

ELLORA'S CAVE *Spectrum*

KYANN
WATERS

Ice
MAN

Blood Slaves

Ice Man
KyAnn Waters

Book 1 in the Blood Slaves series.

Feeding and sex go hand in hand when you're a blood slave to a vampire. It's like a drug and Rowan is hooked. With the vampire Theron, Rowan has never wanted for more than his next fix. Until he meets Brett. Brett is hot, the sex is incredible—and he's human.

Brett is looking for kinky sex when he goes to the Catacombs, an exclusive fetish club for men. Flair bartender Rowan, also known as Ice Man, is sexy and mysterious. Brett isn't ready to complicate his life with a lover outside the Catacombs and Rowan isn't interested in club-scene sex, but coming together and giving in never felt so good.

Rowan's dark secret could destroy everything. He must never allow Brett to learn of his symbiotic relationship with the vampire. He has to choose—tell Brett the truth or remain a blood slave. Either way, he can only hope Brett will trust in love enough to forgive him.

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Ice Man

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ICE MAN

KyAnn Waters

Dedication

D.L. and O.C.—thank you for being a phone call away whenever I needed you. Thank you for that little shove when I really deserved a kick in the ass. You are the best and I'm so grateful for your friendship, your advice and your ability to listen to me drone on endlessly.

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Chapter One

Blood surged into his cock. Cool mist bathed his warm flesh and sent shivers down his spine. Drugging euphoria clouded his mind and his limbs grew heavy. He felt as if he melted into the bed beneath him. Some said the pleasure of feeding was like the high of a hallucinogenic drug. Pulsing erotic energy thrummed through his body. Scorching heat raged through his veins. Soaring higher, his cock grew longer—harder. He not only offered the blood in his veins but also his aroused body. Maybe feeding was a drug. Without will to refuse, he'd certainly become an addict.

Whispered voices surrounded him. Hands caressed his torso. Faceless touches in the blackened room. His stomach quivered under their seeking hands. Fingers pinched his nipples, twisting until the sting had him moaning. His hips thrust into the blackness. He ached for relief from the delirium of intense pleasure.

Cool breath stirred against his throbbing cock. His essence oozed from the slit and trickled down the length. Moist, cold suction surrounded his cock head.

"Yes," he hissed through his teeth. His jaw clenched and his back arched off the bed. He needed more. Firm lips worked down his shaft, sucking him deep into the chilled, cavernous depths of his lover's mouth. Heat pooled in his balls.

Strong fingers circled the base and tightened. Teeth scraped along the length as his faceless lover took more of his cock between those cold, soft lips. His heart pounded. Blood roared through his ears and sweat beaded on his brow. He wet his dry lips with his tongue, anticipating the high.

The cold mouth on his cock continued to slurp him into his throat, sucking him off and grazing him with teeth, just to the point of biting. Another cold tongue swiped his hard, pebbled nipple. The sensation nearly made him come.

Leather straps cinched on his ankles and anchored him to the bed. Although he could still buck against the delicious tongue lashing at his balls and cock. His arms, stretched above his head, were bound to the headboard. He could grasp the wrought iron bars but couldn't pull free. The bed dipped on the left and another cold tongue traced the seam of his mouth and parted his lips. He was powerless to refuse the invasion. He opened and savored the dark flavor of his unknown master.

The kiss ended. Someone combed his bangs from his face. A tender caress traced the brows over his eyes and cupped his whiskered cheek. Warmth.

Theron. Powerful, dominant. And Rowan Huntington was a slave to him.

"Are you ready?" The familiar voice washed over him. Fear prickled at his thoughts. How many lovers? Quenching Theron's thirst had built his ability to recover quickly from feeding. Enzymes in vampire saliva worked like a steroid, accelerating the

renewal of the blood supply. The more the vampires drank, the more he produced. But three vampires? Maybe more? He would be weak by morning. "Don't worry." Fangs pricked his neck. He flinched and Theron pierced his flesh and bit deep.

Like a gossamer veil lifting, Theron entered his thoughts.

A throaty chuckled echoed in his mind. Rowan gasped and muscles throughout his body jerked.

Relax. Theron sucked hard, greedily feasting on the carotid artery in Rowan's neck.

Spinning, dreaming, he released his hold on the ravaging happening on his body and relished the delirium of hosting. His mind spiraled into a maelstrom of lust and surreal pleasure. Another bite pierced the flesh near his groin. Blood rushed from his femoral artery. The vampire's large, strong hands gripped Rowan's leg, nails digging into his flesh as the creature gorged on blood.

Rowan moaned. Another vampire growled and a third mouth latched onto his wrist. Fangs pierced his skin.

The sensations overwhelmed him. Heat scorched his body. His cock oozed and stretched. He was hard, so hard that a touch would have him reaching orgasm.

Even as he weakened, his need to come became more acute.

Fangs slipped from Rowan's neck and Theron sealed his wounds with a gentle swipe from his tongue.

"Enough. Leave us."

Rowan couldn't open his eyes, the effort too herculean. Fangs retracted from his wrist and leg. The warm tongue near his groin rolled over his flesh and flicked along the length of his shaft, lapped the dripping juices. He clenched his teeth and thrust upward. The vampire curled his tongue around the sensitive edge then tasted the slit. The tease wasn't enough. "Suck it."

"No." Theron's roar had the two other vamps scrambling from the bed.

"We'll see you upstairs," one of the vampires said.

Rowan recognized the voice. He didn't really care who he fed as long as Theron was among them.

The door opened and muted light spilled into room, slashing Theron's long shadow across the bed. Rowan drew a deep breath. His body was strung tight and his nerves sizzled. The rioting sensations needed release. He needed sex.

Patience. Theron's voice once again weaved through his erratic thoughts. *Tonight I want you for myself.*

Rowan relished the possessiveness. "Then release me." He jerked on the restraints.

His vision blurred as he turned his head. Theron closed the door with a thought and plunged the room into blackness again.

Why would I let you go? You belong to me.

"No, I serve you." The choice was still his. He submitted because he was powerless to fight the intoxicating euphoria. "But you don't own me." However, Theron did own others. In fact, he owned every vampire within his sect. He had sired them all. Now they walked the streets among unsuspecting humans.

"Don't forget that I know your thoughts." Theron spoke aloud.

Yes, Theron read the minds of those he sired. A trait that kept the species under control. However, with blood slaves like Rowan, he knew their thoughts only during the Zenith—the time a vampire burned with human warmth, could reach orgasm and experience human sensation. The fleeting phenomenon only lasted for vampires while feeding and during the aftermath. He should say all vampires except Theron. Somehow he'd retained human characteristics.

Theron sat on the bed. Warm breath tickled Rowan's lips then Theron lowered his face and gave him a drugging kiss. "Any other host, I would have slain." No one opposed the vampire leader. Rowan had.

"I never led you to believe I'd make the change." The revelation that he wouldn't had nearly ended his life anyway. Secrecy was paramount, worth every sacrifice. The history books were full of conjecture concerning the existence of vampires. Most references stemmed from legend and lore, carefully crafted by the surviving seven. The seven Master Vampires controlled their world with precision strategy. After having nearly gone extinct, every decision was orchestrated toward their survival.

"It was my mistake." Theron spoke with contrition but he had no reason to feel guilt or remorse.

"I'm content to serve you without having to become vampire."

"Yet I can't help wanting you." Theron's fingertip trailed along Rowan's sternum, circling the flat, hardened nipple.

Rowan tugged on his arms. "Release me so I can show you how much I want you too."

But you still aren't content. Perhaps I'm not enough for you.

"You have more than enough. And I want all of it now." He referred to the size of Theron's cock, not the context of their relationship. Rowan accepted that emotionally, he'd been bankrupt for a long time. Theron, the vampires—he belonged with them because he didn't belong anywhere else.

Theron's hand stilled. "But I want eternity." *I won't demand it – not from you.*

Rowan released a shaky exhale. Theron's weight shifted on the mattress as he moved to the end of the bed. In the dark, he couldn't see his long dark brown hair but he felt wisps along his inner thigh.

Nails scratched the outside of his hips. "Perhaps I'll leave you tethered to my bed."

Restraints weren't necessary. Tonight, he wanted to be with Theron. His choice—always.

As you are my choice. No one's blood is sweeter. No one's body harder. To prove his point he closed his warm mouth over Rowan's cock. Rowan's eyes slid closed. Damn, Theron's wicked mouth had unmatched skills but he'd been sucked enough. He loved the feel of a smooth moist mouth and talented tongue but he also ached to penetrate, stretching Theron's hole with the thickness of his shaft. The surge of erotic power that came from knowing he was the life and lust of an ancient vampire. To fuck and be fucked.

Rowan wanted to penetrate then switch positions, leaving the final climax to Theron. He visualized Theron rising over him, a god of sex and pleasure. His hair flowed like a curtain of silk down his back and cascading over his shoulders. His defined pectorals created ripples and curves to touch and taste. A dusting of fine hair formed a thin ribbon over Theron's washboard abdominals.

Rowan moaned and his balls tightened.

Theron chuckled and pulled his mouth away. *I'll come if you continue to fantasize about fucking me. Right now, I'm more concerned with making you come.*

"Then sit on my cock. Take me into your ass and ride me like the slave I am."

Theron didn't laugh. He crawled over Rowan's body and braced his hands on Rowan's arms. He was big and strong and oozed sexual dominance. Rowan could never overpower the inhuman strength of the vampire but he didn't feel small and timid beneath him either.

"My slave?" He straddled Rowan's hips. "There are times when I wonder who serves whom."

Theron stroked Rowan's cock. Pressure weighed heavy in his groin and at the same time cream seeped from his slit. Theron milked his cock, stroking him firmly. He wasn't coming. He couldn't. Theron's mental link on Rowan kept him from release, yet liquid continued to seep from his slit. The Master Vampire used the secretions to lubricate his shaft. His slick fingers cupped Rowan's sac and fondled his balls.

"Is this what you want?" The dark timbre of his voice melted over his flesh. He quivered in expectation. Sliding taut skin over his rigid erection, Theron stroked pleasure into his dick.

"You know what I want. You always have." But he couldn't fill the emptiness. Nothing could, not even the high he felt now, after feeding Theron.

Not that he'd call it manipulation but Theron had recognized a void in Rowan. A secret fetish that needed to be filled. In the beginning, Theron had offered The Catacombs—an exclusive club that secretly catered to vampires and their ravenous appetites—as a sanctuary. At the time, he hadn't realized that a dark need dwelled within him. Lust for a lifestyle developed by his association with Theron. But the club hadn't appealed. Group, stranger or even partnered public encounters turned him off. Yes, having three vampires sink their teeth into his veins and drain him of thick, rich blood had aroused him. His hard cock and heavy breathing proved he'd been affected. But he was underground, beneath the club, in Theron's private lair. When it came to

sex, Theron had never insisted Rowan participate in the deviant decadence above. Anyone who knew Theron realized how rare that was.

So I'm a hedonist. He grasped Rowan's cock at the base, positioned his hole over the dripping crown, and lowered.

Blood rushed from his brain. His cock head nudged against Theron's puckered anus and slipped inside. Heat seared his flesh as Theron sank onto his rod. Lower, taking him all. The vampire growled. He braced his hands on Rowan's chest, his nails like claws curling into his taut flesh.

Theron's rim squeezed along his length as he lifted and dropped again. He gripped the bars above his head and endured the sweet agony. Clenching his buttocks, he thrust higher. Theron tightened his thighs to the outside of Rowan's hips. Gyrating, lifting and slamming back down, he found his rhythm. Rowan's cock swelled, growing harder and longer.

Theron's whispers filled his head. He couldn't resist this high. The melding of minds and bodies. Theron's hole loosened and the slide deep into his body became more intense – more volatile.

Muscles bunched and burned in his thighs as he absorbed his weight. Rowan thrashed against his bindings. The restraints at his ankles cut into his flesh. He writhed on the bed, gnashing his teeth and fighting his building orgasm. Damn! He bit his tongue. The metallic taste of blood filled his mouth.

Theron roared, his talons digging into Rowan's flesh. In a flash, he bent forward and thrust his tongue into Rowan's mouth. He pillaged, greedily sucking on Rowan's tongue. Fangs nicked his flesh.

Rowan couldn't speak. Theron was in the Zenith. A fiend for blood and sex. His sphincter contracted on Rowan's cock as he ate at his mouth. But the position kept Theron from plunging on Rowan's rod.

Release me! Rowan screamed in his mind. Theron hadn't moved but the restraints loosened and fell away with a mental command from Theron. Rowan banded his arms around his lover. He pulled out and with a surge of testosterone, rolled on the bed, pinning Theron beneath him. Now lying supine, Theron tipped his pelvis and wrapped his legs tightly around Rowan's hips. He clawed at his back as their tongues slithered together.

Rowan plunged deep. He kissed Theron roughly and dug his knees into the mattress. With the force of a jackhammer, he pounded into Theron's ass. Theron's cock pulsed, juices seeping, dripped between them.

Theron bit into his tongue. His body tensed beneath Rowan and his nails raked along his back as he gripped and held him close. With a growl, he erupted. Rowan slammed into Theron's tightened rim. Theron's thick, solid erection pulsed. Hot cream spurted between them. Rowan continued to thrust in and rear back, fucking him through his orgasm.

Rowan ripped his mouth away and braced his weight on outstretched arms. Heat raced through his veins and surged into his shaft. His mind numbed and his body convulsed—hard. His balls tightened and he exploded. Ribbons of cum spewed from his shaft into Theron's ass. He filled him with cream. Waves of pleasure crashed over him. He rode the crest until he finally dropped onto Theron's chest, drinking in the heavy scent of sex. He was spent, drained, yet euphoric in the aftermath. His cock continued to contract as he slipped from Theron then rolled to his side.

This wasn't love. This wasn't a relationship. But they did have a bond.

And I'll never let you go.

* * * * *

Another busy night and patrons crowded around the counter. Rowan stood behind the bar, flipping bottles and mixing drinks. His hands were steady as he focused on the turns, juggles and flash that brought him excellent tips and inquisitive stares. Blood slaves and vamps mingled with unsuspecting humans. All gay men and all heavy into fetish and the lifestyle. The Catacombs was a pleasure palace to those seeking high kink and anonymity.

Rowan fed on the erotic energy and adoration. However, he never participated in the sex play happening in public rooms, private rooms, or the open fuck fest occurring in the Pit, a large room with few rules and few limits. His habits in the bedroom weren't for public consumption.

He couldn't say the same of his vampire lover. Some looked at Rowan with loathing and contempt. He supposed that was to be expected, considering he was the blood slave to the ancient vampire. It wasn't a role he accepted easily.

Rowan didn't have family. In his early childhood, he'd bounced from foster family to foster family. Adolescence was worse. He'd always known he was gay. His lips curled into a snarl as he took a mental trip down memory lane. Getting caught giving the captain of the high school swim team a blowjob had gotten him kicked out of the last home. He'd taken to the streets and had been there about a year when he'd met a man named Tac.

Incredibly attractive, obviously wealthy, dressed in all black and screaming sex, he looked good and smelled better. Rowan hadn't been able to take his eyes off the bulge of his cock encased in black denim. He'd worn a long black coat. That night seven years ago, Tac had offered Rowan a ride in his BMW, had taken him out to dinner then back to his bed.

Seven years.

Rowan shook off the maudlin thoughts. Part of him did belong in the club, belonged to the vampires. But that didn't mean he didn't want a traditional relationship. A man, not a vampire, to share his life. He glanced at Theron's private table. He sat with friends, laughing, exuding a sexual aura that attracted men like moths to a fire. They knew him as Tac, the king of kink.

"You have beautiful eyes."

Rowan focused his attention on the man seated in front of him.

"Ah," he said. "So you can smile."

"What can I get you?" Rowan wiped the counter with a bar towel.

"A mojito, a private room and an hour with you."

Rowan took a tall glass from the stack. "I'm working." He tossed the rum bottle and caught it above the glass.

"You're very good at what you do."

"Thanks."

The man had piercing blue eyes fringed with thick feathery lashes. He wore a gentleman's haircut, trimmed close on the sides and a bit longer on top. Gray hairs weaved through the dark hair at his temples. Laugh lines creased the corners of his eyes when he smiled. Sharp angles created an interesting face. Ruggedly handsome, yet his deep voice spoke of refined elegance. A man who could sip champagne and still get dirty.

Rowan's cock stirred. The stranger intrigued him. Unlike many of the members of The Catacombs, this man wasn't blatant in his predilections. Men around them wore leather, PVC or bare oil-slicked skin, chains and collars. This man had on a silk shirt and trousers.

"I assume this is your first time here." Rowan knew everyone in the club. That was his job. He'd never seen this man before. He passed a pad of paper and pen to the stranger. "Member number." So he could put the drink charges to his tab.

Inside the club, anonymity was a priority. Men could spend an evening, fuck one person or participate in group sex. Or a man could slip into a private room, revel in any fetish and never share his name.

The man jotted his number on the paper. "Not my first time." He gathered sweat from the glass on his fingertip. "Though I did recently move to the area." He didn't elaborate.

Rowan focused on the way he traced patterns on the glass. Manicured nails capped long, thick fingers. Sparse dark hair swirled between his knuckles.

"It's a bit awkward," the man said. "We aren't supposed to ask for names and telling someone you want to fuck them isn't supposed to be uncomfortable here." He sipped his drink. His eyes raked over Rowan's T-shirt-clad chest. An answering warmth rushed into his shaft. His cock jerked. It felt good.

Men in the club didn't usually affect him. Perhaps he'd become desensitized to the tempting flesh on display throughout the club or maybe his lack of interest in others stemmed more from the fact that Theron fucked him hard and often.

"Rowan," he said without thinking about it too long. He extended his hand and the man enclosed it in the strong, solid warmth of his. Fingers tightened and held for just a moment.

"Brett Kirsch." He loosened his grip and they slowly let go. "A pleasure."

What the fuck? Rowan's pulse pounded and blood surged from his brain into his cock. His balls tingled and his skin was electrified. Desire simmered in his gut, turning hot. Sweat trickled down his back. A pleasure for sure. An unexpected one.

Not that he could do anything about the rush of blood into his shaft or the flash of desire warming his balls. Not without interference. He immediately scanned the area for Theron. The vampire, in the Zenith, would know the dangerous thoughts in Rowan's head.

"So we have names." Brett took a sip of his mojito. Now would they have sex?

"Your offer is tempting but I don't fuck in the club."

Brett raised an eyebrow and his mouth twisted with mirth. "You don't find the surroundings arousing?"

Rowan glanced at the men sipping beers, hooking up, determining who could best fulfill their darker desires. "No." He snapped his gaze back to Brett. "Not usually." He paused, took a chance on having his thoughts heard and then spoke. "That doesn't mean I'm not interested." Tension tightened his shoulders. "And I'm working."

"When do you get off?"

Rowan smiled.

"I meant, when do you stop working?"

Rowan worked at the club every night. His shift started after dark. Normally he stuck around until the crowds thinned but Brett could tempt him away. He leaned forward and whispered, "Would you be interested in getting together outside the club?"

Brett's smile faltered. "I wish I could." He took a hefty swallow of his drink. "I come to the club to avoid outside entanglements." He pushed the glass forward. "If you change your mind, I'll be around."

There won't be an after-hours party. Tell him not to go.

Rowan's stomach plummeted and his eyes slid closed. Whispered words couldn't keep his thoughts private—not from the mental link he shared with Theron. Usually he didn't care. With Theron, he'd held nothing sacred. Tonight he wanted a taste of something he'd never before considered. Chills broke along his arms. "Brett, wait." His heart pounded.

Brett turned. Rowan gave himself a lift by stepping onto the shelf behind the counter. In a leap, he lunged up and stood on the surface of the bar. Their eyes locked. He wanted one touch. Perhaps one kiss. He didn't know how Theron would react but he had to take the risk.

He stepped across the bar surface then placed his booted foot on the barstool. He jumped to the ground. He moved with determination. Nothing was going to stop him. Not even Theron.

What makes you think I want to stop you?

"Some choices are mine to make."

Rowan stood nearly the same height as Brett. His tight T-shirt, worn denim and combat boots contrasted the "business hot" Brett wore. He touched his tongue to his lower lip. Nerves sizzled. He didn't fuck members of the club. Nightly propositions were common. The heat firing through his system and hardening his cock wasn't.

"Does this mean you're on break?" Brett's smile cut deep dimples into his cheeks.

"I don't need a break to kiss you." He stared at Brett's mouth. Full lips, sensuous and soft.

"Then kiss me." He curled a finger into the waistband of Rowan's jeans where they rode low on his hips. A gentle tug brought their groins close together.

