips before insistently pressing for entry. Raine took the hint and sucked his finger deep, laving it with his tongue, releasing it with a pop as Val unerringly found his pucker and pressed gently, tapping, then pressing again.

Ohmigod, he's a fast learner. Bright boy.

Ya think he's getting over the whole not-into-guys thing? Because in a second, he's going to be into...oh yeah...

Val's finger slid inside, holding there as their slick cocks mashed together. Val's heavily-lidded, dark eyes held his, and the expression on his face almost made Raine cry for what could have been. Raine hissed in a breath as he struggled not to come.

Let's wrap this up while he's in the mood, shall we? Then we can all go back to our regularly scheduled programming.

Raine contracted around Val's finger once, twice, then gave Val a light push to his shoulder. The vampire allowed himself to be rolled over, and Raine was once again straddling him. Val kept up the gentle intrusion, rotating gently before see-sawing, then pulling out to the brink. Before he could insert a second finger, Raine moved away quickly, kneeling down between Val's legs and taking the weeping head of his flushed cock into his mouth.

He moaned around his cock as the taste of Val's pre-cum hit his tongue. That first taste had him sweeping his tongue across the spongy tip and dipping his tongue into the slit to extract every possible drop before sliding his lips down the shaft, feeling the girth stretch his lips, until the tip hit the back of his throat. He swallowed against his reflex and took the length into his throat, bottoming out against the nest of dark gold hair.

"Holy fuck!" Val yelled, and his hands came down to gently cradle Raine's head, fingers winding into his hair.

Raine smiled with a hum as he held there, continuing to swallow until the need for air had him sliding back up the incredibly hard shaft. He pulled off, prompting a groan and a tightening of the hands in his hair, then licked his way down the side until he reached Val's soft sac. He tongued one smooth orb into his mouth, gently rolling it before releasing the suction and moving to give the other orb some attention.

Val writhed beneath his attentions. "Ah. Oh fuck, Raine."

Raine sat up, and Val reached frantically for him. "No, so close..."

"Shhh. I'm not going anywhere." Raine switched direction and lay down on his back, feet towards the top of the bed. He reached over and gave Val's hip a pull, telling him without words where he wanted him. Val's eyes turned even darker as the understanding hit, and he got to his hands and knees over Raine.

"Yeah, now fuck my mouth," Raine encouraged, and Val obliged, spreading his knees and thrusting downward into Raine's welcoming mouth, shallowly at first, then with increasing depth, holding there until the mage's throat muscles yielded entry. Raine held him, massaging him with his throat until the need for air overcame his passion. A slight nudge had Val pulling back up, and Raine mouthed his cock, turning his head to the side to speak.

"Now I want to suck you until you come, and I'm going to swallow every drop. Is that okay with you, big guy?"

Val's voice was deep and drugged with desire. "Oh yeah. Raine. God, what are you doing to me?"

"Spoiling you for any other mouth, I hope."

Val's breath fanned over Raine's exquisitely hard cock. "I should return the favour," he murmured huskily.

Raine felt a spurt of pre-cum well from his slit at the thought. *Focus*. "Do you know what I'd rather have you do right now?"

"What?"

"Bite me."

"What the hell?"

"C'mon, bite me, Val. Right. Down. There. Suck my blood. You know you want it." Raine teased mercilessly, spreading his legs wide in invitation. "There's a major bloodline right there. Think you can hit it?"

"Raine..." He groaned.

"Hit it."

Val hit it. One moment, Raine was despairing of ever getting Val to just bite him already, and the next, he was hanging on for the ride as Val simultaneously bit down and slipped his cock back between Raine's waiting lips. Val latched on, curving his hands under Raine's ass, hugging him close as he fed, pushing Raine immediately to the brink of orgasm.

One large, warm hand started stroking his sensitive sac, petting it from the back, and that was all it took to send Raine over the edge. He groaned around Val's cock as he helplessly opened his throat to Val's thrusts, feeling the buzz at his spine and his own balls drawing up just before he shot cum between Val's chest and his own stomach.

