



# LOBELEI AND DARIN

Dark Guardian Book 4

T. S.

Walker

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Lorelei & Darin  
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LOBELEI □ DARIN  
DARK GUARDIAN FOUR

BY

TS WALKER

## DEDICATION

*To my family and friends who enjoyed my writings and stand by me. To my editor, thank you so much for all your feedback.*

## CHAPTER ONE

Lorelei Riese peered wide-eyed at the home she has lived in for the past three years. Hot, warm tears stung her eyes at the mere thought of going inside. One tear spilled down her cheek, cooling her skin from the chill of the October wind. Her stomach tightened in knots as sickness overtook her. She tried to form a smile, at the same time, reaching deep inside her soul, trying to mask the anger and pain rousing deep inside her.

She knew if she went into the home with this much pain stirring inside her, the guards who constantly surrounded her fiancé, Vincent, would feel her grief and notify him. She was also aware that Vincent would be angry with her upon this discovery. Vincent only needed a collar and a leash and they would be master and dogs. The thought of Zak and Terrace on a leash made her smile. As quickly as happiness filled her, one look at the home again and the smile quickly faded. Her happiness turned back to pain and misery. How she could make herself feel joy when she did not have joy in her heart or her life?

The house itself did not make her cry. She never saw a more beautiful home than this one. It resembled an Italianate style home. The sun brought out its sheer

beauty when it shone from behind the gray clouds. The home was painted snow white with dark brown trimming around the panels of the roof and windows. It had a low-pitched roof, large, decorative brackets beneath widely overhanging eaves that were tall with narrow windows. An elaborate wraparound porch really brought out the true beauty of the house.

After being built in the early eighteen hundreds, Vincent...*sigh*...restored it five years ago, making it more modernized than ever. Everyone, including herself, fell in love with it at first sight. Along with the outside beauty, the inside made you have to stop and stare at it to take it all in. Vincent had installed a stainless steel kitchen, which she never cooked in, or would ever get a chance to cook in. She had more fireplaces than she could ever need, along with beautiful furniture, lovely paintings and sculptures. Vincent had brought every high tech piece of equipment he could think of, from computers, big screen televisions, to a topnotch security system. A woman could not wish for a better place to live. She loved her home. She considered it her place of peace and her hellhole.

Lorelei wiped the tears from her eyes, gripped her shopping bags tighter in her hands, while forcing herself to walk toward the home. She had to go inside no matter what so there was no need standing outside freezing to death. Freezing to death would be a good way out, but she did not think she could commit suicide. She only wished that her distress had faded enough so neither Zak nor Terrace would be able to detect it. If they did, then she had a long time of pain to

suffer for just being sad. Lorelei wanted to cry at the thought. She could not be sad or too happy. Both emotions would get her into a lot of trouble.

Looking up at the sky, small flakes of snow began to fall. What a wonderful day to feel like crap. She opened her mouth, tasting the few flakes as they danced along her tongue. The front door flew open and Francesca, the housekeeper, rushed out in the cold wind to greet her. Lorelei closed her mouth to look at the woman making her way toward her in the skimpy maid's outfit.

"Ms. Riese," Francesca's voice spoke softly, with a hint of fear. "Where have you been? We have been so worried about you." She reached for the bags. "Give me those."

Lorelei snapped her teeth together, not wanting to say anything out of line. Vincent paid Francesca to make their lives easier. And she had. However, there were times when she got on Lorelei's nerve—like now when she just wanted everyone to leave her alone. She could carry her own bags up to her room. She had been doing it since she could remember. Now, she did not have a choice in the matter. Yeah, she knew some people would love this luxury. To have a person fall at their feet so they could walk on them to avoid walking in a mud puddle had to be the good life. She, on the other hand, did not want to live that life. She wanted to live a normal existence, with a normal fiancé, doing normal work. Lorelei snorted. Yeah, as normal of a life as one could have when their boyfriend happened to be a real, live werewolf. She could not have a normal life because of that one reason.

"It's too cold for you to be walking," Francesca told her, bringing Lorelei back to reality. "Why did you not take a car? You have three of them."

Lorelei looked down at her hands, turning them over to look at her palms, then back to her knuckles. Her hands were frost bitten and they hurt from the cold air. She forgot to grab a pair gloves when she snuck out. Her knuckles were red from straining to hold her fist closed tightly in an effort not to strangle her maid. Her long, sharp nails bit into the palms of her hands and she welcomed the pain. She needed the pain. "I needed the time away," Lorelei responded after making sure that she had calmed down some. "Walking was not that bad."

"But it's too cold to be out walking. Look at you. You look dreadful. Your skin is too white and Mr. Cochran will not be too pleased with me for letting you go out alone."

Arrggg...why did they all worry about what Vincent would think? It was always Vincent this or Vincent that. What about her feelings? What about the fact that on her next birthday she would be thirty-five years old and she could not go to the restroom without someone knowing what she had to do. Damn it! What a frustrating life. "It's okay, Francesca. I am not harmed." Lorelei lifted her hands in the air, spinning to let Francesca get a good look at her. "Not even a stain on my clothes."

"No, it is not. At least you could have taken one of the guards with you. There are people always looking to kidnap or hurt someone in your place. You left and did not let anyone know of your whereabouts. That's



not how we do things, Ms. Riese.”

“I know, Francesca,” she replied, not wanting to argue with her. “Terrace and Zak were still asleep when I left. You know how they are after a change.”

“Yes. I know, Ms. Riese. I do not want to see any harm come to you and you know that.”

Francesca did not mean any harm. She only looked out for her well-being. She nudged her back, pushing her toward the house.

“Well, Mr. Cochran has been worried about you. Every ten minutes or so he looks out the window for you to come home and with you not telling anyone of your whereabouts, he got worried when I told him that you did not even take your cell with you. He planned to go searching for you if you were not home in a couple of minutes.”

“No need to worry. I am a big girl,” Lorelei spluttered, still walking in front of Francesca. Lorelei stopped walking, finally understanding what Francesca had said. She turned looking into Francesca’s blue eyes. Her tongue darted out of her mouth, touching her chapped lips. She knew that her already pale skin paled more when the blood drained from her face at the thought of Vincent being home. “Vincent is home?” Her voice trembled with each word.

Francesca nodded, her long, black ponytail bobbing up and down with her head.

Vincent was not scheduled to return home until tomorrow night. After his three nights of running in the wild, he usually stayed an extra night to... Lorelei quickly vanquished the thought from her mind.

Vincent explained to her that he stayed an extra night to insure his role as leader, but she knew the truth. He stayed so he could have sex with other women. As much as the thought should bother her, in this point in her life, she did not care what Vincent did when he went out for his run. When he was not home, he did not bother her and she liked it that way. "Shit," Lorelei mumbled. "How long?"

"Sorry," Francesca's voice grew thicker with her Spanish accent. "I don't understand your question."

Lorelei wanted to scowl at the woman, but could not get upset at Francesca because she did not understand her question. If that were the case, she would get upset with half of England. She did not understand what half of them said and Vincent, being the man who he was, did not give her permission to learn another language. God, how could she have gotten into this sort of life? Better yet, why could she not leave? She wanted to leave Vincent. She truly thought about leaving him hundreds, no thousands of times. It would be easy to just slip off when he left for three days and hide until he forgot about her. She could do it, but her body would never walk out, though her mind screamed otherwise. Her present state trapped her in this situation. Plain and simple. Lorelei took a calming breath, knowing she could not take out her anger on Francesca. "How long has Vincent been back home?"

Francesca smiled in understanding. "Oh. Three hours." Then Francesca motioned with her hand for her to go inside.

Lorelei wanted to turn and run away. She wished she could crawl into a small hole and stay there until

she got her life together. What she would not do to have a life again. She had a life once back in South Dakota. She had family and friends who loved her. She was just a secretary at the hospital, but she loved every minute of it. So what did she do? She let it all go for a man who did not love her as much as he claimed to have loved her. If he did, he would not be out whoring around every chance he got.

Lorelei reached the door. Her hands shook so hard she could not get a grip on the knob. After three failed attempts to open the door, she inhaled, then blew out a long breath before grabbing the doorknob. The moment she opened the door, warmth from the home flooded her, warming her body instantly. It felt so good to be inside. She entered the house, looking around to see if she spotted Vincent. Not seeing him, she headed for the stairs. The heel of her leather boots tapped over the intricate designer cream tiles lining the floor as she walked.

The crackle from the fire made her turn to the fireplace on the far side of the room. The perfume of fresh baked bread and something else she could not make out filled the air. Lorelei could tell Francesca had been cooking all day. She inhaled the scent, loving the smell. Her stomach rumbled from the aroma. She had not had anything to eat since noon and it was nearly six.

“Mr. Cochran,” Francesca said to the man walking up to the top of the stairs.

Lorelei slowly looked up at him and her body locked in place. She stopped in the middle of the room, watching him come down the stairs. No, not tonight.

He could be a dangerous man when he wanted and right now she knew from the vibes he projected how truly pissed off he was at her. She wanted to take a step backward, but her feet refused to move. She met his hazel eyes from afar. His eyebrows arched at her. A snarl formed on his lips, but he did not growl. He would not show what type of man he really was—not in front of everyone. Yep, definitely not in a good mood.

Lorelei frowned at Vincent. It had to be a chilling ten degrees outside, even though they had the fireplaces warming the inside, he wore no shirt, his tanned skin glowing in the dancing fire from the fireplace. He wore black slacks that sat on his hips, looking so sexy. He didn't have any shoes on. She would love to run her hands down his body right now. She also noticed his golden hair with brown streaks was out of place. This was something Vincent did not let many people see. He groomed himself for perfection.

Behind him were his guards, Zak Acosta and Terrance Pruitt. His lapdogs to be more precise. If Vincent said jump, their reply would be *how high*. They did any and everything to please him and right now, she knew they had told him that she had sneaked off without their knowledge...and it was true. She did not need them following her around, grumbling about her taking so long while shopping. When she went shopping, she took her time, trying on everything, looking at what she wanted, and admiring what she purchased.

She had to do something while she went out

shopping. Vincent did not allow her to have many friends. One to be exact. Jade Taylor and she hit it off the moment they met about two years ago. Jade loved going shopping with her, but she did not come around as much as she use to. It had to be Vincent and his ghouls scaring her off.

Lorelei watched as they descended the stairs.

Zak, short, five-foot-six inches, walked behind Vincent. Zak was very short for his type of people—werewolves. Do not let his height fool you as Lorelei once witnessed Zak take down, in one movement, a man three times as taller and bigger than he was. His brown eyes met hers and he smiled. She knew that he had read her emotions. Werewolves could not read minds, but they read emotions. He knew she thought about him and that pissed her off.

She quickly looked at Terrace—that tall piece of crap. Six feet-two inches of nothing but trouble. Out of the two, she really did not like Terrace. She never knew why and could not give a reasonable answer, but she knew deep down in her gut he only stirred up trouble. Trouble between her and Vincent. Trouble between Vincent and Zak. Terrace enjoyed when he got someone in trouble.

Vincent stopped in front of her. His two lap dogs went up to Francesca.

“Let me have those,” Zak spoke, his deep voice sliding down Lorelei’s spine making her want to gag.

Zak took one bag and Terrance grabbed the other.

“Thank you, boys,” Francesca said, patting them both on the shoulder. “What would I do without you?”

“It’s our pleasure,” Terrance responded before

heading back up the stairs, already knowing where the bags go.

Francesca walked into the kitchen without a word.

“Good evening, love,” Vincent’s voice spoke softly, but was thick with anger even though he tried not to show it.

He bent and kissed her on her cheek, making her flinch. Her black eyes widened when the smell of perfume, none that she owned, assaulted her nose. She wrinkled her nose, wanting to move away from him, but stayed, letting his warm lips linger on her cheek before moving gracefully across her cheekbones, then to her mouth. His lips moved over hers slowly...demanding, and controlling. His arms wrapped around her waist and he tugged her closer to his body, deepening the kiss she was trying to resist.

Her arms were limp at her sides, her body cold on the inside from his touch, his kiss, and his scent. How dare he touch her, kiss her and try to make her want him when he reeked of another woman?

His hands tightened painfully around her waist, making her whimper into his mouth. His teeth nipped at her bottom lip, cutting deeply until he drew blood. She jumped from the pain. Vincent knew how to take blood from her and make it the most erotic feeling she could experience. She knew that he made her endure pain because he wanted her to be in pain.

Her hands went up to his shoulders, wanting to push him away from his attack. She knew what he tried to do to her and she would not allow him to achieve it. He wanted to make sure she had not been with another man. She had not. He could have asked

instead of doing this to her. This was assault. This was pain. It made her want to kick his ass all over the foyer.

His deep growl stopped her from pushing him away. She knew better than to challenge him, especially when he wanted to show her who ran the household. His warm tongue slid over the bite mark, taking in the little blood he drew, healing the cut as he did.

“Get a room,” Zak’s voice teased in the background.

Vincent kissed her for several more moments before releasing her. His fingers in her sides eased, followed by the burning sensation from the bruises she knew would be there.

“We have one,” Vincent snarled. “This entire home is *our* room. If I want to make love to my fiancée right here, you two better get out.”

Zak looked over them piercingly as he walked passed them.

Lorelei looked up into Vincent’s eyes. Her body began to tremble. Her hands shaking from fear over the passion he tried to induce in her body. No one could feel passion when their partner wanted to do bad things to them and she did not know why. Anger flared through him like fire in the fireplace and she happened to be standing too close to the fire. It burned. Her mind received everything from Vincent because he wanted her to get them. The main one happened to be anger toward her.

“You are hungry, my love, yes?” he asked, looking deep into her eyes.

They were so close not even air could get between them. She felt the magnificent bulge pressing against

her stomach and two years ago, she would have taken him on the stairs in front of everyone. Now she did not desire his touch at all. It repulsed her, sickened her and yet, she still *wanted* his touch. Why was she so mixed up? Craving, wanting, longing, hating, repulsion, and anger. They went together to a point she did not know one from the other. He had her mind so confused she was surprised she could still dress herself. Lorelei bit her lip, a smile tugged at the corner of her lips. "Yes," she answered honestly.

Vincent looked at Terrace who made his way downstairs. "Tell Francesca we will eat in fifteen minutes. I need to talk to my beautiful fiancée for a moment. It has been three days since we have seen each other."

*No!* Lorelei cried in her mind before she could stop it. It spilled out and she knew Vincent had received her answer loud and clear. His gaze shot to hers at her mental cry and a low rumble began deep in his chest. The growl let her know not to move or speak, not even in her mind.

"I have missed you, my love," he added, then gave her butt a quick pat before releasing her.

"Make it quick," Zak told them.

"Like that's new," Terrance teased.

Vincent snarled at the two of them joking, but did not say a single word.

Lorelei knew that Vincent joked with his boy toys a lot, but right at this moment, he did not want to joke, talk or play. He wanted to punish her. Zak and Terrace had to notice it also because both stopped smiling and headed into the kitchen area.



“After you,” Vincent said to her.

Lorelei went up to their room, the tiles on the floor quickly changing to a dark brown, shagged carpet when she made it to the second floor. She went into their room and noticed the comforter pulled back on the bed, exposing the white sheets. Pillows lay all over the bed and floor. When she left this morning, Francesca had made the bed.

Not only that, the aroma of sex lingered in the room and the same perfume she smelled on him was faint but still there. A cool breeze filled the room and she noticed the window opened slightly. Vincent only did that when he wanted a smell to fade. Lorelei could not detect a woman’s release, but could smell Vincent’s. It was strong as if it happened only minutes before.

She studied the room to see if she spotted any other evidence. Her body began to shake again. Her head began to pound. She wanted to scratch Vincent’s eyes out. The bastard had another woman in her bed. Maybe that bitch Eve Dudley. The scent had to be hers. She spun around, not seeing, only feeling Vincent’s large hand as his palm made impact with the side of her face. Lorelei let out a strangled cry. Her body lifted off the ground, flew through the air, before landing backward on the bed.

She grabbed her face in more shock than pain. Tears streamed down her face as she looked into his now red eyes looming over her. The hit left a constant ringing deep in her ears. He had not even hit her that hard. Vincent would never leave a mark on her face where someone could see it. He hit her with his werewolf mojo, as she called it. It packed a hell of a punch, but at

the same time, left no marks.

“Where the fuck were you all this time?” His voice sounded dark, dangerous, and menacing.

He grabbed a fist full of her black hair, holstering her up into the air before she could get the words formed in her mind. His other hand wrapped around her neck, and he released her hair. He held her, not applying any pressure to leave a mark, just enough to hurt. Lorelei reached for his hand, but stopped at his growl.

“Answer me now, Lorelei.”

If he were not choking the life out of her, she would answer. Did he think she could speak when she could not breathe? Geez! How crazy was he? “I went shopping,” she said between breaths.

“Since this morning? You snuck out of the house, went God knows where with whomever you wanted to go with. You should know before you leave to let myself, and in my absence, Zak or Terrace know where you are going so one of them can escort you. What is your problem? Are you trying to get yourself killed?”

“I was...” She would never tell him how lonely life was when he left. Correction, while he went out for his three-day run of the full moon with his werewolf buddies. When he left, she sat here alone, crying constantly, knowing that he was out having sex with a werewolf. She smelled another’s scent all over his body, letting her know that he had recently been with another woman. Not only out in his werewolf form, but in human and in her bed. *Her bed!*

“I can and will be with whomever I want to, Lorelei,” he growled, reading her emotions. “You, on

the other hand, cannot. If I would have tasted another man in your blood, you would not be able to be seen in public for weeks." He released her.

She dropped to the ground, staggering to stay upright. Lorelei coughed loudly before looking at him. "I don't need to have another man's dick inside me," she snarled. "I don't need to feel another man's touch. I am faithful to you, always have been. You seem to not be able to keep your dick in your pants." She stood straight, looking into his eyes. "In my room, Vincent? You had another woman in my room? How disrespectful is that?" She pushed his limits. She knew it when his eyes changed from red to golden again. A dark red lined his eyes, making him look evil and ready to kill.

"I can fuck anyone I want. It's not your decision." He grabbed her shirt. "Talk to me that way again and you're going to have to take a trip to the dentist soon." He shoved her away.

Tears still flowed down her cheeks unchecked as she watched him.

He grabbed his shirt from the chair and pulled it over his muscular arms.

She swallowed and more tears slid down her face. Why could she not walk away from him? Why did she stay? Her mind forced her to go, but once again, her body would not follow.

\* \* \* \*

Vincent watched as Lorelei tried to control her tears as they flowed down her lovely face. He hated to see her

cry, but that's how he kept her in line. Fear. She *had* to fear him. Loyalty. Without that, he had no control. He almost hated to do that to her. Almost. He had to keep her in check or no wolf would respect him if he let her do as she pleased.

"You are not a werewolf yet, Lorelei," he said looking at her after several minutes of silence. "I cannot take you when I am in werewolf form. If I do, I would likely kill you. I will convert you in two days when I am the leader of the Corvina Clan. You will be my wife, my mate and my eternal lover." He smiled at her, his eyes burning a heated trail down her body.

His lovely Lorelei. Her long black hair touched the middle of her back. He loved women with long hair. She had the blackest eyes he had the pleasure of looking into. If he had not been so upset with her, he would have noticed her outfit. She wore a long black leather skirt, hugging her every curve. She knew he loved the look of leather on her and that's why she wore it. He noticed a blood-red blouse with pearl buttons shown from underneath her jacket.

His body hardened and, even though he had let Eve give him a quick blowjob a moment ago, right now, he wanted Lorelei. He cared for Lorelei and the thought of her not being here, waiting, wanting, craving him the moment he walked through the door, angered him.

He took most of his anger out on Eve's throat, cumming quickly, hard, but unsatisfied. He quickly dismissed her, knowing Eve wanted his body, but he left her that way and took a shower. He had to or his beast would have taken over and he would have done worse to Eve than he had.

He hated to see Lorelei cry, but having her know her place as his other half would take discipline. He wanted to hug her, comfort her. If he did, he would seem weak in the eyes of his people. If he showed the first sign of weakness, the first male werewolf would challenge him to replace him. A fight to the death did not frighten him. He just wanted a long leadership role without having to defend his victory.

When she continued to cry, he could not stop himself. He walked up to Lorelei, wrapped his arms around her, sighing when she flinched at his touch. It took her several moments before she responded by wrapping her arms around his waist. She buried her face in his chest, still crying. He stroked her black hair, whispering softly in her ear, "I cannot stand to see you cry, my love. I know it hurts you to know that I touch another woman, but you cannot keep up with my needs. Not yet. I hurt to think that another man had his hands on you. It makes me so angry to think about it. If you had been with another man, I would have known."

He had spoken the truth. Even if Lorelei had washed away the scent of another man from her body, her blood would have been laced from the man's DNA. When two people kiss, DNA enters each other's body, lingering in the blood stream for days, sometimes weeks. When he kissed her downstairs, it let him know if she had cheated on him. She had not. He knew she would never cheat on him.

"I know and you know that I would never be with another," she whispered against his chest. Her hand moved down his waist and to the front of his pants,

pressing tightly against his hardened length. She did want to be with him, but his need to have her body is what flooded her senses. She knew what he wanted from her and no matter how much she did not want to be with him right now, she had to.

“You know me all too well, Lorelei,” he hissed through clenched teeth.

Through the pants, he hardened more from her touch. “Vincent, I only wish for your body inside mine. Only crave yours inside me. You know that.”

She moved her hand up and down his pants, creating a wonderful friction. His hips moved against her hands, thrusting aggressively against her. Vincent pressed a finger under her chin, lifting her mouth to his. His lips pressed against hers and the moment they touched, her body exploded against his. Her body heated, as liquid fire rushed from her body, readying herself for his. His hands went up to her hair, releasing it from the tie and dropped it to the floor.

Her other hand moved to the front of his pants and she unbuttoned them, at the same time keeping in time with his kiss. She pushed his pants down as far as she could from a standing position. He stepped out of them as she removed his shirt off his arms and down to the floor. His hands gripped her skirt and he tore it at the seam. It fell away from her body.

She shrugged off her favorite jacket, letting it pool at her feet.

He took that as a sign to continue. Her shirt, bra and panties met the same fate as her skirt, falling to the floor in shreds. He did not let her take off her boots, loving the look of her naked in a pair of heels. It was

just sexy to look at her that way. Releasing her lips, he looked into her eyes. They were hooded, lust shone brightly in them. He picked her up and laid her on the bed, spreading her for him, only him. He moved over her and quickly took her nipple into his mouth.

She moaned, arching up to push more of her flesh into his mouth.

God, he loved when she was wild and out of control like this. She feared him, which she should, and loved him at the same time. She craved his touch, his mouth on her like this, tasting, teasing and licking every inch of her skin. He moved to the other breast, tasting her skin, attacking it with the same urgency as he did the other breast. He growled at the smell of her body creaming more for him. He lifted his head to look at her, her black eyes opened at him, stopping suddenly.

“What is it?” she asked low and seductive.

“I want to make love to you all night, but I have to meet with my people in a few hours. We will have the rest of the night to make love once I get back.” He kissed the top of her breast, over his mark he placed there three days ago. “And all day tomorrow...” Another kiss. “And forever after the ceremony.”

\* \* \* \*

He slid deep inside her warm, welcoming body. Lorelei cried out at his unexpected thrust. Her mind might have been ready, but her body was not. Vincent was huge. Larger than most men were. Every time they made love, she experienced pain. Her hands went to his shoulders to hold on to his forceful thrust into her

body. Her nails dug into his skin as he moved inside her long, hard and fast.

Pain accompanied by pleasure overtook her. She could not help but rock toward his thrust. The rising of her orgasm surprised her. She never faked an orgasm with Vincent, could never fake it if she wanted. He would know and would be pissed if she ever tried. "Vincent, I love you," she whispered and his mouth descended on her once again. He moved inside her and she soared, gripping, tightening and convulsing around his length. He growled and moved faster. The bed slammed against the wall from the force of his thrust.

He released her lips and looked down at her. "Look at me," he ordered.

It took several moments before she could pry her eyes open. She could not keep her eyes open when he moved inside her again, faster, deeper, harder. Another orgasm hit her hard, harder than the first, stronger, rising until her blood boiled. Hot fire began at her breast, but she did not care, as it only added to her pleasure.

*Lorelei.* He cried into her mind as his warm seed entered her body.

Opening her eyes, she looked at his mouth. During her orgasm, he had bit her. Her blood stained his lips. His tongue snaked out, licking away her blood.

"You are so delicious," he said low. "I cannot wait to change you."

He planted a kiss on his mark before moving up to her lips. He thrust his tongue in her mouth, letting her taste her blood on him. She did not cringe, knowing



what her blood and his tasted like. Over the three years they have been together, he had given her his blood. He never gave her enough for a true exchange—just enough to make her crave the taste.

That's why she could detect when he had been with another woman. His blood heightened her senses. She was stronger and faster than the average human. She was trapped between two worlds, one human and one werewolf. When she found out that Vincent was a werewolf, it frightened her, not knowing that they really existed. She had been attacked while here in London for a month's vacation by another werewolf.