Rowan nipped at Brett's mouth, tempting his lips open with a flick of his tongue. His body felt alive. The man smelled incredible. Cloves and leather. He wrapped his hand around Brett's nape. The hair at his neck was silken against Rowan's fingertips and his skin warm. He opened his mouth and thrust his tongue inside. Sweet flavors of mint and rum mingled with the tempting demands of an aroused man. Brett groaned, grasped Rowan at the hips and crushed their erect cocks together.

A group near the bar erupted in cheers. "Ice Man. Ice Man. Ice Man." Ice Man wasn't just his bar name, it's how he lived. Rowan bantered and had fun while serving drinks but he had never savored the heady intoxication of a mysterious lover. Until now.

Rowan banded his arm around Brett and reveled in the play of taut muscles beneath his designer clothes. Shifting his head to the left, he deepened the kiss. He couldn't taste enough. Erotic swipes of his tongue glided against smooth inner tissues and teeth then dipped in again and sucked. Lips meshed. He hadn't realized how careful he'd had to be when kissing Theron. Brett didn't have razor-sharp teeth. He ate at Brett's mouth, demanding, hungry for more. He rolled his pelvis. Friction warmed his cock as it pulsed behind the fly of his jeans. Yeah, he wanted much, much more.

Brett grasped his buttocks. "Now do you want to fuck me?" Tongue rubbed tongue, slow then hard thrusts hinting at the intended promise of a night together weaving between them.

Take him to a private room. I'll join you there.

Rowan jerked his mouth away. He flinched, stepping away from Brett as if he'd been burned. "No!"

A dark shadow fell across Brett's face. "I wasn't insisting on anything. And *you* kissed me."

A lump like a boulder lodged in Rowan's gut. "You don't understand. It's not you."

Brett focused over Rowan's right shoulder.

Prickles tingled along Rowan's spine. He didn't have to turn around to know why the atmosphere around them charged with tension. Theron.

He stepped in close behind Rowan and rested a hand on his shoulder. "I see you've found someone to join us." *Good choice. I can smell his musk. He's hot for you.*

Brett's gaze shifted between them, recognition dawning. Members of The Catacombs had to go through Tac. To humans, he was a complex, secretive business owner who protected his establishment. He provided gay men a safe location to explore and be accepted in a dark sexual world of kink and fetishes.

"Rowan, I didn't realize you were involved."

Theron's grip tightened. *Foolish and dangerous. You know better. No names.*

"I'm only *involved* when my cock is," Rowan said.

Theron burst out laughing. "Well, I think your cock could be persuaded." *I'm hard, hungry and need you, now.*

"I'm working." He glanced over his shoulder. Members crowded around the bar. Two other bartenders handled drinks but without the flair and style he brought to the job. Flair bartending was the only show he gave. The scene playing out between the three of them held several vampires' rapt attention. Neither sex nor a situation with Theron was going to be the night's entertainment. *Damn it.* He knew better than to start what he was unwilling to finish. And he wasn't willing to play in Tac's playground. Their connection was personal and private. That vampires knew he was a blood slave was enough.

"I'm not opposed to joining the two of you." Brett smiled.

Will he let me fuck him just so he can fuck you? Interesting. I think we should put it to the test.

"No."

"Ah, no big deal." But it was and Rowan could see the disappointment in the downturn of Brett's smile and the shrug of his shoulders.

Rowan stepped forward and slammed his mouth over Brett's. He thrust his tongue between his lips in wild possession. Hot, sexy and full of erotic intention. He cupped Brett's cock and rubbed his palm over the erect length. Damn, the man was thick, long and hard. His mouth watered and his anus clenched.

You want him. Take him.

He ignored the voice in his head. "I do want to fuck you. Not here."

No.

Brett ran his fingers over Rowan's abdominals. Quivers rippled along his flesh. "I wish I could, but I can't." He turned his focus to Tac. "Another time, perhaps."

Tac grinned. "I certainly hope so."

Chapter Two

Brett raked his fingers through his hair, a common action when he was frustrated. And damn was he frustrated. It wasn't just because it had been a few years since he'd been in a sex club, it had been a hell of a long time since he'd met a man and wanted to tear off his clothes and fuck in front of a room full of strangers. He'd applied for membership in The Catacombs six months prior. At first, he hadn't understood what the big deal was. All private clubs required membership. He'd never had to go through background checks and then an interview with the club owner. Now he understood the confidentiality clause he'd signed and the high security. Shit, he doubted the CIA could do a more thorough investigation.

Which meant that the club owner knew everything about him. Pressure tightened his chest. He knew how he'd fucked up not only his life but also Karen's and the kids'. His ex-wife was just as culpable. She'd been willing to accept that her husband was gay as long as it didn't interfere with her social calendar. Hell, she'd been fucking her tennis coach twice a week for years. Brett hadn't blamed her. The man had a nice ass and impressive bulge in tight white shorts.

He slipped off his shirt and hung it over the new leather couch. A new matching recliner sat in front of giant sliding glass doors leading out to a small balcony overlooking the city. Going to the kitchen, he grabbed a beer out of the fridge. Everything was new. New condo, newly divorced, new fucking life. He twisted off the lid to the beer. The cool drink slid down his throat. At forty-three, he was finally free to live openly gay and he was still hiding, unwilling to take Rowan's offer of meeting outside the club.

Blame didn't really lie with Karen or the kids. Karen was a thousand miles away in Texas. Both his kids were in college, both in military schools. Daniel was at Texas A&M so he could stay close to his mother. Brett had moved to Denver so he could be closer to Jennifer. She was in her second year at the Air Force Academy. When he and Karen had told them about the divorce, they'd also told them why. He groaned and set his beer on the counter. Why torture himself with bitter memories? That life was his past but he still had an obligation to Karen. Hell. She'd seen to it in the divorce settlement. *He leaves the state and I pretend my ex-husband isn't a fag.* Her exact words. After all, her membership in the country club might be revoked.

Thinking of the country club brought his thoughts back to the bartender at The Catacombs. Not only had he been gorgeous but he'd held the attention of the bar crowd with his bartending style and flair. Flames, juggling, he'd been amazing. Muscles had carved his form. Not big and bulging but tight and corded. Wavy brown hair, tousled and sexy. Blond highlights lent a good-boy image to his bad-boy attitude. Fringe curled

around his collar and the sides had been finger-combed behind his ears. A hidden strength simmered beneath the surface. Long lashes, green eyes—eyes that kept secrets and hinted at mischief—and an expressive mouth. Dark whiskers had shadowed his jaw and grown thicker around his lips and on his chin. Not a clean-cut goatee but a sexy-as-hell face.

Brett's pulse kicked up a notch and blood rushed into his shaft. He brokered multi-million-dollar business deals. Had clients all over the world. He made decisions and played hardball with ruthless tycoons. Yet a man like Rowan could take him to his knees. Fire sparked behind his eyes.

Brett wasn't stupid. Obviously Rowan was involved with the owner of the club, Tac. Why did that thought arouse him further? Maybe because he could imagine the two of them together. Both strong, virile men—a film of sweat glistening on Rowan's washboard abs. He pictured him with his head thrown back, pleasure straining his face and Tac sucking his long, erect cock. Size wasn't a problem. He'd felt his heavy tool pressing against his groin during the kiss they shared.

He opened the fly of his trousers and released his swollen cock. Ropey veins infused with blood lined the length. He wrapped his fist around the base and squeezed. Pearly liquid seeped from the slit.

He leaned against the counter and stroked the hot, velvety flesh over his solid erection. Felt good. Damn good. His balls tingled and pulsed, drawing closer to his body. Closing his eyes, he pictured the way Rowan had leapt onto the counter. Raw power and determination, he exuded sexual energy.

Loosening his grip, he stroked faster. Intense flares of pleasure streaked through his cock. Muscles in his arms bunched. Faster. He clenched his teeth and hissed. "Oh yeah, fuck yeah." He teetered on the cusp of orgasm. If he hadn't been fearful of acting on his desires, he could be pushing his dick past Rowan's luscious lips and thrusting into his wicked mouth.

He spun toward the sink as hot cream spurted from his cock. Each pulsing jet convulsed through him. He jerked hard, squeezing his base and waves of pleasure rolled over him. His mind numbed as endorphins surged through his body.

Gasping for breath, he sagged against the counter. His weakened knees buckled. He'd come but fucking his fist wasn't going to quench his thirst for a man. Rowan. Sparks of interest had flared between them. He wanted to see if he could fan the flames. The bartender was young, hot, and if Brett read him correctly, he was barely containing his need.

Turning on the tap, he rinsed his semen down the drain, washed his hands and headed for bed. A staircase led to the second-floor-bedroom loft. The bedside clock glowed the ungodly hour. He crossed to the bank of floor-to-ceiling windows. Controls on the wall adjusted the amount of light filtering through the glass. Blinds contained within the panes could be adjusted to blacken the room. The sun would be up in a

couple of hours. Brett pushed down the lever. Blinds pivoted, blocking out the Denver skyline and plunging the room into darkness.

He stripped out of his trousers. Using the glowing numbers of the clock as a guide, he crossed the sparsely decorated room and sank onto the king-sized mattress.

Linen sheets were cool against his nude body. Fatigue washed over him. It had been a long day—a long month. Now this was home. The house was quiet and dark. Peaceful. He growled and turned onto his side. *I'll be at peace when I'm dead.* Right now, he wanted adventure.

A deep sigh relaxed him into the bed and he drifted off to sleep.

* * * * *

Heavy lethargy weighted down his body. He woke slowly, pushing through the fog of sleep. An insistent ringing blared through his head. Brett snapped awake and jackknifed off the bed. He groped for the phone. Middle-of-the-night phone calls usually meant trouble. Grasping the clock, he spun it around and glanced at the time. It wasn't the middle of the night but it was late. Had to be one of the kids.

Swallowing to moisten his dry mouth, he picked up the phone and checked the caller ID. The number was unfamiliar. He answered.

"Hello." His voice, rough from sleep, echoed through the quiet room.

The line was silent.

"It's too fucking early for chat. If you're an obscene phone caller, start breathing. Anyone else needs to wait until a decent hour before phoning."

"Were you sleeping?"

Brett tried to place the voice. "Yes."

"Are you naked?"

"Rowan?" His heart started to pound in his ears. Sleepiness vanished, replaced with arousal. "How did you get my number?" The club promised anonymity and confidentiality.

"I'm resourceful."

There was a moment with nothing but breath between them.

"You could be dangerous to me." Brett lived in the real world of high finance and family. Rowan couldn't be older than mid-twenties. He might not realize the risk he presented. Phone calls and meetings outside the club could cause Brett problems he didn't need.

"I guarantee you're dangerous to me. I still had to call."

"You shouldn't have."

"But you're glad I did," Rowan said.

Brett sighed then whispered, "Yes."

"Is your cock stiff?"

"Jacking off didn't help."

"Do you still want to fuck me? Now that we're alone, I'm asking. I definitely want to fuck you."

"You know I do, but I have more concerns about how you accessed my telephone number and what you plan to do with the information."

Rowan took a deep breath and blew into the phone. "Hopefully, I'll still have a job." He chuckled, low and seductive.

Brett felt a tug in his groin as his cock hardened. "You have amazing hands." He snuggled back into his bed, bent his knees and put his feet flat on the mattress, tenting the sheet. "You could work anywhere."

"I was hoping you were referring to something besides my skills as a bartender."

"I wouldn't know about those skills." He reached beneath the sheet and stroked his shaft. "If you recall, I offered."

"Come to the club tonight."

That's what he wanted too. "For a drink?"

"And more."

"Just the two of us? I was under the impression that wasn't an option." Tac had been clear. Rowan was already involved.

"I won't pretend not to have a relationship with Tac. It's complicated."

"I want to say yes but I just got out of complicated. I'm looking for easy."

"I've never been easy." Rowan's voice lowered. "I would be with you." There was another moment of silence. "No pressure. If you come," he inhaled, "you'll *come*."

Impossible to resist his innuendo, he simply agreed. "I'll see you later."

Brett hung up, knowing he'd never get back to sleep now. His hard-on had a purpose.

* * * * *

Rowan's heavy tread echoed in the stairwell as he descended to the catacombs beneath the club, from which it had gotten its name. Tonight he felt none of the usual anticipation. Pressure built behind his eyes and a piercing pain stabbed into his temple like an ice pick. His veins felt engorged, swollen and throbbing. And flu-like symptoms. Without a vampire to drink the excess blood, he'd need to be leeches. Because Theron fed often, Rowan produced more than most.

Strange that a ritual he'd participated in for years could leave him feeling anxious and empty. The cinderblock corridor was cold. The chill settled on his flesh.

A wave of panic caused him to stumble on the step. Brett was coming to the club. Rowan didn't want another scene at the bar. He wanted the chance to have Brett alone, to fuck a man, not a vampire. He didn't want to share with Theron and didn't want the

vampire's voice in his head. But he had to feed. Already, his body ached. The situation was impossible. Misleading Theron was impossible. His hands fisted.

"Why did I call Brett?" Because he couldn't stop thinking of the man with the penetrating blue eyes. Lust still simmered close to the surface. For the first time, he'd met a man worth the risk.

There were problems—*complications*. Brett had made it clear he didn't want complications. So somehow, Rowan had to keep the vampire out of his head and the only way to do that was not to feed him.

Impossible. No, he wasn't ready to give up Theron. He might never be ready—especially for a man he'd just met. He simply wanted to explore the attraction that had overwhelmed him last night. After Brett had left, Rowan hadn't been able to focus on work or the club. All he'd wanted was for the Zenith to fade and for Theron to go to bed—alone. As soon as sunrise broke the horizon, guaranteeing Theron rested in his chamber, he'd accessed the computer system and found out all he could about Brett. The search had been easy. He'd had his first name and his member number. Even if he hadn't, tenacity happened to be one of his strengths. How else would he have managed to escape foster care and survive on the streets? Drugs had never appealed but then who needed narcotics when hosting brought such euphoric highs.

He weaved through the maze of hallways deep beneath the city. Muted lighting lit the way but he could find Theron's sleeping chamber in the dark.

Pausing outside the door, he drew a couple of steadying breaths. Focusing his thoughts away from Brett was impossible. Why try?

He pressed against the door and slipped into the darkened interior. Vampires led secretive lives and Theron was more controlling than any other. That Rowan entered his private lair freely revealed his permanence in the vampire's life. Of course, it was permanent. "Lights, low illumination." Voice commands initiated the recessed lighting, bathing the rooms in a muted glow. Rowan stalked toward the bedroom.

Theron lay in repose, eyes closed, mouth slightly parted and breathing like the undead—barely noticeable. Hard lines carved his naked form. He had a strong jaw and long neck. Wide shoulders tapered to a trim waist. Muscle and tendon defined his sculpted torso. Taut skin rippled over his corded abdominals. The man was perfection. Power, intelligence and cunning. How would he react to Rowan's betrayal?

Normally Rowan stripped before climbing onto the bed. Tonight he had plans and didn't want to go to Brett with the scent of Theron and sex clinging to him.

After taking off his boots and socks, he stripped off his shirt, aware that when Theron woke, he'd be ravenous. Rowan didn't want blood on his clothing. Emotion rolled through his gut. Anxiety frazzled his nerves. The bed dipped as he climbed on. Crawling on his hands and knees, he lay next to Theron and nestled close. The vampire stirred.

Rowan brushed a fingertip over Theron's nipple. His warm flesh reacted, tightening into firm, beaded pebbles. Theron was the only warm-blooded vampire he'd ever

encountered. Theron had many unique qualities. Powers others either didn't know they had, or if they did, they wouldn't know how to command. Mind control, manipulation of kinetic energy and the ability to sire. At least, Rowan assumed that was a skill only Theron possessed since he'd sired all vampires Rowan had met and fed.

Heaviness crushed his chest. Rowan knew too much about Theron, vampires and their sect. Before he could follow the thought, Theron snapped awake. A feral growl erupted from his chest. His eyes glowed crimson. Rowan, anticipating the bite, braced for the attack. He turned his head, exposing the vein in his neck that was swelling with blood, anticipating the surge of power – the high.

The violence was fleeting. Theron reared up and on top of Rowan. His mouth opened and fangs slipped from his gums. Pain flashed through Rowan's neck then endorphins released and his mind numbed. He sank into the mattress, Theron's weight holding him immobile. Blood bubbled to the surface and trickled down his neck. Theron bit harder, thrusting his tongue against Rowan's flesh, increasing the flow.

Then he was there. In his head, arousing his body. And Rowan was powerless to resist.

Theron's strong arms held him tightly and his long silken locks feathered against Rowan's skin. He drank, soothing the pressure in Rowan's veins with each hungry pull. The tug traveled into his balls and his cock swelled. Finally, fangs retracted and warm breath caressed his neck.

Rowan sighed. He lay cradled in Theron's arms, his bloodlust sated but not his drive for sex. Never before had Rowan refused Theron. If he fed him, he fucked him. However, there wasn't a rule that said a blood slave had to have sex. Why wouldn't a slave want to? The erotic sensation of hosting naturally led to desire of the flesh. But not tonight. Rowan desired another.

Resting between Theron's thighs, his back to Theron's front, the vampire's erection pressed into him. His fingertips traced a pattern on Rowan's forearm. Rowan didn't speak but he didn't have to. That he still wore jeans and hadn't gone down to suck on Theron's dripping cock head spoke volumes.

Why are you angry with me?

"I'm not."

I haven't forbidden you from – anything or anyone.

Rowan stiffened. How much had Theron gleaned from his thoughts?

Everything. "And I should be angry."

"Are you?"

Theron pressed warm, smiling lips to Rowan's temple. "No." He laced their fingers. "We've been together a long time. I don't want to see Brett come between us."

"He won't."

Theron chuckled, a deep aural lure into surrender and the vibration seeped into Rowan. "He already has. And don't say you're sorry because I know you aren't."

Raking his nails over Rowan's thigh, Theron inched closer to his groin and his body responded. He swallowed the lump in his throat as blood rushed into his shaft and his heartbeat thrummed in his ears.

Why fight what we are? Theron kissed his neck, opening his mouth and flicking his hot tongue against his sensitive flesh. Heat flushed through Rowan's veins, answering the primal call of the vampire.

"What *you* are. I'm not like you." He pulled away but Theron tightened his hold. "I told you, I choose."

Theron grew so still Rowan wondered if he'd pushed too far. Was it anger or hurt?

I assure you, only one of us will hurt.

Theron cupped Rowan's crotch. *Do not mistake understanding for weakness. Wearing clothing when you are in my bed is insulting and I won't tolerate further disobedience. Do not push this, Rowan. I will not be undermined. Nor will I be ignored. This conversation is over and this fascination with Brett will go no further.*

Rowan pried away from Theron. "You don't have a right to tell me who I can and can't see or who I want to fuck. I have a right to a life."

"I gave you life," he roared. A muscle ticced in his jaw and his eyes narrowed. "When I found you, you were a street urchin with blood so sweet I could nearly taste it from scent alone." Tension rolled off his imposing form in waves.

"You've more than tasted." He scrambled from the bed, putting distance between them. "You didn't give me life." He balled his hands into fists. "I give *you* life every night when I descend those stairs."

Theron stood from the bed. His cock stretched toward his navel, erect and dripping pre-cum. Rowan tried to ignore the manipulation in his mind. He wouldn't submit to Theron, wouldn't take his big beautiful cock between his lips and suck him dry. "No, Theron. Stop this. I don't need you." Nausea rumbled in his stomach. "I don't want you."

Theron crossed the room and faced Rowan. He cupped his chin and lifted his face to meet his gaze. "That I know is a lie. You don't want to want me. That isn't the same." He pressed a soft kiss to Rowan's trembling lips. "And I do need you. That I acknowledge." He kissed him again. "It's also why I won't let you go."

Unable to resist his tenderness, Rowan wrapped his arms around Theron, curling his fingers into his hair. "Then give me tonight." The solemn supplication expressed his vulnerability.

Angling his face, he kissed Theron, opening his mouth and slipping in for the familiar flavor. His hand itched to cup Theron's cock and stroke the silken length, but not tonight.

Theron chuckled and pulled away. "Go then, before I shred the clothes from your body. Reading your thoughts and experiencing your encounter with Brett will be hard enough." He glanced at his erection. "I already have a hard problem to deal with."

"Finding someone to play with has never been a problem for you." Rowan smiled and turned. He took a step toward the door.

Only tonight. I'm tolerant to a point.

Rowan spun toward his lover but Theron had already turned his back. Rather than continue to argue and test the already delicate truce, he walked out of the room.

And Rowan, don't ever again come to my bed dressed.

Chapter Three

The Catacombs. Brett didn't really have the wardrobe to fit in but he had the desire. For years, he'd had to pretend, keep his needs locked away for fear of what Karen would say, what she would do. Once the kids had come along, his future had been set. Now that his life was his own, trepidation merged with excitement. He knew what he wanted but a part of him still questioned whether he deserved an openly gay relationship that included activities that happened in The Catacombs.