At the same time, Raine watched, fascinated, at close range as Val's sac tightened and Val rammed deep and held, flooding Raine's throat with his ejaculate. Val helplessly thrust in and out in the throes of his release, and Raine swallowed frantically, trying to keep up with the jets of fluid. He stroked his hands along Val's flanks and felt a shudder go through the dominant male as he released from the bite and drew his tongue across the area, causing a tingle to go through Raine's inner leg.

"Thank fuck he healed this time. God, that was good. Holy shit, I've never come so hard in my life."

Raine tried to sit up, shocked, but Val's body was heavy upon his. He gave a quick shove, and Val fell to one side, reaching for Raine and pulling him up so that they lay face-to-face once more.

Raine pondered what had just happened. It was like he was hearing Val's thoughts, kind of like when he had overheard Val and Killian's mental conversation at the bar. He tried a pulse of power, and Val's head snapped up, his eyes meeting Raine's quizzically.

"Did you feel that?"

Raine didn't answer at first. His magic had thankfully returned, but it felt different. Significantly more powerful. It was like going from driving an economy car to a Hummer. He flexed it again, and again, Val reacted, seeming to feel the thrust of it. Raine cautiously allowed some jubilation to creep in. He wouldn't know for sure until Brie had a chance to assess him, but it seemed like the exchange of power worked even better than they had hoped.

He allowed some of his relief and happiness to creep into his expression, and Val relaxed and smiled in return, those dark eyes soft with satiety and contentment. They lay there for long minutes, gazes locked, studying each other from inches away.

"You're beautiful," he whispered lovingly to Val, then could have kicked himself as that seemed to break the spell, bringing hesitation back to the vampire's features. Oh, well, in for a penny and all that. "Too bad you're not into guys," he dared in a flat voice, sitting up when a look of shock whipped across Val's face as he, too, rose to a sitting position. Raine looked away at last with a sigh, not wanting to see the rejection rising there, the horror that had broken his heart yesterday, wanting to remember the pleasant aftermath instead.

"Why can't you believe that I really do want you? God, I wish I hadn't attacked you yesterday, you'll never trust me now. Raine, Raine, my love. What will I do when you're gone?"

Chapter Eight

Val's voice rose inside Raine's head, painting his words with a baffling mixture of love, desolation, self-loathing, and desire. Raine was stunned at the implications of not only being able to 'hear' Val, but also *what* he was hearing.

"Val?" he began hoarsely, only to pause and clear his throat. "Val." This time his voice was stronger. "We really need to clear a few things up." He reached out and took the vampire's hand, their fingers automatically twining together as if they'd been doing it for years.

"First question. What were you 'upset and sickened by' yesterday?"

"Why do we have to think about that again, I was like an animal, a –"

Raine interjected, "Out loud, please. You tend to ramble mentally. And you weren't an animal."

"What the fuck?" The look of shock on Val's face was priceless. "You can hear my thoughts?"

"Yes, ever since we came. Apparently, the power exchange completed itself as our life-mate bond kicked in."

"Power exchange? Life-mate bond?"

"Can we do this aloud?"

Val grimaced sheepishly. "Sorry."

Raine gave him an arch look. "For a guy that doesn't have much to say most of the time, you're sure a Chatty Cathy in your head. Anyway," he continued, "can you answer my question? Sickening? Yesterday? Ring any bells?" he concluded, getting irritated at the lack of response.

* * * *

Valerian had never been timid in this life, but he was reluctant to answer Raine's question. Was he trying to rub it in? What did he hope to accomplish by forcing Val to admit his perfidy?

"My attack on you, of course."

"What attack?"

Val stared. "What do you mean, what attack? I pinned you down, bit you, bruised you. I *hurt* you. You said yourself afterward that I was a brute and that you might not survive it. Then you passed out in shock."

Raine returned his stare with one of his own. "I said those things in my head. And you heard me?" He shook his head, then surprisingly gave Val a smile. "I meant brute in the best possible way." The smile widened into a grin. "And what I was thinking was that I wasn't sure I'd survive actual sex with you if just rubbing off together was that hot." His engaging grin turned self-deprecating. "And I wasn't in shock. I, uh, faint at the sight of blood. Just my blood," he assured hastily. "I know you're a vampire and that blood will kind of, uh, be around," he waved his hands vaguely, "in the future." He trailed off and looked at Val longingly.