Vincent came to her rescue, killing the other werewolf who had not told her his name as of yet. When Vincent showed up, he was in werewolf form. After he killed his kindred, he morphed right before her eyes back into human form. She thought that she had lost her mind at the amount of blood she had lost and fainted right on the spot. When she woke, he had taken her to his home where Vincent gave her blood every couple of hours to strengthen her quickly. Over a two-week period, he gave her more blood, which for some odd reason she accepted. Once healed, they began to talk everyday and soon, they fell in love. He told her everything about him and other creatures of the night. They laughed together and never left each other's side. When she went back home to South Dakota, two days later, Vincent showed up on her doorstep with a proposal she could not turn down. He claimed that he wanted to be with her forever and wanted her to be not just his wife, but also his *mate*. Yes, she could not turn him down. She grabbed what

she could and left her friends, family and job without looking back.

Vincent had plenty of money, owning several companies all over the world. He owned the one thing that brought in more money than any business could. A blood bank for vampires. Yeah, there were vampires and all other types of creatures that went bump in the night. Vincent made millions from the blood bank alone. He...

Vincent's low moan brought her back to the present. He was moaning as she pulsed around him, her body trembling for another release. The man could make her cum like a bunny rabbit. Back to back. Hard. Soft. Strong. Until she lay too weak to move.

"You have to stop, Lorelei," he whispered against her lips, his hips moving in slow and tantalizing strokes. "We will not make it to dinner if you keep that up."

Lorelei smiled and forced her body to stop. As much as she wanted him, she also hated him. The man just slapped her and she wanted his body inside hers as they were right now. No one had to tell her how screwed up she was. She knew she needed to get the hell away from Vincent. If she stayed, he would likely kill her.

How could she have stayed through all of this pain in the first place? It started a year ago with abuse. A shake here and there led to a push and a shove until he began physically abusing her. She wanted to leave him, run away forever, but she knew he would find her. Their blood bond would never die and she would have to suffer with his cheating, abuse and sometimes

neglect, hoping one day it would go back to the way it used to be.

That thought made her body go completely still under his. Tears formed in her eyes again. She closed them, not wanting to let him see her cry. His warm lips pressed against hers briefly, before he eased out of her body. She groaned at the loss, more happy than sad that he had moved.

“Go have a bath,” he instructed. “I will meet you in the dining room in a few.” He went to the closet.

She watched his muscular back flex as he moved through it, looking for an outfit. The man was a golden God with a devil’s soul.

He turned toward her. “I will shower in the guest bathroom.”

“Why?” She regretted the words the moment they left her mouth.

A smile tugged at his lips. “You did not have enough?” he teased. “But seeing you naked in the shower...” He looked over her lying in the bed. “I would never make it to my appointment.”

She also smiled at the way his eyes went to the junction between her legs and she knew he saw just how wet she truly had been. She reached between her legs, feeling their wetness mixed together. She teased her clitoris before dipping lower.

He raised one tawny eyebrow at her. “Go bathe and do not tempt me, Lorelei.”

Lorelei stopped and removed her hand. She knew once he said enough, he meant it. Rising from the bed, she walked into their bathroom. She moved the glass door and turned the water on warm. Steam rose into

the room. She dropped a couple of lavender bath beads into the water. They dissolved quickly, mixing with the steam to fill the room with the scent of lavender.

Once the water reached the level she wanted, she turned off the water and sunk down into the tub, moaning as the warm water relaxed her aching muscles. Closing her eyes, she drifted into a light slumber, forgetting about Vincent.

\* \* \* \*

Vincent turned to the sound of footsteps behind him. He did not have to turn around, knowing who followed him. "I thought you were gone, Eve." She giggled and ran her fingers along his spine, teasing him. He trembled and she giggled again, delighted that her touch got to him. It did, but it was the first day after the change and he wanted—no needed, sex on a constant basis. The first couple of days were worse than during the change. Blood and sex. The two combined so strongly he could not tell them apart.

"My, my, and here I thought I had satisfied you," she retorted, then sniffed, her hand quickly, removing from his body.

He turned to her, naked. Her gaze went down to his semi-hard length. "You did, but Lorelei is going to be my mate and I do enjoy bedding her."

Eve walked closer to him. Her brown eyes blazed with burning passion for him. She reached up and ran a fingertip down his chest to his flat stomach. "Yet, you don't love her?"

"Of course I do. Why wouldn't I?"

"Because..." Her fingers moved lower, her nail growing long and sharp. She cut into the flesh of his stomach, drawing tiny beads of blood. She smiled and brought her fingers up to her mouth, licking the blood from them. "She is not a full-blooded werewolf and could never satisfy your needs as I can. Never give you the right amount of pain, mixed with pleasure. I should be by your side, not that human."

"You may be right, Eve." He leaned closer and kissed her on her lips. "However, I would never take a whore as my mate. That would bring my ratings all the way down."

Eve growled and swung her hands to hit him in the face.

He let his clothing drop to the floor and gripped her hands before she made contact. "What's wrong, Eve? You *are* a whore. Don't you like that word?"

"I wasn't your whore when your head was between my legs."

"You were one then, just one that would do anything to get on top. What did you think this was?" He jerked her closer to him. "I would leave Lorelei for you? Please."

"Let go of me you asshole, or...or..."

"Or what? You will tell Lorelei. So what! She knows about you and cannot do anything about it. She cannot leave me and I will not let her leave me. Lorelei is a woman every man wants by his side. She is loyal and beautiful and would not go after the next werewolf with the biggest cock and the most money."

"Let...me...go," she cried out when his nails implanted deep in her skin.

His eyes went red with anger. "If I want and when I want you, you will come to me and give me what I need. I can have your body and every woman's body in the Corvina Clan and neither you nor Lorelei can do anything about it."

Zak and Terrance came up the stairs.

He shoved her away from him toward them.

She staggered, almost falling over the long, red, spaghetti strapped dress she wore.

"Don't come back unless I call you."

Eve's brown hair flew wildly as she turned toward Zak and knocked his hand away from her before he could touch her. "Don't touch me. I know my way out!" She glared at Vincent before turning and storming down the stairs two at a time.

Vincent took a deep breath. He only came out of the room because Eve had been in the hallway when he made love to Lorelei. He felt her anger growing stronger, almost violent toward Lorelei. No matter what happened between him and Lorelei, he would not let anyone hurt her. He cared for her too much to let someone hurt her. Especially some insignificant slut who only wanted him for his money.

He gathered his clothes off the floor and went to the guest room. He would go back in with Lorelei now that Eve was gone, but she needed time to gather herself. When she came out, all the hurt and pain would be no more and they all would think they were the loving couple. He made sure of that while they made love. He always took away her pain with mind control. She thought that she just got over it on her own. Not all the time. He had to help her through

some of it.

Only his guards knew the truth about how he truly was. Not Francesca. Not anyone in his organization knew of his unfaithfulness to Lorelei and he would keep it that way. Closing the door, he went inside and turned on the water for a quick shower.

## CHAPTER TWO

Darin sat back in the wide, comfortable seat of the plane. He looked out the window, seeing clouds in the dark sky. A baby's cry made him cringe at the high pitch wail. He sighed, ran his hand through his brown hair in frustration. He was in his own private part of the plane, but he heard everything – the talking, the whispering, the yelling and the snoring. *Everything!*

He would have used his personal plane, but his pilot was sick and he had to take a commercial flight, full of human hearts, beating loudly in his ears. The sound of blood flowing through their veins made him wish he had fed in the airport. He needed blood. They had been flying for eight hours with eight to go. They re-fueled and were ready to make the rest of the trip. When he made it to London, it would be close to midnight. Closing the shutters to the windows, he sighed.

He hated going to England because too many werewolves lived there. Nevertheless, he had to go because a new werewolf, Vincent Cochran, would be the new leader of the Corvina Clan and he had called for him. Even with werewolves being the dominate part of the species, vampires, as himself, ruled and if



he did not see Vincent fit to be part of the Dark Guardians, then he would not. Vincent was not a Cotranth, but the Dark Guardians were opening their doors to every type of demon.

Darin closed his eyes, trying to drown out the sound of nourishment calling him. His stomach tightened. He snarled low. Quickly, he stood from his seat and made his way toward middle class. At the entrance, a woman dressed in a dark blue flight attendant uniform stood ready to serve him in many ways. He stared at her and she smiled at him.

"Is there something wrong, Mr. MaGruder?" she asked when he stopped in front of her.

He flashed a seductive smile and the moment he did, he caught a whiff of her starting arousal. *Nice*. It had been entirely too long since he tasted a woman's arousal while feeding. Matter of fact, he had not fed from a live woman in years. Bagged blood did the trick, but tonight he needed to sink his fangs into nice, warm flesh. "I need to feed," he whispered low. His stomach tightened at the thought of her warm, fresh blood. She frowned at him, her blue eyes watching him closely.

"You want something to eat?" she questioned. "We have several meals being served on this flight. Do you like fish?"

Darin shook his head from side to side.

"We...I have to find a menu." She turned to look for one.

"No," he said sharply.

The flight attendant quickly turned back to him.

"I said," he began speaking again and at the same

time, looked deeply into her blue eyes, taking over her mind quickly. "I need to feed."

She froze, dropping the paper she had in her hand. She swept her golden hair from her neck and stepped closer to him.

Darin thought about feeding there, but one of the other flight attendants may walk by and see him. He took her hand in his and pulled her back into First class. "Sit," he ordered.

She did as commanded.

He sat beside her and moved her hair from her neck. He let his fangs descend from his gums. On a low growl, he sunk deep into the soft flesh of her neck. He heard her sudden intake of air. Her body jerked and the smell of her desire for him flooded his senses tenfold. Besides not having fresh blood in a long time, it had been years since he thought of a woman's body. Feeding and sex usually went together with him. Since he did not feed, he did not think about sex as much as he used to. That and the point he was nearly eight-hundred years old would do the trick. After living that long, sex did not excite him as much as it used to. The rush of blood in his body made it all come back to him. The need. The want. The gathering of strong emotions that he had not felt in a very long time flooded his body and senses. Lust for a woman's body. The need to sink deep into her repeatedly, bringing them both to release.

Darin growled and pulled away from her. The thoughts were not his, but hers. She wanted him—wanted him to take her right there. The fact was, she wanted him ever since he walked on the plane. This

didn't surprise him one bit. Many say he was handsome while others called him beautiful. Another woman wanting him only made him see how much the world had not changed over the years. Man and woman. Sex. Love. Hate. Destroy. Nothing will change in this world. Never.

Darin leaned closer, letting his tongue smooth the two tiny pinholes on her neck. He lingered there, savoring her warm skin for several moments before moving away from her, afraid of doing something he would regret. He never took a woman under compulsion. He sensed she wouldn't say no to it even if she had complete control of her mind, but to do it just did not seem right.

Darin quickly implanted thoughts of her bringing him something to eat, then coming back and taking the food away. After checking on him once again, she began to feel lightheaded and he asked her to sit to gain some composure. Once he made sure his command took, he released her mind. Her eyelids fluttered, then she turned to him and smiled. "You feel better now?" he asked before standing.

"Yes. I think," she said, then frowned. "This has never happened before. I am sorry."

"It's okay, Ms..."

"Kristen," she jumped in. "Call me Kristen."

He nodded. "Okay, Kristen. Thank you for the lovely meal. It was good." He watched her hand go up to his fading marks and she flinched from the pain of her touch.

Not saying anything, she stood. "I better get back to work. Is there anything else you may need from me?"

As innocent as that question came out, his body leaped to life. His cock grew thick against his pants. The fresh blood in his system made him think about all the things he missed in the past. The women. The lovemaking. Everything. He wrapped his long, black coat around his body to hide his obvious arousal. He did not need to tempt her more than she already was. "No, thank you."

"Okay, Mr. MaGruder. Just call me if you need anything. I am here to serve."

"I will." Darin watched as she strolled down the aisle and out of first class. He could not wait until this trip was over. He did not know why he could not let Vincent know that he had the job over the phone. He was a respected leader. Vincent had, as he heard, a loyal, loving human mate who he intended on turning the night of his ceremony. Not bad at all. He had a home, money, a mate who loved him for better or worse, and soon would be the leader of his clan. Who could ask for more? As soon as Vincent was the leader of the clan, they would ask for partnership with the Dark Guardians. It's a long process before another could be considered a part of the Dark Guardians, but was well worth the wait.

As a Dark Guardian, you had security, brothers and sisters of all races and species who would not betray you no matter what. They trained and hunted every day, making the world a safer place for all that lived on earth. They paid a lot of money for just being part of the group. Yet, still, the feeling of having someone as a family when you do not have anyone made you feel loved. Not many of his kind had found or even looked

for love, but having a family like the Dark Guardians was just as good.

He closed his eyes, feeling the rise of the morning sun. They would cross over in time and it would be dark in London. Soon he would sleep, hoping, praying that the plane would not crash while he slept. He did not have to worry about someone coming into first class and throwing open the curtains, burning him to death. He needn't worry that he would burst into flames the second the sun touched his skin. It would hurt, leaving blisters at first, then begin burning his skin. Soon, he would eventually die from the overexposure. That could take hours. He would wake the moment the first sunrays touched his body anyway so he did not worry about dying from the sun.

Another thing his kind did not do was sleep like the dead. He could, but did not. He slept like mortals almost every day. If he went into a dead sleep, he would most likely do it while underground where he could shut down his heart and lungs. Leaning back in the chair, he sighed and soon let the humming sound of the plane's engine put him to sleep.

\* \* \* \*

Lorelei looked up from her food as she heard a chair scrape across the tiled floor.

Vincent stood and stretched. "That was a wonderful meal, Francesca," he said. "Everything was magnificent."

Francesca picked up his plate. "You are welcome, Mr. Cochran."

"If I wasn't so in love with Lorelei, I would marry you, Francesca," Vincent teased as she gathered the plate from in front of Lorelei.

Francesca laughed before heading into the kitchen. Seconds later, she walked back out and placed a cup of coffee in front of Lorelei.

"Vincent cannot marry you, but I can," Zak ribbed from the other side of the table.

During the entire meal, Zak and Terrace were so quiet. They apparently knew Vincent was upset and so was she. To love a man that hurts you, only to make you desire him moments later, had to be the saddest relationship to be involved in. Love verses hate. One emotion was no stronger or weaker than the other. They were both on a level that you cannot live without the other.

Lorelei brought the steaming cup to her lips and sipped. She cringed at the lack of sugar and cream. She would wait until Vincent left before piling on the condiments. Vincent had this strict rule about what and how much she ate. He watched her figure for her, as he said. After she changed, her body would be perfect for him and would stay that way for all eternity. Yeah right. Her body? That's an understatement. He built her to be perfect for him. A trophy wife, to be more exact.

"Stop being so fresh, Mr. Acosta," Francesca told him. "Is your coffee to your liking, Ms. Riese?"

Lorelei sat the cup down and looked at Vincent who walked gracefully toward her.

He grabbed her cup and took a sip out of it. "It's fine," he answered for her, then sat the cup back on the

table.

The urge to elbow him in the ribcage rose to a point she had to grind her teeth to stop herself.

"Don't grind your teeth," Vincent said closely to her ear.

So close the heat tickled her skin and tiny goose bumps rose.

"I will be back in a few. Don't go anywhere," he hissed the last part before kissing her on the lips.

"I will be here when you return."

Vincent stood straight and smiled. "Hopefully, naked."

*Not on your life.* She made sure that her thoughts did not spill out so Vincent could hear. "Sure. Anything for you."

"Just as I like." He kissed her quickly on the cheek. "Be back soon."

"Okay," she said, then slumped down in her chair once Zak and Terrance followed Vincent out of the room. The moment Francesca went into the kitchen, she dove for the sugar and cream, pouring extra amounts in the cup before stirring it with the spoon. Lorelei sat there for what felt like hours as Francesca cleared the dishes, then cleaned the table. She nursed the now cold cup of coffee, stirring it at the same time, thinking of nothing at all.

The doorbell sounded.

Lorelei jumped and then stood to answer it.

"I have it, Ms. Riese. Sit, enjoy your coffee," Francesca told her. It took several moments before Francesca came back into the dining room.

"Lorelei," Jade Taylor's voice vibrated through the

dining room before she made it into the room.

"Jade," Lorelei said, standing from her chair.

"I saw Vincent pulling up to the Corvina parking lot and decided to stop by to say hello." Noticing Lorelei's stoic face, Jade scowled. "Lorelei, what's wrong?"

Lorelei tried to smile, knowing her friend knew so much about her and her life. She knew what Vincent was, her big mouth letting it slip one day that Vincent was a werewolf. She also knew she and Vincent did not have the romantic relationship that so many people thought. Yeah, that was a slip of the tongue, too. Jade wanted her to leave Vincent for all the pain he caused her, but Jade did not understand what Vincent meant to her. She loved him—a little, and if she wanted to leave, he would follow her to the end of the Earth if he had to. "Nothing is wrong with me."

"You are such a liar," Jade retorted.

Lorelei scowled. "How can you tell?"

"It is written all over your face. The pain. The anger. All of it's there. I noticed it the moment I walked in here. What gets to me is the fact that no one else notices it." Jade placed her hands on her hips. "I don't know why you stay with a man who mistreats you."

"Would you lower your voice," Lorelei said before pushing Jade out of the room and leading her down the hall and into the private study.

"Why are you defending him, Lorelei? Werewolf or not, you do not have to take that from him. He does not deserve you. You love him, right?"

"Of course I..." Did she love Vincent as much as she did two years ago? Or had the pain and hurt he caused her taken away that love for him?



"I thought so. Leave his ass and come stay with me."

Lorelei smiled at her friend's generosity. "You are such a doll sometimes, Jade. I don't care what they say about you black girls, you are alright with me."

Jade hissed between her teeth. Something she did when she tried to scare someone. Jade knew it did not work on Lorelei.

"Don't hiss at me."

"I will hiss at you all I want." Jade's eyes softened a little as she looked at her. "I love you as much as a friend could and I do not want to see you hurt. We are both from the United States, and even if you or I were not, I would still care for you. We can leave here and go back to the United States. Vincent is one man I would never wish any woman on. He does not love you as much as you care for him. It's a one sided love relationship. He cheats. He hits you. He is demanding. He takes and takes from you and never gives back and most importantly, he cheats on you. Having sex with different women every month while they go out howling at the full moon is not acceptable." Jade shook her head. "No harm, but why would you give up your life to become a werewolf? I would not think of you any differently because you have changed I just need to know why you would want to be beside a man who does not know what he wants in life."

Lorelei looked at the fire in the fireplace, hoping to stop the tears threatening to spill over.

Jade grabbed her hand and made her look back at her. "I am not saying these things to hurt you. God knows you have enough hurt in your life. I am here to

open your eyes to see that you cannot be the wife that takes things from a man. I would never and you should not either."

Lorelei pulled away from Jade and stood. Her emotions betrayed her as tears streamed down her cheek. "I know, Jade." Lorelei wrapped her arms around herself. "I know. What can I do? I am in a situation where I cannot just pack and go. I want to. This is not that simple. I made a commitment and I have to keep it, no matter how much I want to break it. I am hoping that when he changes me, things will go back to normal."

"Normal," Jade broke in. "Normal? What is normal? Is a werewolf life normal? Running in the woods. Sniffing butts to let each other know you like them! Biting each other. Eating raw food. There's nothing normal about that."

Jade had spoken the truth. She and Vincent would never have a normal life. Never live as two humans. Never be in love as they were the first year together. As a human, she would die after forty or fifty years. As a werewolf, she would live forever. *I don't want to be trapped with Vincent for all eternity.* The thought made Lorelei shiver with distaste. "I don't know what to do."

Jade moved her black hair from her face and smiled. "I got it."

"What?" Lorelei would hear any suggestions to get her away from Vincent as far and as quickly as she could.

"Kill the bastard."

Lorelei looked at Jade, shocked for a moment that her friend did not smile at all. "You're joking, right?"

"Maybe. Maybe not."

Taking a cautious step backward, Lorelei studied her friend.

Jade shrugged, then laughed. "I know you cannot do it, but what a thought, aye?"

It was. Killing him happened to be her only way out. *Kill him!* She could never kill anyone. Never take another person's life. No matter how much she wanted to do it. "It's a thought. Maybe I should kill him. He deserves to die." Lorelei shook her head at the thought. "Nope. I cannot do it."

"Okay. Just a suggestion. If you want to, there are so many people out there who would do it. The other suggestion is still open also."

"Which one?"

"Me, you, moving back to the states. I miss Chicago and I know my family would take me back with open arms. Plus, you can stay with me until you get on your feet."

Lorelei thought about it long and hard. To be free of Vincent seemed like a distant miracle. Something you wish for, but would never get. "Tempting offer, Jade. Let us see what happens after Vincent becomes the Leader of the Corvina Clan. After that, if it doesn't get any better, then we are leaving."

Jade snorted at her suggestion.

If it sounded the same as she heard it, Lorelei was not convincing at all. "Sit," Lorelei said. Jade sat down and Lorelei followed suit. They began talking about the good times, the bad times and what they planned to do in the future. Jade tried to convince her to leave several more times before she finally left when Vincent's car

pulled into the driveway.

"I have to go," Jade said, standing quickly.

Lorelei also stood. "No, stay."

Jade turned on her heels. "I don't think so. I would probably say something to Vincent that would hurt his ego. Sorry, but I have to go. Let's go shopping after your change."

Lorelei nodded before proceeding to follow her out of the study.

"How are you this evening, Jade?"

Vincent's voice stopped Jade in her tracks. She spun around facing Vincent as he entered the room. A scowl crossed Jade's face. "What's up, Vincent? And I see you have your two tails with you, Larry and Curly. The entire three Stooges are here."

Lorelei coughed to cover up her laugh. Vincent turned to look at her and she stopped smiling. "Talk to you later, Jade." She rushed up the stairs to keep from laughing.

\* \* \* \*

"Jade, I thought we were such good friends?" Vincent purred as he stalked closer. Jade took a step closer to the door to get away from him. It made him smile that she was so uncomfortable around him.

"I don't think so, Vincent," she said. "I have to go." She turned to get away.

He grasped her arm and she yelped in surprise. "We are friends, are we not?" he teased her, letting his warm breath skim her ear. "I thought that we would always be friends."

Jade snatched her arm away. "You are such a jerk. I would never be friends with you and if I was Lorelei, I would leave your sorry ass."

"To bad you're not Lorelei. Even though I know you would like to be." He watched Jade tense up as she grabbed for the doorknob again. She faced him once more, her fingers still around the door handle.

"Lorelei is my friend and I would never, I mean never want to be in her place. If I would, you would not do half of the shit you do." She smiled. "I know you want me, of course, but you cannot have me."

With that said, he let her leave of the house. The thrill of it was not as fun as he hoped. Jade usually argued with him for at least an hour. Now she tried her best to stay away from him and he knew why.

"Is everything okay," Lorelei asked from the top of the staircase.

Vincent's gaze met hers. "Everything is good." He walked up the stairs. "You know, I do love teasing your friend. She really doesn't like me."

Lorelei wrapped her arms around his waist when he made it to the top of the stairs. "She likes you. Jade is such a sweet person."

Vincent snorted at her comment. "Sweet, yeah right. She would take you away the first chance she got, but I know you will not leave me, will you?"

Lorelei smiled. "Now why would I do that?"

"Because I do things that I know hurt you sometimes—though not on purpose. I do love you." He leaned down and scooped her up in his arms. Lorelei shrieked with laughter as he did. "And I plan on showing you for the rest of the night." He kissed

her before heading back to the bedroom.

Once there, he proved to her just how much he cared for Lorelei. He made love to her more times that night than he had in the years that they were together.

## CHAPTER THREE

The sound of the doorbell woke Lorelei. She looked over at the clock and groaned. "Who would be here at four in the morning?" she mumbled, then moved closer to Vincent.

The doorbell chimed again followed by a loud knock.

Vincent's arm tightened around her and he growled, resembling a dog snarling. "Vincent," she called out and turned her head to look at him. "Wake up." His nails bit into her skin and she hissed out. He pulled her even closer. Lorelei wondered about his aggressive behavior. She hissed out when he pulled her closer still. "Vincent, wake up!" He snarled, his eyes snapping open, dark red and dangerous looking. She sucked in a breath at his deadly stare.

His face softened and he released her. "Sorry, my love."

"What's the matter?" Lorelei rubbed the nail marks in her skin.

Vincent growled before jumping up from the bed at the sound of the doorbell again. "Stay here," he ordered.

Lorelei nodded.

Vincent put on a pair of pants and grabbed a gun

from the drawer.

Lorelei questioned him about having a gun a year ago. His explanation was that if someone came in to harm him or her, he could shoot them and the police would not question him, but a dead body shredded to pieces by claws would raise suspicion. They did not want to draw attention to themselves.

Lorelei watched as he rushed out of the room. She quickly jumped up and locked the door behind him—something he told her to do in case of an emergency. She dressed in a pair of jeans and a t-shirt, not knowing if she would have to run for her life. If she did, she did not want to have to run naked in freezing temperatures.