After the phone call, he'd slept but his dreams revolved around Rowan. He'd woken refreshed and with an impossible-to-ignore erection. Now he was on his way to the club. Rowan hadn't specified a time, hadn't said whether he'd be working or what Brett could expect.

God, his palms sweated on the leather steering wheel of his Audi TTS Coupe. He made a left and weaved his way through light traffic. He buzzed with excitement. Stranger encounters weren't new to him. During the years of his marriage, he'd strayed a few times during his travels. He didn't consider it cheating since he could count on one hand how many times he'd fucked his wife since telling her of his preference for men. He'd never had a committed relationship with a man. He wasn't looking for one now. However, Rowan did intrigue him.

Downtown, he found a parking spot on the street a half block away from the alley leading to the rear club entrance. Crisp, cold wind stung his cheek as he exited his vehicle. Beeps sounded as the auto locks engaged. Men didn't mingle outside the club and not because of the temperature. The nondescript building had a "no loitering" sign, a simple reminder to everyone including members not to draw unwanted attention to the establishment. Blackened windows lined each floor of the old three-story warehouse. From the inside, the windows were hidden behind walls thick enough to keep light and sound from seeping out to the public.

He raised the collar on his trench coat and hunkered into the fur-lined warmth. He squinted against the bitter, prickling air and walked down the alley. At the recessed entryway, he entered his membership code into the keypad and the door buzzed open.

Once inside, he shrugged out of his coat and checked it.

He sidled close to the wall and scanned the sparse crowd. Perhaps he'd arrived too early. Perhaps he should have asked for more details. The phone call had rattled him. Rowan had gone to the trouble of searching him out. Lust maybe, but not desperation. The man worked in a sex club. Knowing he appealed to someone as hot as Rowan sent awareness and heat to his groin. It felt damn good to be noticed — to turn someone on.

He glanced toward the bar, searching for the object of his fixation. Chills crawled across his skin, yet he was hot. Sweat damped the hair at his temples. He raked his nails over his scalp, slicking his hair away from his face.

A man wearing PVC led another man in chains past him. Pressure tightened his balls and his cock hardened. Imagining Rowan wearing a collar had blood surging into his shaft. Glancing at those in close proximity, he adjusted his position, slid his hand into the front of his black jeans and pulled his dick upright. He nearly groaned aloud. Moisture coated his finger as he grazed the tip. His shaft jerked. Back in high school, he'd been close to coming every time he touched himself but he'd never lost the edge and prematurely ejaculated. Rowan had him creaming his jeans—literally.

Pushing past a small grouping, he stalked toward the bar. Three men—three muscular, bare-chested men—worked behind the counter. One raised an eyebrow in question.

“Corona with a twist.”

The bartender nodded, reached into ice beneath the counter and grasped a longneck bottle of beer. He twisted off the lid, snagged a sliver of lime and squeezed it into the opening.

Before Brett could thank him, he'd moved down the counter. Brett spun on the stool and leaned his back against the lip of the bar. Tipping the drink to his mouth, he sipped. Men milled about. Some clustered together in small groups. This room was open, with just enough light for touches beneath the table and the volume on the music loud enough for casual conversations not to be overheard. Half-moon booths lined the perimeter of the room.

He tapped his toe on the rung of the barstool, not impatient, just enjoying the music, the mood and the anticipation. He took another long sip.

“Have you been waiting long?”

He swallowed, snapping his eyes to the left. Holy shit! Rowan was more beautiful than he remembered. Or maybe it was the intensity flashing in his green eyes. Perhaps it was the chain and leather harness crisscrossing his rock-hard pectorals. Corded abdominals directed his eyes lower to the strained fly of his leather pants. Brett swallowed the excess saliva in his mouth.

“May I have a sip?”

Brett glanced from Rowan to the beer then handed him the bottle.

“Not what I want.” Rowan cupped his face, dragging his hand over the shaven cheek. Then he dipped in for a taste. Soft, yet determined lips touched, sending flames licking over Brett's flesh. With a subtle nudge, Brett opened his mouth. Rowan groaned and sank deep. Tongue glided over tongue. Raw, dark and male. Rowan tasted of mint and man. Hunger flared in his gut and blood rushed into his shaft.

Brett groaned. The ridge of Rowan's erection bumped against his hip and the clean fragrance of his cologne titillated his nose. Breathing deeply, he drew in more of his scent.

Without breaking the kiss, Brett set his beer on the counter and spread his thighs. Rowan shifted between them. He placed his hands on Rowan's hips as he continued to savor the delicious taste of Rowan's mouth. Hot tongue and smooth flesh.

They parted slowly while he shifted his hands to Rowan's ass. The firm muscles flexed beneath his fingers. Rowan was probably just as pleased as he was that they were together – knowing how the night would end.

"Sorry I'm late."

"It was worth the wait." Brett smiled.

A bartender arrived. "What can I get you?"

"Hey, Ten, club soda."

The bartender nodded and returned a moment later with the drink.

"His name is Ten?"

Rowan laughed, sliding onto the seat next to him. "No, it's one of the club rules. No names. But some of the regulars, and most of the staff, pick up nicknames. He's called Ten because that's what he conceals beneath his loincloth when he's not working behind the bar. They call me Ice Man."

Brett raised an eyebrow and glanced down the bar where Ten poured a draft.

"So you must know...everyone."

Rowan stilled with his drink poised at his lips. He slowly set the glass on the counter. "It's my job to know. I run the bar." He narrowed his eyes and glanced around the room. "I haven't fucked a single person here."

Brett scanned the crowd. "What about Tac?"

"He isn't here...in this room." Rowan grinned, tipped his glass and drank. "You'll surprise me if you say that it bothers you. We're in a sex club."

He wasn't bothered. But he also recalled the possessive way Tac had come upon Rowan. "Is that why you're here with me? Because he isn't?"

"Fuck, I wish he wasn't." A muscle ticced in Rowan's jaw. "He's here. Somewhere."

"If our association is going to be a problem –"

"It isn't."

"I don't want to come between the two of you."

Rowan clamped a hand on his thigh. "You aren't," he whispered. "I told him. He knows. I don't know if he's upset. I don't care." Their eyes locked. "I'm not property. I'm not a sub." He leaned in closer. "What I am is turned on. What I want to do is fuck you."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Let's go." The club was huge and Brett had only investigated a small part. The Pit held some appeal but not the rooms where pain played a role. Rowan paused in his steps and reached for Brett's hand. "Come with me."

"Where are we going?" He slid his fingers into Rowan's strong, warm grip. His fingers were long and elegant, like a pianist.

"To a private room." He led him to a wide staircase.

A shiver skittered up his spine. Brett had never ventured upstairs. "We'll be alone?"

Rowan stopped midway up the stairs. "Yes." He released his hand and pointed in the direction from which they'd come. "That isn't me. I love working the bar but I'm not the man for you if you're looking for someone to take to the Pit or to chain up in a bondage room. I'm not into this scene. I just work here."

"I can vouch for him."

They both faced Tac as he came down the stairs. Black leather pants encased long legs. A tight shirt clung to the contours of his sculpted torso. He was attractive and he moved and spoke with arrogance. The confidence fit him. Brett knew the type well from his business. Hell, he was that type too.

Tac smiled, seemed to accept that Rowan was with another man.

He stopped in front of Rowan. "I left a bottle of my best wine in the room for your friend." A mischievous smile curled the man's lips. "Nice." He ran a knuckle over the chains in the harness. Rowan's hands clenched at his sides.

Brett stepped forward. "We met last night." *In an uncomfortable exchange.* Tension cracked between Rowan and Tac. Maybe he was just a distraction for Rowan, a way to make Tac jealous.

Tac stepped past Rowan and clasped Brett's hand between his palms. A wave of sexual awareness slammed into his gut. His mind dizzied and he swayed slightly on the stair. *The alcohol must be hitting me hard.* Or perhaps it was because he hadn't had dinner.

"No!" In the fog of his mind, he heard Rowan. "You promised not to get involved. It's enough you're in my head."

"I don't understand your anger with me." Tac's seductive voice flowed like honey through the thickened air around him. "But I do understand the fascination."

Warmth seeped into Brett's crotch. Tac licked his lip, staring at Brett's mouth. He reached toward Brett and Brett leaned closer.

"Not tonight." Rowan's arm snaked out and grasped Tac's shoulder.

Danger glinted in the man's eyes as he narrowed his stare on Rowan. "I haven't forgotten our agreement."

Tac wrapped his fingers around the nape of Rowan's neck and pulled him into his kiss. Lips touched. Mouths opened and breath mingled. "One kiss."

Rowan inhaled sharply. As if unable to control the hunger, he sank into Tac. Tongues thrust against each other in wild fury. Tac fisted his fingers in Rowan's hair and crushed their groins together. Brett sagged against the wall, cock hard and heart thundering. He gasped a breath.

If he were able to move, he wouldn't. The mesmerizing kiss stirred him, sending a scorching wave of heat over him. An unfamiliar sensation sizzled on his skin. His veins surged with blood.

He gaped at Tac. His eyes were open, blood red as he kissed Rowan. "Holy shit."

Rowan erupted, shoving hard against Tac's chest. "Tac! No!"

His eyes slowly cleared.

"I'll find you later," Rowan said. "I promise."

"I don't think this is a good idea," Brett said.

Rowan snapped his gaze away from Tac. "Please, don't go. I can explain."

The feral, growling man with red eyes now seemed in complete control. "Excuse me." He pushed past, refusing to look at Brett.

"Is he on something?"

"Huh?"

"Drugs? Rowan, that isn't normal behavior."

"It is for Tac." He started up the stairs. "And no, he isn't on drugs, more like he is one," he said a bit quieter. He glanced over his shoulder. "Are you coming?" He continued stalking up the stairs, muttering under his breath.

The exchange dampened the mood but Brett still followed. This was sex. He didn't need to become involved in whatever problems Tac and Rowan had. Their problems were just that – theirs.

But his gut still churned. Tonight shouldn't be heavy with baggage. The run-in with Tac had changed the mood. *Not tonight.*

With two long strides, he closed the distance between them. At the top of the stairs, phallic-shaped sconces lit a long hallway. Rowan strode to the third door. Silver Showers. "I hope the room isn't some spin-off of a golden shower."

Rowan laughed, entered a code and buzzed them in. "Not quite." He swung the door open wide.

Brett made bank. He understood high finance and he looked at closing a deal as an art form. And while Karen had always worried about image, for Brett, money meant security. But that didn't imply that he'd settle for less than the best in clothes, food and luxuries. This room fit his tastes perfectly.

Silver light bathed the room in an ethereal glow. A projection screen covered the wall on the right and smooth marbled rock carved the wall on the left. Brett stepped forward. A chaise lounge dwarfed an average-sized sofa. The soft gray leather lounge was about ten feet long and about five feet wide. The half back rolled like a wave. On the backrest and in the corners, bondage straps were stitched into the upholstery. Off to the left, a sex swing, suspended a few feet from the floor, hung from thick cables that were anchored to the ceiling.

But something else captured his attention. He crossed the room with purposeful strides. A large window, nearly floor to ceiling and about six feet across, looked out over the Pit. His heart slammed around in his chest and lust unfurled in his gut. His head lightened and his cock hardened. Twenty feet below, men entwined in a devilish display of flesh and sinful sex.

Rowan stepped in close behind. "One-way mirror," he whispered. "We can watch the Pit." He glanced toward the projection screen. "Or we can watch ourselves. There is a camera directed at the chaise and another angle focused on the rocks."

Brett pivoted to the rocks. A short wall made of stone and about a foot high framed the area directly in front of the wall.

"I'll show you why it's called Silver Showers." He crossed the room and flipped a large switch on the wall. A curtain of water cascaded over the rocks. "The dial controls the temperature." He spun the knob until the water steamed.

"A waterfall." The enclosure kept the water from splashing onto the plush gray carpeting. "This is incredible." Brett took two steps toward Rowan. He smiled, humbled by the attention to detail. "How could you know? I mean, this is perfect."

Rowan inhaled and let it out slowly. "It's crazy but tonight I just want to say fuck off to the world."

At least, outside this room the world didn't exist. Brett turned, walked back to the window and braced his hands on the glass.

Rowan's pants rustled and his chains clinked as he positioned behind him. Rowan's chest brushed his back. Warm breath against his neck sent a shiver over his flesh.

Tugs on his Henley inched the fabric from his jeans. Quivers rippled over his stomach, tightening his abdominals. Anticipation compressed his chest. He waited for the first touch of Rowan's fingers against his bare flesh.

Ah, his cock jumped. Rowan ran his hand over Brett's hip around to the front of his jeans, grazing his dick through the denim. Inching higher, he waited for him to slip beneath the fabric of his shirt. Higher. He held his breath and didn't move a muscle.

Rowan chuckled. "Would you rather be down there?" he asked, glancing twenty feet below. He moved his mouth over his neck.

"I want to be right here, with you. At first I was concerned, because of the phone call." Now he was damn happy Rowan had made the effort. "I haven't stopped thinking about you."

Rowan slipped the buttons open at the neck of Brett's shirt. "Take it off. I need to touch you."

Grabbing the hem, he jerked the Henley over his head. He spun then leaned back against the glass. He traced the harness chains crisscrossing Rowan's sculpted chest with his fingers. "I like the harness. So don't take it off." Rowan's flat nipples constricted. "You're so beautiful." Taut muscles and lean lines. Contours to touch and taste.

Brett rasped his thumb over one nipple then bent his head and swiped his tongue over the tip. "You taste as good as you look." He gently bit. "Better, in fact." He laved the other nipple. Rowan moaned. "Ah, you like that."

"You can do whatever you want to me."

"Promises, promises."

With a gentle shove, Rowan became aggressive and had Brett's shoulders pinned to the window. "Do you want promises?"

Countering the force of Rowan's pin, he grabbed the center links of the harness and jerked. "Oh yeah, I want promises." He closed the space between them, mouth meeting mouth. Teasing the seam of Rowan's lips with his tongue, he tempted his way in and claimed his carnal, dark delicious kiss.

The snap on his jeans popped. Oh God. Brett reared back and hissed through his teeth. Rowan reached into the fly of his jeans and wrapped his fist around the swollen girth of Brett's cock. He wanted both to savor the sensation of having a man grasp and stroke his shaft and at the same time, ached to shove his jeans past his hips, thrust like a wild fiend and reach orgasm as fast as he could. He closed his eyes and rested his head against the glass. "Don't make me beg."

"Would you? Beg?"

He lifted his gaze and stared into Rowan's darkening green eyes. "Fuck, please." He captured Rowan's lips in a bruising kiss. Using lips, tongue and teeth, Brett ravaged Rowan's mouth, sending electric pulses through every nerve in his body and pooling liquid heat in his groin. For him, nothing existed but this moment, this man. Tilting his head, he speared his tongue into Rowan's mouth for another taste, savoring the flavor and texture.

Rowan's hands roamed over him, stroking up his back and down to grasp his buttocks. He squeezed his ass and Brett clenched, knees weakening under the onslaught of erotic need.

Rowan pulled back and gasped for breath. His brows furrowed, his nostrils flared and his lips morphed into a feral sneer. He balled his hand into a fist and smacked it against the window. He glared at the crowd.

Brett turned, trying to see what Rowan saw when watching the men below. What made him pull away? Beneath them men had sex, were lost in passion and wild abandon.

"He's down there...hoping I'm standing here at the window." His voice grew quiet. "Knowing I'm standing here...with you."

"Who?"

"Tac."

"You're thinking about your lover while you're kissing me? Rowan, that's fucked up."

"I don't want to."

He grabbed onto Rowan's biceps and spun him away from the window. "You don't want to kiss me or you don't want to think about him?"

Rowan gaped at him. "Do you really need to ask?" His voice held an edge of danger, it was almost volatile. "I'm not his lover, not like you think. It's complicated."

"You've mentioned that before."

"Yeah, well nothing has changed in the last twenty-four hours."

"Look, Rowan, I'm not into head games. A moment ago, I had my tongue in your mouth wishing it was my cock. I don't want to sound crass, but we don't know each other, don't have to make excuses, and you certainly don't have an obligation to be here if you'd rather be with Tac."

He seemed confused by the words so Brett clarified. "I'm member 6489 and you're the bartender I want to fuck. If you don't want to be here, then leave. I can find someone else to suck my dick."

"No."

"Then get him out of your head." He crossed to the rock wall and paced back to the window.

"I can't!"

Brett raked his nails over his scalp. "I'm here with you tonight. If he is too, you might as well have brought him into the room with us. He's here anyway."

"I can't explain and you wouldn't believe me." He shook his head. "It doesn't matter. I knew what would happen before we walked into this room. I came in anyway."

What in the hell was he saying? "I thought we both understood why we were here. You invited me to the club to fuck. That's it." Whether or not he wanted more than sex didn't matter. He wasn't ready for a relationship beyond a physical one.

"Yes and no." Rowan moved to the chaise and sat. "Will you stop pacing?"

Brett smiled. This almost felt like their first argument. He couldn't call it a lover's spat since they weren't lovers. Yet.

Crossing the room, he paused in front of Rowan. Rowan spread his thighs, wrapped his hands around the back of Brett's legs and pulled him a step closer. He rested his forehead against Brett's bare stomach and slowly drew his hands higher. Reaching around to the front, he finished unzipping his jeans and tugged the denim down. His cock sprang free, bobbing twice before flushing with blood, thickening and swelling another inch.

Hot, silken breath caressed the moist tip. "I don't want to argue with you." Rowan's eyes slid closed. "Especially with you."

Emotion churned in his gut. He didn't want to read expectation into the words, didn't want to attach feelings to the physical act. But when Rowan's velvet tongue slipped from between his lips and laved his cock head, his intentions melted along with his resistance.

He threaded his fingers through the cool, silken softness of Rowan's hair. The gentle touch weaved a cocoon of intimacy around them. Rowan opened his mouth. Moist heat surrounded his cock. Opening wider, he took him deeper and sucked as he slowly pulled back. Brett groaned. Nothing had ever felt better. His balls tingled and his shaft pulsed. He focused on the euphoric pleasure of Rowan's wondrous mouth. Rowan groaned and curled his tongue around the sensitive ridge then licked the slit.

Brett traced Rowan's brows with his fingertips then curved a pattern along his whisker-rough cheek. Rowan cupped his sac and gently rolled his testicles.

With his jeans bunched at his knees, he felt too confined. But damn, Rowan's mouth slid along his shaft again, each glide taking more of his length into the moist heat. Teeth grazed along the underside. Brett gasped and flinched.

Rowan jerked away. "Did I hurt you?"

No, but he suspected Rowan was a man who could if Brett allowed himself even the fantasy of something more than a sexual encounter. But he wouldn't. If he was anything, it was determined. He'd made the decision not to get involved with anyone. Hence, the club and the anonymity.

The little voice inside laughed, mocking him. *He has your name and your phone number. And you are so fucking attracted to him, you were beating off in the kitchen sink and counting down the minutes to this moment. Then I nearly sabotaged my chance with him by pulling a jealous tantrum.*

Did he want a chance? More than a chance. He'd rather lie to himself and remember this was just sex.

Brett awkwardly kicked off his shoes and finished removing his clothes. Finally he knelt naked in front of Rowan. He sipped Rowan's lips then trailed kisses along his jaw. "You taste good here," he whispered and flicked his tongue against Rowan's earlobe. Then he laved the shell. Rowan's head fell to the side, giving him more tantalizing flesh to kiss. To taste. To gently nip.

Rowan snapped up. "Don't."

Brett retreated a few inches. "Don't what?"

His eyes wildly darted left then right. "Don't bite me."

"Not a problem. I wouldn't have bitten hard, just nips."

Rowan refocused on Brett. "I'm sorry." He grasped his head and pulled him into a kiss, a desperate exchange. He latched onto his mouth, clutched his shoulders and kissed him deeply. Tongues, hands and something more.

He didn't know what Rowan had been through in the past but he recognized vulnerability. They both carried heavy baggage into this room. Brett applied pressure to Rowan's chest and he reclined on the chaise. Brett climbed over his body. Together they could leave some behind.

Leveraging higher, he braced on his knees and arms. "I'm going to need some help getting you out of your pants." He slid from the chaise.

Rowan chuckled—a subtle seduction, dark and full of promise. He stood, unsnapped the fly and peeled the tight leather over his hips and down his legs.

Without the confines of the pants, his cock unfurled, thick, long and straight. His balls were tight—and hairless. Swollen veins streaked along the shaft. The cock head was dark in color and pearly juices seeped from the slit. Everything about him was hard and masculine.

Brett swallowed, taking in all of his naked beauty. “Interesting,” he said in reference to Rowan’s hairless groin. “I like it.” All he wore was the chain harness. He glanced toward the rock waterfall then stalked closer. “I don’t want anything between us.” A quick flick and he had the hooks unlinked. The chains dropped to the floor with a clatter.