Val felt a welcome tightness in his chest. Hope blossoming.

"In the future?" he coaxed the mage.

Raine blushed. "I have a confession to make."

Val tried not to panic at the words. "Oh?" he managed carefully.

"I seduced you. On purpose. To get my power back." And he explained in detail about the power exchange and the reasons why they had invoked the Delegate Offering and chosen Val.

Val felt a wave of empathy and tenderness wash over him at the level of devotion his life-mate had shown for his sister. He took Raine's hand, thanking his lucky stars that they had chosen him for Raine, abruptly realising how chancy fate could be. The thought of Raine setting out to seduce another vampire...Val swallowed hard, attempting to dispel the disturbing image, focusing back on Raine as he concluded his tale.

"When we found that my magic was gone, I knew I would have to seduce you into getting it back, even though you weren't interested in guys. I was just using you by having sex," he finished dolefully.

Val burst into laughter. "You can seduce me for whatever reason you want, mage, anytime you want." He took a deep breath and forged ahead. "Does this mean that you might be happy about us being life-mates?"

Raine's answering smile lit Val from the inside out. "Do you think that you might be happy with a *man* as a life-mate?"

Val gathered him into his arms. "Not just any man. You, my mage. So, you won't mind being a constant blood donor?"

Raine gave him a wry look. "As long as I don't have to see it, I'm good."

"So am I," Val answered, his lips travelling down the cord of Raine's neck. "Get used to being perpetually a pint light."

Epilogue

Raine looked up towards the house as he walked back from the glen. Val was standing on the steps, pyjama pants hanging low on his lean hips, his impressively muscled chest bare in the weak morning sun, love and desire shining from his dark eyes, beckoning Raine.

"C'mere babe, you look chilly."

Raine looked down at his nude body, his burgeoning erection jutting out above his bare smooth balls. "Surprisingly I'm not."

"*Indulge me,*" Val chided mentally as he enfolded Raine in his warm embrace, then drew him up the steps into the house.

"Glen says hello."

Val gave him an amused look. "You are just too weird sometimes, naming a damn field."

"It likes the name Glen," he insisted.

Val rolled his eyes. "Killian called. He and Brie are coming up later. Apparently they have good news. Something about the other faction folding like an accordion."

Raine rubbed himself against Val. "I don't want to talk politics. We'll get enough of that later when Brianne is here. Right now, I want you to fuck me. I'm buzzing with power, and I can tell you need a little morning pick-me-up."

Val apparently took him at his word, picking him up and pinning him against the wall of the foyer. "Need lube," he murmured hotly against Raine's neck.

Raine threw his head back, arching his neck. "Already took care of it before I went out this morning."

Val reached down and tested Raine's entrance with two fingers. "*Fuck, you're brilliant. A damn boy scout.*" He didn't waste any time impaling him to the hilt, and Raine gasped as the immediate burn slowly melted into the breathtaking fullness he loved. Val nibbled his neck.

"Don't tease me, you brute," Raine managed to gasp, and Val gripped his ass cheeks more firmly in his hands, bracing them both as he slid his teeth into Raine's neck.

Raine gasped as Val suckled his neck while glancing his prostate from within. "Oh fuck," he moaned as he squeezed Val's cock, milking it with his channel, starting to spill between their bodies. He was distantly aware of Val's final thrust and hold, the heat of his seed spilling within him, and along with their joined bodies, the ever-present connection of their hearts and minds.

"I love you, mate."

"I love you too. My mage."

About the Author

Devon started reading and writing at an early age and never looked back. After a creatively-sapping career in the business world, she gratefully took some time off to be at home. At thirty-nine and holding, Devon finally figured out the best way to channel her midlife crisis was to morph from mild-mannered stay-at-home mom to erotic romance writer. She lives in Oregon with her husband and two girls, who are (mostly) understanding of all the time she spends on her laptop, aka the black hole.

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