\* \* \* \*

Darin heard footsteps running through the house. He still had an hour or so before the sun would come up, but he did not want to stand here waiting for someone to find his ashes.

The door jerked opened.

Three pistols pointed directly at his face. Taken aback, he lifted his arms showing he meant no harm. “Damn,” he hissed seriously. “Maybe I am safer out here in the sun.” He watched as the three dangerous men lowered their weapons.

“Darin MaGruder,” Vincent said with a smile. “Long time no see. I am happy to see you.”

“I would say the same for you.” Darin lowered his hands. “Is that how you greet all your visitors?”

Vincent gestured for Darin to enter his home. “I



don't have vampires knocking at my door at four in the morning. That makes me a little uneasy."

Darin grabbed his bags and went inside. The heat from the fireplace quickly warmed his body. "If I came to kill you, would I have knocked on the door?"

Vincent shrugged. "Never know. It has been so long since I have had the pleasure of being in your presence. I could not pick up on your scent."

Darin set his bags down. "Yes, a hundred years would do that to you."

"True. Sorry about that, but my fiancée's life comes first. You should know the feeling."

"Not really," Darin said in a low voice.

"You will one day. By the way, this is Zak Acosta." Vincent pointed to the shorter man who leaned against the door, sleep clearly in his eyes.

Darin nodded and Zak returned the gesture.

"And my other guard is Terrance Pruitt."

The taller guy stabbed the gun into its holster and waved.

Darin quickly turned to Vincent, shutting his mind when Vincent sent out a mental call. "Mind not spilling over your thoughts, Cochran? It's been a long day and I do not have the energy to block it."

Vincent looked at him, then looked up to the top of the stairs as a tall, beautiful woman with dark, jet black hair came into view. She glided down the stairs and for some reason, Darin could not take his gaze off her. He never saw a woman so beautiful in his life. The woman on the plane, he wanted...to fuck. This woman, he wanted to make love to her. He wanted her by his side. He wanted her period. Could it be his...his...

Truelove? No!

She did not smile as she made her way down. The moment her feet touched the bottom step, she moved toward Vincent.

"This is my fiancée, Lorelei," Vincent introduced the woman before wrapping his arms around her protectively. A sign that she was off limits to Darin.

"Nice to meet you."

Her voice flooded his senses, short-circuiting them for a moment. Darin could not speak, only stare at the woman tucked underneath Vincent's arm. Darin cleared his throat. "Nice to meet you. I am Darin MaGruder."

She smiled and his heart stopped. "Oh, yes. You are the recruiter from the Dark Guardians. It is a pleasure to have you staying with us," she whispered.

"Yes it is, dear," Vincent said. "It's nothing to worry about. How about you go back to bed."

"Nothing to worry about? Besides the point that you and your guards tried to put three bullets into my body," Darin quickly added.

He heard Lorelei take in a deep breath of shock. "Vincent, did you really do that to our guest?"

"He is only adding more to the story than really happened."

"I am sorry for Vincent's behavior."

"It's okay. I have had worse done to me on my good days," Darin said.

"I know that you should be exhausted by now, Darin," Vincent interrupted. "Francesca will show you to your room."

As if on cue, the maid walked down the stairs.

"Welcome, Mr. MaGruder," the woman greeted in a deep Spanish accent. "May I take your bags?"

"No," Darin said with a smile.

The maid stopped and lifted an eyebrow at him. "Is something wrong?"

"Nothing is wrong. I will carry my own bags. Just show me the way."

"Very well. Follow me."

"Have a nice day, I will see you all tonight," Darin said. He took one more glance at Lorelei. Darin followed Francesca down several hallways until she began descending a flight of stairs. It grew darker and darker until they reached the bottom and the room lit up as she flipped on the switch.

The room didn't have any windows. A large canopy bed sat in the far left corner of the room. There was a fireplace next to the bed along with two small end tables carved with a strange patterned, something he'd never seen before. A small desk and chair arranged perfectly in the middle of the room completed the furnishings. To the right, a door led into a small bathroom. A large flat screen television hung on the wall in front of the bed.

"Is there anything that I can help you with?" Francesca asked.

"No. Thank you."

"Have a nice rest." She left the room, closing the door behind her.

Darin set the bags down, then went to take a shower. After his shower, he lay in the bed and went into a deep sleep.

\* \* \* \*

"Lorelei," Vincent called out as she sat in the warm water in the tub.

The vampire downstairs stirred something inside her that she'd never felt before. Not even with Vincent. It made her feel so bad that she thought about another man in a sexual way. That's why she stayed close to Vincent the way she had. Vincent thought that she wanted him. The moment they made it back to the room, they made love. This time she did not enjoy it as much as usual. At least he did not notice it. Lorelei sat up in the water. "Yes, Vincent."

"I am heading out for a few, do you need anything?"

*At eight in the morning?* Lorelei quickly shook off the thought. It was not as if she could stop him if he was going to meet with a woman or not. She sighed. "No." She slid down deeper in the water. "I'm fine."

He stepped to the doorway and stood there for several moments. "Are you sure? You seem a little distracted while we were having sex."

Lorelei swallowed the lump in her throat. He knew! He was going to kill her. "Nothing," she whispered. "It's nothing. Maybe the way we woke has me a little off balance. I should be better after I get some coffee in me."

He nodded, leaned down, and kissed her briefly on the lips. "Don't stay in too long."

"I promise." Once Vincent walked out of the room, she laid her head against the towel she had folded on the back of her neck, slid down in to the water more

and let sleep take over.

Lorelei stirred, jumped at the feel of strong hands caressing her thighs underneath the water. She moaned, already knowing that Vincent had come back into the room to tease her. She moved her thighs apart for his hands. His nail scraped across her skin and she moaned at the tingling feeling running through her body. Vincent had never been this gentle before. He moved higher and she moaned deeply in her throat. As he inserted two fingers inside her slick body, she raised her hips and he slid deeper inside her crevice.

“Yes,” she hissed softly. At this unexpected gentleness, her body tightened around his fingers and she heard his deep groan of pleasure at the warm cream from her body meeting his fingers. He thrust harder and her body quickly raced toward the edge. His other hand caressed her breast and she trembled. It all felt so good, so different, and she wanted more of him. More of him showing her just how much he loved her and wanted to be with her.

Her back arched at the first wave of her orgasm. She bit her bottom lip at the new sensation washing over her. Never in her life had she experienced a feeling as strong as this. She blindly gripped his hand, holding it inside her as she convulsed around his fingers, pulsing, throbbing, repetitively. White lights flashed behind her eyelids as the sensation continued to wash over her. She tried to stop the emotion, but it only heightened to the point she bit down on her bottom lip so hard she drew blood into her mouth.

Lorelei felt his hand tighten around her breast and he growled deeply in his throat at the smell of her

blood. Once settling back into the tub, her breathing labored, he removed his hands from her body. She smiled at what just happened and wanted him again. "I need you," she said, opening her eyes. Her eyes went wide in shock and she opened her mouth and yelled, "Darin, what the hell are you doing in my bathroom?" Lorelei jerked awake to an empty bathroom. She looked around the room, trying to see if she dreamed what happened or was it real.

"God, I'm losing my mind." She jumped out of the tub, wrapping a large blue towel around her body. As she walked into the room, she felt moisture between her thighs and it was not from the water, but from her own body, her cream coating her thighs. She shook her head, too embarrassed to think about what she dreamed. It felt so real. His fingers inside her, his hand on her breast. The heat was real. It had to be. She could not just dream something up like that.

A thought came to her. Why would she dream of Darin? She did not like vampires. Or did she? She looked around the room just to make sure she was still alone. Taking in a breath, she could not catch any scent of him being in the room. Only the faded scent of him lingered in the air, but not strong enough to signify that he was actually in the room with her. He was in the house, that's why she could detect him.

Snorting, she dropped down on the bed and placed a hand on her forehead. What was she going to do? She could not go around lusting after a vampire for the next twenty-four hours. Vincent would surely figure it out, or fuck her brains out, or maybe do both. After wondering why she stayed in constant heat, he would

do bad things to her and probably Darin. Plus, it is not his fault that she is attracted to him.

*Attraction.* A strong word for someone she only met for five minutes. What woman finds a man sexually attractive, and has sexual dreams about him in such a short period? Obviously, her. Her life was a little more difficult. She loved a werewolf, her body wanted a vampire, and if she told anyone this, that person would label her as slutty.

She did not want that label. Yes, she loved Vincent. If she kept saying it, maybe she would believe every word. She had a loyalty to him to be a proper woman. Not running around trying to be with another man, no matter how much she wanted to. Sighing, she stood from the bed and went to the closet, pulling out a pair of jeans and a black sweater. Coffee and toast would get her mind off Darin.

\* \* \* \*

“Darin, what the hell are you doing in my bathroom?”

Lorelei’s voice yelling at him woke Darin from his sleep. He hissed in pain as her voice vibrated inside his head. Louder, louder, and still louder until he thought his head would burst. Clamping his hands over his ears to keep from screaming in pain, he concentrated on lowering the volume in his head until it was only a mere whisper.

Now, his body hard and raging with desire, took over. He wanted her and that was a dangerous thing. He could not desire the mate of a werewolf, no matter how much he wanted her. A dream. They shared a

dream, something that does not happen often. One of them had pulled the other in a dream. When he walked into the bathroom and saw her sleeping in the tub, his mind screamed at him to leave her alone, but his body demanded he touch her. Her skin felt as soft as it looked. Softer than anyone's skin he had ever touched.

He did not go slowly with her, knowing the dream would not last long. Either he or she would awaken, throwing their souls back into their bodies. So he took her quickly, his fingers sliding in and out of her heat. She lay in water, but she was wet from her own moisture. Her smell of need and want filled the room in a matter of moments and he knew he had to make her cum, feel her body cum around his fingers and his cock. He wanted it all.

When she came, he tried to will her to keep her eyes closed, but her mind was strong and she fought the suggestion. When she opened her eyes and saw that it was he, not Vincent, who brought her to release, she seemed upset with him.

Darin groaned. Just like so many vampires, had he really found a mate? He shook his head. He could not have. Vincent owned her. She reeked of Vincent's blood. He noticed that the moment she came down the stairs. Lorelei was beautiful and even with him denying it before, he wanted her, had to have her, but would never pursue that want. No matter how much he desired her, he could never have her.

He knew whom she loved and the thought made him want to roar out in frustration. A mate is the other half of a lonely vampire. If he stayed away from her, she would not pick up that feeling to want to be with



him. Easy as that sounded, how could he do that for the next twenty-four hours when he had to survey their every move? He had to make sure that she was werewolf material and Vincent was leader material not to mention to see if they would be loyal to the Dark Guardians.

Pressing a hand over his raging cock, he groaned before turning over on his stomach to try and will himself back to sleep and try to get Lorelei out of his thoughts. He was going to burn in hell for thinking of another man's woman that way.

His heart drummed against his chest at the thought that once she was turned, she might lose the ability to be his mate, who she was meant to be, and live forever with a man who was never meant to be her other half. She would know nothing about it so her life would be wonderful. What would happen to him? Is there more than one mate in the world for him? If she were the only one, would he have to live knowing that he let his mate go to another man?

The thoughts crushed his heart. Why had God made him come here knowing that he could not have this woman? *His* woman. *His* savior. A blood tear streamed down his cheek. Why? Why suffer this way?

A thought came to him. Was Lorelei wondering what happened to her in her dreams? Did she pace around her room, wondering why she dreamed of him? Did she even care?

No, he would not interfere with Vincent and Lorelei's marriage. In twenty-four hours, she and Vincent would be together and he would not stop it, no matter how much his heart told him to.

## CHAPTER FOUR

“Ms. Riese, are you okay?” Francesca’s Spanish accent asked while she made her way back into the dining room.

Lorelei jumped, the steaming cup of coffee flew from her hands onto the table, spilling over. “I’m sorry.” She quickly stood to clean her mess.

“No, Ms. Riese.” Francesca quickly intervened, grabbing the napkins from her hand. “I have this. Just sit and I will bring you another cup.”

“That’s okay. I don’t want any more coffee.” Lorelei headed back to the room, wanting to go back to sleep, but her feet took her in a different direction. Instead of going to her room, she walked toward the basement area of the home, the scent of Darin calling out to her, her body needing his.

Her feet stopped moving when she now stood in front of Darin’s bedroom door. A cool wind wrapped around her, her skin chilled, tiny goose bumps rose on her arms and legs. Strange! No wind should be in the home. They had several fireplaces roaring with life on every level of the home. It was warm, toasty, and comfortable.

*Do it.* A dark voice spoke inside her mind. *Go inside.*

*You belong to him. You are his.*

Her hands went up to the doorknob before she thought about what she was doing. Nothing in her mind warned her of the consequences of walking into the room of a sleeping vampire. The door creak when it opened. The scent of Darin met her and she inhaled deeply.

*Go inside.*

She went inside the room, closing the door behind her. A swooshing noise erupted around her. She yelped. Her body moved so quickly, she could not tell what happened until she opened her eyes. She looked up into silver eyes.

Lorelei did not know how, but Darin had successfully taken her down to the ground. She lay on her back and he lay on top of her and placed her arms above her head. His teeth were sharp and dangerous looking in his mouth.

The ordeal should have scared the crap out of her. She should be screaming for her life, but oddly, this turned her on. She wanted to bare her neck to him. Let him bite her, take her blood and at the same time, her body. Neither she, nor anyone could miss the hard length of him pushing against her mound. She moved and suppressed a moan that tried to escape her lips. The friction of him pressed intimately against her caused her body to cream.

His eyes intensified. Lust and need clearly showing in them. Lorelei shivered at the thought of him knowing she wanted him and he wanted her. That or all vampires got hard-ons when someone snuck into their rooms. She doubted that.

\* \* \* \*

Darin looked down at the woman underneath him. When he awakened and found someone coming into his room, he reacted first. In the process of taking that person down, he saw that it was Lorelei. He cushioned their fall, making sure not to hurt her at all. As he looked down into her black eyes, he saw them blaze with a want for him and his body reacted. Even though he wore shorts, he knew she could feel his desire. Not only the part pressing against her, but from the emotions burning deep inside him.

Why was she in his room anyhow? What made her come here? Did she not know how dangerous it was, not killing her dangerous, but him taking her body dangerous, for her to be in here with him? He had to taste her, needed to feel her lips under his just once. He needed this just once in his life. To feel again. Want someone who wanted him. Needed someone who needed him just as much.

Lowering his lips to hers, he saw her eyes go wide with shock, but she did not protest or turn away from him. She wanted him just as much. Her body was moist and warm underneath her jeans. Her arousal was everywhere. Just one kiss. One taste.

The fire crackled from the fireplace and both of them turned at the same time.

If he kissed her, he would start the bonding process. A chain link would form around their wrist. A sign that she was his Truelove. What was he doing? It was wrong. Wrong to take advantage of a friend's fiancée.

Wrong to have her pinned beneath him, craving her just as much as she craved him. She moved, rubbing against his body, making him want to explode just from the touch alone.

“What are you doing here, Lorelei?” he asked softly, still not moving from her body. He had to touch her for just a couple more minutes. She ran her tongue over her lips and he groaned at the thought of tasting them.

“I don’t know,” she answered honestly, “but I would ask you to move so I can go change before Vincent comes home and smells your scent on me.”

Just her mentioning another man’s name made him go wild with rage. His eyes darkened. The beast inside rose and roared out in anger. Instead of acting on his anger, he moved from her body and stood. Reaching down, he gripped her hand, pulling her up.

On her feet, Lorelei did not move.

She stood there watching him, taking him in. When her body temperature rose, she darted out the door, not closing it behind her. He was glad she ran from him. There was no telling what would happen. They would have committed the one act that would get him kicked out, which for Lorelei he did not mind, but it would ruin her reputation. He could not do that to her. After closing the door, he lay back in his bed, letting the roar of the fireplace put him to sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lorelei ran up the stairs, taking two at a time. She raced into her room, stripping out of her clothes the moment she entered. Quickly, she tossed them down

the hamper shoot, hoping the scent was too weak to detect. After turning on the shower hot as her body could take, she got in. The hot water made her flinch at first, but soon it began to sooth her skin, but, it did nothing for the ache between her thighs. Never in her life had she experienced a need so strong for a man, not even with Vincent. She loved Vincent, but with Darin, it was a need. A need so powerful she almost had sex with him. No, she almost made love to him. Could her feelings be so strong for this man?

Gasping, she slapped her hands over her mouth as if she spoke it aloud. "Get out of my head," she whispered. She grabbed the soap and washed Darin's scent from her body. She showered that way, scrubbing and rinsing, rinsing and scrubbing until she knew that his scent did not linger on her any more.

After drying off and putting on more clothes, she opened the window, hoping to drown out the scent of him. Darin's scent may not be on her skin any longer, but she sure as hell could detect him in her body. Her body knew his scent and she knew from this day on, when he had gone back to his hometown, she would still remember him. Her heart fluttered, then began to beat faster at the thought of him forgetting her when he left. Why the fact of him not remembering her made her hurt so much? Vincent was going to kill them both if he got a whiff of what happened between them or for that matter, got into her mind and saw what she thought about Darin. Man, how was she going to pull this off until tomorrow night? She was strong. She could do it.

"Ms. Riese," Francesca called from the door.

Lorelei jumped, nearly leaping out the window from fright. *Get yourself together. Nothing is going to happen. You only have to survive one day and night with him here. After that, he will be gone out of your life.*

"Ms. Riese," she called again.

Closing the window, Lorelei went to and opened the door. "Yes."

"Ms. Dudley is here to see you and Ms. Taylor wanted you to call her back."

"Eve is here?" Lorelei asked, a little shocked of why the woman her fiancé was fucking would want her.

Francesca nodded. "Yes."

"Where is she?"

"In the foyer."

"Tell her I will be down."

"Yes, Ms Riese."

Lorelei looked herself over once more before going down to see Eve.

"Lorelei," Eve greeted when she walked into the foyer. Her silky brown hair pulled away from her face cascaded down her back. Her brown almost hazel colored eyes shined brightly. Most werewolves had either brown or hazel eyes. She had on a black sweater and nice fitting jeans. She had on knee high black boots and a black leather coat to top off the look. The brown lipstick and eyes shadow she had on went perfectly with her skin tone. Eve grabbed her into a big hug. "It's so nice to see you."

*Wish I could say the same, but hey, you have seen my fiancé, so what's to be happy about.* Lorelei smiled and returned her embrace. "Nice to see you."

Eve let her go then sat on the chair. "Sit," Eve said.

Lorelei lifted an eyebrow.

“Go ahead, sit down. No matter what you think about Vincent and myself, it’s not true.”

Still standing, she watched the werewolf. “I am not getting into that with you, Eve. If you have fucked Vincent, so what. What do you want me to do about it? Cry on your shoulder and ask you not to do it again? Beg? I will not do it. So what is this visit about?” Eve looked at her without saying a word. Had she been shocked at her reply? If Eve was not, she sure as hell was.

“Truce,” Eve said, holding up her hands. “I wanted to bring this over for tomorrow’s night celebration.”

“What is it?” Lorelei asked, looking at the box suspiciously. Lorelei was not stupid. She knew deep down Eve wanted to be in her place in Vincent’s life. She knew Vincent and Eve had sex before. They were, in some way, old lovers. They were together years before she and Vincent were together and they are still together off and on now. Right at this very moment, rage and anger shot through Lorelei’s body. It wasn’t because Eve and Vincent had sex, or that Vincent went out with other women when he changed into werewolf form. It was because until this very moment, she let it go on and on without a word from her besides what she said this morning. Now, it took all her strength not the slap Eve in her face for disrespecting her. Lorelei literally snatched the box away from her. She tore the lid off, looked inside and noticed two diamond rings.

“It’s yours and Vincent’s rings for the ceremony. He asked Zoe Washington to pick them up for him, but she is sick with the flu. She called me and asked me to



bring them. I hope you don't mind that I did."

Lorelei almost felt bad for acting this way. Almost was the famous word. She ran her fingers along the diamond and over the golden bands. They were beautiful. They had unusual symbols carved on the side on both rings. She knew they were in Latin. The dead language as Vincent called it so many times. "Thanks for picking these up for us. I almost forgot about them."

"You are so welcome." Eve stood. "Well. I will see you later at the ceremony. You will be Mrs. Vincent Cochran the next time we speak." Eve nodded and headed for the door.

Why did it sound like Eve did not enjoy saying that? Maybe because she only did it because Vincent made her say it. Maybe, in reality Lorelei did not give a shit. *What's wrong with me lately?*

Ever since she met Darin, she had this nonchalant attitude when it came to marrying Vincent. If she could stop...shaking the thought, she was going to marry Vincent. She would love him and once she changed into a full-blooded werewolf, she knew he would be faithful to her. She just knew it.

Lorelei went to call Jade who was her maid of honor. It was not a traditional wedding with long white gowns and tuxedos. They would not have wedding music and cake served. They would not have to stand in front of people while reading their vows. She and Vincent were technically already married. Once he accepted his role as leader, they would accept the rings from Darin...*sigh*...right after Vincent said his speech and then he would change her that night while

they made love.

Lorelei's stomach rolled at the thought of taking Vincent's blood. Had she gotten cold feet now, less than twenty-four hours away from her change? If she had, she knew she could not walk away from it now.

Day turned to night and Lorelei sat nursing a cup of coffee. Jade had come over and they talked for hours. She left and now she sat alone watching the fireplace roar to life. She should go up to her room and watch television. She knew why she did not want to go upstairs. Darin. He would be out soon and she wanted—no needed to apologize. The phone rang and she jumped. "Damn it." Lorelei sat the cup down and picked up the phone. "Hello."

"Lorelei," Vincent's voice spoke over the phone. His words slurred from what had to be alcohol.

"Yes, Vincent."

"The boys decided to throw me a party so I will be in late tonight."

Good, because she didn't give a shit. He not being here made it easier for her to be relaxed in her own home. She figured that when he did not come home, they had to have gone somewhere else. Besides, a party for his last night of freedom seems like something his friends would have done. "Okay." She sighed, really wanting to get off the phone.

"Tell Darin when he wakes that he can take one of my cars and come down to the Days of Nights Club. You can give him directions."

"No problem, Vincent. Enjoy."

"I love you, Lorelei."

Lorelei stared at the phone for a moment before replying. "Love you also." She hung up the phone after hearing the other end go dead. Any other night, any other time, Vincent staying out until dawn would have put a damper on her spirits. Today, she craved the loneliness. That's until *he* walked into the study hall where she sat.

He moved, but made no sound as he glided across the marble floor, his short dark brown hair brushed and groomed to perfection. The men of the Corvina Clan and other werewolves always kept their hair long and thick. However, Darin's hair barely touched his broad shoulders. He had on a brown sweater and chocolate colored slacks along with dark brown shoes that made the outfit complete. His silver eyes watched her with contempt. With each step he took, her body wound tighter and tighter until she knew she would break if he touched her. She stood from the chair. "Darin," her voice trembled with want.

"No need to apologize," his voice sounded thick and mesmerizing.

"I need to," she said. Lorelei drew in a breath when he stepped so close to her the heat of his body wrapped around her and squeezed the breath from her lungs. He smelled so good as if he just walked out of the hot streams of the mountain's water. Earthly, different, but so good. She opened her mouth to speak again, but closed it when he smiled at her. *That is so not fair.*

Darin should not look that good to her. His smile should not make her insides began to melt and her body ready itself for him. *Not him.* This should only

happen with what's-his-face...ummm ...Vincent. That's his name. Now she remembered. She should only want Vincent.

\* \* \* \*

He should leave England on the next flight out of here. Darin knew he should. This woman. This beautiful woman standing in front of him should be his, not the mate of a werewolf! Not the love of a fleabag. *His!*

He lifted his hand toward her, but she moved away from his touch. Deep in her mind, she wanted his touch and would let him if Vincent could not detect his scent. Dropping his arm to his sides, he stepped away from her. He could not detect Vincent anywhere in the home. In fact, Vincent had not been home all day, while Lorelei sat here like a child, waiting on him to come home.

The thought made him want to shake some sense into her, but something stopped him. *Pain.* Lorelei felt pain when she was around Vincent. Just as quickly as he saw the pain, a thick unbreakable barrier went up in her mind, tossing him out.

"Lorelei," he called her name, smiling when he saw her shiver from his voice. "I am sorry, but what is between us is wrong. I know you feel it. I do also, but we cannot act on it." Lorelei opened her mouth, but he shook his head. "Please, let me finish."

She nodded.

"I like Vincent and hope that what you are experiencing with him is not what I felt in you a moment ago. There is a lot of pain between you two

and if that's the case, you should be sure that he is whom you want to be with. If not, you need to make this decision before tomorrow night. After that, you will be a Corvina and there is no turning back for you. Once you are a full blooded werewolf, you cannot convert back to human form."

Lorelei's black eyes watered from tears.