“Nothing between us.” Rowan placed his hand over Brett’s thundering heart.

“Not even secrets.” Where the hell had that come from? Sweat beaded on his brow and trickled down his back.

Rowan paused. “We all have secrets. Some we can’t share.”

“I don’t know why I said it.” He wanted tonight to be about pleasure and nothing else. He needed to remember those were his requirements. Not giving off mixed signals just because he was mixed up inside.

Rowan crossed the room and turned on the waterfall. Brett shut off the lights. A muted glow filtered through the one-way mirror. Brett’s palms sweated and his skin felt electrified. Steam rose from the floor and misted up around Rowan’s legs as he stood beneath the spray. Water sluiced over his taut form. Lifting his arms, he ran his fingers through his dripping-wet hair. Biceps bulged and his washboard abs rippled with movement.

“I’m waiting for you to join me.” He held a condom in his hand.

His wait was over. Brett stepped into the enclosure. Instantly they were in each other’s arms. Hands glided over wet, slicked skin. Cock crushed against cock. Mouths fused and moans of pleasure rent the air.

Rowan parted and ripped the condom wrapper open. A hunger Brett had never experienced before tore through his gut. In his past and in his usual fantasies, he mounted his lovers. More than his next breath, he wanted Rowan filling his body.

Lifting his eyes from the task of stretching rubber over his beautiful erection, Rowan asked the silent question.

“However you want me,” was Brett’s reply.

Brett leaned against the wall, the rocks biting into his flesh and the heated water soothing the sting. Rowan kissed him, slicing a leg between Brett’s thighs. He widened his stance. Rowan had one hand on the wall, and one hand stroking Brett’s cock, feeling the length, then he reached beneath to fondle his balls. Water poured over their heads. Droplets clung to Rowan’s lashes as he blinked, staring into Brett’s eyes. Bending his knees, he inched his finger farther back, caressing the thick vein beneath the sac.

Brett groaned, finding Rowan's cock and grasping onto the base. Rowan slipped his middle finger into Brett's anus to the first knuckle.

"Oh fuck." Brett grabbed his wrist and forced him farther in.

"You're so tight." He carefully worked his finger in and out until muscles relaxed. Then he eased in a second finger.

Brett hissed and clenched his hole. "God, I'm going to come off your fingers." He thrust his hips against the water, trying to rub against Rowan's hip.

"Hold onto my shoulders." Rowan pulled his fingers free. Brett gripped his shoulders, his nails digging into the firm muscle. "Put your foot on the edge of the rock wall." He did. The position opened him wider, giving Rowan unfettered access to Brett's ass.

"Fuck me. I need your cock."

"Breathe. I'll go slow but you're tight."

"I don't care." Fire licked his balls and he felt the burn everywhere. Like a fever that only sex could cool.

"No, I won't hurt you." Rowan sealed their mouths as he fit the knob of his dick to Brett's hole. "Would never hurt you." He inched forward, barely breaching his body.

Brett gasped and clutched tighter to Rowan. Chest against chest. Mouths meshed. His ass resisted. Muscles tightened. He inhaled and released the exhale slowly.

"Ah, you feel so good." Rowan continued the slow glide into his body. The fullness bordered on pain but the hurt felt so good. Pre-cum dripped from his cock blending with the water. He closed his eyes and focused on the connection. Rowan's muscles bunched beneath his fingertips, revealing the tight control he kept on his movements. Rearing back, he then slid a few inches deeper. Finally, he buried the length of his cock to the root in Brett's ass.

The rim relaxed. Rowan eased out and thrust in. With each stroke he lengthened the slide, stretching the pleasure for both of them.

Uncurling his fingers from Rowan's flesh, Brett soothed his hands over him. Smooth, strong and sexy. Without guilt, he enjoyed the pleasure Rowan rained over his body. Kisses, touches and unbelievable sex. His hole squeezed along Rowan's rod as he continued the rhythmic plunges. He laughed aloud, overwhelmed with emotion.

Rowan smiled. "It's supposed to feel good but I'm not sure my cock is supposed to tickle."

"Your cock is amazing. Don't stop."

Rowan wrapped a palm beneath Brett's thigh and lifted his leg higher.

"Oh shit." The new angle of penetration grazed a pleasure spot. Shallow breaths matched the rapid thrusts of Rowan's hips driving his shaft in and out. Harder. Deeper.

Rowan stretched his neck, shouted toward the ceiling and came. Brett felt each contracting pulse in his rectum. He grabbed his dick. His balls tightened and pressure

built in his groin. His orgasm was rushing toward him. His mind spun. Endorphins flooded his body.

Rowan ripped from his hole and dropped to his knees. Water splashed onto his upturned face. His eyes slid closed and he swallowed Brett's cock. The hot wet suction spiraled Brett over the edge. Every muscle tightened. Then he exploded. His abdominals crunched, pitching him forward. He braced his outstretched arms against Rowan's shoulders where he knelt before him, still sucking his cock, taking him to an orgasmic plane where he couldn't think, couldn't speak, could only feel.

Chapter Four

Brett reclined on the chaise with Rowan curled between his legs. He absently combed his fingers through Rowan's hair, absorbing the weight of his torso snuggled against his chest. His body was replete both in pleasures of the flesh and mind. It hadn't just been about reaching orgasm. Fuck, he did that at least twice a day. Sappy love was for pussies and women who read romance novels. Real men weren't supposed to feel like that. But he did.

"When can I see you again?"

Rowan's voice stirred him from his reverie. "Whenever."

"That's not specific enough for me." Rowan rotated to his side.

Brett traced his lips. "I work a lot of nights. This week I'm in negotiations with a Chinese investment firm." He'd also made the decision not to bring men into his personal space, his home. "A few days at least." He scooted lower as Rowan inched higher, lying on top of him. "You have my phone number."

"So you don't care if I call again?" He pressed a brief kiss to his lips.

"I'd be disappointed if you didn't."

"Will you talk dirty to me?"

Brett's cock began to swell. "Absolutely. I'll tell you how your cock will feel soft and slick against my tongue and how much I want to taste the salty flavor of your cum."

"You'll suck my dick, make me come and swallow my cream?"

"Every drop. Then with restraints like these," he fingered the straps of the chaise, "I'll bind you to my bed and fuck your ass until you scream my name." *Until you forget you have another lover.*

"I'm having a hard time," Rowan ground his erection into Brett's pelvis, "picturing how my cock will look sliding into your mouth."

"You need a visual?"

Rowan sat and leaned against the backrest. He stretched his arm along the edge and flexed his cock. "He's ready."

Brett grinned, grabbed one of the tethers and wound it around Rowan's forearm. He reached around to the right and tied his other arm. "No touching."

Rowan tugged the straps. "Couldn't if I tried." He flexed his muscles and the leather tightened on his arms.

"You're at my mercy." Brett leaned over his lap. "I can do what I want and there's nothing you can do about it."

A chuckle rolled from his chest. "I'll beg." Laughter ceased as Brett closed his mouth over the head of Rowan's cock. His eyes slid closed.

Good hell, the man tasted as good as he smelled. He laved his tongue over the apex, pressed into the slit and lapped at the pearly cream. While Brett sucked and savored the silken smooth length, Rowan moaned his enjoyment.

Brett released him, shifted to the floor and knelt between his thighs. He stroked the taut skin, sliding it over the solidness beneath. His fingers trembled and his heart pounded. His own cock throbbed, erect and aching. He closed his eyes, licked and tasted. He moved his mouth over Rowan's shaft, his balls, and spread his legs wider in order to lash his tongue over his hot hole. Rowan's skin, hairless and smooth, felt like satin in his mouth.

"Yes, more. Keep me in your mouth." Rowan's whispers about how good it felt set Brett on fire.

With each subtle flex of muscle, each whimper and groan, he learned what pleased Rowan. With each pump of his fist and every time he rolled his lips along the length, Brett realized he was in trouble. This felt too good, too right to walk away after one night.

Rowan stretched out his left leg and tightened his buttocks. His dick lengthened and hardened even more.

Strain curled his lips back in a snarl. Teeth clenched. The leather straps pulled taut as he fought against the pleasure. "I'm going to come."

Brett knew. The pressure was building in Rowan's tightening sac. Cream seeped from the slit. He shifted his angle so Rowan could watch his mouth sliding up and down his cock. *Remember this the next time you're with Tac.*

Rowan bucked and cried out. Hot ribbons of cum jetted from the tip of his cock, bathing Brett's tongue in decadent cream. Salty and musky. His unique flavor was more than satisfying. He'd made him come, but during the encounter, something changed within him. For the first time, he could see their encounters happening outside the club.

"After that I can guarantee phone sex will never be enough." A heavy sigh melted Rowan into the lounge.

Crawling up beside him, Brett straddled his lap and kissed him. With eyes closed, he ran his fingers along Rowan's arm to the leather restraints. A few flips and the band loosened. Rowan took his free hand and raked his fingertips through the hair at Brett's temple. Brett freed the other arm. Still they kissed. Wet, hot suction brought Rowan's tongue into his mouth. Heads shifted. The play of lips created sensations blazing over his flesh. His nipples stiffened and balls drew up against his body. He rolled his pelvis into the corded plane of Rowan's abdominals.

The kiss broke and they both inhaled deeply. Inches separated their faces. Red, slightly swollen lips smiled. "How do you feel?"

"Better than I can remember," Rowan said. "Thank you."

"Damn, don't thank me." Brett slid from his lap and laughed.

"You know what I mean."

"Maybe I don't. Lie down and tell me." Brett stretched out in front of Rowan. They spooned, Brett's back to Rowan's front. Rowan's arms loosely wrapped around his middle and he placed kisses along the tops of his shoulders and the nape of his neck. His cock nestled in the crack of Brett's ass. With subtle movements, he pressed and nudged the seam, keeping his cock erect. Brett arched, wanting to feel more—more heat, more hardness—just more.

"Yesterday, you made it clear that you wanted an encounter in the club," Rowan said. "I know this isn't what you had in mind."

They were quiet and still for a moment. "You're right."

A sleepy groan came from Rowan. "About what?"

"I want to see you outside the club." Neither spoke.

"Are you sure? I pushed, but I'm fine with this."

"I don't think I will be." Brett took an audible breath then decided to be honest. "I'm divorced."

"You were married. I've never been with a woman, always knew I was gay."

"I did too, but I fought it. I married young then went to school. We had our first child." He thought back on the years. "I don't regret raising the kids with Karen."

"Does she know you're gay?"

"She's always known. Now the kids do too. I don't want my preference to affect them. I swore to her I'd keep my private life very private."

"It sounds as if you're still close."

"Close in choices, not close in affection. We both want what's best for everyone. She's moving on and so are the kids."

"And so are you." Rowan caressed his hip and ran his toes along Brett's instep. They touched as much as possible. "They want you to be happy, right? You're divorced. Your ex-wife has to realize you'll move on...with a man."

"I'm sure she does. The divorce wasn't bitter. She doesn't have a reason to bitch. We haven't been married in the physical sense in a long time and she has enough money not to care whether I'm in Texas or not. I'm sure she's glad I'm gone as long as my life doesn't infringe on hers."

"You're divorced. She doesn't get an opinion now."

He chuckled. "You've never been involved with a woman." He laced their fingers. "We won't have to do much more than talk for a few years. Both our kids are in college now. Until they have lives and families of their own, the thousand miles between us will be enough." He shifted and glanced over his shoulder. "What about you?"

Rowan leaned forward and kissed him. His mouth opened and Rowan slipped in for a taste. Tongue glided along tongue and then they parted. "There isn't much to tell. Childhood sucked, teenage years were worse, the last few years have been better."

With Tac. Brett hated that he had to know but jealousy had him by the balls. He had no claim on Rowan, no right to ask for anything, especially when he hadn't been willing to give any more than a secret fuck in this private room. That could change. First he had to know about Rowan's lover and the strength of their relationship. "What about Tac?"

"What do you want to know?"

"Start with the basics. You're involved."

"Yes and no." After tonight he was sure he didn't want to continue fucking Theron, not if he was having sex with Brett. But he was still a blood slave. "I work for him. We're friends. Good friends."

"How good?"

"Very good."

"Do I have to be specific? Do you fuck him? Suck his dick? Have him suck yours? If you do, do you always wear a rubber because even though I joined this club to have indiscriminate sex with strangers, that isn't what happened." He flipped over and faced Rowan. "I met you."

"Yes, in a sex club. Are you now saying you want monogamy?" His heart pounded, waiting for the answer.

"After one day of knowing each other?" He shook his head. "No. I'm saying that I need to know the score. If you tell me you're interested then I'm not coming into the club to fuck anyone else." He traced Rowan's lower lip. "I've enjoyed fucking you. How would you feel if you showed up for work and discovered I was in the Pit?"

Heat blazed in his gut. He swallowed the rise of bile in his throat. "I'd feel sick." Just the thought had his stomach roiling. "I wouldn't want to share." He reached between them and stroked the silky softness of Brett's semi-erection. The skin swelled and stretched with his touch. "I want to see where this can go. What do you want?"

"I didn't think I would, not this soon after the divorce, but I'd like to have someone special in my life. I want more than indiscriminate encounters."

"I won't fuck anyone else either."

Brett closed the space between their faces. A brush of lips then mouths opened and tongues explored. Wet, hot, erotic and full of expectation. A meshing of teeth, more tongue and moans of pleasure. Rowan's erect cock jerked, bobbing into Brett's. A thrill chased up his spine. Had someone suggested a man could walk into the club and turn his world on its axis, he would have believed the notion impossible. Yet his mind was spinning, his body on fire.

Finally they parted. Brett sighed and closed his eyes. Rowan focused his thoughts—his quiet thoughts. They hadn't labeled their encounter with the relationship tag. It was

too soon. But they had just declared monogamy. *Monogamy. Fuck.* He didn't know how he'd work it out with Theron but he had to try.

In the windowless room, he didn't have a sense of time. No sunlight but the hour had to be past daybreak. He smiled. Had Theron heard his thoughts, the vampire would already be in the room, dragging his ass back down to The Catacombs, where he believed Rowan belonged – at his side.

Breathing deeply, he pulled Brett closer, closed his eyes and drifted to sleep, content in his lover's arms.

* * * * *

Rowan stirred, stretched and slowly opened his eyes. Brett glanced up from zipping his jeans. "Hi." Rowan blinked a few times and slowly sat up.

"I'd say good morning but it's closer to lunch. I didn't realize the time. We've been asleep a couple hours."

"You have to go?" His throat tightened. He wasn't ready to say goodbye. "There's no rush."

Brett laughed. "I wish I could. I have a conference call tonight." He snagged his shirt from the floor. "If I want to close the deal, I need to be prepared. I'll be at the computer most of the day." He yanked the Henley over his head and quickly tucked it in. "Will I have any trouble getting out?"

The club closed during the day. However, there would be plenty of men downstairs, employees cleaning up and restocking the bar. "I'll walk you out." Already desperate to savor their last few minutes together.

Brett leaned against the wall and watched him dress. Whiskers darkened his jaw and a smile curved his mouth. Rowan's gaze traveled over Brett's fit form, pausing on the bulge in his jeans.

"Don't." He pointed his finger at Rowan. "As tempting as I find you in those leather pants, I need to go. I wish I had time."

"We'll see each other soon." He hated the desperation in his voice. They would have time later. Besides, Rowan had issues of his own to deal with, like how he was going to feed his lover and not fuck him.

"A few days at the most."

They left the room and descended the stairs. A weight settled in his stomach. He didn't have much experience with morning afters. He didn't want the night to end. He mentally snorted. The night never ended. And wouldn't as long as he remained a blood slave to Theron.

Brett stepped a few paces ahead. While in the throes of passion, Rowan could easily see life differently. But how would he feel in a few hours, when his need for the high was as strong as the vampire's?

The club was quiet. Floors were mopped and polished, the bar restocked and the booths wiped down. The lights shown brightly. Without the mood, music and men, the mystery wasn't here.

Brett paused near the doors. "I checked my coat."

Rowan nodded, hopped up on the counter and went into the coat-check room. A few jackets hung on hangers. He guessed at the expensive trench, slipped it from the hanger, went back to the window and over the ledge.

"Thanks." Brett took the coat and shrugged his arms into the sleeves. He adjusted the collar and then paused.

Their eyes locked.

Breath froze in Rowan's lungs. His heart thundered and his hands trembled.

"Why does this feel like goodbye?"

Rowan shook his head. "It's not going be." He stepped forward and kissed him. Theron slept in his chamber. The Zenith had faded. His thoughts were his own and all of them revolved around this man. "May I call you later?"

Brett nodded. "I won't be able to talk long."

Long enough to hear his voice was all he needed.

The door opened and wind whipped into the building.

Then he was gone.

Rowan forced his hands into the front pockets of his pants, turned and headed toward the bar.

"How'd it go last night?"

Falcon, one of the regular bartenders and sometimes bouncer, laughed. "I was about to ask you the same question." He ducked below the counter. Bottles clanked together. He made checkmarks on a clipboard. "Considering the time, I'd say you're in much better spirits than Tac."

He didn't want to ask but curiosity was killing him. "What about Tac?"

"Once you disappeared upstairs with your friend..."

Brett. His name is Brett and he feels like more than a friend this morning. Only he couldn't tell Falcon that. Names weren't shared. "Sorry, I missed that." He hadn't been listening but rather reliving last night in brief, totally erotic flashes.

Falcon popped up from behind the counter. "I said, Tac was insatiable. Not even the Pit took the sting out of his bite." He cocked a brow. "And I'm not talking the kind of bite you enjoy. Whatever pissed him off, he took out on his subs. Not that you'd hear them complain. I think we all breathed a sigh of relief when he finally retired to his chamber."

Those words didn't bring any comfort. What would happen if he simply refused to go below tonight and rouse Theron from his slumber? He cringed at the thought. He'd learned enough through the years not to cross the ancient vampire. Last night, Theron

had been clear. Rowan had pushed far enough. But he hadn't. Somehow he would find a way to satisfy both his and Theron's lust for blood but not sex. "I'm heading home."

"Catch ya later." Falcon went back below the counter. "And could you please tame the beast before he comes to the club tonight?"

No, he didn't think he could. Maybe his priorities were fucked up because he didn't want to lie to the man he'd known a day but wanted distance from the one he'd served for seven years.

Chapter Five

Rowan's heart thundered like a herd of mavericks. Wild and untamed. His palms sweated and his cock stirred. Emotionally torn and feeling physically ill. He'd tossed and turned for a few hours but his unsettling dreams had twisted his gut into knots. Finally he'd given up the effort. Now he sat on the sofa in his small one-bedroom apartment, staring out the front-room window.

He didn't have much, didn't need much. Growing up, being tossed from one family to the next, he'd never had much. He had relied on himself, made his own way, until Theron had plucked him off the street. Rowan wasn't a fool. He might have been young but he'd experienced enough to know what he was doing when he climbed into Theron's vehicle then into his bed.

Taking the glass of water from the table, he took a sip, trying to swallow the lump in his throat. His eyes burned and pressure seized his chest. He couldn't do this. Couldn't give up Theron for Brett. Not totally. He had to feed. He swallowed hard. Tears welled in his eyes. When was the last time he'd felt anything strong enough to make him cry? God, he couldn't remember. Over the years, he'd become a cold-hearted bastard. The only pleasure came from feeding Theron—until last night. Fuck him, maybe he was selfish. He wanted them both.

He stood and paced to the kitchen. Damn, the sun was already starting to set. He didn't have time to plan. Theron expected Rowan in his bed. Tonight he wouldn't accept a clothed slave. If he fed him, he'd have to fuck him.

Shit!

One thing he'd never been was a liar. He'd given his word to Brett. No sex with anyone else. Somehow he knew that applied to *Tac* especially. He hadn't hidden their involvement. But he'd said that, as of last night, their involvement would no longer be sexual.

He dressed for work. Most of his fetishes didn't require props. He'd rather have a man, Brett, naked with a hard cock. Rowan wanted to be restrained. Ropes, leather or with a strong verbal command promising pleasure. But at the club, he was part of the fantasy. Tonight he wore a black leather, studded codpiece and red chaps with black fringe. Later, just before he stepped behind the bar, he'd slick back his hair, oil his chest and go shirtless—once he'd fed and *not* fucked Theron. He closed his eyes, flared his nostrils and inhaled. He'd pushed Theron. Tonight he'd find out if he'd gone too far.

He shrugged on a long trench coat and left the apartment. Outside, the sun was setting. The crisp winter air didn't cool the heat surging through his system. He was about to test the mettle of his own desire and test the authority of the one person who had given him so much. He climbed into his vehicle and turned the ignition with

trembling fingers. The Mini Cooper had been a gift from Theron two years ago. Everything he had, his job, his car, even his confidence came from his association with Theron.