It nearly broke his heart to just watch her and not touch her to ease her pain. Why had he come in here in the first place? He knew why. He looked for Lorelei the moment he woke and her scent drew him in here. He had not fed as of yet and usually he would be starving for blood. Right now, he wanted to feed Lorelei. Cold blood usually sustained him long enough that he did not have to go out hunting. With him not going around biting necks of innocent humans, it kept suspicion down. Too many hunters knew the mark of a vampire. Even though their saliva healed the wound, a track of their presences still lingered there. A mark where their fangs sank into their bodies remained for a day or so. A tingling feeling goes through the victim when they touched or rubbed against the mark, making it known to them. He was born a Dark Guardian, knew of the ways, and he did not want to be caught in one of those hunter's traps where they torture before killing them.

Just one thought of sinking his fangs in Lorelei's neck made his body leap to attention. His already deprived body called out to her to come closer to him. Closer. And still closer so he could taste her. Lorelei watched him for a moment before she moved toward him. Her black eyes stared at him as she moved. The beast within him roared with victory. The beast

wanted her and would have her.

\* \* \* \*

*Go to him. He needs you.*

Lorelei heard that voice inside her head again. Dark. Dangerous. Warning. Her brain screamed at her to run away from Darin. She knew he would not hurt her, but what she heard in her mind was not him. The call was on and it was too late to turn away. She stood in front of him, looking at his chest for several moments.

*Touch him.*

She lifted her right hand, touching the front of his sweater. Heat! Fire! It traveled from his body and into hers. Lights flashed in front of her and she cried out, not in pain, but in pleasure. Just touching him was enough.

*Yes. Give into him. All of him.*

Lorelei felt weak from need. Her knees buckled from underneath her and she would have fallen to the ground if Darin had not caught her.

*"Lorelei, are you all right?"*

She opened her eyes and smiled. "I'm okay. What happened?"

Darin shook his head. "I don't know. What happened to you?"

"I heard a call," she said when he helped her stand on her feet. "It told me to come to you." She frowned. "But it wasn't your voice I heard. Not mind control. I think that we should really stay away from each other before..." She let her sentence hang, not wanting to finish lest they end up in bed together.

What she just experienced was something she'd never felt before in her life. It shocked her, like a bolt of electricity traveling from head to toe. She did not experience any pain whatsoever. Only pleasure. Not just sexual, but...she could not explain it. Different pleasure. Her inner soul cried out from the touch. When he touched her before, there was a lighter feeling of what she just got from him. As bad as it may be, she wanted to touch him again.

Like now, with his hands on her shoulders, she did not feel anything. Nothing shocked her. Nothing spoke to her. It must be triggered some sort of way. Had to be. Maybe when they denied what they wanted, the voice called out to her. *Oh God!* Would that happen to her when Darin left? Would she still feel the need to touch him? Be with him? Crave him? She hoped not.

"It was—" Darin let go of her and stopped speaking.

Lorelei wondered what had happened until Francesca rounded the corner and entered into the room.

"Good evening, Mr. MaGruder," she greeted. "Your dinner is waiting for you and Ms. Riese."

"Thank you," Darin said. "I will be there in a few. I have to check on some things first."

"Okay." Francesca looked at Lorelei. "Are you feeling okay, Ms. Riese?"

"Yes," Lorelei quickly answered, but her eyes were locked with Darin's. "I am okay. I was going to tell Mr. MaGruder that Vincent called and wanted me to give him the keys to one of the cars so he could meet them at the Days of Nights Club if he wanted. They are

having a bachelor party, I assume." She rolled her eyes at the thought of Vincent giving a stripper money to shake her ass in his face, probably followed by him leading her to a room for a fuck. She snarled, but did not say anything.

"No, thank you," Darin said. "As much as I love a good party, I have to keep my mind straight for other decisions. Tell him thanks for his offer." With that, Darin left the room.

Lorelei did not hear a footstep as he walked away from her. She knew from the ache in her heart that he was leaving her.



## CHAPTER FIVE

The moment Darin stepped into the room, he pulled his sweater over his head. His gaze went to the black panther tattoo on his arm. About seven hundred years ago, he inherited this panther's soul and for seven hundred years, Sashi has been a good cat. Until today. Today, he wanted to know why she did what she had. "Sashi," he said with a harsh tone. "Live." The tattoo began to glow in different bright colors. He heard a loud snarl just before the tattoo disappeared from his arm and a large panther with silky jet-black fur appeared in front of him.

The panther snarled loudly. Her tail swished back and forth in long lazy movements.

Darin quickly redressed.

*Why do you call for me, Alpha? I have been a good girl.*

That was a lie before it left the panther's mind. In life, panthers cannot speak, but in the afterlife, they are just as smart as humans are. They spoke, but only by mind. They can speak to others, but their Alphas—as the Indians call who ever possessed the tattoos—can control them. They had powers...unusual powers that he had not learned in all the years of having Sashi as his guardian. "Sashi," he said with a growl.

The panther lay on its stomach in submission.

A true sign she had been up to no good. Sashi knew that she should not speak by mind to another unless given permission. She used this power with Lorelei. Not a power that would hurt Lorelei, but a power that would make her constantly crave it. Sexual powers. Sashi sometimes made women he fed from or had sex with feel her powers. The woman craved him more and sometimes Darin had to break Sashi's trance before the woman could have a normal life again.

*Are you mad at me, Alpha? I am sorry.*

"I am not mad at you. Never that. But Lorelei is not for me. I cannot have her."

*She is your mate, Alpha. Your Truelove. I know. That's why –* Sashi stopped speaking and looked away.

He knew she had done what he thought. "You called her to us this morning, didn't you? And again while we spoke. You made her touch me." The panther did not look at him. "Look at me, Sashi."

*No. Alpha mad at me.* The panther sounded childlike. *I was only trying to call her to us. She wants you, Alpha. Not just because of what I did to her. She wants you. And you want her. Why not make Alpha happy? Why Alpha not want her?*

"I never said that I didn't want her." Sashi looked up at him. She growled playful, then stalked closer. She sat beside him and rubbed against his leg. He placed his hand in her thick fur and rubbed, making her purr loudly. "I cannot have Lorelei. She is not mine."

*Yes she is. She is yours, Alpha. You want her.*

"No, she belongs to Vincent."

Sashi growled at his words.

Darin knew that the thought of him not getting Lorelei hurt her also.

*Sashi want to run and play. Can Sashi go out?*

Darin looked at Sashi. She was a smart animal and would not be seen by anyone unless she wanted them to see her. Even in spirit, Sashi loved to run and play and when she was around other panthers, they could not tell the difference if she was a spirit or a real panther. Like now with his hand in her fur, she purred, her skin warm to the touch. She could be as sweet as a kitten, but when Darin was in danger, she was as viscous as her species could be. "Okay, Sashi. You can run and play, but no one sees you and you come back to me very soon."

Sashi stood. *Okay, Alpha.* Sashi ran toward the wall, disappearing through it like a ghost.

Taking a calm breath, he rubbed his arm through his shirt, missing his pet already. No matter how upset he got at her, they were still a part of each other.

\* \* \* \*

Dylan Kiernan walked down the road. No one was out. No cars passed by. Not even the sound of a dog barking. He turned a corner, wanting, needing to feel something. It has been so long since he has had a good fight that his teeth ached to come out from the stress of it all.

Dylan froze for a moment. He felt the presence of something blocks before it reached him. Not evil, but just something not human. He braced himself for

whatever came his way. He looked into the night, searching with his emotions instead of his eyes. Whatever it was, it did not want him to see it.

The air in front of him stirred. Dylan's eyes widened in shock. He saw the air stirring and moving toward him at full speed and then it began to take shape and color. Black. Teeth extended. He moved away from the panther, but it was too late.

The beast leaped and tackled him. Dylan went to the ground hard, the panther on top of his chest. It growled playfully at him. Its golden eyes watched him closely. Then it leaned its large head down and a rough tongue licked at his face.

*Dylan. Where is Zaid? Where is Zaid, Dylan?*

Dylan heard the playful tone in the animal's voice. He pushed and the panther moved off him.

Zaid, as Sashi referred to, was Dylan's guardian. A large, white polar bear he had tattooed on the front of his chest. The bear looked as if he was bursting through a cool stream of water. His mouth was open, water shooting up in the sky. The image looked so real.

"Sashi," Dylan stood, knocking the dust from his jeans. "What are you doing out by yourself? Better yet, what are you doing here? Is Darin here also?" He looked at the panther as she cocked her head to one side to study him. He felt the tingling sensation in his chest from his own guardian wanting to come out and play. His guardian and Darin's guardian always got along, even though Zaid could tear Sashi's head off with one swipe of his claws. When the guardians are away from the body, they can be hurt and it's known that some have died in battle or trying to protect their

Alphas. "No, Zaid," he growled. The bear calmed, but the sound of his voice roared inside Dylan's mind.

*Why Alpha not like me to go to Sashi? I want to see her! I want to.*

"Not now, Zaid."

*Zaid wants to see Sashi? The panther asked. I wanna see Zaid. I like Zaid.*

Dylan watched the panther move closer to him. "No, Sashi. Why don't you go back to Darin? Tell him I want to see him."

The panther looked at him for several moments before speaking. *Will you let Zaid out to play with me?*

"If I say no, you still have to tell him my message."

The panther growled softly. *I will tell Alpha.* The panther stood, turned quickly, and jumped into the sky after something.

Dylan heard a whistling noise in the night. He ducked out of the way of whatever was coming toward him. He screamed as an arrow entered into his chest. A burning sensation traveled through his chest and arms, paralyzing him. "Zaid," he said through clenched teeth. "Live."

His chest began to tingle. The bear tore through his shirt. Zaid growled and landed a couple feet ahead of him. Dylan saw Sashi begin running after whoever shot the arrow at him. "Sashi," he said, blood gushing from around the arrow's head. "No!"

But it was too late. The panther had disappeared and turned the corner.

The white bear stood over him. His golden eyes watched him as he lay on his back.

*Alpha hurt?*

"Yes. Alpha is hurt. Can you get this out?"

Zaid bent down, pressed a paw on Dylan's chest to hold him down. He gripped the arrow with his teeth and without warning, yanked the arrow from his chest.

The scream that left Dylan's lips were of pain and angst. It hurt. It hurt like hell.

*Sorry, Alpha.* The bear tossed the arrow to the side and sat beside him.

"It's okay, Zaid. Go, find Sashi and get her back here." He breathed deeply, feeling the wound begin to heal. "Darin is going to kill me if I let something happen to Sashi."

*Alpha hurt. Do not want to leave Alpha when he is hurting.*

"I will be okay in a few moments. Go. Help Sashi."

Zaid seemed to nod its large head. It dissolved into mist and followed Sashi.

\* \* \* \*

*Shit! They were coming.*

Hana tucked the bow in the holster behind her back and jumped down two stories. She landed to the ground hard, rolled onto her back before standing again and began running through the dark streets. She heard the growl of them. Two of them. The vampire sent his guardians after her. If they caught her, they would likely kill her on sight for trying to kill their Alpha.

"Fuck," she yelled as a claw bit into her right arm. She grabbed the gun out of the holster on her belt. She cannot harm the guardians when they are invisible, but

she knew she could kill them if they showed themselves. They had to be seen because they touched her. She pointed the gun back behind her, keeping her eyes in front to see where she ran. Pulling the trigger, the gun discharged. She heard a painful growl followed by the sound of a large form hitting the ground.

*Good.* She kept running, knowing that the second one would not follow her after seeing the one she shot. It would stop to nurse it. Hana cursed at herself for missing her target, Dylan Kiernan. He has been on her kill list for months. She had followed him all over this world, tracking his every move, trying to see whom he met. When they gave her the order to kill on sight, she gladly followed. She was a Slayer and she wanted them all dead. All of them. Or did she? She always kept her distance from Dylan, but tonight when she looked at him, she watched as his blond hair whip in the night's wind. Watched his silver eyes glow as she saw the guardian bounce on him like a stuffed animal. Something inside her stirred. She would never admit it aloud, but she knew she missed his heart on purpose. She did not want to kill him. Could not kill him.

Hana groaned. They would never let this go if they knew she had purposely missed a target. Hana Jamison never, and she meant never, missed a target before in her life. She has trained from birth that vampires were her target. Their hearts were hers for the taking. They were hers to destroy. If this ever got out, it would destroy her reputation.

"Hana, ca...you...hea...m," the radio in her coat pocket called. They never got good reception here.

Still running full speed, she pulled the radio out of her pocket and spoke. "Repeat that."

"I said can...you...me?" Static followed each word.

"I cannot hear you."

"Mee...at...hideaway...need...your...help..."

"Copy that." Hana answered. Dylan was off her kill case for a while. She knew it and frankly was happy about that. She had to make sure she could kill him before chasing him again.

\* \* \* \*

Darin snarled with rage. Pain radiated through his body. His very being vibrating from angst. "Sashi!" he yelled. "Return!" When his guardian did not return to him, his heart beat against his chest from pain.

"What's wrong, Darin?" Lorelei asked from across the table. "Who is Sashi?"

Darin looked at Lorelei. "My guardian. Someone hurt her. I need the keys to a vehicle. Now!"

Lorelei jumped up from the table and returned to the dining room moments later with the keys. He could run, but just in case Sashi could not return to him, he would have to carry her. Carrying her would not be a problem, but the sun would be up soon and he did not want to tote a hundred pound panther through the streets while burning to death at the same time.

"I'm going, too," Lorelei said, leaving him no room to argue.

He could not argue if he wanted. He wanted to get to Sashi. "Let's go." They rushed to the garage and got inside a dark blue car. He closed his eyes,



concentrating on where his guardian was. *Sashi! Are you badly hurt?* He sent out a mental call to her. Darin waited and when no reply came, he called again. *Sashi, where are you?* He felt a stir in his memory.

*You are close, Alpha.*

Relief washed over him at the sound of Sashi's voice. *We are coming. Do not move.*

*I will not, Alpha. Zaid's Alpha is here and he is helping me.*

"Turn right, here," he told Lorelei.

She jerked the wheel, turning in the direction wildly.

Darin did not fully process what Sashi said about Zaid's Alpha being there until they pulled up beside a Dark Guardian crouched over his guardian. They jumped out of the car and ran up to her.

"Oh my God," he heard Lorelei's voice say with a start at the sight of blood around Sashi.

"It's better than it looks," Dylan told them as they came up to Sashi.

His guardian lay on the ground, breathing hard with every breath she took. He ran his hand over her fur before whispering, "Return to me." The panther growled, its body disappearing into thin air before it reappeared on his arm. Darin felt Sashi's pain the moment her soul entered his body. He wanted to roar to the heavens at the angst she experienced.

*Alpha upset with me?*

*No. Alpha is not upset with you, only if you have a reason for getting yourself shot.*

*Alpha...*

*No. You rest. I will speak with Dylan.*

*I will do as you ask, Alpha.*

And with that, she left his mind to rest and heal. Darin looked at Lorelei who stood in one spot, staring at the spot of blood. "We have to get inside," Darin told Dylan. "Can you drive, Lorelei?"

She did not speak.

"Lorelei!"

She jumped. "What?" she snapped, but he knew she had not meant to.

"I said, can you drive?"

She nodded. "Yes. Let's go."

"Could you drop me off home?" the other man asked.

Lorelei nodded.

"Thanks."

\* \* \* \*

Lorelei had seen werewolves change forms. Saw all types of demons in her life, but never saw a hundred pound, not to mention, hurt, panther disappear into thin air. She had not expected to see a disappearing act tonight.

"Dylan," Darin said after several minutes. "I am sorry not to introduce you to her, but this is Lorelei. Lorelei, this is my Dark Guardian brother, Dylan."

"Nice to meet you, Dylan."

"Same here. Is Vincent your fiancé?"

Lorelei cringed at the thought that this man knew her. "Yes. He is."

"And you want to be a werewolf?"

Did she? She did not know what she wanted right

now. Darin had seriously – and she meant seriously – screwed up her world. “I...” she looked into the mirror at Darin who sat in the backseat, looking at the marking of a black panther walking down his right arm. His eyes went to her through the mirror and she quickly looked away.

“You what? You want to or not?”

“Dylan,” Darin interrupted. “What happened tonight?”

Dylan grunted, obviously in pain when he moved in the seat beside her. Boy, oh boy, how was she going to explain the blood in the car?

“I was shot by an arrow,” he explained. “I think a Slayer is after me.”

“You think?”

“Yes. I have several hits out on me in the states. That’s why I came here for a while. Tonight I missed her because Sashi was begging me to let Zaid out. The wench shot me in my chest. Sashi grabbed one of the arrows, but she got another one off. Sashi went after her. I called her back, but it was too late so I released Zaid to follow. When I healed, I went searching for Sashi to see she had been shot also.”

Lorelei listened to the story, but did not speak.

“She? Do you know who she is?”

“No.” Dylan shook his head. His hair flying wildly as he moved his head. “I never saw her. She’s always right there, but I never know what she looks like.”

“Do you know her scent?”

“Of course. I would know it from anywhere.” Dylan sat up. “Turn right here, Lorelei.”

Lorelei pulled up to a small building. His flat. It was

nice, as far as she could see at night.

"Thanks," Dylan said as he stepped out of the car. "I will see you tonight at your transformation. If, that's what you want."

Lorelei snarled at him, but nixed saying something smart. "Okay." She waited for Darin to get into the front seat of the car before she pulled away from the flat. After several minutes of driving, she asked, "Darin. What was that?"

"Sashi?" he asked, then his eyes locked with hers.

"Ye-yes," she said a little too nervously for her. Why did Darin make her so nervous when he was around? She reverted to a giggling teenager whenever they were close to each other.

*That's because you like my Alpha.*

Lorelei arched an eyebrow at the voice in her head.

"That was my guardian. Have you heard of them?"

She had. Not in much detail. Vincent told her that some people got them tattooed on their bodies by ancient Indians. They capture the souls of animals and once they finish tattooing them on the body, the animal was at their command.

"That's pretty much it," he said and smiled at her.

Lorelei laughed. "You were reading my mind?"

"Yes. I got Sashi over seven hundred years ago, when my sire first turned me into a Dark Guardian. I love her like a pet. She has helped me a lot over the years."

"I am sure she has. Is she going to be all right?"

"Of course," he answered. He lazily caressed his arm, running his fingers over the tattoo. "After a day's rest, she will be good as new."

"Darin, what is Alpha?"

Darin's head turned to hers and he frowned.

"Where did you hear that word?"

"In my mind. I heard it a second ago. I thought about...well, never mind what I thought, but I heard it call the name Alpha."

"That's what all pets call us. Alphas."

"So they can speak?"

"Not aloud. Not like you and I are speaking. They are smart as humans and they communicate by mind. Sashi is a pushy guardian sometimes and she says things to others who she knows she shouldn't."

Lorelei had a gut feeling that he secretly chastised Sashi over giving her an answer. "Don't get mad at her. She did not give me any of your secrets or anything like that. But..." Lorelei said with a smile. "If Sashi wants to talk while Darin is asleep. I would love to hear any secrets that I can use for blackmail later."

Darin laughed at her comment and placed a hand over the tattoo. "Don't say that too loudly. She might take you up on it."

"I am sure she would."

They rode the rest of the way back home in silence.

## CHAPTER SIX

“Ms. Riese,” Francesca called the moment they were in the house. “Is everything all right?”

Lorelei wanted to growl at the woman. “Yes. Everything is fine.”

“I told Mr. Cochran that you were asleep when he called a couple of minutes ago. He said that he would be here in the morning. He wants you to be ready for tomorrow.”

Lorelei studied Francesca. Why would she lie to Vincent about her whereabouts? Did Francesca know about how abusive Vincent was to her? *Is there a way to get out of this at all?* She wanted out. She had to. Vincent would eventually kill her with his violence. Lorelei’s eyes began to tear. “Thanks, Francesca.”

“You are welcome, Ms. Riese.” Francesca walked toward the kitchen.

Lorelei froze. Her entire body locked at the feel of Darin’s hand on her shoulder. She gasped. Just his touch made her want him. She swallowed the lump in her throat before turning around to face him.

“I feel your pain,” he said. “Is there something you want to tell me? I cannot and will not grant Vincent’s roll as a Dark Guardian if he is mistreating you. I

cannot.”

Lorelei opened her mouth to speak, but his warm finger touched her lips. Will power had nothing on the fight she had going with her body. Her body overpowered her mind ten-fold. She almost, almost, opened her mouth to taste his skin as he teased her bottom lip with his finger.

Man, how wrong this felt. So wrong. No way should she be attracted to Darin. She loved Vincent. She wanted...Vin...who in the hell was she trying to fool? She *wanted* Darin. *All* of Darin. To want him had to be a sin. She wanted a man she could never have.

*Touch my Alpha. He wants you. He needs you. Please. Touch him.*

Her bottom lip trembled to keep from doing as Sashi ordered. As if he noticed what he did from his touch, Darin stopped touching her and took a cautious step away.

\* \* \* \*

*No, Alpha do not stop. No! She wants you. Do it, Alpha. Take her away with us. Take her with you.*

Darin watched as her tongue darted out of her mouth, traced her lips nervously before retreating back into her mouth. God, he never hungered after a woman this much. It has been too long since he bedded a woman and never really thought about it since the last time. Now, that’s all he wanted. That’s all he needed was Lorelei. *His Lorelei.*

*Our Lorelei.* Sashi corrected.

*No. Sashi.*

“Darin,” she whispered.

Her voice made his body tighten at the softness of her words.

“I don’t...,” she breathed out. I don’t think it’s right for us to be around each other.” She looked away from him for a moment. “I...”

“I know, Lorelei, and I wished to God that we had met before now. Before you made this commitment. I cannot take you away from Vincent. Even if I cannot take you away, I still cannot grant this if he is not treating you right. If he is not, you do not have—” He did not want to make her not marry Vincent to be with him. “Just tell me what you want and I promise you, you will be safe.” Darin saw tears roll down her cheek. He never intended to make her cry. He never wanted to make her cry. He reached up to wipe her tears. He wanted to grab her in his arms. He did not know which. He only wanted to comfort her.

“Don’t touch me, Darin,” she said harshly.

“Why not?”

Her bloodshot eyes went to his. “Because I don’t know if I could stop myself if you continue to touch me.”

Darin watched as his mate ran from him. She took the steps two at a time to get away. He stood there watching the empty staircase until he heard a door slam in the distance. Her running away from him had only let him know that they *were* meant for each other. In some small way, it did not bother him that much that she ran from him. What bothered him was when he heard her cries coming from her room. Now that cut through his heart stronger than a stake would ever.



Not thinking, he raced up the steps and up to the room. Without knocking, he entered the room to see her laying face down on the bed, crying. Darin walked over and picked her up from the bed. She did not fight nor pushed at him to let her go. He left the room with her in his arms and walked back toward his room. If they were going to talk, they would not do it here. He did not want Lorelei to think about Vincent, or have his scent in the room. By morning, the little time he spent in the room should fade.

Lorelei grabbed him around the neck and sighed. It had to be a sigh of relief. Then she did something so shocking, he stopped just outside his door to his room. She kissed his neck. It wasn't just a kiss. He felt her warm tongue slide against his skin, her teeth nibbling at the column of his neck before she tasted him again with her tongue.

"Lorelei, please, don't tease me that way. I cannot have you..." His plea went unheard as she kissed lower toward his chest. Darin reached for the door, opened it and shut it with his foot. Inside the room, he sat on the bed with Lorelei in his lap, smoothing her black hair away from her face. She still teased his neck with her tongue and lips. She nibbled here, then a little bite there. She aroused him as no other woman in the world could. "Lorelei," he moaned her name. "Stop." Lorelei lifted her head and looked at him. He saw her eyes sparkle with a desire that only she, his mate, should have for him.

"Why? I want you..."

Her arm released his neck. Her hand slid down the front of his shirt and down to the front of his pants

where her hand met a very hard cock.

"And I can tell that you want me. I don't want to marry him."

"Why not?" Her deep breath accompanied her hand moving from his erection.

She looked away for a moment, then back into his eyes. "Because he has not been faithful to me."

"He hasn't?" he growled the words.

Lorelei shook her head. "He hits me when he is upset. Every time he changes, he sleeps with another werewolf. Even when he hasn't changed, he sleeps with other women."

"Why do you stay?"

"Why do women stay in abusive relationships?" she said, then snorted. "I was scared. I thought he would change. I thought things would get better when he changed me. I love him, or at least I thought I did. All those things are possibilities."

Darin shook his head. Vincent would not gain any access into the Dark Guardians. His kind did not deal with men or women who are in violent relationships. Yes, all relationships had problems, but abuse they did not tolerate. And to his mate! That made Sashi roar louder than he wanted.

*Kill him, Alpha! Kill him.*

*No.*

*Let me, Alpha. Let me do it. Please, Alpha. He hurt her. He hurt her! I will not let that go.*

*Calm down, Sashi.*

*Yes, Sashi, please calm down.*

Darin looked at Lorelei when her voice entered his mind.

She smiled weakly.

"You heard both of us?"

"Yes."

For Darin, this was another sign of them being true mates. When they could hear their guardians speaking to them, it indicated they were really meant to be together.

"Is something wrong with that?"

"No. It's right as it should be. I cannot tell you what to do. It's up to you, but if Vincent has hit you, then he will not get into the Dark Guardians. And I will kill him if he hits you again."

"Darin." She covered her mouth.

\* \* \* \*

Lorelei had said too much. Darin did things like that to her. He made her feel love. He completed her. The empty space in her soul that she experienced, Darin filled. She stood and faced him. He looked so damn sexy, she would strip right now if he asked her to. Hell, if he didn't ask, she might do it anyhow. "You cannot tell him that..."

"You don't have to worry. I will say I picked it from his mind. Not yours."

"But...I...I didn't want him to not be leader."

"I cannot stop that. He will be the leader of the Corvina Clan. As a Dark Guardian I cannot grant him that access."

"What about me?"

"It's up to you, Lorelei. I cannot take you away from him. I want you. That I do, but I will not demand that

you come with me when I leave.”

“I’m too afraid to leave him. Do you know what he would do to me if I tried? He hit me just for saying something out of line to him. He would kill me if I tried to leave him.” Darin also stood. All six-foot-two inches of luscious man. It should be a sin to look that good. The police should lock him away from all women and throw away the key. Better yet, toss it in the river where no one would ever find it.

“It’s your decision. If you come with me, I will protect you. Every Dark Guardian would protect you. Vincent does not own you. No one does. His blood may run in your veins, but that does not count as ownership. For that matter, what woman wants to be with a man who finds another woman attractive?”

Lorelei smiled. “So are you saying that you find me attractive?”

“Very much and you knew that from the first time I laid eyes on you.”

“If I were to leave with you, you would not want to be with another woman?”

“I would never want to be with another woman. Never. You would be whom I would want to be with. My Truelove.”

“As good as that sounds, I don’t know if I can believe that,” Lorelei said with a smile. “It’s late. I need sleep and so do you. Right now, I feel better than I have in three years. I thank you for that.” Lorelei knew she had confused him with the change in her attitude. She did not know if she would leave with Darin tomorrow, but she sure as heck knew that she was not becoming one of Vincent’s other women. This shit ends

tonight. After his role as leader, she was getting the hell out of England and she knew that Jade would happily come with her.

"You are welcome."

"No," she whispered. "You made me see a light that I should have seen many months ago." Lorelei walked up to him and pressed her lips against his. Not an open mouth kiss, just a gentle thank you kiss and nothing more. Well, she meant for it to mean nothing. The moment she prepared to pull away, a rush of need slammed into her body, nearly knocking her to her knees from the intensity of it. *Holy crap! What was that?*

Lorelei opened her eyes to find herself close to Darin's body, his arm wrapped around her waist, that delicious hard-on pressed against her stomach. His breathing came in short pants. He sounded like a man who just got off the treadmill. She sounded no better than he did. Her body ached. Her panties were soaked from her need to have him inside her. Her nipples pressed against her laced bra, begging for his touch. Needing his touch. Wanting his touch. What she would not give to have his sexy lips suckling her breast.

"I would love that also," he said with a smile.

"As tempting as that may be, I have to decline, but I must say that I'm very impressed by your desire." Had she done a three-sixty or what? She went from mousy to what-I-want-I-take attitude.

"Then, I have to add that I can smell your arousal and it's really making me hard with a need to sink deep inside your body and take what is mine."

Lorelei shivered at the thought. "Well, come

tomorrow, that might come true." She pulled out of his arms and walked to the door. "Have a nice rest."

"You, too."

Lorelei went out and closed the door without looking back. She ran up to her room and grabbed the phone. She dialed a familiar number. It rung once, twice, three times before her friend picked it up. "Jade," Lorelei said.

"It's five in the morning, Lorelei. I don't have to see you for a couple more hours."

"I have something that I need for you to do."

"What is it?" her sleepy friend replied.

"Remember what we talked about earlier. I think I want to do it. Tonight."

"Are you sure?" Jade asked more awake now.

"Positive. Here's what I want you to do." Lorelei began telling her friend what she had planned.

"I cannot believe you are going to do that!" Jade said right after she finished.

"Yes. That's the plan. I have to get a few hours of rest, but be here no later than ten. We have plans."

"Will be there."

"Thanks, Jade, you are a friend." Lorelei hung up the phone.

After taking a quick shower to wash Darin off her—no need to make Vincent mad before his big day—she dressed in a silk nightgown and went to bed. It did not take long before she dreamed.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

**D**anger filled Lorelei's mind. Dark. Black. She stirred in her sleep, pushing through the thick layers of slumber. She pushed through one layer, then another, then another. Someone wanted her to stay asleep. Someone wanted to get into her mind and read her thoughts. She pushed at the invasion. At once, her mind cleared. The darkness surrounding her dissipated into thin air.

Lorelei woke. Her eyes snapped open and for the first time in her life, she woke frightened for her life. She looked into hazel eyes. They were hard, evil, and dangerous looking. She tried to move and she noticed that not only was she naked, he had her hands above her head, trapping her. "Vincent, what the hell are you doing?" He breathed out and the smell of liquor hit her stronger than a freight train. He was drunk—more like wasted. She struggled to get away, but she knew that he would not let her go. Not until he finished with her.

"You let that vampire near you. I smell him on your skin." He bared his fangs.

Lorelei read his mind. She felt his intent. She would not let Vincent bite her and change her. That, she could not let happen. "Let go of me!" She struggled more,

but her movements only made him hard with desire. He loved when she was helpless to him. She might have been yesterday, but today she was not the woman who would let him fuck her to make it better. Not anymore. This ends now. "Get the fuck off me, Vincent."

"Or you'll what? Run away from me? Call the police?" He bent closer. "What?" That word came out hard and cold. "What are you going to do besides let me fuck you? You will stay away from him until he leaves. After I change you tonight, I will show you about being around other men in my own home."

Lorelei stopped fighting to look at him. He would never change. Not even when he changed her into a werewolf would things be different. After the change, Vincent could beat her and she would heal by morning. No more hiding inside until the pain of bruised ribs went away. He never hit her hard enough to have her sporting a black eye, but what about after the change? He would do it knowing that she would heal by morning. No! She would never live that way. She did it long enough and now she would strike back. "I did nothing with Darin," she said. "Now get off of me."

"Darin? Darin! So you are on a first name basis with him now? I leave you alone—"

"Exactly! That's what the hell is wrong right there, Vincent." She ground her teeth to keep from biting at his face. She wanted to do something. Hit him. Bite him. Something that would make her feel better.

"What are you talking about?"

"You leave me alone all the damn time. You left



yesterday morning. How do I know you weren't with some whore lying around all day? You call me after midnight to tell me you will be home later. What the fuck is that?"

"Watch your tone."

"Fuck you and your tone. I hate you! I hate you for all the shit that I let you do to me. For all the times I let you get away with fucking another woman and then coming home to me. I hate you for making me feel like I am nothing to you, but your fucking bitch. And..." She gasped for air when his fingers wrapped around her throat so quickly. With one free hand, she reached up to his hand, trying to pry his fingers away from her neck so could breathe.

"Are you mad, talking to me that way? I can be with anyone I want and there is nothing you can do about it. I don't know what you and Darin spoke about, but he has filled your head with a lot of nonsense that you better get out of your head before tonight."

Her breath left her body in short spasms. She could not breathe. He was going to kill her and she knew it. "Vin..." She drew in a breath. "Let...go..." she pleaded. When she knew she had drawn her last breath, he let go. She breathed in deeply, coughing uncontrollably. She inhaled. The hell with this relationship. He might not stop next time. But hey, why stop now when the fun's just starting? "You piece of shit. If I were a man you would not do this."

Vincent laughed. "If you were a man I would not be prepared to fuck you."

"No," she shook her head.

He stared at her. "No? No? I am going to if you

want it or not. Did you want Darin to make love to you?"

She shook her head again.

"Yes. I can tell. You got aroused from him. I smelled it the moment I came into the house. You went to his room. Your arousal lingered there." He moved and his large hand gripped her breast.

Any other time she would have moaned. Now, she just wanted to spit in his face.

"Did he touch you? Make you ache for him to fuck you? Did he? Did he make you feel the things I do when I touch you?"

Lorelei cried out at his nails, slicing into her tender flesh. He drew tiny droplets of blood before bending his head and tasted her blood.

"Ah yes. He might not have touched you sexually, but your blood has him in it. Did he kiss you, Lorelei?"

When she didn't answer, his claws cut deeper. She winched. "No. He did not."

He chuckled. "Then how did his DNA get into your system? Did you kiss him?"

Lorelei wanted to smile at what she had done. She licked and tasted Darin's neck. She wanted to kiss him. She wanted to do more than just kiss. But now wasn't a good time to think about the damn vampire who should know that her life was in danger while he slept.

"What happened to get his DNA in you?" He snarled the last part.

*Think on your feet...well, on your back, Lorelei. Think!*  
"Would you let me up and I will tell you the truth. It's not what you think," she said quietly.

Vincent watched her for a moment, then moved

from over her body.

Good God, she could block certain images from Vincent while letting him see what she wanted inside her mind. If she couldn't, then this lie would get her into a lot of trouble. She looked at her breast. Three red trails of blood poured from the wound. She was going to go to the bathroom, but Vincent was there, lapping at the trails. It soothed the pain, but his tongue on her made her want to cringe.

He moved away and sat on the bed, waiting for her to explain.

She breathed in and planted the story into her mind before she began. "Darin's guardian, Sashi, got shot last night after going out to play. Some Slayer was chasing Dylan Kiernan, another Dark Guardian. Well, Darin asked for the keys and I said I was going. I was only going to drive and that's it. We found Dylan and Sashi. Sashi was hurt badly and without thought, I got out of the car and ran up to the panther. I touched its fur and blood before thinking. Of all things, I wiped my face and some got into my eyes. Even though it is a panther, its blood is Darin's blood." How did she know that?

*I might be asleep, but the moment you awoke with fear, I did also.*

*Darin?*

*Who else would be in your mind giving you a story such as that?*

Lorelei wanted to smile, but could not give Vincent any hint that her and Darin could speak by mind.

"So," he said after a long pause. "You did not touch him at all?"

"No. Never. I only cared for the cat."

"But you left without letting anyone know."

"I know and I'm sorry for that. I did not want to disturb you from your fun. I only wanted to help."

"Don't let that happen again. I don't want you around that sort of danger. You don't know if the Slayer was still around and Darin should have not taken you with him."

"Don't fault him. I jumped out of the car. He told me to stay there and keep the car in drive and at the first sign of danger, he wanted me to leave."

"He is a good man then. I jumped to conclusions at the smell of him on you."

"If I would have been with him, don't you think I would have washed him off me?" She had tried, but failed miserably at it.

"What about your arousal near his room?"

Lorelei laughed, her black eyes locking with his hazel ones. "To tell you the truth, I did get aroused last night, but not from Darin. Think about it, take in a deep breath, when I went to bathe, I had a dream about you. A sexual dream. You and I both know that arousal lingers on the skin for a long time. I did not think that Darin could smell it. He never acted on it."

*You are such a little liar.*

*Shut up, Darin, or I will come down there with a stake and kill you myself.* She heard him laugh at her threat, but he did quiet.

"I am going to go find out if breakfast is ready. I'm starving." He began buttoning up his shirt.

Lorelei looked shocked for a moment. He wasn't going to have sex with her?

Vincent laughed, making her look at him. "You want me to make love to you?"

*Hell, no! "Could we after the change?"*

He finished buttoning up his shirt. "Of course."

Lorelei held completely still when Vincent leaned over and kissed her on the lips. Not a romantic kiss, just a so-so sort of kiss. Like I-kissed-you-because-I-felt-obligated-to-kiss-you sort of kiss.

"Get dressed and come to breakfast," he ordered.

Lorelei sat on the bed for several moments, not moving when he left the room. She wanted to disobey his orders. Tears flowed down her cheeks, making her close her eyes to cry. She hated this. She hated her life. A life that would be over real soon. Her eyes widened at the lightest touch on her face. She jumped.

*Don't cry.*

*Darin? She questioned. How can you touch me without being here?*

*I can do many things that you do not know. This is not about me. It hurts me to my heart to feel you crying and I cannot comfort you.*

*I cannot help it. I hate him and he thinks that I still love him.*

*I know you don't, but don't let him get to you. I still leave the option open for you to leave with me tomorrow night.*

*I know. Thank you. And please get some rest.*

*If you promise not to cry anymore.*

Lorelei wiped the tears away, then smiled. *I promise.*

*Until tonight then, Lorelei.*

The way he spoke her name made her want to run down to the basement and climb into bed with him so they could make love until neither of them would be

able to leave for a day or two. Lorelei tossed the cover from her, then went to take a shower. Now, she wanted to get Vincent's scent off her before she saw Darin tonight. After tonight, everyone, would be shocked at her decision. She still did not believe she was going to do it.

After showering, Lorelei dressed in a pair of blue jeans and a black sweater. She put on a pair of black, low heel boots that went up to her knees. She brushed her hair away from her face. A style she knew Vincent would grimace the moment he saw it. She applied a little makeup, then left the room.

Downstairs in the dining room, she spotted, of course, Zak and Terrance, eating a plate full of pancakes and sausages. Vincent sat at the other end of the table, reading the local newspaper. Go figure. He dropped the paper for a moment to look at her. He smiled, then raised the paper again, covering his face.

She would rather eat not looking at him anyhow. Taking a deep breath, she flopped down in the empty seat beside him. Francesca was right on cue and set a plate of food in front of her. Lorelei pushed the food away, not particularly hungry now.

"You need to eat," Vincent said from behind the paper.

Instead of starting another unnecessary argument, she pulled the plate closer. She unraveled the fork and knife from the napkin, without thinking, she stabbed the pancake with her fork. The urge to toss it at the paper Vincent thought was so interesting made her hand ache. She had to bite her bottom lip to keep from doing it.

Zak and Terrance hadn't said a word. Not even stopped eating to notice her intent.

Some pair of bodyguards they were. They didn't know when the person they were protecting was in need of being protected. Well, maybe because pancakes would do no damage to him whatsoever, but she would feel better once she had hit him.

"Eat!" Vincent ordered.

She knew her brain waves had opened and he knew that she didn't want to eat. She didn't want him ordering her to eat either. Matter of fact, she didn't want to be here at this very moment. She wanted to be down in the basement with Darin. Vincent didn't know that part, but she was sure he knew the others. "I am," she said through clenched teeth.

Vincent did not retaliate as she hoped. He only flipped the page and continued to read.

The doorbell sounded.

Moments later, Francesca walked into the room, followed by Jade.

Lorelei smiled at her friend. She had on a black and white jumpsuit and white tennis shoes. Lorelei figured she had run from her house to here. Jade loved to keep in shape.

"Good morning, everyone."

"Jade," Terrance spoke first. "Baby. When are we going to get married?"

Jade looked at him. "I don't marry immigrants."

"You have wounded me with your words."

"Good."

"Good morning, Jade," Vincent said, but still did not take down the paper.

"Morning to you, too, Vincent. Wherever you are behind those papers."

Vincent dropped the papers.

"There is the man of the day. Ready for tonight?"

"Of course. With Lorelei by my side, what else could I wish for?"

"Nothing," Jade said with a smile. She turned to Lorelei. "Are you ready to go? I have the day planned out for you."

"Where are we going?" Lorelei asked.

"To the spa for a day of pampering. We have to look our best for tonight. If that's okay with you, Vincent."

Vincent stared at her for a moment. "Sure, go have fun. Just be here by seven. The ceremony begins at eleven."

Lorelei stood from the table. She went over to Vincent, kissed him on the cheek before heading out of the dining room. After retrieving her purse from her room, she and Jade headed out for a day of fun.

\* \* \* \*

"Are you just going to let her go alone, Vincent?" Zak asked.

"She is not really alone. I have many watching her all over this city. She is not my problem now. I need you to watch Darin for me." Vincent saw both Zak and Terrance look at him questionably.

"Why? What has he done?" Terrance asked.

Vincent let out a breath. "I smelled him on Lorelei this morning."

"What?" Both men said together.



“And you let her just leave. You didn’t show her that...well you know.” Zak went to a whisper, “You didn’t show her who is in charge?”

Vincent watched as Francesca walked into the room.

“Are you done, Mr. Cochran?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said. “Thank you for the wonderful breakfast.”

She removed the plates from the table, stacking them on top of each other before leaving the room.

“I didn’t because I didn’t want to leave any bruises on her tonight.”

Both Zak and Terrance nodded.

“What about Darin?” Zak said.

“She gave me some lame ass story about his guardian being hurt and she touched the animal’s blood and then wiping her face.”

“Well, I have heard that the blood of their guardians are the same blood type and scent as their Alphas,” Zak confirmed what he already knew.

“Yes, but I really think it is a load of shit. If he didn’t hold my ticket to getting into the Dark Guardians, I would go down and probably stake his ass myself. I invited him into my home and he touched my woman.”

“I don’t think Lorelei did that. I really believe that she did what she said. Think about it. Lorelei is more afraid of you than any woman has been. Which is a good thing. She would never cheat on you. Never. That’s something I don’t think you would ever have to worry about,” Zak said to Vincent.

Maybe he spoke the truth. Maybe Lorelei told the truth. Just the thought of Darin’s blood in her made

him upset. No one touched Lorelei but him.

"Why did he take her with him in the first place?" Terrace questioned.

"Lorelei said he didn't want to take one of my cars out without me or her in it. I can see the problem with taking another man's car. I told Lorelei to tell him to drive my car to the party last night. I did wonder why he hadn't come, but I now know why."

"It all makes sense. If his guardian hadn't been hurt, then I am sure he would have come to the party," Zak told him.

"I'm sure of it," Vincent agreed. He should reconsider this entire situation. He jumped to conclusions knowing that Lorelei would never let another man touch her. He acted childish about the entire situation. No matter what happened between them, tomorrow night, Darin would be gone and he would be part of the Dark Guardians. Nothing could ruin this day. Nothing. "I am going to prepare for my speech. I assume everything is ready to go for tonight?"

"Sure," Zak said. "It's up and running. Everything is set up at the hotel. The caterers should be there by six. The band, no later than six thirty. I have bags of blood coming in for the local vampires who will be attending."

"Good. That's perfect then." Vincent's cell rang. He flipped it opened the cell, not looking at the number. "Hello?"

"Your ghouls you have following me are not working. They cannot come inside an all women's spa," Lorelei said between giggles.

"You know I could not let you go out alone. I have reserved people watching you at all times."

"I know. I called you because I forgot to tell you that Eve brought over the rings last night."

"Eve? Why her?"

"I didn't listen to her story. I placed them on the nightstand, if you are looking for them. I cannot wait until tonight. It's going to be so much fun."

Vincent frowned. "Sure. Okay, baby, enjoy your day."

"I will."

Vincent closed the cell.

"What's wrong boss?" Terrace asked.

"That bitch, Eve, is up to something. Zoe was supposed to bring my rings over." Zak laughed, making Vincent growl at him. "What's so funny?"

Zak shook his head. "You doing Zoe also?"

Vincent had to laugh at that statement. Zoe Washington was a cute little woman, but he wasn't attracted to her that way. No matter how much he wanted sex, there had to be something about a woman before he had sex with them. "No. I have not had any relationship with her."

"You don't have to tell," Terraced teased. "We will eventually know."

"There is nothing to know," Vincent defended. "I am never ashamed of whom I have sex with and would never deny having sex with a woman, but Zoe is only a friend. *Only* a friend."

Both men nodded.

"Do you want us to watch Darin? Maybe do a little knee damage."

“No,” Vincent answered, shaking his head. “Let’s not do anything but get this over with, get my way into the Dark Guardians, then we will see where it goes from there.”

“No problem,” Zak said.

Vincent rose from the table. “I am going to work on my speech.” He made his way up to his room.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

“Are you sure you heard correctly?” Ormond Lansky, his Nodoro, asked over the phone. His voice was dark and not pleased with the information Darin had told him.

Darin watched the fire in the fireplace. With the warm blazes going, and the smell of fresh scented flowers the maid must have brought in last night. It would be romantic if he had Lorelei by his side. He could make love to her by the fireplace for hours at a time. Worship her from her head down to her toes. Make her beg for his touch, his body, and his bite. She would want him every way she could have him and he would do his best to give her what she wanted.

Shaking his head of the thought, he took a deep breath, then exhaled before things got out of hand. Feeling his cock pushing against his pants, he groaned. Too late. It was already out of hand. The mere thought of her made him hard with need. Never in his life had he thought that finding his mate could be so painful.

“Darin,” Ormond spoke softly over the earpiece. “Is something wrong?”

Darin debated on if he should tell him the truth or just lie to his leader. No use lying to him. Eventually he

would find out what bothered him and that would upset Ormond more than anything would. Dark Guardians did not have secrets between them. "Yes," Darin finally said. "There is something seriously wrong."

"Care to talk about it?"

No. He didn't want to talk about it. He didn't want to think about it, aware of the problem and how to handle it. He wanted her! Nothing could replace the fact that his mate would marry a werewolf. They would mate and have babies from Vincent. Lots of babies. Lots of sex. Darin ground his teeth at the thought of it. "My Truelove is here," he blurted.

"Well, that's a good thing." Ormond's voice sounded happy and cheerful at his confession. Ormond loved every Dark Guardian as one of his own children and he always wanted to see his family happy. "So why do you sound so sad about it?"

"My mate, Lorelei, is marrying Vincent Cochran tonight." Darin waited for Ormond to speak. After a long pause, Darin wondered if he had heard him or not.

"Fate has a way of doing things. It shows us the way and we must take it. If you and Lorelei weren't meant to be together, you would have not gotten the assignment to go to England and another Dark Guardian would be in your place. On the other hand, what has happened, is a sign that Vincent and Lorelei are not meant to be. You are her mate. Not Vincent. Lorelei must never be a werewolf." Ormond sighed. "As much as I do not wish to say this...but before I do, has she noticed you?"

She had noticed Darin the moment they saw each other. If not, Sashi could not have commanded her to come to him. "Yes. She is showing interest in me."

"And Vincent has no clue?"

"Sort of. But we came up with a story that should be all right for now," Darin explained.

"That's fine. No violence should be involved, but if she wants to be with you, she will always be under our protection. Vincent should understand that mates are born, not made, and not forced to be together. You and Lorelei are two halves of the same whole. He should understand that."

Tell him something he didn't know. "I told her that. It's up to Lorelei if she leaves with me or stays with Vincent."

"No. It's not up to her. It's up to the both of you. If you let her go, and let her change into something she was never meant to be, there is no telling what will happen to her. Or you. You might not be able to handle leaving her there. Once she is converted, it will be too late. This needs to be handled tonight before he is awarded as leader."

"I know, Ormond. I know."

"Then do something about it. If what you say about Vincent is true, why would you leave your mate to a miserable life with a man who cheats and beats on her? I would never let such a fate stand. If she doesn't accept you, at least make her understand that she cannot stay in that relationship with him."

Darin mentally nodded in understanding. "I know and will speak with her before tonight."

"Good. Good. I do not want you to say anything

about his acceptance into the Dark Guardians. The board will deny him. Plus, I must talk to others about his unacceptable behavior toward Lorelei. That might get him kicked off the board as leader of the Corvina Clan. I cannot say for sure. We are different species and I heard that werewolves are aggressive beings who love to keep their woman under control and strict supervision."

"I have heard that," Darin said. "I had to report that to you to let you know he is abusing Lorelei. Not only cheating, but striking her in ways that makes me want to..." Darin went quiet before he said something he would regret. He wanted to take Vincent in, as werewolves called it, the circle of death. He would challenge Vincent, not only because of what he did to Lorelei, but all women. Some Dark Guardians are playboys, but none are abusive to their sexual partners. That's just uncalled for.

"It's okay, Darin. I understand. Shouldn't you be asleep now?"

"I slept for about an hour, but now I'm up and cannot sleep."

"Your mate is so close yet so far," Ormond said.

"Exactly."

"Thank you for the information. Please take what I said into consideration. She should be with you, not Vincent. Remember, if she stays with Vincent, she will have an unhappy life."

"I understand. I will return home soon."

"Hopefully, with your mate on your arm."

Ormond did not know how much Darin wanted that. He would give up everything to make love to



Lorelei just once. To hold her, kiss her. Darin closed his cell, laying it on the nightstand beside the bed. He looked at the clock, the red lights showed one o'clock in the afternoon. He had a long day ahead of him.

\* \* \* \*

"So," Jade began speaking from the massage table beside Lorelei. "This Darin fellow, you have a thing for him, do ya?"

Lorelei turned two shades of red at the thought of how much she had a thing for Darin. A thing, as Jade referred to it, was nowhere close to what she felt for him. "Can you fall in love without having sex with a man and in less than twenty-four hours of knowing him?" Lorelei asked. She turned her head on the table, looking at Jade. Their massages were over five minutes ago, and they were waiting for their mud bath. That meant, time for girl talk.

"Of course you can. It's called love at first sight," Jade answered. "You think you love Darin?"

"Yes...no...maybe." Lorelei frowned. "I don't know. It's all happening so fast. One minute I am in love with Vincent. The next, I want to be with a vampire."