Tamping down his reservations, he sped toward the club. He'd made the decision and as the hours passed, had to recall the way he'd felt in Brett's arms. He held to that in the moments when his resolve nearly faltered.

Several minutes later he parked, entered the nearly empty club, hung his coat in the coat-check room and strode to the bar. In a few hours, members would be drinking, fucking, flogging or just watching others enjoy their encounters. Rowan's mouth went dry. He swallowed hard. If he couldn't break with Theron, would he ever see Brett again? He needed Theron to release him. He needed to be free to pursue Brett and still be welcome in the club even if he was banned from the rooms beneath.

He reached into the assortment of bottles behind him and plucked out a fifth of Jack Daniel's. He spun around and slammed it onto the counter. He took a shot glass from the stack and poured. The sight of the black label and the caramel color had adrenaline flooding through his veins.

He hadn't had a sip of alcohol in seven years. He didn't smoke, didn't drink and ate a healthy diet void of heavy spices. He exercised, got plenty of sleep—he grinned—except last night. All because of Theron. The vampire had a taste for pure, untainted blood.

Rowan lifted the shot glass to the light. His chest ached. Tingles crawled over his flesh, knowing he was about to make a choice that couldn't be undone. His breath came fast. Nausea churned in his stomach. He swallowed the excess saliva in his mouth. Fear of the unknown skittered down his spine.

"This is crazy." He trusted Theron, served him. He should just go below and ask to be released. He sighed, knowing that reality would be much different. Theron would kiss him, use his mental manipulation and play on Rowan's desires. Clothes and inhibitions would fade, along with his intentions.

No, this was the only way. With a heavy heart and guilt eating at him, he tipped his head and drank.

It was done. He followed that shot with three more in quick succession. His throat burned, the fire chased into his gut, roiling with his betrayal of the ancient vampire. His tongue thickened and numbed.

A rush of heat radiated out of his stomach as the whisky blazed through his body. He tipped the glass upside down on the counter and stared. Drips pooled around the edge, reflecting light, a glaring truth that he'd made the choice. His choice.

Thirty minutes later, alcohol buzzed in his brain but his thoughts were clear. He descended the stairs, only slightly unsteady on his feet.

How should he approach Theron? He opened the door as he'd done thousands of times and entered the darkened room. Familiar scents nearly knocked him to his knees. "Light low." Dim illumination lit his way as he stealthily moved to Theron's sleeping

chamber. Theron rested beneath a shimmering black sheet. He lay unmoving. Calmness and regret meshed, choking the breath from Rowan's lungs.

He jerked his shirt over his head, determined to undress and climb into bed with Theron.

And Rowan, don't ever again come to my bed dressed. The words weaved through his thoughts. Their last encounter had been rife with tension. He hated to think how Theron would react to his defiance tonight. He wouldn't have long to wait. Theron stirred beneath the sheet.

He quickly shed his clothing and climbed onto the bed.

"I can smell him on you."

Rowan paused then inched closer. "You usually like the smell of men."

"Not on you." He turned over and touched Rowan's cheek, holding his face. "I know you enjoyed him."

Of course he would. For part of the night, they had shared Brett—mentally. Never again. As possessive as Theron was over him, he felt the same over Brett.

"Yes, I did enjoy him." He lowered his head, unable to stare into the drowning depths of Theron's amber eyes.

"Then it's done." Theron threaded his fingers around the nape of Rowan's neck and pulled him close.

He inhaled, drinking in his scent. Fangs dropped from his gums, glinting like enamel knives. Rowan gulped. If he bit him all would be lost. Theron should have sensed the alcohol poisoning his blood. His eyes slid closed, as much anticipating the high and fearing the euphoric pleasure that came from hosting. He waited, poised to accept Theron's wrath once he entered his thoughts, discovered his deception. He'd not come to his bed to feed him but to drive a wedge through their relationship like a stake through the heart.

But the sting of the bite didn't come. His eyes opened and panic seized his thoughts. Theron's gaze narrowed, focused intently on Rowan's face. His lips pulled back in a snarl and brows furrowed. The beauty of Theron's face morphed into a mask of rage. His eyes turned crimson and a low, menacing growl unfurled from his chest.

Rowan scrambled back but Theron moved like lightning, straddling his torso. Unbelievable strength pinned him to the bed. Theron's long, strong fingers closed around his throat. "Why?" he seethed.

The one word sent a shiver over his flesh. He hadn't expected violence but Rowan realized with perfect clarity that there was a side to Theron he'd never seen.

"Do you think my charity has no bounds? That I would let you betray me, my breed?"

Rowan shoved his palms against Theron's chest but the vampire was as immovable as steel. "I haven't betrayed you."

Theron stretched his neck and his fangs dropped farther. He roared—a deafening thunder that shook the walls. Rowan clawed at Theron's arms but his strength was waning. "Please," he rasped, but couldn't push the words from his throat. "I'm sorry." He nearly blacked out from the pressure on his neck. He couldn't breathe, couldn't focus. Darkness closed in. He was passing out, perhaps dying. What had he done?

* * * * *

Pressure squeezed his head in a vise. Pain sliced through his throat as he swallowed. He groaned and struggled to turn onto his side. Where was he? He hurt too much to be dead. He lifted his head and blinked the room into focus. He lay naked on the floor in Theron's sleeping chamber.

How much time had passed? Not nearly enough. "Oh God." He held his head, still buzzing from the effects of the alcohol.

His vision adjusted to the dim light. He rose to his hands and knees. His head slumped between his shoulders. Slowly he lifted his gaze.

"Oh shit!" He jerked, scrambling back several feet. Theron sat in the chair in the corner of the room. He was shirtless and wearing jeans, leaning forward, his elbows braced just above his knees and his hands pressed together, steepled under his chin. His eyes focused with steely intent, drilling into Rowan.

"I want an explanation."

Rowan rubbed his throat, stood and paused. A man lay naked and unconscious on the bed. "Who is that?"

"Do you care?"

He snapped his gaze to Theron. "No." Yes, and he hated the surge of jealousy. "Is he dead?" The body was pale and unmoving. He picked up his chaps from the floor.

"He'll recover. You might not." Theron leapt from the chair, snatched the chaps and flung them across the room. His nose wrinkled as he sniffed. "I assumed the scent of alcohol was from your lover, not you." He spun away. "Who do you intend to feed tonight?" he demanded.

Rowan would have to feed a vampire with a thirst for alcohol-laced blood. Theron was a purist. Rowan did the only thing he could. "I just want you to release me."

"You are *my* slave. Mine!" He growled and paced across the floor. "When did the thought of feeding me become so unsettling to you?"

"No, it's not about the feeding."

Theron sighed and his shoulders dropped. "You can't tell me you don't want to fuck me. I know better."

"Maybe you don't know me so well."

Theron was on him in a flash, hands roaming over his bare flesh, caressing his cock as his tongue lashed his lips and speared into his mouth. Rowan groaned, already

missing what was once between them. Blood rushed into his shaft. His erection swelled between them. He stepped back, wrenching his mouth from Theron's.

"No." He shook his head. "I can't do this."

"Why? He can't possibly pleasure you the way I can."

Theron was right. Brett was nothing like the vampire. But perhaps that was what made him so damn appealing. "I don't want this anymore."

"Bullshit." Theron chuckled. "I can see for myself how much you *don't* want me."

That his body responded didn't change his intentions. "My dick isn't making the decision. I am."

Theron sat on the edge of the bed and leaned back on his elbows. "And what if you're making a mistake?"

"It's mine to make." Fuck, this man had seen to his every need for seven years. Rowan couldn't look at his masculine perfection and not recall the intensely erotic sensations he'd rained over his flesh. This might be the biggest mistake he'd made in his life. But he'd considered the possible consequences for hours. The moment was here. Stay with Theron, continue to exist and never know if there was someone else for him, a partner. Or take a chance with Brett. Maybe they wouldn't last. But maybe they would. One point was crystal clear — Theron had never been that man. Not for him.

Theron flopped to his back and rubbed his palms into his eyes. "Rowan, baby, it's not that easy."

Rowan couldn't have a conversation with Theron without wearing clothes. He picked up the codpiece, bent his softening dick to fit in the pouch and tugged them on. "I never said it would be easy." He crossed to the chaps. "Until Brett, I never imagined wanting anything beyond this room." He shrugged. "I do now."

"And what if he doesn't?"

"He does. I don't know for how long. I don't care."

"You certainly know how to make a guy feel like shit." Theron sat up. "But how I feel is irrelevant. It's impossible."

Rowan arched a brow. "I can fuck who I want." He stepped into his chaps and adjusted the leg closures. "It's none of your business." He lifted his gaze to Theron, almost daring him to respond.

"That's where you're wrong. You are my business." He slid off the bed. "Do you know how old I am?"

"I couldn't even begin to guess."

"I stopped counting because the years blended, centuries passed. Centuries, Rowan, and in all that time I have never let anyone close to me." His jaw flexed and he bit down. "Except you." He stared at the man on his bed. "I've fed from millions of men, sired thousands of vampires and I hear every one of their voices in my head." He faced Rowan. "Your thoughts are special to me. I won't give that up. We've shared too much.

The memories we've made— You'd throw it all away to be with him? After just meeting him?"

"I can't explain because it doesn't make sense to me either."

"You're a fool if you throw away what we have together."

Rowan leaned against the wall and closed his eyes. "You know me better than anyone." He glanced at Theron again, aching because of the hurt shimmering in his eyes.

Theron took a step closer. "Yes, and that happens to be the problem. You know me too well." He rested his hands on Rowan's hips. "I won't let you go."

"You have to." He swallowed the bile in his throat.

"You don't understand. You don't have a choice." He softly kissed his lips.

Rowan turned his face away. "I always have a choice."

"Not in this. Releasing you is a risk I'm unwilling to take."

Rowan mentally laughed. And did Theron think his risk was any less unimaginable? All he had in the world was in this room. Damn it! Damn him! He had a right to want for more than an addictive connection.

"You took the risk in sharing your secrets with me. If you now feel that was a mistake, then that's your problem. I've never professed to be anything more than what I am." He pushed away from the wall. "And if now you think I'm untrustworthy, then fuck you." He stalked toward the door.

"Don't go."

The simple request struck a chord. Softly spoken, full of regret. He turned. "How can I stay?"

Theron crossed the room and took his hand. "What did you promise him?"

"How do you know I promised him anything?" Theron waited and Rowan smiled. He couldn't hide from Theron. "I promised not to fuck you. He's not going to see anyone else either."

Theron failed to contain the bubble of laughter. "You're right. I can't give you that. Why would anyone want to promise fidelity?" He led Rowan into the main living quarters. "At least with you, that part makes sense. I'm not sure I believe Brett will stay faithful. He's a member of a sex club for a reason."

"I don't want to hear this shit."

"Right now, we're going to talk. You're going to listen. Unclench your fists and your ass and have a seat. God, I didn't realize in the last twenty-four hours you'd had an epiphany."

"If you're going to be an asshole, I'd just as soon leave. I've beaten myself up enough for both of us." He touched his neck. "If you left a bruise I hope it looks like a hickey. That's going to be easier to explain than strangulation marks."

Theron's expression sobered. "I'm sorry."

Rowan shook his head. "I can't say tonight has been my brightest moment. I knew better than to wake you in my condition. You aren't yourself until after you feed."

He nodded. "Thank you, but I don't think it excuses my reaction. I don't want you feeding another vampire, not without me."

"I don't want to. I couldn't think of a way to make you understand. This isn't about you and me. It's just about me."

"I believe I'm understanding the emotional place you've been. Don't worry. I'll heal the bruising."

Rowan sat next to Theron and let him pull him into the circumference of his arms. He stiffened then relaxed. This was his best friend and, until yesterday, his lover. He sighed and let the intoxicating warmth surround him. If all worked out with Brett—even if it didn't—this might be the last time they held each other close.

"I want you to sit here and listen to me," Theron began. "I don't love, not the way humans do." He was quiet a moment. "Maybe once, but that was so long ago." His voice took on a dreamy quality. "Not anymore and never again." He tensed. "Trust is overrated. I'd rather know when I'm being fucked over."

"I'm not fucking you over."

"Shhh," he whispered near his ear. "You're listening now."

Rowan nodded.

"As long as I live, I will sire all vampires in my sect," he said unyieldingly. "My world. Only those invited in by me are allowed."

He wasn't talking about the club. Hairs prickled along Rowan's arms.

"I hear the thoughts of those I sire." He paused a moment. "No other, human or vampire, will ever threaten my existence again." He tightened his hold on Rowan. "Including anyone I hold in fond regard. Regardless of how much it might hurt, I would not hesitate to destroy that which could destroy me."

Rowan's audible swallow echoed in the room. "Do you consider me a threat?"

"All humans are threats once they know of our existence."

"Vampires?"

"Yes." His breath warmed Rowan's neck. "I offer you this." Theron's voice became thready with emotion. "Keep your promise to Brett." He kissed his neck. "We will share our last kiss."

Rowan's heart pounded, but with Theron's wicked tongue on his flesh, his cock stirred and blood surged through his veins, desperate to feed his master. "Can't...fuck...you."

"But you can still feed me."

Rowan closed his eyes. His body warmed as Theron absorbed more of his weight. Fangs pricked his neck but didn't penetrate. Theron waited for consent. "Yes." He barely breathed the words.

Theron's teeth sank into his neck. Blood rushed to the surface. *Oh God, feels so good.* Heat sizzled on his flesh. Theron's hands wrapped around his shoulders and his legs locked around Rowan's. He held him immobile as he drew hard, sucking, tasting, gorging on his blood.

The fog cleared from his thoughts and Theron was there with him, whispering words of regret. Their connection had been special for both of them and the loss punched Rowan in the gut. Even with the high of feeding, he knew they would never be the same.

I'll be here waiting when you're ready for me. When you're ready to come home.

Chapter Six

Brett clicked keys on the keyboard but his eyes kept drifting to the clock hanging above the fireplace. He'd managed to get a few hours sleep between bouts of online information gathering. Most of the groundwork on the Chinese deal had been done months ago. But last-minute details could undermine the entire project and he wasn't about to let a two-million-dollar commission slip away. He didn't fail. He persevered, fought through fatigue and got the damn job done. Just like he would tonight. He adjusted his reading glasses, took a sip of coffee and returned to his spreadsheet. He plugged in numbers, recalculated costs and made notations for contingency expenses. Monotonous, but numbers he understood.

Sexy, secretive bartenders had created the chaos in his life. Secretive because, although Rowan said he wouldn't be fucking anyone else, he couldn't help picturing him wrapped around Tac. Yesterday he'd found the image arousing. Tonight, it pissed him off.

He stood, arched and stretched. Rolling his shoulders, he eased the stiffness from his neck. Normally, he could work for hours, but normally he wasn't sore as hell from fucking all night long.

Sometime tonight he needed to think about dinner. An unstoppable smile curved his mouth. He could imagine something hot and smooth sliding between his lips. He'd nearly come when he'd seen Rowan's hairless crotch.

The house was always quiet. He rarely watched television. Online sources were better for financial news. He enjoyed turning on the stereo but not while he worked. He didn't like distractions. Yet in the quiet house, alone, without TV, stereo, kids or a wife, he couldn't get shit done. He growled and ran his fingers through his hair.

Last night he'd scolded Rowan to get Tac out of his head. He hadn't realized just how hard that could be. He sighed, giving up the effort of work, and went to the kitchen. He opened the refrigerator door at the same time the phone rang. His heart jumped and his pulse raced. Over a phone call! And it might not be Rowan. He glanced at the clock again. At this hour it had to be. He reached for the cordless and, feeling breathless, answered.

"Hard at work?" He smiled at the sound of Rowan's voice. "Or just hard?" Brett chuckled. Obviously Rowan was in a good mood.

"I wish." He returned to the living room and plopped onto the couch. "I can't focus." He glanced at the clock. "My meeting is in about two hours and if I don't figure out how to get you out of my head so I can concentrate, I'm going to be winging this one."

What would it take to get Rowan out of his head? Damn if he knew. He'd never been ruled by his sex drive. Fuck, he had stayed in a marriage for nearly twenty years. If that didn't prove his commitment to work, what did? He'd never put his personal life first. The kids yes, but with Karen running the house, all he had were power deals, jacking off to porn and a very rare, casual hook-up.

"Where are you?" Earlier he'd said he'd be behind the bar tonight but the line was too quiet for him to be in the club. "I thought you had to work."

"I did. Falcon is filling in for me."

So they could see each other if he didn't have this meeting. Maybe after, but that would mean opening himself up for complications. He hadn't wanted to have men coming to his home. Not just because the doorman might make the assumption—the accurate assumption—that he was bringing home a lover, but he wanted his privacy, needed his space.

Indecision faded. This was different. Rowan was different. Brett didn't want to imagine Rowan tied to his bed, he wanted him here.

"I have the conference call."

"So we'll have phone sex later."

"I'd rather see you."

"So invite me over."

Brett chuckled. "Would you come?"

"Now you're teasing. We'd both come."

His stomach swooped. "Do you wonder if we're moving too fast?" He rested his head against the backrest of the couch. One-night encounters weren't relationships. But then, he wasn't the expert on relationships and it didn't appear Rowan was either, considering yesterday he was involved with Tac. Hell, for all Brett knew, he still could be.

"Maybe, but I don't want to think about what's right or wrong. What did you expect to happen when you ordered a mojito and batted your sexy bedroom eyes? I certainly wasn't planning on meeting anyone in the club, then fucking him in a private room and the biggest surprise..." There was silence on the line. "I didn't expect to break with Tac but I have."

Brett lifted his head. "Fuck. Are you okay?" Maybe he called because he didn't want to be alone. "I'm sorry —"

"Don't. It's okay. We talked and I'm fine. He's fine but Tac didn't want me in the club tonight."

"He fired you? He can't, you know. You could slap a lawsuit on his ass —"

"No, stop. This isn't about Tac or my job. I want to tell you everything but not now. I just want to hear your voice. I need to see you."

"Then come over."

He blew a harsh breath. "About time you asked."

"I live downtown."

"Brett, I know where you live. I'm freezing my ass outside your building. I didn't want to come over without calling first."

Brett laughed. He'd never met a man more like himself than Rowan. First the phone number and now the address. He'd come after Brett the same way Brett went after his work. Nothing stood in his way and nothing was going to stand in Rowan's. *Thank God*. He stood and went to the window overlooking the street. Peeling back the curtain, he glanced at the line of cars parked along the curb. "I'll buzz the doorman. Come on up. I'm on the sixth floor, apartment 618."

He hung up and immediately dialed the doorman who also filled the role of night guard. His building consisted of both owners and renters. Upscale, secure and near the heart of the city. "I have a guest arriving." He watched out the window as Rowan stepped from a stylish Mini Cooper. "He's coming to the door. Don't question him, just let him up."

A flicker of guilt niggled his conscience. Brett didn't have company. He'd moved to Denver, purchased his condo and stayed to himself. He didn't strike up conversations with the neighbors or the doorman. And until tonight he'd never buzzed a man up.

Glancing around, he made sure his home was presentable. Hell, his place was almost sterile it was so clean. He had a woman come in twice a week, but living alone, he didn't create much work for her. He hadn't lived in the place long enough to amass clutter. And when he'd moved out of the family house in Texas, he hadn't taken much with him.

Brett hurried upstairs to the bathroom and ran a comb through his hair. No time. Rowan would be at the door any minute. He quickly gargled mouthwash, glided deodorant under his arms and checked his clothing. Casual beach pants and a tank. He chuckled, not the usual wear, but at home he liked to be comfortable. The doorbell buzzed.

Holy shit! Adrenaline fired through his veins. His heart pounded and his hands trembled. His tongue felt thick in his mouth. He'd seen the man this morning and yet he couldn't get back downstairs and the door open fast enough.

He flipped the dead bolt and opened the door. Before he could utter a word, Rowan was in his arms. He slammed his lips onto Brett's, thrust his tongue into his mouth and moaned.

Brett kissed him back, shifting them into the room. He kicked the door closed and pushed Rowan against it. He tilted his head and deepened the kiss. Soft warm lips and a hard body. He slowly parted, dragging oxygen into his lungs.

He rested his forehead against Rowan's. He smelled as he remembered. Hot flesh, spicy. "This is crazy," he whispered.

"Do you want me to go?" Rowan's fingertips trekked over the ribbed material of his tank, tracing the contours of his torso.

What did he have to lose? This feeling in his chest, the pounding heart, warmth in his gut and need pooling in his balls, was real. "Come in." He took a step back.

Rowan shrugged off his coat and Brett took it from him. "Nice place."

Brett glanced around, seeing his condo through Rowan's eyes. Yes, it was nice but looked infinitely better with Rowan in it.