"Better a vampire than a werewolf."

"Why do you say that, Jade?"

Jade snorted. "Come on. I would rather see you drinking blood from a cup than watch you change into a fleabag three days out of the month. I have to add that some of the werewolves I have seen in this town are hot with a capital *H*. Yet, I don't want to be one.

Maybe screw their brains out a couple of times. That's about it."

Lorelei laughed at her friend's comment. "Love 'em, then leave 'em I see."

Jade shrugged. "Why not? They have been doing it to us women for years. Granted, I wouldn't go around having sex with hundreds of men just to prove my point. A werewolf is so not on my what-I-want-in-a-man agenda. Enough about me. Are you going to tell Darin?"

"Tell Darin what?"

"That you love him, silly."

"I don't know him that well to say I love him. I said I might."

"That is good enough for me to know that you don't love Vincent as much as you thought you had. You want to be with Darin. If not, you would not be planning on doing what you are planning on doing."

So very true. Lorelei looked over to her friend and smiled. "Are you sure you want to do this with me?"

Jade smiled. "Hell ya! You could not pay me not to. I am ready. Everything is ready to roll."

Lorelei breathed out a deep breath. Everything was ready except her. She didn't know if she could go through with it. How could she even think of doing it?

"What's wrong, Lorie?" Jade called her by that silly name.

She only did that to get on Vincent's nerves because he hated when she cut off her name. There was no time to think about Vincent. From now on, she only thought about herself. *The free Lorelei Riese*. "Nothing is wrong. I just want to get this over with and move on. Once it's

done, I don't have anything to worry about."

"True. Are you going to tell Darin now or later?"

Good question. She didn't want Darin to know about it so soon and one of Vincent's men getting inside his mind and finding out what she had planned on doing. That would not turn out right at the party tonight. "Later. Much later. He is not going to leave until tomorrow night. After tonight, I will not have to tell him what I planned. He will know. I just hope I know what I am getting myself into."

"You do...and from now on, stay away from Englishmen. They are just crazy."

Lorelei giggled. "Vincent is from New York. He was born and raised there."

Jade rolled her eyes. "I know the story. How long has he been here? A hundred years. That's a long time for the brain to start to forget what being an American is all about. Freedom."

"It has freedom, but some women are going through the same thing I am."

"But you are smart enough to walk away before it's too late."

The door opened and two tall, handsome men entered the room. They only had on a pair of shorts that hung at their waists. Both had muscles that made you want to purr like a teenager when they walked by. One had black hair that hung all the way down to his butt. The other, short, golden, spiky hair.

"Damn, I think I want another massage," Jade said after looking at the men.

"If that pleases you, madam," the one with the short hair said in a deep, erotic tone.

"Jade, likely," Jade said with a smile on her face.

"Jade," Lorelei said sternly. "We will never get into the mud baths. You know how hard it is to get an appointment?"

"But, Lorelei. Look at them. Go play in the mud when I can have a hot guy rub his hands all over my body. The other guys were okay, these are worth the extra bucks."

"How about that massage?" The one with the black hair stood over Lorelei.

*Lord! Look at him.* Her black eyes followed his tanned body all the way down do his...she closed her eyes. *Nope not going to do that. Not going to stare at him that way. I'm in love. I'm in love!* "Ummmm...no, thanks. I would like to have my mud bath." Lorelei grabbed the towel closely around her body. No need having it fall off and the man see her naked. "And my friend's also, okay? Lorelei grabbed Jade by the arm, nearly snatching her from the massage table and away from the hunk massaging her shoulders. Which was a task considering Lorelei's other hand had to keep the towel around her body at the same time.

"Hey! I wasn't finished!"

"Yes you are," Lorelei whispered. "Did you just say we are staying away from Englishmen?"

Jade secured the towel around her body. "Nope." She shook her head. "I said *you*. Nothing in my book said I have to stay away." Jade started to approach the table again.

"We are done," Lorelei said.

"Are you sure," the dark haired one asked.

"Positive. Jade, let's go to the mud." Jade turned to

her, a pout in place that reminded her of a child.

"You are so off my friend's list after tonight."

"At least you are giving me until tonight."

"I don't know why." Jade crossed her arms over her chest. "To the mud bath."

Lorelei watched as the men gestured for them to follow them. "Jade," Lorelei whispered as they walked behind the men down a long corridor.

"I am so not talking to you right now."

Lorelei laughed. "I will make it up later."

"How? I don't want your body."

"I promise to find a way."

"You had better. It's been months since I've had sex and I was really ready for a one night stand."

"Jade! You are such a whore," she teased.

"I am a horny whore," Jade retaliated. "One that will be horny for the rest of her life."

"No, you will not."

"Says who? When did you become the sex fairy?"

Lorelei knew that Jade wasn't upset with her. She just wanted to make a big scene.

"Would you look at his ass?" Jade whispered. "And his back. All those damn muscles."

"Shut up, Jade. Before you do something you will regret in the long run."

"What? Like getting laid? I see nothing wrong with that."

"You wouldn't."

"No. I definitely do not see anything wrong with that."

They went through a set of white doors, then another into a room with two large pools of mud in

them.

"Here you are ladies," the man with the golden hair said.

"Thanks," Jade said, never taking her gaze off him.

"If there is anything, I mean *anything* you need help with, don't hesitate to call me," the guy said to Jade. "I'm Calvin, by the way and this is Chad."

"I will definitely call you later, Calvin."

Lorelei shook her head at the way the conversation between the two was heading. After the men left them, Lorelei took off her towel, letting it drop to the floor. "Doesn't that mud look great?"

"Yeah," Jade said then took off her towel and got into the mud. "I would rather play in the mud than have that guy getting me off. The fun of it all. Mud over sex. I have lost my mind."

"Calm down and relax. This is my day."

"Sure. Your day," Jade agreed, then sunk down in the mud.

\* \* \* \*

"Hana," the man who she only knew by the name of Wolf, called to her the moment she stepped inside the lab. "Tell me that you took Dylan down?"

Hana pressed her lips together. "No. I shot him with the special made arrow, but his guardian saved him." Hana looked around the lab. There were different colored beakers filled with liquid. Machines beeped all around. There were scientists working on their different projects. None of them looked up from their work when she spoke, perhaps because half of them

worked with materials that could be deadly if not handled properly.

There was a room made of glass right in front of her where she saw a naked man lying on a metal table. He lay still. No movement. Not even his chest rose. Blood stained his long blond hair. She saw that his nails were long and sharp on his hands.

"Vampire," Wolf answered her unspoken question. "Dawson is the only name we have for him."

"How did you catch him?"

Wolf smiled. "He was feeding. Newly turned and careless. One of the Slayers jumped on the opportunity and shot him with a vampire tranquilizer. I am in no need to keep him and when I spoke with Alex in the United States, he said he could use Dawson."

"Why?" Hana asked.

"Experiment. He has a willing human woman named Liberty to breed with him."

The way he said it made Hana not believe him at all. No human would volunteer to mate with a vampire. A human female would have sex with a vampire being that half of them were handsome, but not have children from them. Though they had little proof, there is a slim chance one would live if they had a baby in human form from a vampire. Hana moved with caution toward the glass. Now she saw that they had his arms and legs strapped to the table. "Does this woman know of the danger of mating with a vampire?" Hana turned to look at Wolf who had followed her up to the glass.

"Sure she does. It's him who we have to convince."

The vampire's blue eyes snapped opened. His chest

rose to take in air.

Hana took a cautious step away from the glass when his eyes locked with hers.

He snarled, his fangs dropping down from his gums. "Let me out of here." A deadly hiss followed his command. "I will kill you all."

"Calm down, Dawson," Wolf said from the glass. "You will be on your way to meet a nice young lady who wants to mate with you."

"I will not touch her."

"You have no choice in the matter. You either mate with her, give us the children we desire or you die."

Dawson, not liking that threat, snarled, growled, and pulled at the straps with all his might. The strap on his right arm popped and he reached over to grab the other strap with his free hand, snapping it like a rubber band. It didn't take long before he was free and charging the glass.

Hana screamed when he made impact.

Wolf assured, "Don't fear. That's triple plated with a strength that ten vampires could not break through if they ran into it at the same time."

The vampire stood and looked at her. He smiled. The vilest smile she ever had the pleasure of receiving.

*I know what you are. I smell it in your blood. I know why you are so obsessed with finding him. You are one of us. His voice was low, hissing with every word he spoke. You hide in the shadows, waiting for him. Following him everywhere he goes. Let him see you and you will find what you are looking for.*

Hana closed her eyes at the invasion.



*Let me out of here, Hana. Let me out! Do it!*

Hana grabbed her head and screamed at his thoughts invading her mind. She went to her knees at the ache of her head pounding from pain.

“Hana!” Wolf screamed her name. “Fill the room with gas. Right now, damn it!” Wolf grabbed her around the waist when she tried to stand on her own.

Hana looked inside the room again. Red lights flashed. A loud alarm had Dawson covering his ears and snarling. Moments later, white smoke filled the room. Dawson growled loudly, ramming the glass over and over again. She could only look in awe as blood trickled from his head from the impact. She wanted to help him. Wanted to let him out. His nails scraped along the glass, leaving deep claw marks in it.

Her eyes met his again. *You are one of us, Hana. One of us!*

That’s the last thing she heard before she saw his eyes roll into the back of his head and he fell to the ground. The alarm stopped, then the gas they pumped into the room began to float out of the room through air vents inside. Once she could see in the room again, the lights stopped flashing and three people in white suits with mask over their faces rushed into the room. Two of them picked Dawson up and slammed him on the table. The other man began replacing the straps on the metal table. Instead of leather, they were strapping him down with metal chains.

“Are you all right, Hana?” Wolf asked after his people finished up in the room, then quickly left a naked Dawson on the table.

Hana pulled out of his arms. “Yes. I think so.” She

didn't really know. Her head still hurt, though not as much. What Dawson had said to her really bothered her. *You are one of us, Hana. One of us!* It freaked her out, knowing what he meant by that. If he spoke the truth, she was a mate. It couldn't be. She didn't feel like a vampire's mate. He might have just said that to scare the crap out of her. It worked.

"What did he say to you?"

She turned to face Wolf. She would never tell him what Dawson said. They would have her strapped down to a table faster than she could say *vampire's mate*. "He...he kept ordering me to let him out. I pushed him out, but he fought to get back into my mind, and that's when the pain came."

"He might be a fledging, but he is strong." Wolf grabbed her arm. "Now, what were we talking about before we were interrupted? Oh, yes. What about Dylan? What happened?"

"The bastard is a lot smarter than I thought. He keeps slipping through my fingers."

Wolf released her. "I let you come here because they told me that you were the best. But from what I can see, you cannot take down one simple vampire with a guardian."

"He sent his guardian after me. I can handle an animal that doesn't have powers to travel faster than a jet. I am glad to have gotten out of there with all my limbs still attached. I didn't know the damn man had a guardian before tonight. It's not as if you all have a lot of records on Dylan. I know you all can't tell me which vampires have guardians and which ones don't, but it would be a big help."

"Don't get your hair in a bunch. I know you are good and when you get a chance, you will be able to take Dylan out of commission, but for now, I need for you to go on another assignment for me."

Hana did not like the sound of that.

"I need for you to escort Mr. Dawson here back to New Orleans."

Hana frowned. "What about Dylan? I just cannot abandon my assignment. I have to bring him in, dead or alive. I prefer dead over alive any day."

Wolf smiled, his brown eyes going to hers. "I like the way you think, but this is a special project. I don't have any Slayers around that I can let go to the states for an extended period. So I need you to do it."

"And when he wakes, I am suppose to..."

"We will provide you with the necessary weaponry that would take him down in less than one second. I would do it myself, but I am needed here."

Hana did not want to leave Dylan here. He was her project and no one else would take that glory away from her. "I want to take down Dylan. I have been chasing him for too long to let someone else take the glory away from me."

"It's yours to have. If he is a good boy and stays away from my Slayers, then you will have your Dylan to hunt. But if he feeds on one of my people, he will end up in the glass case like Dawson there."

What could she say? A head Slayer ordered and she had to obey. No matter how much she didn't want to. "Okay. Okay. Get the plane ready, I want to get this over with."

"Nice. I will have everything set up for in the

morning.”

“In the morning?”

“Yes.” He began walking away from her and she knew to follow. “When they are at their weakest point, he would likely sleep the entire trip, making it a peaceful jaunt for you and my crew of people.”

Hana followed him into his office where they arranged for the trip back to the states.

## CHAPTER NINE

Lorelei never felt so at peace with herself as she did at this very moment. Her body relieved of all tension, her mind finally free of hurt and pain. If this was how she felt before she was engaged, she never wanted to experience marriage. Marriage equaled heartache and pain. Two things she never thought she would feel in her life. Two things that she never knew hurt so badly.

“Oh, my God!” Jade said pulling Lorelei away from her thoughts. “I feel so great!”

Lorelei smiled at her friend. “I have to agree, I really needed that.”

“Man, if I knew going to a spa treatment made me feel like this, I would have made it a weekly trend for me.”

“You and me both.”

“So what’s next on our agenda? Shopping?”

Lorelei looked at her watch. They were walking by the sculptor of the four lions on Trafalgar Square. There were several children sitting on it while, what had to be tourist, took pictures with their cameras. Lorelei heard the roar of thunder. She looked up to see several small clouds of rain drifting across the sky.

"Looks like it is going to rain."

"Yeah, bummer for tonight's celebration."

"We better head back home. It's getting late. We will have to postpone our shopping until later."

Jade stopped walking and stared at her for a moment. "Yeah, right. You wanna get back with that vampire."

"No, I do not," Lorelei denied. In truth, she wanted to get back to Darin. She knew the moment he woke this morning. She knew when he went back to sleep, and she knew that he had been up for about an hour. He paced in his room like a caged animal, waiting on the sun to set so he could leave his quarters.

He hadn't spoken to her at all. She knew he wanted to talk to her. Sashi had told her that Darin missed her. As dangerous as that animal is, Sashi can be the sweetest sometimes. The panther cared more for Darin's feelings than its own. As strange as that may seem, it was true.

"If he looks anything like you described, you will be in bed with him before the night is over." Jade linked her arm with hers and they began to head home.

"I cannot do that to Vincent."

Jade made a low growling noise. "What makes you say that? And don't give me that I-love-him speech because it is not and I repeat, not going to work with me."

"I wasn't going to say that." Lies. All lies. She had planned to say that exact thing. She loves...correction...loved Vincent and she didn't think that jumping in bed with her potential mate would be the best thing to do right now.

Jade came to a halt, making Lorelei stop walking also. "Then what were you going to say?"

They looked at each other for a moment. Jade winked, making her want to...to...she couldn't think of anything bad that would not leave her friend hurt. She just wanted to rough Jade up a little.

"I'm waiting," Jade sung. "Clock is ticking."

"Screw you," Lorelei pulled away from her friend. "Just unlock your door so I can go home."

"Do you have a legit excuse why you don't want to have sex with Darin?"

Not a one. She would never admit it to Jade. If she did, Jade would never let it go. "Yes. It's wrong."

"And..." Jade pressed the button on her keychain to unlock the car door. Inside the car, she continued. "We always do things that are wrong, but you and I know that being with Darin is not a bad thing. I have to get a good look at him when we get back."

"No."

"No," Jade repeated. "Why not?"

"I don't need a matchmaker. I need you not to get involved in this. As long as you have everything ready to roll for tonight, I'm good."

"Of course." Jade started the car. "Everything is ready to go." She put the car in drive and pulled away from the curve.

Lorelei lay back against the seat and closed her eyes. She needed to make sure that she kept her mind clear for Vincent. She knew that Jade would. Jade had taught her how to do it after finding out that things other than humans lived on Earth and half of them could read each other's minds. She learned to block out

anything she didn't want them to know.

\* \* \* \*

Darin woke for the fifth time today. He never had so little sleep since his change. The dreams he had were only of Lorelei and himself. They were kissing in one and making love in another. The last dream, the one that woke him from a peaceful sleep, was about him changing her into his mate that he needed her to be. *Lorelei accepted it.* Nothing would ever make him happier than to change her. He would give her his world if he could.

Sashi spoke to him. *Alpha want woman. Why not have woman? She wants you.*

She sounded so much healthier and stronger than last night. Thank heavens for that. He did not know what he would do if he lost Sashi. She was not only his guardian, but also his lifeline. Sashi kept him sane over the years. After enduring so much loneliness, hurt, and pain in the world, she helped him through those trying times. She got on his nerves sometimes, like now when she pushed him to do things he knew he did not have control over.

*Alpha has control. If Alpha not have control, Sashi would have made Alpha take woman. Alpha needs her. She needs Alpha.*

*I know, Sashi, but she has to decide if she wants to come with me when we leave tomorrow.* Worry washed over him from Sashi. It made him cringe at the pain Sashi felt at the thought of Lorelei not leaving with them.

*Alpha not want her to go with you? Why would Alpha*



*let woman stay here when she belongs to you? To us!*

Darin stopped pacing his room, sat down on the bed, and thought about what Sashi said. Why would he not just act like the vampires in the movies and sweep her off her feet? Why not make her fall in love with him by making love to her? No, not love, mate. After one exchange of blood, one taste of each other, she could not resist him if she wanted. They would be together for an eternity.

*Why not do it, Alpha?*

*As much as I want to, I cannot force her to go with me. She will make her own decision.*

*Sashi like her.*

*I do also. Are you feeling better now?*

*Yes. Sashi healed. Sashi wants to play with Zaid. Where is Zaid?*

*Zaid is with Dylan and you know that.*

*Can Sashi go to Dylan?*

Darin shook his head. *No. Last time I let you out by yourself, you got hurt.*

Sashi growled loudly in his ear. *Sashi was protecting Dylan. I might not be Dylan's guardian, but I protect all. Sashi not bad! Sashi know how to take care of herself.*

*I am sure you can, but I will not let you out right now to go running around the streets. You stay here until we get home. Dylan will return to the states also.*

*Then Zaid and Sashi play?*

*Yes, you two can play together.*

*That make Sashi happy.*

*I knew it would.*

*Could you go get Lorelei? That makes Sashi and Alpha happy.*

*You don't give up, do you?*

*No. Sashi want Alpha to be happy all the time. Alpha is really happy when he is with Lorelei.*

That may be true.

*It is true, Alpha.*

Yes, it was. But he would not interfere in this relationship between Vincent and Lorelei. If Lorelei left with him, he would gladly accept. If not, well, he did not know what he would do right at this moment. Darin reached for his cell when it rung. He did not notice the long distance number on the blue screen. "Hello."

"Darin, it's Dylan. How are you and Sashi doing?"

"We are good. She is healed, which is a good thing."

"That's good."

"Yes it is. She wants to play with Zaid."

Dylan's laughter bloomed though the receiver. "Yes. I cannot sleep because Zaid keeps waking me up worried about Sashi. All day it's, *is Sashi all right, Alpha and call Darin to see if Sashi is fine.* If I hear that once more, I am going to pull my hair out."

Darin smiled. "Yes. I know the feeling. Too bad they cannot communicate with each other while they are *supposed* to be resting. Sashi talks all the time. Not that I mind. I just want sleep and she keeps me up about going to—"

"To what?"

Darin heard the desperation in Dylan's voice to find out what made him quiet so quickly. Darin did not want to say anything just in case Lorelei refused to go with him, so he lied. "Nothing."

"If you take me for a fool, you are wrong. *Nothing*, does not have a man sounding as you do. Now, either

you tell me what's going on, or I'll be there and talk to Sashi myself. They cannot communicate to others long distance, but in a few miles of her, I can hear all she says."

Darin believed that he would do it.

"I would," Dylan said reading his mind.

Darin growled. "Don't read my mind."

"You don't have it opened up enough so I can tell what the *nothing* is all about."

"The nothing is Lorelei."

Dylan quieted for a while. "The woman that drove me home last night?"

"Yes, her."

"What about her that has you down?"

Nothing about Lorelei made him feel down. He hadn't felt more alive in years. If she only agreed to go with him and be the mate that he needed, he would never feel down another day in his life. To have a mate to wake up to every night, to love and would love him back would be the life. He would never want another woman's touch, but Lorelei's. He would never crave to be with another. His world would end if he did not have her by his side when he left. He had to convince her to be with him. "Lorelei...Lorelei is my Truelove."

Dylan did not respond right. "Do you know how bad that is?"

"Do I. Hell yeah I know." Dylan did not have to explain to him that his mate was about to marry to a werewolf and transform tonight. Once she transformed into a werewolf, there was no telling what would happen regarding their bond together. He could not mate with a werewolf. More like, he didn't *want* to

mate with one. There are no known cases where a vampire and werewolf live together. He did not want to be the first one to prove it.

Once transformed into a werewolf, would their bond be broken as his heart would be? He would suffer knowing that he lost her to another for the rest of his life. No telling how long that would last. He would probably kill himself before morning. He just didn't know what to do or what would happen between them.

"What are you going to do?" Dylan asked.

"Nothing. I cannot force her to come with me. Things did get a little out of hand last night once we dropped you off."

"She knows of you?"

"I think she does. I told her some things. Fate and want pulled between us. I knew it the moment I saw her."

"And by things getting out of hand, what do you mean by that?"

"I held her. Touched her. I wanted to make love to her, but we didn't."

"But your scent was on her and vice versa."

"Yes."

"Did Vincent find out?"

"Sort of. I planted a story in her head about it and she knew exactly what to say. So far, he is good with that. The bad part is I cannot let him into the Dark Guardians."

"Why not? He seems like a good candidate."

"Even though cheating should not be a reason for not accepting someone's application, it's part of it. He

is violent toward Lorelei—who is human. What would he do to other humans if able? What has he done to them in the past? We do not need anyone who cannot control his temper when it comes down to protecting mortals.”

“True, but are you sure that your decision was not based on the fact...” Dylan quieted. “Did you just say he is violent toward Lorelei?”

“Yes. You are not hearing well today?”

“Oh, I heard you... and he still has his head?”

“Yes. He does.”

“Are you mad?” Dylan growled through the cell. “He needs to be killed for touching your mate in that manner. The fact that he is with her sexually should make you upset. Then add hitting her. He should be in jail right now. Or dead.”

Come to think about it, all this time he hasn't thought about her and Vincent having sex. Now, the thought of them together made the beast rise inside him. It pushed through layer after layer of calm before bursting through the surface. He growled out. He would not accept another man touching his mate in any kind of way. No one touched his mate sexually, but him.

*Alpha!* Sashi's voice called out to him. *Calm down, Alpha. Lorelei is your mate. You can have her and another will not touch her ever.*

He was damn sure they wouldn't. Lorelei was going with him, no doubt about that. He would never let her stay with Vincent. Never!

“That's right,” Dylan said. “She is your mate and you have to protect her.”

"Thanks. I didn't see it that way until now. I don't care how I will do it. Lorelei is leaving with me."

"Good. Call me before you leave. I need to visit Michigan for a while."

"Why?"

"No reason. I want Sashi and Zaid to see each other. It's been a while."

"True. I will talk to you later."

"Make sure you call before you leave. I can catch a ride with you."

"Will do." Darin closed the cell and tossed it on the bed. The sun would be down soon and before tonight, he needed to talk to Lorelei about everything between them. She was his and he would not accept any other answer but that.

\* \* \* \*

Lorelei groaned out in pain, grabbed her head, and leaned onto the car for balance.

Jade stood by her side in seconds. "Lorelei, are you okay? What's wrong?"

Her friend grabbed her arm, steadying her. If Jade hadn't, she would have fallen to the ground.

"Do I need to go inside to get Vincent?"

Jade hated Vincent, but to help her, Lorelei knew she would go to him for help. "No," she breathed out as some of the pain subsided. "I will be fine."

"Are you sure?" her friend's voice trembled with fear. "What happened?"

"You would not believe me if I told you." Steadying herself upright, she removed her hand from her head.

Jade released her slowly, but did not move away just in case it happened again.

"Try me," Jade's black eyes watched her for a moment, studying her to see if she was okay.

Lorelei knew at the slightest notion that if she were not well, Jade would run to get Vincent, and she did not want that. "I'm okay. Something made Darin upset."

Jade frowned at her. "Something made Darin upset and that affected you?"

Lorelei laughed at how it sounded when Jade repeated it. It really did not sound logical at all. "Yes. We're connected in some way that I cannot explain. I felt him explode. His inner beast was upset and then he screamed out to me with his mind. It hurt, but I know he did not mean to hurt me. Something happened to him and I want to know what."

"Are you sure? Are you okay?"

"Yes I am." Lorelei met her friend's gaze, then immediately looked away. She said she felt okay, but she lied. Whatever happened to Darin, made him very upset with her. The anger he radiated made her want to turn and run from the house. Not that she believed he would do anything to her. He wanted her. That was the bottom line to what she felt.

Jade changed the conversation. "Let's get inside, it's freezing out."

Lorelei nodded and followed her into the home.

"Good afternoon Ms. Riese and Ms. Taylor." Francesca said the moment they were inside.

"Hey, Francesca," Jade greeted.

"Ms. Riese, Mr. Cochran has gone to the

Westminster Hotel to make sure that everything is set up and ready to go in two hours. He wanted me to instruct you that your and Ms. Taylor's dresses are ready and he would like for you to be there before eleven."

"Thanks," Lorelei said dryly.

"Do you need help dressing?" Francesca asked.

"No," Jade jumped in. "I will help her."

"Very well. Enjoy your party and when I see you tomorrow, you will be Mrs. Cochran."

Lorelei's stomach rolled at the thought. Months...no, days ago that had excited her. Marriage. Love. Honor. Now the thought made her gag. She was not going to go through this tonight, no matter what. "Thank you," Lorelei managed through clenched teeth.

"You are welcome." Francesca turned and walked away.

"Well," Jade said, linking her arm with hers. "Let's get you dressed."

Lorelei groaned at the thought. She let Jade pull her upstairs.

"Oh...my...God!" Jade whispered the moment they made it to the top of the stairs.

Lorelei looked at her friend and saw her staring in front of them. She looked in the direction. After seeing what had caught Jade's attention, she gasped. Lorelei opened her mouth to speak, but no words emerged, except a squeaking sound like a mouse.

"Good evening."

His voice sounded so erotic Lorelei knew she just lost the battle to stay away from him. That and the point that he looked good. Darin had on a white



tailored suit with black pin stripes, along with a matching vest, the outfit shaped every muscle in his broad shoulders to perfection. Underneath, he wore a black lay down collared shirt and tie. He wore black shoes to complete his apparel. He had his dark brown hair brushed, leaving no strands out of place. If Jade had not had her arm, she knew she would have run up to him and ruined his clothes. He stood in the middle of the hallway, looking like a statute made out of the finest material.

"Hello," Jade spoke, then nudged Lorelei with her elbow. "I am Jade Taylor, Lorelei's best friend." Jade let her go and walked toward Darin, who had not taken his gaze off Lorelei yet.

"Nice to meet you, Jade."

Lorelei watched as they shook hands.

"I am Darin MaGruder."

"Darin," Jade repeated.

"Yes."

"I never knew..." Jade said, then looked back at Lorelei.

"Never knew what," Darin said, releasing Jade's hand.

Jade smiled. "How lucky a woman could be."

Darin did not respond.

He walked toward Lorelei in slow movements, then stopped in front of her. What she wouldn't do to just touch him right now. Her black eyes shot up to his silver ones. They seem to darken with a desire she knew mirrored her own.

He leaned closer.

His male scent filled her lungs. He smelled wild just

like the rainforest. His lips touched her cheek briefly. Lorelei stared at him as he took a step away from her. Her body flamed with need. A need for this vampire who stood in front of her.

“How was your day at the spa?” Darin asked.

Darin’s hand touched her arm and even through the coat, she felt his touch as if he touched her bare skin.

Lorelei shivered. “It was good.”

Darin smiled at her obvious nervousness. Hell, anyone miles away would notice her change when she was around Darin. How is one to act when you want to be with someone who you cannot touch because your fiancé would know the moment you had? Damn werewolves and their abilities to smell other men on their mates. The thought made her want to growl. This was so frustrating.

“I would ride with you and your friend to the Westminster Hotel, but...” he stopped speaking and leaned closer. “I don’t think I would be able to keep my hands off you during the ride. I would probably end up making love to you right there in the car in front of your friend.”

Her mind screamed *yes do it* while her body...what the hell, her body said the same thing her mind had. She would probably, nope, she would let him do it even if he tried right now. “That would turn out badly when we made it to the party. Your scent all over me while I am standing next to Vincent.”

“Let’s not talk about Vincent. My scent is the only one that should be on you from now on. After his speech, we need to talk before your conversion tonight. Meet me in my room number three-forty before you go

to Vincent. Promise me that you will do that for me. For us.”

“Yes,” her voice came out thick with emotions.

“That’s all I ask.” Darin removed his hand and walked away.

Jade came up to her. “Now, I know what all the commotion is about.”

“What do you mean?” Lorelei asked, finally getting her voice to work.

“Darin is a hunk and from what I can tell, he wants you.”

Understatement. Darin did not want her. Darin needed her just as she needed him. Man oh man, what had she gotten herself into now? She did not know and could not explain it if she tried. Why did she feel so much emotion, so much need, want, and desire for Darin? She could not put it all together. She had been with Vincent for three years. Three long, sad years and she never experienced half of what she experienced with Darin. And they hadn’t even had sex yet. When they did, she knew she would go crazy. Sex with Darin would lead to Lorelei losing her mind for him. She would want it—no, demand it—every day and night. Darin could be addictive and if he did not want her as much as she wanted him, that could be bad for her. Very bad. “I know he wants me, Jade. I want him yet what can I do about it? If Vincent knew that I wanted Darin, I would be a dead woman.”

“Don’t worry about that after tonight. We have a plan and we are going to stick with it, right?”

Lorelei nodded.

“Good. Let’s go and get dressed.”

## CHAPTER TEN

Darin drove out of the garage, not happy at all that he was leaving Lorelei behind. He wanted to sweep her off her feet, take her away from Vincent, and have her for himself. The thought of doing it made him want to turn the car around and do just that. He would only wait until after the speech to talk to her. He would not let Vincent touch her again. He would not make a big scene in front of everyone. That's why he wanted her to meet him in his room where she had no choice in the matter but to accept their fate and become one. Vincent would have to find another mate elsewhere. *Lorelei was his!*

He turned the car toward Dylan's place. Dylan stood outside, waiting for him, wearing an all over black suit. His blond hair hung loosely over his shoulders as it flew in the cool wind when it blew. Sashi stirred in his mind the moment Dylan got into the car. He knew the animals wanted to play and he might let them later, but for now, they had to stay put.

"Hey," Dylan greeted.

"Hi." Darin drove on.

"We have a problem," Dylan said.

"What is the problem?"

"You know Dawson?"

Darin let the name roll around in his head for moment. "Dawson who?"

"That's just it. His name is just Dawson."

"Yes, I remember. What about him?"

"I heard the Slayers have him. I have been tracing this Slayer here named Wolf."

Darin nodded. He knew of Wolf though that was not the human's real name. He just went by it. He heard that Wolf was one of the most dangerous Slayers around England. That was another reason why he agreed to come to England. He wanted to shut Wolf's operation down, but the moment he saw Lorelei, his plans had changed. He still wanted and planned to take Wolf down, but it would take a little longer to do now that he had to win the heart of the woman of his life. "Do you know where they are planning on taking Dawson?"

"No and frankly I don't care."

"Why not?" Darin glanced at Dylan before turning his attention back to the road.

"I heard Dawson gave a lot of Dark Guardians to Wolf to spare his own life. Now that he cannot find anyone to give, the Slayers took him. Any Dark Guardian that would do that deserves to die."

"No they don't."

"If you say so."

Darin knew that Dylan had officially ended the conversation about Dawson.

"Why do you sound so down?" Dylan asked after moments of silence.

Darin did not say anything at first. He did not know

if telling Dylan of his plan would be a good idea. Dylan could block his mind just as well as anyone else. "I am going to talk to Lorelei tonight before Vincent changes her."

"Talk? Only talk?"

"Not exactly. I plan to make her mine before this night is over. I don't want to lose her to a werewolf. I never heard of having more than one mate in a lifetime. If we don't choose to be with our mates, I know that we don't get another chance at it later."

"True. So your plan is to..."

"Seduce."

Dylan laughed. "Then you are a real Dark Guardian."

\* \* \* \*

Lorelei could not believe her dress. She looked like a satin queen going to the prom in this dress. It was a side cut turquoise colored dress with a plunged back and cross back straps. It looked good on her, but for some reason she thought of satin bed sheets when she looked at the material.

Lorelei walked out of the bathroom, looked at Jade, who did not look so happy with her burgundy colored long elegant evening dress, mainly because it looked better than hers did. It had an embellished 'V' neckline in gold. It really looked good, but on them, it was a bad choice. Jade snickered when Lorelei came into the room. "If you laugh, Jade, I promise you that I will not burn the pictures taken tonight of you in that dress." Jade could not hold the laugh in any longer and neither

could she. They both laughed an all out laugh.

"Oh God," Jade said, holding her stomach. "What's with these dresses? Are we in the fifties or what?"

It took a while for Lorelei to stop laughing. "I don't know. Vincent picked these out. He only wanted our sizes and he said he would do the rest."

"Well he did something all right. He made us into dress up dolls." Jade stood from the bed. "I cannot believe I am going to go in public with this on." She pulled at the dress.

"You and me both."

"Are you going to do your hair?" Jade asked.

Lorelei could pin it up into a nice bonnet, but no, she would not do it. Only because she knew that it would burn Vincent up to know that she did not do her hair. "No. I like it down like this."

Jade watched her closely for a moment. "You are trying to make Vincent mad." It was a statement, not a question.

"Yes. I am."

Jade shook her head. "Let me at least put on some makeup before we leave." Jade headed to the bathroom.

Lorelei looked at herself in the full-length mirror once again.

*You look beautiful.*

Lorelei gasped, closed her eyes, and moved away from the mirror.

*No, don't close your eyes. I see what you see and you look beautiful in that dress.*

*Darin.* She whispered his name in her mind. She opened her eyes and stepped in front of the mirror

again.

*You are beautiful.*

*How can you see what I have on?*

*I see through your eyes. It's a simple trick not many Dark Guardians take the time to learn.*

*I see. So you like the dress on me.*

No. And before she let his words sink in, he continued. *I love it on you.*

*Thank you. I didn't say it before, but you look good in that suit.*

*I figured that you had.*

*Why is that?* she asked, making sure that he could see all of her in the mirror. She did not want to move now that Darin could see her every move.

*You were gawking at me. I thought for a minute that you would attempt to take my body.*

*Don't flatter yourself. I don't gawk at anyone.*

*If you say so. I will see you when you get here and do not forget to meet me in my room after the ceremony.*

That made Lorelei smile. There were endless possibilities of meeting Darin in a hotel room. There was a bed, a shower, and a Jacuzzi. All amenities she wanted to try out. Man, she was so going to hell for thinking like this. *I will.*

*Later, love.*

Lorelei frowned at the emptiness of her mind when Darin left. She almost cried out for him to return. As much as she wanted him there with her, she did not need him inside her mind when she stood next to Vincent. When Jade came out of the bathroom, she still smiled.

“And what has that big smile on your face?” Jade asked. “There is no way you are smiling because of the



dress."

"Nothing. I cannot wait until tonight."

"And why is that?"

"Darin and I were speaking just a minute ago."

"Really." Jade moved to stand in front of her. "By mind?"

"Yes. It's so different with a vampire. Unlike Vincent, Darin can talk to me by mind. He can touch me and not be in the same room. Plus, I just found out that if we are not in the same room, but our minds are connected, he can see through my eyes."

Jade stared at her. "Damn, that's different."

"You are telling me."

"So are you going to meet him in the room after Vincent is pronounced leader?"

Lorelei shrugged. She would go, no doubt about it. It would take a pack of werewolves to keep her from going to talk to Darin. "Yes I am going to talk to Darin."

Jade snorted.

"What's with the snorting?" Lorelei asked as she slid one foot into the clear heels, then the other.

"You and Darin talking? You two have so much sexual frustration built up you two could burst a dam at any moment."

"We do not," Lorelei denied.

"Try that with someone who does not know better. The man looked as if he would eat you in the hallway. I think that he did not do it because I was there."

"Not true."

"If you say so." Jade ran her hands through her hair. "You ready to go?"

Lorelei looked at the mirror once more then nodded.

"Then let's get going. We do not want to keep Vincent waiting all night."

"Wait a second!" Lorelei stopped Jade before she got out the door. She stood there looking around the room knowing that this was going to be the very last time she might ever see it. Tears formed in her eyes. Her chest expanded from the ache of what she had to do.

"What's wrong?" Jade asked from beside her.

Lorelei tried to put on her best smile. She did not want her friend to worry about her or worry about her changing her mind about what they planned to do.

"Are you sure you want to do this, Lorelei? It's not too late to change your mind."

Lorelei shook her head. It was now or never. "No," she whispered. "No. I am ready. I had to look at this room one last time."

Jade touched her arm, making her look up at her. "Do you want to take anything?"

As good as that sounded, she did not want anything to remind her of Vincent—not the clothes that he brought her or any pictures of them together. She only had the small suitcase of clothes that Jade had in her house for her. "No. I want nothing of his."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I am. I am so happy that I did keep my own banking account opened over the years and I had been putting money in there every now and then, never knowing what would happen to Vincent and me. I have enough to last a while."

“As long as you are sure.”

“I am. Let’s go and get this over with. I can say that I am happy to leave this place.” Lorelei grabbed her long, black coat out of the closet before making her way out of the room and out of Vincent’s life for now and forever. She only had to figure out if she wanted to be with Darin the way that her mind and body demanded. Of course, she wanted him, but did she want to be *with* him? Having another sexual relationship was something she did not want to get involved in again.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

Lorelei and Jade walked inside the Westminster Hotel. Low classical music played in the background. There were all sorts of decorations around the front lobby. Tables were set up with flowers and a black candle burning brightly on each one. Typical.

Lorelei inhaled. There were humans, werewolves, vampires, and some demon's scents she could not recognize. Everyone was standing around talking to each other. Some had glasses with their favorite drinks in them. Blood for vampires and werewolves and wine for the human servants. Nothing unusual or different.

A man dressed in a butler's uniform walked up to them. "May I take your coats?"

Both Jade and Lorelei shrugged out of their winter wear. It was cool outside, but the motel was warm.

"I am going to find something to eat," Jade whispered. "Will you be okay until I get back?"

"Sure."

Jade went over to the bar set up with food and drinks.

Lorelei walked into the ballroom to see they had it set up with rows and rows of chairs. In front was a

podium with four seats. One for her, she knew, and one for Vincent. The other two she had no idea who they were for.

"You look beautiful," Darin spoke from behind her.

She spun around looking in those silver eyes. "You don't look so bad yourself."

"Thanks."

"I give credit where credit is due," she teased. And boy was it due. What she would do just to touch him right now. Not only touch him, and kiss him. Yes, his lips looked like they were soft. Kissable lips. He had kissable lips. Groan. She had to get away from him until later before every non-human creature came after her scent.

"I agree," he said reading her mind. "Meet you later." Darin walked away, heading out the double doors at the other end of the room.

"Damn, damn, damn," she whispered. "Why do I fall for men that look so damn good?" Lorelei went back into the main dining hall.

"Lorelei."

This time when she heard her name, she tensed.

"You look ravishing tonight."

She looked at Vincent, with his usual cocky smile on his face. Vincent had on an all over black suit. He had on a white collared shirt and a black tie. Nothing unusual about the way he dressed. He did not even turn her on the least bit. her heart didn't even flutter at the sight of him. Nothing compared to her reaction to...cannot think about that now. "Thanks," she said dryly. He leaned down and kissed her on her lips.

"Are you okay?" he asked after she did not respond

to the kiss as she knew he wanted.

She nodded. "I'm fine. Just tired."

"Well, you cannot go to sleep on me tonight." He wrapped his arms around her, pulling her closer. "We have plans tonight that require your full, undivided attention."

She knew he wanted to turn her. A year ago, she wanted that. Now, she wanted him to get his hands off her. Lorelei had to prevent herself from tensing up at the low, dangerous growl erupting inside her mind. She knew Darin's anger better than her own. She felt it, but then, where was he? He had to be close enough to see Vincent holding her close. Darin might not know it, but she did not want Vincent's touch as much as he didn't want Vincent touching her. She looked around the room, trying to spot him. When she did not see him, she looked up into Vincent's golden colored eyes. "I know," she finally answered. "I know how important this day is to you."

"And to you," he added.

She chuckled. "Yes, it is important to me, too."

He pulled her closer and wherever Darin hid, he was pissed off at him touching her. His anger flamed and so did hers.

"Are you sure that everything is all right?" Vincent asked. "You seem a bit distant."

His arm tightened just a bit around her. Not too much that it hurt, just enough to get her attention.

"I don't want this shit tonight, Lorelei."

There's the old Vincent she knew. Not the caring son of a bitch he pretended to be. Good old Vincent would not let her down. She pushed at his chest, but he

did not release her. "What shit?" she whispered. "I am not doing shit and you are getting upset because of that. What the hell do you want from me?"

Vincent growled. His hand went to her shoulder where he applied pressure. Anyone in the room looking at them would think they were two teenagers in love who could not keep their hands off each other.

Lorelei knew the truth. She was in hell. She closed her eyes, but refused to cry out. He wanted her to show weakness. He would never get that sort of gratification from her again.

"Watch your mouth with me," he hissed. "I don't want anything to go wrong tonight."

How surprised he will be a few hours from now. "It's all..." Lorelei clenched her teeth at the pain in her shoulder. "Get your hands off me, Vincent, before I walk out of this hotel right now." Lorelei tried to pull out of his arms, but he held her tight to him. She knew that if Vincent did not want to let her go, she would not move.

Vincent looked at her. His eyebrows shot up at her response to trying to get away from him.

"Are you finished with your temper tantrum?"

"I didn't have one until you made me have one."

If she knew she did not have a plan for tonight, she would have thought she had lost her mind talking to Vincent like this. Lorelei did not care anymore. She would get through his leadership because he did earn it, after that, she would do what she had to do.

"You are pushing me in front of our guest."

Our guest? Yeah right. She did not know anyone here besides Darin and Jade. Minus Darin since she did

not know much about him past the point she wanted him in her bed.

*Lorelei, I feel him hurting you, do you need for me to...*

*No, Darin! Lorelei quickly answered. Let him have this, he is going to be very surprised later.*

\* \* \* \*

Darin was somewhat taken aback by her response. What did Lorelei mean by that? Could she have plans of her own? Plans that she did not want to share with him now? Plans that did not include him? The thought broke his heart. Would Lorelei choose not to be with him?

Darin watched them from the balcony. Everyone around believed that Vincent and Lorelei were talking to one another. Hugging. Kissing. Doing things that couples did. That was not the case in their situation. Vincent was hurting her and it took powers from the unknown to stop him from jumping down and beating the shit out of the fleabag.

There were a few Dark Guardians here and he had no doubt that they would back him up one hundred percent. As much as Darin wanted to take that chance, he would not. His brothers were outnumbered ten to one and those are odds you don't tempt. But if Vincent did not get his hands off his mate, he would have to take that chance.

Lorelei pulled away from Vincent, her gaze shot up to Darin as she walked toward her friend, Jade. She gave him her trademark smile before turning away.

"You two might as well get a room," Dylan teased.



Dylan passed him a glass of blood. "Thanks. And no thanks about getting a room."

"Yeah right." Dylan leaned against the banister. "Do you know how much the sexual need is raising off you, my friend?"

"No," he answered. Two women—correction, two vampires—dressed in all black. He considered them vampires because they were not part of the Dark Guardians. Both women had on skintight dresses and they were twins. Both had hazel eyes, long golden hair, and both smelled of need. You could not tell them apart from just looking at them, but Darin noticed that one's hair was slightly longer than the other's.

"Hello there, handsome. I'm Carly," the one on the left spoke. "This is my sister, Celsey."

"Good evening," he greeted. "I am Darin and this is my friend, Dylan."

Celsey moved toward Dylan. "You boys looking to get lucky tonight?" She wrapped her arms around Dylan, who smiled at Darin.

"Of course," Dylan answered.

"What about you, handsome?" Carly asked, moving closer to him. "Are you looking for fun?"

"As beautiful as you are, I have to decline."

Carly pouted. "Why?"

"Because my friend here is in love and has found his mate," Dylan answered. "But I can handle both of you."

Carly inhaled. "You don't smell like another."

"I haven't mated with her yet."

Carly moved toward Dylan. She kissed Dylan quickly on the lips. "He smells of need. Does his mate

not want him?"

"No," Dylan held both women on either side of him. "He is just being a lover boy, that's all. How about you meet me in room five-fifty in about two hours and I'll make sure that neither of you will think about him at all."

Both women laughed. "We will meet you there," Carly agreed.

They both released Dylan and glided away.

"I told you that you were projecting need stronger than anyone else in this place. I think you better get it under control." Dylan frowned at what he said. "What the hell am I talking about? You can keep that up when you are around me, I have a date with twins. I haven't done twins in...in about two hundred years."

Darin laughed at his friend. "I see you are right, but there's nothing I can do about it. I cannot be with her right this moment."

"It better be soon or some lucky man will be raped by a needing woman. Not that I have any complaints about that, but Lorelei might not like the idea of another woman trying to take her man's body."

"So very true."

Dylan looked around Darin and smiled. "Well hello there," Dylan greeted. "I am Dylan Kiernan and you are?"

Lorelei's friend come up to Dylan and extended her hand toward him. "I am Jade Taylor, Lorelei's best friend."

Darin saw Dylan's face light up with excitement. "We are in luck. I am Darin's best friend."

Jade released Dylan's hand. "And how am I in

luck?"

"We can all be good friends. Darin and Lorelei. You and I. No extra wheels."

Darin shook his head and began to walk off.

"Wait, Darin!" Jade said.

Darin turned to face Jade. "What is it?"

Jade moved to stand in front of him. "Lorelei wanted to see you."

"She will after..."

"No." Jade shook her head. "Now. Vincent went somewhere with some girl probably. He said they forgot something back at the house. She needed to see you alone for a while before he comes back."

"Okay. Where is she?"

"In my room. Room eight-sixty-two."

"Thank you." Darin did not wait. He rushed off to the elevator. Darin stood outside the door of room eight-sixty-two. He knocked quietly.

"Come in," Lorelei called out.

He opened the door and went inside, closing the door behind him. She stood in front of him, smiling, but her eyes held sadness in them. "Who is Aria—" he did not get her name out before she had her arms around his neck and kissed him. Darin wrapped his arms around her, returning the kiss they both needed. He knew how wrong it was for them to be doing this, but he could not stop it. Heat rose in his wrist, hot, erotic, and slightly painful. Oh god! He forgot about the binding. Lorelei had triggered the first step of the bonding process.

Lorelei moaned when their bodies touched. It gave him the opportunity to slip his tongue inside the warm

of her mouth. He has kissed plenty of women in his lifetime, but never had he experienced the electricity that traveled through his body like now. The world seemed to fade away from them, leaving only him and Lorelei. The air crackled around them. The need to have her slammed into his body. He growled, pulling her closer.

\* \* \* \*

Someone tell her what the hell was going on because at this point, Lorelei did not know. She only wanted to talk to him. Tell him of her plans for tonight, which she hadn't completely come up with. When Vincent lied about going to go get something he left at the house, she thought that she had no other chance besides now. All her plans flew out the window when he walked into the room. She had to kiss him just once.

His hands moved down her back, slipping inside her dress. He gripped her buttocks through her silk panties, pulling her closer to his hard erection pressing against her stomach.

His hands yearned to touch her this way just to arouse her body. He continued to kiss her like a starving man and she was the last food on Earth. They were so involved in their kiss she did not have time to think about what would happen when Vincent came back and smelled him on her. At this point, she didn't care. She no longer belonged to Vincent. She belonged to herself.

Darin released her lips.

Before she said anything, he trailed warm kisses

down the column of her neck.

“Darin,” she called out his name, not knowing if she begged him to continue or to stop. He removed his hands from her dress, moving them around her to hold her to him. She had to stop him before he bit her, the need to bite her vibrated from his being into hers. She gripped his head, intending to push his away, but instead, she pulled him closer to her. She wanted her clothes off and she wanted them off *now*.

Darin growled at her mental cry of need. Her body needed him inside hers right now. He trailed his hands down the front of her dress, pulling it up as he did. He kissed her again, this time more demanding than the first. His tongue invaded her mouth, making her melt to his demand.

His fingers brushed the front of her underwear. Lorelei trembled at the touch. She could think of a hundred reasons why letting him do this now was so wrong. Not one came to mind when he moved her panties to one side and his finger slid inside her wet, welcoming body. It took all of her strength not to cum right then. No man ever made her feel this way from just a kiss. Just a touch. Never. He released her lips, pushed another finger inside her. She gasped for air.

“I know we must not do this now, but I cannot stop, Lorelei. I *will* not stop.”

Lorelei moaned, wanting to say something, anything to his comment, but only moaned for now. She closed her eyes, feeling him push her closer and closer toward the edge of a climax. She moved her hips in time with his fingers.

“Your need to cum is strong like mine. I can wait

until later to have you, but I will make you cum for me."

She breathed out, her mouth parted and whispered. "Yes."

"Then cum for me now. I need to feel you cum. There is no other pleasure than for me to have that for now."

Darin did not have to ask twice. One moment she was on the edge, the next she was falling over in a storm of emotions. Lorelei cried out at her climax. She gripped his shoulders, riding out the wave of passions as he swept her away. Darin slowly removed his fingers from her body after she stopped trembling. The moment Darin released her, those one hundred things of why it was wrong popped into her mind.