"May I get you a drink?" He hung the coat in the closet. "Beer?"

"Water." Rowan faced Brett. "Or juice if you've got it."

Brett chuckled. "Are you one of those health-food junkies?"

"Yeah, it's a curse." He walked around the perimeter of the room, paused at the window, then glanced at the photos on the desk. "Your kids?"

"Yes," Brett came from the kitchen. Rowan held a small photo. "That's Daniel's graduation." Hopefully Rowan liked orange juice. He handed him the glass then sipped the beer he'd grabbed for himself. "Jennifer's senior prom." She wore a seafoam green dress. The color matched her eyes. Diamonds sparkled in her ears and her date had brought her roses.

"I never went to a school dance." Rowan spoke with awe and reverence in his voice. "I didn't go to high school."

Brett's stomach soured. He hated that Rowan had struggled in his youth. That he'd become a skilled flair bartender and successful man gave testament to his fortitude. Brett found his strength of character a turn-on as much as his ripped body and big cock.

Rowan lifted the drink. "Thank you."

"There's water, milk and orange juice. Help yourself to anything you want."

Rowan's gaze roamed over Brett. "Anything?"

Brett's cock twitched. "The rest will have to come later. I don't know how much company I'll be tonight but I'm glad you're here." He indicated his desk with a tilt of his head. "I have to get back to work."

Rowan carried his drink to the couch and sat. "I can wait. If you don't mind, I'll rest on the couch. If I fall asleep, wake me when you're done."

Brett turned down the lights. "If my work keeps you awake," he swallowed, "you're welcome to go to my bed." His stomach flipped. Rowan in his bed. Blood rushed from his head straight into his cock. "Do you want me to show you where it is?"

Rowan leaned forward and rolled the glass in his palms. "Yes, but I can wait. When I go to your bed, I want you there with me." He set the empty glass on a coaster on the coffee table.

Damn, he had motivation for getting this project wrapped. If his team fucked this up, he'd lose it. If ever there was a night for a deal to be easy, this was it. He sat in his leather desk chair and swiveled around to the monitor. His fingers flew across the keys. Now his mind, like a steel trap, focused. He had his files open, his reports organized and once he finished the conference call, the outcome would be out of his hands.

And Rowan would be in them. He needed to touch, taste and hold. Brett groaned, remembering his fingers curling over Rowan's shoulders, his thick cock, firm buttocks and strong thighs.

He glanced over his shoulder. Rowan had kicked off his shoes and sprawled out on the couch. Long legs encased in denim reached to one end of the cushions and his head rested on a throw pillow. His hair was mussed and sexy. One arm bent over his head and the other rested on his taut stomach. A tight, long-sleeved black pullover clung to his pectorals. The collar covered part of his neck. Damn, his kissable lips were slightly parted. Fringed lashes cast a dark shadow beneath his eyes. Soft breaths lifted his chest. He slept.

Emotion washed over Brett. For years, he'd imagined a life with a man, one he could laugh with—fuck with more purpose than reaching orgasm. He was almost afraid to wish for Rowan to be that man. His alarm pinged.

He spun back around. Time to work. He picked up the phone. He would initiate the conference call with his partner on the deal in New York then dial his Chinese counterpart.

James Cohen answered, excitement lacing his voice. "We're ready, Brett. You've cast your line in deep waters this time. Now reel him in."

Brett laughed. "I'm going to put you on speaker phone. Log into the network." He wanted all his team to have access to his files. Then he dialed his Chinese contact, who would then bring the investor into the conversation.

"Hello," his contact said.

"*Wéi*," Brett said, using the informal telephone greeting. "It's good to speak with you today." Brett shifted his thoughts to Chinese.

James popped in a message to his IM window. *Do your magic.*

He replied, *Time to close the deal.*

* * * * *

Rowan stirred on the couch. He stretched, for a moment forgetting where he was. Papers rustled and a chair squeaked then the room was quiet. Rowan shifted and smiled. He was about to stand when Brett's agitated voice filled the room. He didn't know what had him upset but the tone was unmistakable. It was the words he couldn't understand—something foreign. Brett had mentioned a Chinese deal. He spoke fast, fluently and he obviously wasn't happy with what he heard. Another man spoke through the speakerphone. Then Brett again. A third man entered the conversation. Negotiations clearly weren't going well.

Rowan quietly slipped from the room. He went to the kitchen. A man of Brett's tastes had to have a bar. He opened cupboards until he found a small assortment of bottles. Kahlua, rum, brandy, the standard favorites and a few obscure labels. After a quick perusal of the stock, he grabbed a bottle of bourbon. Opening the fridge, he found

half-and-half and the orange juice. He mixed a drink for Brett. At the bar, he didn't get many calls for a Fat Lighter, but the combination had soothing, stress-relieving qualities.

He quietly entered the living room and crossed to the desk. Brett mouthed the words "thank you" and apologized with his eyes. He took the drink and sipped. A smile curved his mouth but wasn't enough to soften the lines around his eyes or the tension in his lips.

Sidling around the chair, Rowan pressed against Brett's shoulders, urging him forward a few inches. He shifted, rolling his neck and shoulders. Rowan rubbed his thumbs into the tension-tightened muscles. Damn, he was stressed and the pressure built in his strong shoulders and broad back. But Brett didn't need the distraction of a needy lover now. Once he was off the conference call, he'd have him prone on the floor, sit on his ass and give him a full-body massage.

He stepped back but Brett stopped him from walking away. He put a finger to his lips to show they should be quiet. Then he reached for Rowan's hand and pulled him closer.

Rowan gently turned the chair and braced his upper body on the armrests. His lips twitched as he shifted his hands to Brett's thighs. Brett leaned back, silently giving him permission to continue. Slowly he lowered to the floor, knowing Brett couldn't say anything, couldn't do anything but listen to the conversation and watch his computer screen. Only his focus wasn't on the numbers and data. His gaze bore into Rowan as he urged Brett's thighs apart. Brett didn't blink, but he swallowed. The Adam's apple in his throat bounced. He reached up and combed Rowan's hair behind his ear.

Brett said something in Chinese but his eyes remained locked on Rowan.

Muscles flexed beneath Rowan's fingertips as he trailed a seductive touch higher on Brett's thigh, closer to his groin, closer to the erection swelling beneath the thin fabric of his beach pants. Brett adjusted in the chair. Oh yes, he was primed and ready and not wearing anything beneath the gauzy pants. Rowan grazed his nails over the bulge, tracing the length. Moisture seeping from the slit dampened a spot. Rising onto his knees, he leaned over Brett's lap and tasted the material, wetting the fabric over his erection. He was hot, hard and pulsing. Rowan was just as hampered as Brett. He couldn't moan, couldn't tell him how good his essence tasted. He gently scraped his teeth along the length, then lower. He spread Brett's thighs wider, tugged the fabric tight and sucked his sac through the fabric.

Quivers rippled Brett's stomach beneath his tank. He leaned forward, grabbed the hem and jerked the top over his head.

Rowan blew out a quiet, steady breath then licked his lips. He splayed his fingers over Brett's chiseled stomach. His skin was like satin but with the strong maleness that stirred the lust simmering in his core. Heat raced over his flesh, yet chills chased down his spine. He was a bundle of electrified nerves.

With nimble fingers, he tugged on the tie of Brett's pants. He needed his mouth on his naked flesh.

Brett scooted forward, pushed Rowan's hands out of the way and hurriedly loosened the strings cinching the waistband. He lifted his butt. Rowan grasped handfuls of material and jerked the pants past his hips and thighs. The airy fabric gathered at his ankles.

Brett turned to the phone speaker and spoke Chinese. Clearly he could multitask. Follow a conversation, speak a foreign language and still grasp his cock at the root and stroke it. The cadence of his words didn't alter but his breath puffed from his mouth.

Rowan wrapped his hands over Brett's, stilling his movement. He smiled for the briefest moment then lowered his head and closed his lips around the crown of Brett's cock. He sucked on the head. Brett stopped speaking and closed his eyes.

"Brett, are you okay?" One of the men on the phone spoke English.

"Fine." He followed it with more Chinese. Rowan tuned out the words and listened to Brett's body language instead.

Curling his tongue around the perfect mushroom-shaped head, he lapped at the salty secretions. He lashed at the length, swiping his tongue over the slit, swirling around the ridge to swallow the shaft again. Brett's dick oozed, pearly drops beading on the tip. Rowan used hands, mouth and teeth. Tasting and sucking, unable to get enough of his musky flavor.

Rowan opened wider and laved his balls until they glistened then sucked them into his mouth. He applied pressure with his tongue, thrusting the silken sac to the roof of his mouth and rolling the small treasures within.

Brett grasped the armrest, his knuckles whitening.

Rowan stroked the shaft, squeezing harder, milking pleasure from Brett's cock. He adjusted his position on the floor. His own dick ached, pressing into the zipper of his jeans, but he wouldn't cease his ministrations to alleviate the pain of the pressure.

Licking Brett's length from base to tip, he explored the hot, smooth texture. Ropey veins, infused with blood, pulsed beneath his tongue.

"I'm not sure we're going to finish this tonight." Brett's words drifted through the fog of his mind but he was still speaking to his conference call. He was also incredibly close to coming. His cock was stretched taut, balls tightened and his hips rolled. Rowan continued to pump his fist while sliding his mouth up and down the length, whipping his tongue in fast, furious strokes.

Brett was fucking his mouth. One hand wrapped around the back of his head, the other fumbled with the phone. He jerked it forward, trying to reach the keypad, finally he hit the button. "Can you hear me?"

No one responded.

He growled low in his chest, bucked into Rowan's mouth as he gripped the armrests. "Oh fuck," he groaned, as if in agony. "I'm going to come."

Rowan hummed his acquiescence and continued to feed his hunger for Brett's cock. He sucked, stroked and savored the hot steel in his mouth. He grabbed Brett's thigh, scoring his nails across the inner surface.

Brett jerked, spewing hot cream deep into Rowan's throat. Each rhythmic spasm pulsed against his tongue. Once the contractions lessened, he slowly pulled his mouth away, sucking the length and cock head, drawing out every drop of cream.

The conversation continued without Brett. He smiled, hit the mute button again and spoke. His tone had changed. Worry lines on his face softened. His eyes sparkled and his posture relaxed.

Orgasms were the best stress reliever.

Brett couldn't believe he'd just risked a two-million-dollar deal for a blowjob. But apparently his distraction had been the motivation needed. He didn't think they'd ever come to terms, however, when he'd grown quiet, the investor had grown concerned.

He disconnected the conference call but James remained on the line.

"What the hell were you thinking?" James demanded.

"Negotiations had stalled. I gave the investor time to think." Actually, Brett had been thinking about how intensely erotic Rowan's mouth looked on his cock. It was the first time anyone had been considerate enough to see that he'd been on edge. The heated negotiations were quickly unraveling when Rowan had appeared with a drink and a neck massage. Then he had cautiously stepped back. He hadn't been a distraction. Whether or not the deal fell through had everything to do with coming to terms over money, not his lover. *His lover*. When Rowan's silken hair had brushed his thigh, he'd been ready to hang up the phone.

"Are you there? Brett, you almost cost the whole fucking deal." James started to laugh. "You were brilliant, but then that's how you make millions and why I put up with your eccentricities."

"I'm glad I meet with your approval in some approximation."

"Yeah, well, you scare me like that again and I'm coming to wherever you are these days and kicking your ass. All right!" He cheered again. "Fucking unbelievable."

"What is unbelievable to me is the hour. It's late." He glanced over his shoulder at Rowan. He'd returned to the couch, looking casually replete, sprawled on the cushions. Not for long. "I need to go to bed." In the best way possible.

"Yeah, yeah. Okay, so congratulations, Brett. This is one for the records. Don't know how you do it but I'm damn glad you bring me along for the ride."

"Good night, James. Go celebrate." After all, he planned to. He disconnected the call. Normally he wouldn't leave his computer on or his files open but right now all he wanted was Rowan. He stood from the chair and stalked toward the couch.

Rowan shifted to sit. "So you take James along for the ride?"

"Not that kind of ride. He's my partner in New York. We've worked together for years."

"Sounds as if he gives you all the credit."

Brett shrugged. "It's my company. I suppose, because the failures are always my fault too, I get credit for our successes." He didn't need the spotlight as long as, at the end of the day, he closed the deal and made them all a lot of money. "I'm unusually lucky with money." He sat next to Rowan. "Not tonight. I was going to lose this deal." He closed his eyes and dropped his head forward. "There are a lot of people counting on me, expecting me to come through."

"Maybe they expect too much from you." Rowan leaned in and kissed his neck.

"I expect a lot of myself."

"But you're only responsible for you. Most people want something." He flicked his tongue against Brett's skin. "But it's not always clear what they want."

Brett angled his head and Rowan opened his mouth over his flesh. Hot breath caressed his skin, followed by gentle bites and flicks of his tongue. "If you're right then what do you want from me?" Brett asked.

"I think that would be obvious." He pulled back and their eyes locked. "I want to take you to bed."

Chapter Seven

Brett squinted against the midmorning sun streaming through the window and slashing across the bed. Rowan groaned beside him. There was nothing more erotic than waking next to his lover, leg brushing against leg. In three weeks, he'd only become more accustomed to having Rowan in his home.

Their schedules complemented each other. Brett worked late and often was still at the computer when Rowan came over after his shift at the club. They'd sleep half the day away then fuck. No, they did more than screw. Rowan was quickly becoming a part of the life he thought he'd never find. A partner. They matched each other's needs in and out of bed.

He leaned over and kissed Rowan's shoulder. Sleepy warmth surrounded him. The scent of Rowan and sex clung to the linen. Brett ran his hands over Rowan's form from his shoulder, along each rib, over his waist, pausing on his ass. Firm, perfect, *mine*.

Rowan groaned in his sleep. He turned onto his back, kept his eyes closed and tried to pull Brett down beside him. "Sleep," he grumbled.

Brett chuckled and slid from his arms. "Can't. You sleep." Brett needed a hot shower and a cup of coffee. He ran his hands through his hair and crossed to the bathroom.

Twenty minutes later, he'd showered and pulled on jeans. He had his glasses on, cup of coffee to his left and his computer mouse to his right. The house was quiet. Stocks were up. Life was good. Life was damn good.

An hour passed and Brett unfurled from the chair. His stomach rumbled. He set his glasses on the desk, rubbed his eyes and headed upstairs to the bedroom. He paused in the doorway. The sheet had slid from the bed. Rowan slept on his stomach, arms pillowed beneath his head. Pressure clamped on Brett's chest. He swallowed the lump in his throat, wondering how he'd fallen in love in less than a month.

He stripped out of his jeans. His cock bobbed against his stomach, thick and solid. Slowing his breaths, he quietly stalked across the room. He didn't want Rowan waking yet. His knee dipped the bed. Rowan shifted and rolled over. Brett froze. This was even better. He finished crawling onto the mattress.

Rowan's cock lay limp against his pelvis. Brett carefully positioned next to him. Without touching, he leaned over, curled his tongue around the soft flesh and took him into his mouth, cocooning him in wet heat. Opening wider, he took all of him until his nose pressed against Rowan's flesh, drinking in the arousing musky male scent of his crotch. Instantly the flesh within his mouth became firmer. He held him against his tongue until the stiffness forced him to part his lips. He slowly pulled back then took his erection deep, to the throat and just a fraction farther.

Rowan groaned, his toes curled and his hand cupped the back of Brett's head. Brett lifted his gaze. A contented smile curved Rowan's mouth and his half-lidded eyes fixed on Brett.

"Good morning." Rowan bent his knees and widened his legs with his feet flat on the mattress.

Brett hummed and continued to suck the length then lower to twirl his tongue over his smooth balls. He lifted his head and kissed the tender skin of his pelvis, higher to trace a circle with his tongue around his navel.

"I should have let you sleep," he slid between Rowan's thighs, "but you looked so damn good on my bed."

"And you can't control yourself. You have to fuck me."

Brett moaned his agreement as he rasped his tongue over Rowan's flat brown nipple. "Tell me you want my cock."

Rowan arched on the bed. With arms outstretched, Brett braced above him. They aligned cock to cock, chest to chest, face-to-face.

There were condoms and a bottle of lube on the bedside table. Rowan grabbed the condoms, tore one from the strip then ripped it open. He reached between their bodies, grasped Brett's rod at the base and with touch alone, sheathed him in latex. Then he squirted lube into his palm. Brett clenched his teeth, enduring the sweet torture of having Rowan's fingers caressing his cock, slicking him with cream.

Rowan shifted his own balls and inched lower. His eyes closed and he rolled his hips. He creamed his own hole, circling the rosette then sliding his finger into his own rectum. He groaned, widened his thighs and plunged deeper.

"God, do you know how fucking hot that is?" Brett placed his hand over Rowan's, pressing both their fingers into his hole, sliding in and out. Rowan moaned, his rim tightening, clamping against their joined fingers.

"I want your cock. Please fuck me."

"If you want me, take me."

With gentle pressure, Rowan wrapped his fingers around Brett's cock and, arching his pelvis, fit the head to his hole. Brett held his breath. His abdominals tightened and he penetrated an inch, pushing past the resistance of his rim.

"Oh God, more." Rowan tried to impale himself, undulating his hips.

Brett lifted Rowan's right leg to his shoulder, clamping a hand over his shin to hold him. "You want fucked?"

"Yes," he hissed.

"Hard?"

"Yes." Desperation laced his plea.

Brett lifted the other leg to the same position then leveraged higher, his cock slowly sank into Rowan. One long delicious slide into heaven. Once seated to the root, he

eased back and reveled in the fiery licks of pleasure caressing his shaft and he stretched Rowan, filling him full of cock.

Rowan's head thrashed on the pillow.

"Feel good?"

"Fuck you. Fuck me!"

Brett tightened his hold on Rowan's legs and slightly lifted as he thrust his hips. Exquisite pressure skated along his length. As much as Rowan wanted him to pound his ass, cram his cock in fierce thrusts, he took it slow, savoring the connection.

Brett wanted control, demanded it. Being inside Rowan, having him under him or over him was the most powerful aphrodisiac he'd ever known—knowing he gave as much pleasure as he took.

He increased his speed and depth. Pounding strokes sent shivers over him. Rowan's ass was ecstasy. His mewling whimpers spurred Brett on. Rowan's legs dropped to the crook of Brett's elbows, spreading his thighs wider. Brett leaned back and watched his cock slip in and out of Rowan's ass. Wet and hot. Internal tissues milked his shaft. Tingles chased over his flesh. His orgasm built in the base of his spine, molten heat pooling in his balls. Muscles tensed with the impending storm of sensations. He slammed hard.

"Come, damn it."

Rowan reached for his cock.

"No, don't touch. I'll make you come." From fucking alone he wanted Rowan's cream spurting onto his stomach, eyes locked on his as he spiraled into euphoria.

Brett shifted the angle, rubbing his cock head against the smooth inner tissues. Rowan bucked, gripped fistfuls of sheet and came.

Hot ribbons of cum jetted from his cock. The powerful orgasm convulsed his body, shooting semen onto his abdomen, chest and onto the sheets. The spasms locked his rim to Brett's shaft. The pressure drove Brett over the edge into oblivion. His mind numbed and heat flooded his system. Every nerve sizzled and snapped. He thrust fully into Rowan and stilled, relishing the pleasure centered in his dick and radiating out. Waves of release washed over him, milking him dry as he emptied into Rowan. Holding on to the condom, he slipped free and collapsed onto the bed.

Rowan used a corner of the sheet to wipe the cum from his stomach.

Brett laughed. "My cleaning lady has to know my sex life has improved."

"I love that there's cum all over your bed. Shows how much sex we have."

And they did. Neither one of them seemed to be able to get enough touching, kissing and loving. "Let's go out tonight."

Rowan turned to his side and braced on his elbow. "After work."

Brett sat, shifted to the edge of the bed then went toward the bathroom to dispose of the condom. "I thought perhaps you could take the night off. We could go to dinner, maybe see a movie."

Rowan stretched out on the bed with his hands laced behind his head. "It sounds perfect but I have to work."

"Call Tac. Tell him you need a night off."

He stretched and sat up. "Can't."

"Why not? You work seven days a week. You're entitled to some down time."

He shook his head. "It's not that I don't want to spend time with you. Tac needs me at the club."

"I need you with me."

Rowan faced him. "I know. I feel the same way. Try to understand."

But he didn't understand. Didn't understand why Rowan went to work hours before the club opened, didn't understand how Rowan could feel loyalty or obligation to his ex-lover.

"Fine, I won't bitch about the amount of time you work." After all, he worked seven days a week, all hours of the day and night. He lived and breathed his business. Rowan lived and breathed The Catacombs. He wasn't jealous of the club or concerned Rowan would meet a man and betray their burgeoning relationship. His insecurities revolved exclusively around Tac. "We can go to dinner before the club opens."

Rowan took his leather pants—bondage pants he'd worn to work last night—and stepped into them. "How about lunch?" He grinned. "I need to be at the club early."

"You always have to go early."

"And I always will. I don't have a choice."

"You're the one who says you always have a choice."

Rowan jerked his T-shirt over his head. "Yeah, we all have to do shit we don't want to do." He stomped from the room and down the stairs.

"Like what?" Brett followed. "What the hell are you doing for all those hours before the club opens?" God, he hated this part. He didn't want to argue.

"Stocking booze and practicing my performance."

"Fine, I'll come with you." He sounded desperate to his own ears.

"No, I don't want you at the club."

"What?" Where the fuck had that come from? "Why?"

Rowan sifted through the couch cushions. "Have you seen my keys?"

"You're leaving?"

"Yes."

He raked his hands through his hair. "Fine. Go." Nausea roiled in his gut. What the fuck had triggered this argument? He wanted dinner, an evening together, a special memory on the night he told Rowan he loved him. Hell, he contemplated asking him to move in. No, the contemplating was over. He wanted to live with Rowan, to wake every morning with his warm, naked body pressed to his.

"Ah fuck." Rowan spun away from Brett. "I can't do this, can't fight with you. Can't you let it go?"

Brett leaned against the wall. "Sure, I can let you go." Maybe Rowan had been searching for a way out while Brett had been holding on, believing they would have something more. He crossed his arms over his chest. "You don't want me in the club, fuck you. I have a membership and as you say, we all have to make choices."

"Oh God, that's not what I mean, not what I want." He slumped into the couch. "Do you want to come to the club? It's not a big deal."

Now he knew he'd overreacted. He crossed the room and sat next to Rowan.

"When we met, privacy was paramount."

He remembered, but he wasn't feeling cloistered now. "Yes, and you spend all your time in a club that used to not hold appeal. I don't get why you rush out of here, yet after work, I know this is your first stop. That's less of a relationship and more of a booty call." He thumbed his chest. "I want more."

"Brett, you have all of me. Tie me to the bed, baby. Tell me to get on my knees and suck your dick. But I don't want to fuck in the club. I don't want to be Ice Man with you. I'm not into group, stranger encounters or pain. Always, it's just you and me in a room by ourselves. I only want your cock in my mouth." He leaned in and kissed his lips. "And when you need to fuck, it better be my ass you're sliding into."

Hunger flared in Brett. He latched onto Rowan, covered his mouth and speared his tongue into the emotionally dangerous depths. Searing heat blazed into his groin. He'd just spent the morning fucking, yet he was on fire for him again. He ripped the snap open and plunged his hand into Rowan's pants. Wrapping his fingers around his shaft, he stroked him, feeling him swell and harden against his palm.

"Come to the club tonight," Rowan gasped between kisses. "Don't ever wonder where I want to be." He cupped Brett's cock. "You, this," he squeezed his erection, "are all I need." He eased back. "But I'm not you. I don't make million-dollar deals. I bartend and I'm good at it. I enjoy my work. So don't ask me to give it up." Their eyes locked. "But I would."

Brett sighed and pulled his hand from Rowan's pants. Lust ruled him. He wanted sex all the time, had to have his hands on Rowan and hated the thought of anyone else being close to him — like Tac. "I'm not myself with you, or maybe I've never been myself until you. All I know is that I hate knowing you're in the club." *With Tac*. Insecurity had never been an issue. He was at the top of his game in his field and when he was married he hadn't really cared what Karen had done with her time as long as she hadn't wanted much of his. Who did he have to be jealous of then? That wasn't how he felt now. He was jealous — of Tac.

Tac and Rowan had history and with the club connection, they remained close.

"Do you want to come to the club?"

Fuck, it seemed to take Brett forever to answer. Rowan's heart raced and his head pounded. How long was he supposed to be able to keep this up? Work — work was a lie.

Yes, he bartended, but he didn't have to work every night. His only daily obligation was feeding Theron. His only daily desire was to be with Brett. The proverbial rock and hard place, for him, was two men.

"Whatever this was," Brett said referring to the argument. "This has nothing to do with your job. You're brilliant at what you do."

"I told you, I'm not fucking anyone. Especially not Tac." He put his hand on Brett's thigh. "Come to the club tonight. Around nine. Falcon and Ten should be working. I'll be able sneak away." He lowered his voice. "You've fulfilled my fantasies, so let me fulfill one of yours."

"Which one? I have several."

Rowan didn't care as long as he could prove to Brett and anyone at the club—Theron—whom he wanted. "Come tonight and I'll ask for a night away from the club."

"Bribery?"

"I'll use blackmail if I have to."

"Then I'll come."

Oh, Rowan could promise that. "Nine o'clock."

"I'll be there."

* * * * *

Brett kept his eyes on the clock. The hours dragged. He'd called and checked in with both kids. Both were fine and told him all of Karen's latest. And he'd told them his. His stomach jumped again. Then he smiled. Warmth flushed his face. He hadn't known how he'd feel about telling the kids he'd met someone but then when chatting with Jennifer the truth had slipped out. He had met someone and suddenly he didn't care if the world knew. And if the world was in on his secret personal life, the kids needed to know. So there he'd sat, grinning like an idiot as he explained to his daughter about Rowan. He still grinned, although the conversation was a bit more strained with Daniel. His son would most assuredly tell his mother but Brett didn't give a shit what Karen thought.

He had a right to be happy and being with Rowan felt damn good. He thought about the club and the garb that many of the men wore. Rowan looked hotter than hell in his chains and leather. Brett had never felt the freedom to explore that side of kink. He'd been content to enjoy his partners' play, but in his newfound openness, he wanted gear of his own. Nothing too outlandish or for wear at the club. He wanted private stock. Cuffs, straps, plugs and paddles. And he wanted one of those swings that hung in the Silver Showers room.

He crossed to his desk. He doubted butt plugs would be in the yellow pages. Internet shopping would be easier but he didn't want to wait. When he brought Rowan home tonight, he wanted to meet all his needs. Until a month ago, Rowan played exclusively in the fetish world. Brett shared his enthusiasm but lacked the experience,

having only the occasional encounter. He'd be ready when Rowan initiated him into the lifestyle.

Well hell, there was a sex boutique a few blocks away. He glanced at the clock again. He had more than enough time. Brett changed his clothes and headed out. On his way, he stopped in the lobby and spoke with the doorman. The building kept a list of regular visitors, individuals who didn't require authorization for admittance.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Kirsch."

"Hello, Glen. I think it's time to add Rowan Huntington to that list of yours."

The man smiled, his gray mustache bouncing. "Very good, sir."

* * * * *

Nearly two hours later, Brett returned home with loaded arms. Creams, warming gels, nipple and cock clamps, neoprene restraints and a blindfold. He'd dropped a fortune but his balls hummed with anticipation. He'd purchased the one item that was bound to spike Rowan's temperature. Brett had felt hot since seeing it in the Silver Showers room. Depending on how complicated the installation, that swing would be anchored in the ceiling tonight before he left for the club.

He said hello to Glen on his way to the elevator. His palms sweated, holding the bags. Finally he entered his condo, dropped his keys on the hall table and jogged upstairs with his purchases. He unloaded everything on the bed. He dug through the contents and picked up the sterling silver Darby-style restraining collar similar to the one he'd seen worn in the club. Rowan wasn't one to strut around as property but here in this bed there was no confusion on who preferred to submit. Rowan loved to please. Brett was determined to show Rowan as much pleasure as he received, even if he had to use the locking metal link on the front of the collar to tether him to the bed.

Brett cleared out the top drawer in the nightstand. It was enough that his housekeeper had to wash his cum-stained sheets and dusted under their lube and condoms. He wouldn't have her polishing this steel and metal. He left the swing on the bed and glanced up. This wasn't simply popping a hole in the ceiling and hanging the chair. This was for rough, aggressive sex and swinging softly while making love. He needed the main support beam to the apartment. Fuck. He needed maintenance for this. Great. He could imagine the conversation. *Can you come help me install my fuck swing? I'm making a sex playground for my lover and I don't want us to break my ass while I'm pounding his.*

Good thing he'd decided to step out of the closet, right into the community spotlight. The condo association would love this.

He laughed. Hell, that's why he paid high condo fees to live in this place. He picked up the phone and dialed Glen downstairs. "I need maintenance." He ran his fingers through his hair. "I need a stud finder." Glen might want to make a joke but he wouldn't. His soft chuckle said enough.

Money talked. Ten minutes later, there was a knock at the door. Brett let in a man wearing blue coveralls and carrying a toolbox. "Glen said you had an emergency. Got a leaky faucet?"

"No, I wouldn't say it classifies as an emergency. More along the lines of a personal need." He led him up the stairs to the loft bedroom. He paused at the threshold of the room. "I want to hang that," he pointed to the swing lying on the bed, "in front of the window. I want to see the skyline, while I...while I...when sitting in the swing." He'd disposed of the box but the contraption spoke for itself.

The maintenance man scratched his head, walked to the windows and glanced at the ceiling. "Yeah, I can see what you mean. This time of year, the stars are so bright. Wouldn't do to wait until tomorrow." He chuckled, muttering about his wife being just as impulsive. "We can get this done. Give me about a half hour." He set his tools on the carpet.

"If you have everything you need—" He didn't know his name.

"Stan, and no, I'm fine." He waved him out of the room. "Go about your business. I'd say I get calls for this all the time but this is a first." He laughed and went to work.

Brett grabbed a shower while the maintenance man installed his swing. He shaved, ran a bit of gel through his hair and splashed on cologne. He tugged on the same jeans. He didn't want to bother Stan by going back into the bedroom. Instead he went downstairs, booted up the computer and checked his email.

A few minutes later, Stan lumbered down the stairs. "All done."

Brett smiled, unable to contain the flash of pleasure tightening his balls and stiffening his cock. He'd have Rowan in that swing tonight. "Thank you."

"Yep."

Brett walked him to the door. Once he was gone, he sprinted up the stairs. He stepped into the room. Perfect. The loft was large and open. Now rather than the club, this was their personal playground.

He changed his clothes, checked the time and headed out. Rowan had specifically said nine. Brett would grab a drink and watch him work until his break. The Audi weaved through traffic. Stereo music filled the interior. Brett tapped out a rhythm on the steering wheel. Several minutes later, he parked, walked to the recessed entrance and entered his member code. The door buzzed and he sauntered into the club.

The night was still early and the crowd thin. He smiled, said hello and made his way to the bar. Music pumped through the speakers and pounded through his body. Muted lighting created shadowed corners and seductive allure. Brett's heart raced and his cock hardened. Rowan wasn't behind the counter. Maybe he wouldn't have to kill an hour until nine. Hitching a hip onto the barstool, he said hello to the man Rowan had called Ten. Brett couldn't resist a quick glance at his groin. Damn, he loved cock. Which was why he was here.

"What can I get you?" Ten wiped his hands on a towel.

"Rowan. Is he around?"

Another man laughed. "I hope not."

"Ignore Falcon." Ten and Falcon enjoyed a private laugh. "Let's just say he's busy right now."

"And hope he stays busy for a while." The man named Falcon roared with raucous laughter. Brett didn't know what was so fucking funny but didn't like the wave of unease churning through his gut.

"I'll take a beer while I wait for him. Corona."

Ten set the beer in front of him. "It might be a while. He doesn't usually come up until closer to nine."

Come up from where? "Thanks."

Falcon juggled a bottle but without the precision skills Rowan possessed.

Brett pivoted on the barstool and watched men slowly filter into the club. He tried to sip his beer but with each passing minute, his concern mounted. He glanced at his watch for the hundredth time.

Not sure when, but sometime in the past few minutes he'd begun to realize something wasn't right. Instinct kicked in. He spun on his chair.

"Ready for another?"

"No, do you know where he is?"

"Yes, but it's a private area of the club. He's with the owner." Ten winked.

Brett swallowed the excess saliva in his mouth, almost afraid to ask more questions. "Tac. I don't suppose their relationship is business only." He chuckled as if he were in on the joke, rather than the butt of it.

"No, I wouldn't suppose." Ten moved down the bar to help another patron.

Brett was sick. His stomach clenched and sweat broke along his brow. A muscle in his jaw ached from gnashing his teeth. He swallowed but the lodged lump wouldn't budge. He didn't want to believe it. No, Rowan hadn't been able to fake his feelings. He was still secretive about the club but Brett refused to think he'd lied in order to hide his activities, that it was because he hadn't stopped seeing—fucking—Tac.

Falcon dipped glasses into a sink for washing. "Look," he nodded toward the left. "Here they come."

Time moved in slow motion. Brett shifted his gaze. *No*. Pressure squeezed the breath from his lungs. Rowan smiled, laughed—lied. Brett's mouth dried at the sight of his bare torso—not pleasantly but with sickening dread. Rowan casually carried his shirt. Brett slid from the stool, not sure his weakened knees would hold him.

Rowan paused, eyes locking on Brett. Color drained from his face. Tac laughed, not realizing anything was wrong. His arm wrapped possessively around Rowan's shoulders. They were unmistakably together.

Brett stumbled. Pain knifed through his chest. Betrayed, deceived, manipulated. God, he was such an ass. He'd believed him. Trusted him. Heat scorched his eyes but he'd be damned before he'd show how much it hurt—scarring him to his core. An oppressive heaviness seized his vitals with the likes of nothing he'd ever felt before. He couldn't breathe. His heart hurt—a fierce gripping pain as if his guts were being wrung from the inside. He had to get out of there. Now, before he doubled over.

Rowan shoved away from Tac and started across the room.

Brett spun away and headed for the door. His hands fisted, ready to strike. He had to get away. Only his legs weren't communicating with his head. Fuck, his head wasn't thinking at all. He was numb.

"Please, Brett, let me explain." Rowan's voice pierced the fog in his mind but all Brett heard were more lies. "Stop, Brett."

In all the years of marriage, he hadn't felt like this. When would he learn? He should have stayed with the plan. No commitments, no expectations, no letdown. He had nothing to believe in. Relationships were built on lies. No one wanted forever. He sure as fuck hadn't. Not until now—until Rowan.

"Brett, wait."

"Fuck off." He didn't dare look over his shoulder.

Rowan grabbed his arm. His touch was electric. Brett closed his eyes and shut off his emotions. He wasn't going to feel anything, not even the pain.

"Can we talk?"

Brett shook his head. "No, all we could do is fuck." He lifted his head and stared into Rowan's green eyes, refusing to see anything but betrayal. "There was no meaning in the sex we had. I'm just a piece of ass." He snorted. "And obviously not good enough to keep you happy."

"You're wrong," Rowan said with passion.

"Yeah, I know. I thought you gave a shit. Well, fuck me." He jerked away and glanced back at Tac. "Or better yet, fuck him."

He slammed his palm against the door and walked out into the darkened night.

Rowan stood rooted to the spot. He'd left. He'd fucking walked away. Knots twisted in his gut. He slowly spun toward Theron. "He's gone."

The vampire cautiously approached. "I don't want to say anything until I know how you feel about it."

"How I feel? How the fuck do you think I feel? Oh shit." He spun in a circle, trying to focus his thoughts. What did he do? How could he fix this? "Fuckfuckfuck...*fuck!*"

"So you're upset."

He narrowed his eyes on Theron. "You're in my head, you son of a bitch. You know how fucked up this is!"

"You haven't broken your word to him."

"Yeah, I'll tell that to Brett. I'm sure he'll understand."

Theron lowered his voice, meeting his stare. "Doesn't it matter that you've kept your promise to me?"

"Not if serving you means I lose Brett." Rowan jogged to the bar. "Hand me my keys."

Falcon tossed them. "Great, now Tac's going to be an asshole again."

"Doesn't look like Ice Man will be much fun tonight either." Ten stuffed his hands into his pockets. "One thing is sure, tonight is bound to be a bitch."

Rowan rushed through the club. If he could get to Brett, he could make him understand. Appearances were often misleading. That's all this was. A simple misunderstanding. All he had to do was talk to Brett, convince him to trust him.

Rowan, I know it's painful, but maybe letting him go would be better for everyone.

"Get out of my head."

You know I can't.

"No, I know you won't. But this time you don't have a choice. I'm done. I won't lose Brett because of your bloodlust. Someone else can see to your needs. No more. I'm done."

We've already had this conversation. There is no out. No choice.

Even in his head, he could feel Theron's irritation escalating.

"Do what you have to...and so will I."

Theron's roar thundered through his head but Rowan didn't pause. He scrambled to his vehicle and took off after Brett.

Memories rolled through his mind, realizing how much he'd risked by lying to Brett. Passion, friendship, a partner. A month ago, he'd feared giving up the high of hosting—a pleasure that paled in comparison to Brett's passion.

Pressure squeezed his head. Fuck him. He'd caused the pain in Brett's eyes. Rowan felt the betrayal like a physical blow.

He double-parked on the street, unwilling to waste time looking for parking. He sprinted to the building and burst into the lobby. Regardless of what Glen said, he was going up to Brett's.

"Good evening, sir." Glen didn't even try to stop him.

"Do you need to buzz Mr. Kirsch?"

"Oh no, that won't be necessary—per Mr. Kirsch's instructions this afternoon."

The elevator dinged and the doors opened.

"Thank you."

The ride to the sixth floor seemed to take forever, seconds feeling like minutes. Finally he stepped out. His feet felt like anvils as he walked to 618.

He stared at the door, not really knowing what to say. If he could hold him, kiss him, make love to him, he could show Brett how he felt. He thought that was what he'd been doing for the last month. He took a deep breath, willing his thundering heartbeat to slow, and knocked.

No answer.

He knocked again.

Fuck. Brett wasn't going to open the door, didn't want to see or talk to him. Well, damn it, too bad. He tried the handle, surprised it turned easily in his palm.

The familiar furnishings, scents and anticipation nearly brought him to tears. He was not giving this up—not Brett, not the friendship, sex or the feeling of being home when they were together. He didn't want to wake and find that Brett wasn't there. Nor could he live with the ghost of what might have been if he didn't try to make things right between them.

"Brett?"

He moved through the quiet apartment. Slowly he climbed the stairs to the loft bedroom. He paused at the landing.

Lights from the city shown through the window and cast Brett's tall, striking silhouette in shadow. Breath froze in his lungs.

"I'm sorry."

Brett's head dropped forward and his shoulders slumped. "I'm too old for this shit. Go back to the club, Rowan. Back to Tac. That's where you belong."

Rowan stalked closer. "No, I belong here with you."

Brett gave a snort. "Yeah, that's what I thought too."

That's when Rowan noticed the swing. He walked to the contraption and ran his finger over the padded nylon strap. "This is new."

"Yeah, I guess we both had a surprise planned tonight." He spun around. "Oh but wait. I wasn't supposed to be surprised. You were the one with the look of shock on your face at being discovered. I guess I fucked up your night when I showed up at the club earlier than expected." He tilted his head to the side. "You know, I had my suspicions. But oh no, you assured me nothing was going on even though I knew in my gut," he thumped his abdominals with his fist, "that you were lying." He raked his fingers through his hair. "I always trust my instincts. Maybe that's why I went early. I wanted to be sure." He faced Rowan. "I wanted to know that you were in this with me." He puffed a breath.

"I can explain." He could tell him the truth. Would he even believe him?

Pain slashed through his head. Theron—wielding his power, drowning out Brett, the room. His voice drilled into Rowan's head, crippling him with its intensity.

I protect what's mine.

Tears blurred his vision. The pain intensified. He tried to focus on Brett but the pain...

"Are you listening to me?" Brett crossed to the nightstand and ripped the drawer from the rails. Toys scattered across the floor. "All of this was for you, for us. I wanted to give you everything I am. Offer my home, my love..." He chuckled with disbelief. "My life."

"God, that's everything I want too."

"Was tonight an isolated incident? Or do you spend every night with Tac before work?"

He couldn't answer, not without losing everything.

"You don't belong to me. You and Tac have made that clear. You've told me things you thought I needed to hear." He blew out a disgusted breath. "You lied to me and you didn't have to. I was an easy fuck on the first day. You son of a bitch, I fell in love with you."

Rowan's stomach tightened with emotions he didn't think he could ever feel. "I love you too."

"Get out." Brett's lips formed a thin line. He stood rigidly but couldn't conceal the trembling of his body. Rowan shuddered with the same fear and broken promises.

He wanted to say the words, to tell him about Theron and his *addiction* to the vampire. He hadn't been strong enough to break from the hold of hosting. Theron's influence over his mind increased. In the end, all he could do was stare at Brett, endure the piercing gaze, the love turning to hate.

"I said get out," he whispered and turned his back to Rowan.

Rowan dropped his head, seeing the contents of the drawer scattered across the floor. Crushing loss seized his soul. He belonged here. He belonged to Brett.

Brett knew it too, deep in his soul where truth existed. Rowan could prove it and he could prove to Brett that this was where he belonged – not The Catacombs. First he had to confront Theron.

Chapter Eight

With the vampire still in his thoughts, Rowan would have expected Theron to be waiting. Maybe Theron's arrogance demanded that Rowan prowls through the club searching for him. Whatever the reason, Theron controlled their confrontation. He controlled the club and until the Zenith faded, he controlled Rowan.

"You're back," Falcon said.

"Not for long. Where's Tac?"

"Tac? Tac isn't participating in the club tonight." He cocked an eyebrow. "Theron is pissed and since his mood changed when you left, I'd say you're the reason he's upset. Again. So I don't think going to him now will be good for your health."

"I'm sure my smiling face shows I give a shit."

He paused, hearing Theron's chuckle flitting into his thoughts.

"Never mind, I know where he is."

He headed, for the last time, into rooms beneath the club.

Don't come to me, Rowan. I'm in no mood for your tantrums or defiance.

Rowan kept moving forward.

Pursue this, pursue Brett, and there is only one conclusion. Go back to your apartment, think about all you risk and tomorrow, come to my bed.

"Fuck you."

My thoughts exactly.

He came upon the door. He reached to push the door open but his muscles burned, tightened. Theron controlled his movement.

You see now how much power I have over you. Do you think I've enjoyed watching you turn your back on me? You were special, he roared.

"I'm sorry if you don't understand. I want more than this." He spoke low, hating that Theron couldn't—no, he wouldn't—empathize. He didn't want to. "This is it, Theron. When I leave tonight, I'm not coming back."

Are you willing to accept your fate, no matter how horrifying? What if the very thing you want most costs you your life?

"I'll take my chances." He fought against the invisible force. "I know what I'm doing."

Do you?

"You won't ever let me go."

The only way to Brett is through me. If you can live with that choice.

The door gave way and Rowan stumbled into Theron's chamber. Theron stood in the center of the room. Eyes blazed crimson, lit with an intense fire from within as the daggers dropped from his gums.

Power rolled off Theron in waves.

Rowan stepped forward into the darkened chamber.

"You might find this choice more difficult than living without Brett."

He'd take the risk. He closed the space between them. Theron opened his mouth. Saliva dripped from his fangs. A feral cry rent the air. He grasped Rowan tightly, bent him over the couch and sank his fangs deep into his neck.

This wasn't feeding. There wasn't the high from hosting. Gut-wrenching aches pierced his heart. His? Theron's? He didn't know. Heat burned, consumed, overwhelmed. Rushing blood flowed like a raging river. Theron's heart pounded in his head.

Remember the sound because you will never feel your own again.

He bit harder.

Never know warmth and never reach orgasm unless in the Zenith.

More blood drained from his body. His limbs weakened. Theron continued to gorge.

Whispers of Theron's ancient language flowed through his mind—the language of vampires.

With time your understanding will grow. Our laws are unspoken. Vampires see unimaginable beauty. Together we will share pleasure you've never known.

He couldn't speak, couldn't tell Theron that while he sired him, giving him eternal life, he would never belong to the vampire. Tonight their association ended. For love, he gave his life.

Theron heard his thoughts even as blackness darkened his mind.

I will miss more than just the taste of you, Rowan.

Rowan drifted on a weightless cloud of euphoria. Theron held him tighter. Warm wetness dripped onto his flesh. Theron's salty tears. Soft, gentle, heavy with remorse.

I'm sorry. This is the only way.

He knew, understood and accepted. Theron had never lied to him. Brett hadn't either. Brett loved him.

The world went dark.

* * * * *

Warm coppery sweetness coated his tongue and pooled in his mouth. He had to swallow or choke. More blood. Thick, slippery...delicious. He wanted more. He greedily lapped at the flow. So good. Need more. He was cold, shivering and aching.

The blood was warm and soothing...and arousing. His cock throbbed and his balls tingled with fiery heat.

More blood. The need to bite overwhelmed. He parted his lips and pain erupted in his mouth. His gums swelled, his need intensified.

Bloodlust. *Oh God, what have I done?* He reared back, instantly craving more of the sweet elixir.

Touching his teeth, he slit his tongue. Blood bubbled to the surface.

Enough. Rowan, you must feed. Strong fingers cupped the back of his head and guided him back to the trickle of sweet, sweet blood.

He snarled, baring his teeth and bit hard into the softening flesh over Theron's heart. Theron moaned, arching into the pain.

Welcome to my world, Rowan.

Rowan collapsed on the floor in Theron's chamber. He felt strangely familiar. His same thoughts, same wants and needs. All involved Brett. There was also a void where his heart used to beat.

"I'm dead."

Theron whispered near his ear. "No, you are reborn. Better, stronger, hungrier."

He turned his face and stared at the man who had been his friend, his lover, his vampire. "I knew when I came to you what would happen but now I don't know what to do. Why don't I hear you in my thoughts?"

"Because now you are a voice in a crowded room." He gently touched Rowan's cheek, fingers trailing down along his face. "During the Zenith our connection is thousands of times stronger. You can go home to Brett. Your thoughts will be your own. Yes, I hear them, but it's different. You can call to me and I'll be there. I'll know when you're in danger and I'll know if you betray our sect. You're one of us now. We protect each other."

He sifted his fingers through Rowan's bangs. "How will you explain your new behavior to Brett? You must feed. Here in the club, you can feed and fuck slaves."

"No, I won't cheat on Brett. But the feeding..."

"With time your hunger increases." That explained why Theron fed so often.

"I'll figure it out." The fight left him and he was speaking to Theron, his friend. "I want to be with Brett. I'll do whatever I have to." He would drink blood from slaves in the club until he could drink from Brett.

"Do you think he'll be your blood slave?"

"No, never my slave." Although he would tell Brett everything. No more secrets. "I trust him, Theron. I love him."

"Then find a way to be together."

"A blood bond?"

"If he wants it, yes, for you I would sire him."

Rowan smiled. More than a moment, they could love an eternity. But first he had to go to him, show him how much his love meant and that Rowan wasn't willing to let him go.

As he walked out of The Catacombs, he realized the freedom he felt in his new form. Free to walk away from the club, from Theron and never look back. Before going to Brett's, he drove to his place. After a shower, he changed into his leather pants, a chain harness and knee-high combat boots. He finger combed his hair and slipped his tongue vibrator into his back pocket. Not only was Brett going to acknowledge their relationship, but Rowan was determined to show him all he'd miss by not giving them another chance.

Finally he fingered the sterling collar. When Brett had tossed the drawer, the collar had rolled and rested near his feet. Before that moment, he never would have considered becoming property. Wasn't that why men wore them, to be tethered to their masters?

Rowan had seen the passion behind the gesture. In a perfect, wonderful way, Brett was giving Rowan the life he wanted. For Rowan, the collar represented a promise – the promise of a partnership.

He brought the collar to his neck, spun it around, and looking in the mirror, locked the bar into place. He put the key in his pocket, headed out the door and went to claim his man.

* * * * *

Anticipation tightened his stomach. Wearing the leather, chains and the collar had his body suspended in a state of arousal that had him hard, aching and ready.

Brett – for eternity.

How would Brett accept his new body? Already he felt stronger, his sense of smell heightened and his vision had become more acute. Headlights from the oncoming vehicles hurt his eyes. He narrowed his vision and wove through traffic to get downtown. Less than fifteen minutes later, he parked in front of the building. The lights were off on the sixth floor. But he had no doubt Brett was there. Probably feeling like shit, the same way he had been feeling, and wishing they could turn back time.

If only they could.

Rowan paused on the way into the building. Shit. He wasn't wearing a coat. Leather and chains didn't leave much to the imagination and Brett had an image to uphold. He sprinted back to the car. It wasn't much but he found an old T-shirt on the floorboard in the backseat.

He shrugged it on and went back toward the building.

Glen greeted him at the door. Christ, he could smell the blood pumping through the man's veins. Not that he felt like sinking his teeth into his neck, but more like when he smelled barbeque on a summer afternoon, it made his mouth water and his gums ache.

The elevator took him to the sixth floor. Once in the hall he stripped off his shirt and dropped it into the garbage can right outside the elevator doors. With each step toward Brett, his nipples tightened. He dug into his pocket and pulled out the key to the collar.

He took a deep breath. Truth time — the *whole* truth.

Knock. Knock. He waited then knocked again.

Finally the door swung open. Brett, in loose linen pants, leaned against the door. The air between them crackled with tension-filled energy. Rowan couldn't breathe as Brett's gaze raked up his legs, paused on his crotch before taking in his torso, finally locking on the collar.

"I wondered where it went." He blinked then his half-lidded eyes met Rowan's. "I'm tired, pissed and just want to go back to bed."

"Can we talk?"

"We don't have anything left to say so what do you want, Rowan?"

The key felt hot in his hand. He ran his finger over the shape then held it out to Brett. "I want to come home." The collar key rested in his open palm. Brett made no move to take it.

"Then go home." He started to close the door.

Rowan put his hand out. He gathered his strength and tamped down the fear firing through his blood. "Please, I'm not leaving. Damn it, Brett, just listen."

Brett opened the door and Rowan entered. Brett walked to the couch, plopped into the soft leather and took his half-finished drink from the table. "I'd offer you one but you don't drink."

"I'll take a beer."

Brett cocked an eyebrow. "Walking on the wild side, are you?"

"Something like that."

Brett went to the kitchen and returned with a longneck. "What about Tac?"

"I swear, there was never anything between Tac and me."

"I know what I saw."

"Actually you don't." Rowan sipped the beer. "Tac is the king of kink and while I want to wear your collar—for you alone—I have never been interested in the club scene. I've never lied about that."

"But you have lied to me?"

He stared at Brett. "Yes, I had to. I didn't have a choice."

"You always have a choice. Your words, not mine."

"Not this time and I can explain." He stood and paced to the windows. "I hope you'll believe me. I know you don't trust me." He pivoted and faced Brett. Damn, he was beautiful to look at, to touch, to love. "I'm going to trust you so that after we talk, you'll know you can trust me. Trust in us."

Brett leaned forward. "I'm listening."

"We both have secrets." He sighed and knew if they had any chance of making it, of being partners—forever—he had to tell him everything.

"I need to tell you about Theron."

"Who is Theron?"

"The man who found me on the streets, took me in and made me part of his family. Only Theron isn't a man at all." Pressure tightened Rowan's chest but Brett listened, focused and in doing so confirmed this was love, and this was trust. Rowan was home. "At the club I'm known as Ice Man, Theron is known as Tac. The Catacombs isn't just a fetish club, it's a lair for vampires. Theron is a vampire. And so am I."

Brett stared, disbelieving, but the strange tingle chasing along his spine told him that the words Rowan spoke were truth. Like puzzle pieces fitting into place, the full picture of the club became clear.

"Vampire?" Was it possible? Vampires only existed in stories, myth and legend. Some people believed vampires once existed. But then some people believed in global warming. Neither could be conclusively proven. "Rowan, that's crazy. You're not a vampire. They don't exist."

"Yes, they do. I do. All but seven went extinct in the sixteenth century."

Brett shook his head then guzzled the last of his drink.

"That no one knows of our existence isn't happenstance. It's a carefully guarded secret worth killing over. Killing," he said with a serious note in his voice. "Humans who know the truth end up serving them...us."

"If it's such a dangerous secret, why are you telling me?"

"Because I'm trusting in you and me." There was a long moment of silence between them.

"A vampire? But how?"

"Five hundred years ago a deadly disease ravaged the vampire species. They were nearly destroyed." Rowan sat on the couch, facing Brett. "But seven survived. Theron was one." He lowered his head. "Those seven control their own sects. Theron is unwavering in his rules. I couldn't tell you about my relationship with him." He lifted his gaze. "I've been his blood slave since the night he found me on the streets." He shook his head. "I can't explain the lure of hosting. It isn't vile or violent. Magic weaves between vampire and host. Maybe it's dark magic. They call it the Zenith. After the first time, I was hooked."

"Jesus, it sounds like a drug."

"In some ways, yes. A pure, unmatched high and I couldn't say no." He placed his hand on Brett's thigh. "Until I met you."

"So you're like a vampire blood slave to Theron?"

"No, blood slaves are human—but they are *slaves* to the hosting. Theron wouldn't let me go."

Brett covered Rowan's hand where it rested on his thigh. "You're cold."

Rowan gave a snort. "One of the many changes I'm going through." He gazed into Brett's eyes. "There was only one way out. Tonight Theron became my sire."

Brett swallowed, leaned back against the cushion and listened to Rowan spin an unbelievable tale. Only he did believe every heart-wrenching word that spilled from his lips. At times, Rowan's voice was whisper soft. Through it all, Brett was hit with the crushing weight of all Rowan had gone through for them to be together. He was humbled. He was hurt. He should've been there for him.

Indecision quickly and quietly became acceptance. "What does this mean for us?"

The first real smile curled Rowan's lips. "Nothing has to change tonight. I've known of vampires for a long time. In my own happy world, you'd choose to become vampire and make a blood bond with me and we'd spend eternity loving, laughing and fucking. Isn't that what every man wants?"

Fucking for eternity did sound nice. But vampire? He couldn't wrap his mind around it as reality, yet sitting with Rowan he knew, deep down, *knew* that Rowan spoke the truth.

Brett's heart pounded. There was so much to consider. He had kids, a public life and a reason to keep his private life private. As a vampire, Rowan needed the same thing.

"Do all vampires have blood slaves?"

Rowan shook his head. "No, a special connection happens during the Zenith. A vampire and his host can read each other's thoughts."

"Christ, so when we were together Theron really was there."

"That first night you told me to get Tac out of my head, I couldn't explain how impossible that would be or how much I wished I could. During the Zenith is also the only time a vampire feels warmth, only time he feels a heartbeat, and the only way he can orgasm."

Brett shifted and stood from the couch. He ran his fingers through his hair. "So who are you going to feed from?" Jealousy had knifed through his gut with the thought of Rowan fucking anyone else. This was worse. "And feeding arouses a vampire, right? Tac...Theron, whatever you want to call him was your lover because you fed his hunger."

"Yes. After the first night you and I were together, Theron and I came to an agreement. Blood without sex. When you saw us tonight, together, I was coming from his chamber."

Brett stood, facing the window. Rowan came up behind him and wrapped his arms around his torso. He placed a soft kiss to his neck. Brett flinched and jerked away. "What are you doing? Were you going to bite me?"

Rowan sucked in breath and closed his eyes. "No, but the desire is strong, like an increasing ache."

"Hunger pains?" Brett gasped as fangs dropped from Rowan's gums.

"I can't help it," he swore. "I want to bite, to feed. I want you. But I won't." He gritted his teeth and the fangs retracted. "But to be safe, you better keep your flesh away from my mouth. Fuck, I can smell your blood...and your arousal."

His cock was hard and pulsing. An invisible pull clutched at Brett. His veins swelled and his skin heated. "Why is it I want to feed you?"

"God, don't tease me. Remember what I told you. Once was never enough for me. What if it isn't for you?"

"Don't bite me." Brett turned and started up the stairs to the loft. He glanced over his shoulder. "Are you coming to bed?"

Rowan followed him up the stairs. "Brett, what if I can't control myself? I've never fed, never experienced the hunger that I've seen overtake Theron."

Brett hooked a finger through the chains crisscrossing Rowan's chest and gave a tug. "I know you won't hurt me." He closed the space between their faces. "I trust you," he whispered.

Brett's cock throbbed. He was already under the powerful effects of some unknown intoxication. *Eternity*. Or he could have tonight.

Brett glided his lips over Rowan's. Lips parted and he slid his tongue into the cool, cavernous depths of Rowan's mouth. A low groan rumbled from his chest. In a flare of desire, he had his hands in Rowan's hair, angling his head and dipping in for tastes of his delicious mouth. His cock raged in his pants and his ass clenched. He was hot. So hot. His skin burned and his heart thundered within his chest. Blood pumped hard through him, swelling his veins, especially the ones running the length of his cock. Burning need pooled in his balls.

They stumbled on the stairs, kissing, touching and stripping. Clothing littered the floor. Brett led them to the bed, dragging Rowan down as he dropped to his back. Rowan rested chest to chest, sliding his mouth over Brett's. "My gums ache. What if I can't stop? Somewhere in those toys, you didn't happen to buy a ball gag?"

Brett laughed. "God, I'm glad you're home." Brett clutched fistfuls of Rowan's hair and ravaged his mouth. Teeth clinked. Tongues sparred. Rough passion-laced kisses.

Rowan jerked his head back and leveraged higher. His neck stretched toward the ceiling. The collar shimmered in the moonlight. Long fangs dropped from his bleeding gums. Then he glanced at Brett again.

Fear should have been clawing at Brett but he wasn't afraid. He was mesmerized. Rowan's mouth was red and swollen and his eyes blazed with an intensity that stole the breath from Brett's lungs.

"I won't bite. I swear it. But I need to fuck." Rowan trailed a finger between Brett's legs. He spread his thighs and Rowan slid deeper.

"Yes," he whispered as Rowan pressed against his anus. Brett had hunger of his own. Rowan. Hot, hard and seated to the root within his ass.

He shoved against Rowan's chest. "Fuck me. Now." He flipped onto his hands and knees and crawled to the center of the bed. He couldn't wait, didn't need foreplay, just prep for penetration. He grabbed the lube, turned on his knees and braced Rowan's hips with his hands. He sucked his cock, eating the length and savoring the smooth, solid shaft. Relaxing his jaw, he took him deeper, feeling the knob thrusting into the back of his throat. As he pulled back, he swirled his tongue, licking and relishing the flavor of his lover. Brett released Rowan's cock and let his gaze travel over Rowan's muscular body. He wore nothing but the collar.

His vampire. Saliva dripped from his white and gleaming fangs.

"Condom." He stroked the length of Rowan's shaft.

Rowan covered his hand. "We won't need them now. Vampires don't carry or transmit human disease."

Brett shifted and knelt on his hands and knees. Rowan spread his cheeks, drizzling lubricant over his hole.

He didn't wait, just grasped his shaft at the base and slowly inched into Brett's body. The burning pleasure intensified. "Oh fuck." Before Rowan was fully seated in his ass, Brett's balls tightened and he came. Hot spurts of cum shot from his cock. Rowan growled and slammed deep. He thrust in wild fury, his sac slapping against Brett with each stroke.

Brett's mind numbed and his body electrified. He grabbed his cock and squeezed. He couldn't hold back. White-hot flashes burned through him. Every nerve sizzled. Molten heat creamed around his hole and dripped from his slit. Holy shit! He came again. Spasms racked him. Muscles tightened and released. Rowan's smooth cock invaded like the steel shaft of a sword. Hard, unbending and invincible. The pleasure in Brett's cock bordered on pain. His balls throbbed. Rowan gripped his hips, thrusting with jarring force. Stroke after stroke. "I can't take another one. Rowan, I'm going to come again." He cried out as he convulsed. His muscles liquefied.

"Fuck, I can't come," Rowan hissed. Still, he continued to pound into Brett's ass. The frustration took a on a sweeping pitch, desperate for completion. He leaned over Brett's back grasping him around the waist and continued the long slide of his cock into Brett's ass.

Brett turned his head to the side. His veins throbbed, his body spent, yet neither he nor Rowan was satisfied. They weren't complete. He reached an arm up and cupped the back of Rowan's head.

"Brett..." There was desperate longing in his voice.

"I'm making my choice." He guided Rowan's mouth to his neck.

Cool breath bathed his skin. Rowan's lips softly kissed. "I love you." Fangs pierced, sinking into his vein. Blood squirted to the surface and Rowan bit harder. Brett froze, held immobile by the stinging pain. Then like a warm elixir slipping through his veins, he softened. Yet, Rowan's cock remained erect. He was driven, plunging his rod deep

into Brett. His mouth latched onto his neck, sucking, drawing blood. Gulping sounds blended with wet sounds of their joined bodies.

Mine.

Brett started at the voice in his head. *Rowan?*

Rowan licked Brett's neck, stopping the blood flow. He reared back, thrust to the hilt until his groin pressed tight to Brett's ass and erupted. The mental connection intensified. Wave after wave of tremors crashed over Brett. *Rowan's release.* He felt the orgasm with Rowan. The sensation in his ass and the presence in his head careered him into another orgasm. His cock was dry, having nothing left to secrete with each pulsing contraction. Finally, he collapsed to the bed, pulling Rowan down beside him, into his embrace. He closed his eyes, sighed and kissed Rowan's temple.

Why?

"Because you wear my collar." He ran his finger over the smooth steel. "Now we belong to each other."

About the Author

KyAnn Waters lives in Utah with her husband, two children and two dogs. She spends her days writing and her evenings with her family. She enjoys sporting events on the television, thrillers on the big screen and hot scenes on the pages of her books.

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