"Oh God," she whispered as she pulled her dress down and watched the man in front of her. "What did I let you do?" She grabbed her head, rubbing it to ease the pain throbbing there. Every werewolf would know that Darin touched her tonight. Including Vincent. *What am I going to do?* She could not go out there with Darin's scent on her and hers on him.

"I cannot apologize for something I am not sorry for doing. You are my mate," Darin explained.

"Bath," she murmured, not commenting on what Darin had said. Without wasting any time, she pulled off her dress, laid it on the bed. She could not think of any other way to get his scent off her quickly. Hot water and lots of soap could confuse Vincent since she had his scent on her already. Maybe they could make it through the ceremony without anyone noticing the scent.

"I will shower first and you after me. That would –"  
Lorelei stopped speaking when she saw Darin staring at her, a predator's gleam in his eyes. Not good. Not good at all. She wanted him, but not at this moment. Now she stood there in nothing but black silk underwear and she knew he wanted her. "Could you not look at me that way?"

He lifted an eyebrow. "And how do you want me to look at you?"

"You know." She waved her hands in front of her face. "Not like you want me in that bed..." She frowned. She stood half-naked in front of Darin. There was a bed in reach, and did she forget to say she was half-naked? Not a good combination at all. "Forget it," Lorelei stormed into the bathroom, closing the door behind her.

After showering, she quickly dried off and went back into the room with towel wrapped around her to shield her body from Darin. He sat on the bed, looking at the menu they had for room service.

"What is this?" Lorelei asked, holding her wrist up.

Darin closed his eyes. "That, Lorelei, is the first sign that we are –"

"No, Trueloves!"

"You have heard of it?"

"Yes I have. I just thought that we were sexually attracted to each other. I didn't know that I was your Truelove. I can't hide this, Darin! You know what, let's not worry about it now. Are you going to shower?"

He looked up at her. "Yes. I guess I have to."

"Is your scent still on me?"

"Not as strongly as it was before."

Why did he not sound happy about that at all?

He laid the menu down on the bed before standing. He moved toward her until he stood directly in front of her, raised his hands to touch her and her body leaped to life again.

She stepped away. "Please, not right now. At least, I want to make it through the first part of this. After that, we are going to have to talk."

Darin dropped his hand. Instead of moving, he continued to stare at her.

"Please, Darin."

That was not what she meant to say. Those two words could mean differently than what she wanted. She only wanted him to wait until later, not please her right then.

"I will do this for you, to please you, not him. After the ceremony, you will make a decision to leave with me. I cannot and will not leave without you."

Darin walked passed her and into the bathroom. Moments later, she heard the shower going. Lorelei redressed, then went to find her purse. She was glad to have brought her cologne with her. After spraying it on her, she left the room.

"So what happened?"

Lorelei yelped. Jade scared ten years off her life when she walked into the main hall.

"Sorry," Jade said.

After she recovered, Lorelei smiled. "Let me just say that no talking happened."

Jade eyes widened. "You want to talk about it?"

"Later." Vincent walked into the hotel and she froze in her spot. He looked at her, but when she inhaled,



she caught the scent of another woman. Not sex, but they had touched. Here she was afraid that he was going to be upset and he was out with another woman.

"Let's go," was all he said as he walked by.

"I really hate him," Jade said.

"You and me both," Lorelei agreed.

"Now!" he bellowed without looking back.

The ceremony dragged on for an hour. Lorelei squirmed in her chair. Beside her sat Vincent. Next to Vincent sat a man she had never met. Talking on the microphone for the last ten minutes was a woman whom she did not care to remember her name speaking about how great Vincent was. From the way she spoke, she and Vincent must have been together sexually. In this point in her life, she didn't give a shit if they had. She looked up to see Darin staring at her from the fifth row. He looked just as bored and uncaring as she was. *When will she shut up?* she said it, but did not know if Darin caught her remark until he smiled.

*Your guess is as good as mine. I never knew how boring this could be.*

*Everyone else seems to be entertained.*

*That's because they are not sitting here with a hard-on from hell.*

Lorelei looked down to keep from smiling. Darin seemed to like teasing her every chance he got. It could be fun just being with him. He would let her be the Lorelei she remembered being. *I don't know. I feel fine.*

*You would. You came once. I haven't.*

*I did? I cannot remember that.* She knew teasing him

wasn't a good idea.

When a ghost hand brushed her thighs, her eyes widened from the shock that he would do that in front of everyone. No one could see it or feel it, but her. Still it was just wrong. She had to control the emotions building inside her. She did not want to get aroused in front of two hundred people. She pressed her thighs together, hoping to stop the wondering hand moving closer to her growing wetness. *Would you stop that!* She hissed.

*You don't remember what happened in the room. I wanted to remind you. I want to see if I could make you cum right on stage.*

*Don't you dare do that to me! Stop it before I do something to you later you would regret.*

The lady with the microphone interrupted their conversation when she said, "...and now, ladies and gentlemen, the man you have all come to see, Vincent Cochran."

Everyone clapped and whistled as he approached the podium and took the microphone. She made her way to the chair and sat down beside her.

Darin's hands left Lorelei's body and she sighed in relief. She believed that he would have made her cum in front of everyone. Vincent had not even looked at her. *What's his problem?* Lorelei wondered.

He had not said anything to her since they sat down together. Could he smell Darin on her? Could that be the reason why he was so quiet? Vincent might be waiting for them to be alone so he could do bad things to her. After tonight, she would not have to worry about Vincent Cochran ever again.

"I am happy to be here tonight as your new leader of the Corvina Clan. It is a privilege and an honor to be in this roll. My fiancée, Lorelei, stood by me through all we had to go through for me to be here today and for that, I love her."

Vincent turned to look at her as the crowd began to cheer again.

Vincent turned back to the audience. "Tonight, Lorelei will join the Corvina as a sister and my wife. I love her and look forward to bringing her over."

Lorelei snorted. *Loudly*. She tried to cover it up with a cough.

Vincent continued speaking, "Once again..."

Lorelei looked up to see why Vincent stopped speaking. At first, he seemed to have forgotten what to say. His mouth wide-open, eyes widened in shock. He reached down and tugged on his shirt, actually opening it. Two trails of blood seeped out of two wounds on his chest. Vincent closed his eyes and fell to the ground.

Women in the audience began to scream, most of them lying on the ground to hide just in case who ever shot Vincent was still there. Men jumped up, some snarling, others transforming into their true werewolf forms. Some stayed to protect the women, while others raced out of the room to try to find out who shot Vincent.

"Oh my God!" Lorelei jumped out of the chair and was by his side just as he hit the ground. "Somebody call for help!" Vincent shook in her arms. Blood poured from his mouth as he tried to speak to her. Zak and Terrace crouched next to her. They were protecting

both of them. "Vincent, you cannot die on me tonight. Not tonight!"

Zak pressed his hands to the cut on Vincent's chest.

"I called for help. They should be here at any moment," Terrace said.

Lorelei moved his hair from his face. "Open your eyes. Please," she pleaded. Darin stood beside her when she looked up.

"He is going to be okay," he assured her.

Lorelei did not know about that. She saw werewolves shot before and never anything like this. The wound looked red. Angry. Worse, it was not trying to heal. By now, Vincent should be standing, making a joke about someone trying to kill him. Instead, he lay still. His body cold. As much as she hated him, she did not want him to die. "Vincent you better not die on me," she whispered again.

The clock ticked away. Five minutes turned into ten before emergency people came into the room.

"What happened?" One asked her, but from there on everything was a blur.

She could not remember a lot, but she did remember someone pulling her away from Vincent. The emergency helpers went to their knees beside him. One man began CPR, the other breathing for Vincent. It went on and on until she heard one say he had a pulse. A weak one. They put Vincent on a stretcher. More blood came from the wound, which worried her the most because his body should healing unless someone used a bullet made out of pure silver to shoot him.

She saw them push Vincent out on the stretcher and

whoever held her, pulled out of that person's grip and raced to the hospital to aid Vincent. They would not take him to a human hospital, but one that catered to werewolves. Lorelei did not think twice before getting into the vehicle with Vincent. She sat on the small bench, watching the man tap up Vincent's chest.

Hours later, Lorelei woke from the chair in the emergency room. Her dress had his blood all over it and she knew she looked a mess. She stretched, then rose from the chair. She walked over to where Vincent lay. There were tubes going into different parts of his body. One up his nose, another in his mouth. Every couple of seconds, the machined beeped, making his chest rise with the air it pumped into his lungs.

When they got to the hospital, they took him into surgery. It took them an hour to remove the bullet from his chest safely. They said it was a bullet made out of silver and had poison in it that released into Vincent's body. They could not say, but they really believed that Vincent would not make it through the next twenty-four hours, and if he did, he might not be the man she remembered. He probably would not walk again due to the poison.

What would she do now? She planned to leave Vincent and now he would need her. Could she just walk away from him? No, she could not abandon him now. She stood over Vincent, looking down at his still form. She hated this man more than life itself, though he didn't always treat her badly. It was just the short time he had turned her love for him into pure hatred.

Lorelei breathed in and stared out the window into

the darkness. Her mind wondered back to the good times she and Vincent had shared. The laughs they shared. The fun they had together. She lived in a fairy tale world when Vincent showed up in South Dakota to sweep her off her feet and bring her back to England with him. Nothing like that happened to women every day. He treated her like royalty. Made her believe that she was a princess every day. That was then. This was now.

Now she hated him with every breath she breathed. Vincent's body jerked, making her look back at him. She brushed his golden hair away from his face with her hand. His beautiful features came to life right before her eyes. Not a single hair lined his face. It was smooth, soft, and soothing to the touch. She rubbed his face, wishing that he would at least open his eyes so she would know what he felt. Her hand brushed the breathing tube in his throat and she quickly withdrew it, not wanting to hurt him.

Lorelei did not know why, but anger and rage from the unknown entered her very soul. Before she could stop herself, she wrapped a hand around the tube, cutting off his air. The machine beeped, then stopped. The air in Vincent's lungs depleted and his chest did not rise again. Lorelei held on to the tube, not caring what would happen when they found out that she had killed Vincent. From the way he mistreated her, he deserved to die. The machine monitoring his heart rate flat-lined. It began to alarm, beeping loudly, but she still held on.

The door to the room opened and several nurses and a doctor charged into the room.

"Ms. Riese," one woman said in shock. "Don't do that."

The nurses grabbed Lorelei around her waist, trying to get her to let go.

"Stop it," Lorelei screamed. "Let me go. The bastard deserves to die." She fought to hold on to the tube. She wanted him dead. He should die. He was messing up her life of happiness. Not only with Darin, but just to be away from him made her happy and now she had to stay.

"You have to let go," the male said.

"No!" Lorelei protested. "Let me do this!" A hand wrapped around her wrist, cold, freezing, she stopped struggling to find Vincent's eyes were open, his hand around her wrist in a painful grip. The tube had dislodged from his throat and now she held it in her hand. The nurses stopped to watch. The one who had her around her waist also let her go.

"Do you want me dead?" Vincent hissed before twisting her arm, pain traveling up her limb. "You will be with me forever!"

"No!" Lorelei screamed then jumped up from the chair she had been sleeping in.

"Lorelei!" a male's voice called out.

Lorelei grabbed her wrist to see if Vincent still held her. She looked toward the bed to see that Vincent still lay on the bed, sleeping peacefully. Had she dreamed that up? Damn, she was losing her mind. She had to be to come up with a dream like that.

"Lorelei."

She spun around at the sound of someone calling

her name for the second time. She frowned. "Darin," her voice trembled with fear and delight to see him. Without thinking, she ran up to him and threw her arms around his neck.

"It was only a dream," he assured her.

Tears flowed down her face. She could not stop them this time. "You..." She sobbed some more. "You saw the dream?" she whispered.

Darin stroked her hair, pushing the strands away from her face.

His hands on her made her relax. To be relaxed in another man's arms while her fiancé, well, ex-fiancé, lay in the bed almost dead, had to be wrong.

"Yes. I saw your dreams and you are not a killer, Lorelei. You do not have the heart to do that to a person."

"But...but I wanted to, I enjoyed it." She stepped closer to Darin. "I wanted him dead."

"No you don't. You hate the things that he did to you and your subconscious wants you to react on your hurt feelings."

"It may be true, but I should not think about killing my fiancé..." Lorelei frowned at the thought of still referring to Vincent as her fiancé. "I mean ex-fiancé. I don't want to be with him anymore, but what will happen when I walk out on him in his time of need? He needs me. He needs me by his side."

Lorelei moaned low at the feel of his hands on her. She could not think clearly with him touching her this way. She wanted to be with him. Not Vincent. No matter what she wanted, what her body wanted, her mind would not let her walk out on Vincent in his



current condition.

\* \* \* \*

"I did not ask you to walk out on him," Darin said reading her mind. Darin breathed in her scent, then exhaled. "I will not leave you with him to abuse you. He does not love you as much as I love you right now. Vincent made you feel things that you desired. I will give you those desires." Darin looked down into her black eyes.

"I don't understand," she admitted in a soft tone.

Darin brushed her hair from her face. "Vincent never gave you what you desired in life. He gave you sex and that was all he gave you. Not love. Just sex. With him being a werewolf, they can make you feel things you would not normally feel. *Like desire.*"

"Mind control," Lorelei said with a hint of anger in her voice.

"Yes."

Lorelei stepped out of his embrace. "That bastard used mind control on me? How? I thought that I had him blocked out of my mind?"

Darin did not want to say it, but he would never lie to Lorelei. "You learned to do that over the years, but when he first met you, maybe, just maybe he did it then. He might have implanted commands in your mind then. They would not have taken root until later in your relationship."

"He can do that?"

"We all can," Darin confessed.

Lorelei spun around and stared at him with anger in

her eyes. "Did you—"

"No!" he answered before she could get the words out. "I would never take over your mind. Not that I could if I wanted." He grabbed her hand. "This proves it right here that we are meant to be together."

Lorelei looked at Vincent. "So you think that he put a mind control on me? That's why I don't want to leave him?"

"It could be a possibility."

Lorelei walked over to Vincent. She bent over his bed. "Just another reason why I hate you." She turned to Darin. "Could you take me home? As much as I want to leave, I cannot right now. But I don't have to go around looking like crap."

"Okay. Where is your coat?"

Lorelei frowned. She did not grab it when she left the hotel. Snarling, she answered, "I left it at the hotel."

Darin took off his coat, handing it to her.

Lorelei stared at him before she smiled and reached for the coat. "Thanks."

"No problem. I can take you home, but the sun will be up in an hour."

"I understand. I can drive myself back."

Darin grabbed her hand as she walked by. He felt Lorelei shudder from his touch. Just touching her made his body come to life with a need to be with her. She looked at their connecting hand before looking up toward his face.

"I don't want you to come back today. Not by yourself. I wan...need you to be by my side while I sleep. Tonight, we come back together."

"But—"

“Not for us, but for your protection. We do not know who shot Vincent or if that person is after you now. Vincent’s men will have to protect him twenty-four hours a day until we find this person. This leaves you unguarded. I will not let anything happen to you.” He saw her look away, felt her pain and angst of the thought of not being the grieving fiancée, but instead wanting him. Darin did not see anything wrong with her thoughts, just knowing that she really wanted him made him swell with pride. He loved her. God! He loved someone. Not just pretending to be with someone to feel love, but deep down he cared for this woman to a point that he put her protection above his own.

“I don’t know about sleeping with you. I don’t think that’s right for us to have sex while Vincent is here like this.”

Darin pulled her closer. “You really doubt my ability to control myself, don’t you?” He leaned closer until his lips were only millimeters away from hers. “As much as I want to kiss you right now, I have control enough not to. If you do not want to make love, then I will not try to force you into doing it. I only want you by my side. I can wait. If you want, I can wait until you come to me.” He moved away from her.

Darin saw her open her mouth, then close it as if she didn’t know what she wanted to say. In her mind, he heard her thoughts. She did not want him to have control. She wanted him to be the vampire she knew he could be. She knew he only had to kiss her and they would end up making love for the rest of the day. Yet, she did not want to because of her confused feelings

for having to stand by Vincent's side. "Let's go."

\* \* \* \*

"Where are you going?"

Lorelei heard the demand the moment she made it out of the door. She turned to see Zak standing on one side of the door and Terrance on the other side.

"I..." she began to speak.

"I am taking her home where she belongs. I will extend my stay until your Leader is on his feet and we find this person who tried to take his life."

Zak nodded. "We cannot watch her if she is home."

"I will make sure that she is safe," Darin assured.

"Are you all right with that, Lorelei?" Terrance asked.

Lorelei looked at Darin, then toward Terrance. "I am sure of it."

"I will see you tonight then," Darin said, then pushed the middle of her back with

his hand. Even through the coat, she felt his warm hand on her skin sending a bolt of electricity between them. Once Darin got into the car, he began to drive, but not toward her home. "Where..." she said, looking around. "Where are we going? I don't live this way?"

"I know," he answered. "I would never take you back to your home right now. Do you know the danger of us being there? I cannot go into the sun for very long and during the day would be the perfect time for someone to attack."

It made perfect sense not to go home. If she did, there was no telling who would be there ready to kill

her. "Then where are we going?"

"Have you ever heard of the Cliveden?"

Lorelei jerked up from her seat. "Yes. It's a very expensive hotel that only houses snobs and other guests of royalty."

"That's the one."

"Since you are not royalty, I am guessing you are a snob?"

Darin laughed. "I am neither. I am just Darin."

Lorelei laughed. "You have reservations there?" Darin's laugh sparked a sensation from deep inside her. She smiled for the first time in a very long time. It wasn't that she had not smiled, but this one was genuine. "Don't laugh at me, Mr. MaGruder," she said, then snarled.

"Wow," he spoke, still smiling. "She has gone back to using last names. Is that a sign that we are back on professional terms? No kissing? No touching? No sexual activities at all? Not even the occasional naked peek that I can get while at the hotel together?"

Lorelei could not hold the laughter that bubbled up inside her. She threw her head back and laughed. "You are such a pervert. Now that I think about it, what I am supposed to do while I am there...wear the same clothes I have on for the next couple of days? Or just walk around naked?"

Darin turned to her and lifted an eyebrow.

"If you say just walk around naked, you will regret it."

It was Darin's turn to laugh. "No, Lorelei. I have a friend there named, Edvina. She owns the place. I spoke with her before I came into the room and she

promised me that you would be able to order any clothes you need while you are there and she will send someone out to get them. I did not want to preorder them because I didn't want to overstep my boundaries." He turned his attention back to driving.

"Why do I feel a *but* coming along with that sentence?"

Darin chuckled. "There is a slight *but* in it. As for tonight, you will be able to take a hot shower, but there are only t-shirts and robes you can put on for now. I could not get anyone to go out and buy you something to wear to sleep in on such short notice."

"So no underwear is what you are trying to tell me?"

"Yes," he said, then sighed happily. "Easier access."

Lorelei snarled. "You are really a nymphomaniac aren't you?"

"I don't know. I did not know men could be referred to as nymphomaniacs. I thought that was a woman's term of wanting sex on a constant basis. But if I'm wrong, the answer is no. I have never wanted a woman's body as much as I want yours right now. I have a deep feeling that when I have you once, I will want you again, then again, and again. I will never get tired of having your body."

Lorelei had to close her eyes briefly at his words. Not that his words got to her, it was the way he said them. His voice had a dark, sexual hunger in it, a hunger that she would not be able to deny while they were together. Lorelei changed the conversation and the moment she did, panic took over. "I need to call my friend."

"What is it, Lorelei?"

"Jade! How is she?" Lorelei laid her head on the dashboard of the car. "How could I forget my friend like that?"

"She's fine. More than fine. She is probably..."  
Darin stopped talking.

Lorelei sat back in the seat and looked at him strangely.

"She is probably what, Darin? And try not to lie to me," she warned.

Darin took in a breath. "I don't know if I should be the one telling you this, but your friend, Jade is with... She left with...they kind of left together."

"They who?"

"Dylan and Jade. Dylan has this thing for women. Not that he would hurt your friend, it's just that he wants sex and that's about it."

Lorelei laughed.

"What is it, Lorelei?"

"Then there are no worries. My friend only wants sex. She is not looking to hook up with anyone. Does she know that he is a Dark Guardian?"

"He will probably tell her."

"I need to call her. Do you have a phone? I don't know where my purse or anything is right now."

"Which is a good thing. You don't need to use any of your credit cards while we are here due to the fact that they could be traced. As for your friend, we will call her in the morning. If I know my friend Dylan, and I do, they are in a predicament where answering a cell is the last thing on his mind right now."

Lorelei nodded, understanding fully what he meant.

She leaned back on the seat and closed her eyes. Her body was tired and exhausted. She had fallen asleep on the ride. Her eyes snapped open when she felt Darin's hand on her shoulder.

"Wake up. We are here."

Lorelei groaned before getting out of the car. Darin stood at her side before she had a chance to stand up. "You move too quickly for me." She looked down at her stained dress, then up to the building they stood in front of. There was no way in hell they were going to let her in looking like a murderer. The rusty brown building was beautiful. It was several stories tall and sat in the middle of a maze of bushes. There were few lights on in the upper rooms, but the downstairs was lit brightly.

Darin grabbed her hand, linking his fingers with hers.

A woman with short and spiky, jet-black hair made her way up to them. She had on a black cotton dress that draped to the floor. Nothing fancy about the dress at all. Nothing but the fact that it looked good on her. Her pale skin glowed and her lips were painted with dark, red lipstick. "Darin, darling, long time no see."

"Edvina, how are you?" Darin reached with his other hand to shake the woman's hand.

Lorelei felt a twinge of anger travel through her from their touching. She squeezed his hand and he released the woman immediately.

"This is my —"

"Of course," Edvina jumped in. Her black eyes watching her. "Your lovely mate." She glided over to Lorelei. "So nice to meet you..." Edvina extended her



hand.

“Lorelei,” she greeted after thinking that getting mad at them shaking hands was childish. “Lorelei Riese.”

“I am Edvina.” She released Lorelei’s hands. “This is my hotel. I am so happy to have you stay here as my guest. I was so excited to hear from Darin. It’s been years. When he told me that he found a mate, I had to meet you dear. You are so lovely. Darin is very lucky to find a woman like you.”

“Thanks.”

“Well, come on in. The sun will be up soon and unlike you, dear, myself and Darin are not into sunbathing, if you know what I mean?”

Lorelei followed the woman inside the hotel, Darin still holding her hand.

They walked through the hotel and no one even looked at them. There were not many guests around, but the staff who was there did not glance their way. They moved through the hotel and up to the elevator. Edvina pressed the button for the top floor and the elevator began to move.

Once at the top floor, the doors opened, Edvina declared, “This is the penthouse suite.” She opened the door and stepped aside for them.

Lorelei took in the room. They were in luxury accommodations, no doubt about it. The room was beautiful with exquisite furniture including what had to be priceless antiques. There was a white fireplace next to the large bed. The comforter was also white with a brass base with gold trimmings. To the left sat a small office set up with a computer, which she knew

had Internet connection.

"We have staff on call all the time. When you figure out what clothes you need, give me a ring and I will send someone out to get them for you," Edvina said, then passed Darin the keycard. "This is yours. Enjoy your stay."

"Thank you," Darin said, then closed the door. He turned to her. "You can have a shower first."

Lorelei felt a twinge of pain in her chest at the thought of him not wanting to shower with her or at least saying a funny comment about them having sex.

"I could," he said with a smile. "But I don't think I could shower with you and fight you from trying to rape me at the same time."

That made Lorelei growl. She wanted to slap him. "You are not funny at all," she snapped, then went into bathroom, slamming the door when she stepped inside.

\* \* \* \*

Darin went over to the small couch in the room and flopped down in it. The moment the shower began, he growled. The images of Lorelei naked in the shower popped inside his mind. He did not want to take advantage of her in her fragile state. He knew that she wanted him as much as he wanted her, but to take her now would just be wrong and later he could not forgive himself for doing it. He could wait to have her. Not long. Just long enough until his body demand that he claimed his mate. He did not know how long that would be. Darin's cell rang from deep inside his pants

pocket. Reaching inside, he opened it without looking at who was calling. "Hello," he answered.

"Darin," Dylan's voice said anxious over the receiver. "Are you and Lorelei all right?"

Darin wanted to tease his friend at his worry for him, but this wasn't a teasing matter at all. "Yes," he quickly answered.

"Good. You ran off without a word."

"I had to find Lorelei and take her somewhere safe. I could not take her back to her home, not knowing who wanted Vincent dead." Darin heard Dylan sigh through the receiver. "Is there anything wrong, Dylan?"

"Yes. A lot of people want Vincent dead. A *lot* of people. I know he wasn't the best choice for leader, but there were many other males who wanted that position. I spoke to a couple of werewolves from the Corvina Clan and they all said that that's what werewolves do. They want the other dead, though they wouldn't necessarily do it on their own. "

"I see. You and Jade are in a safe place I presume?"

Dylan laughed. "Yes. She is asleep now. It took a few rounds to put her completely out, but she will sleep for a while. A woman never stays up long after being with me."

"That was entirely too much information for me."

"I know." Dylan laughed again. "Is Lorelei okay? When Jade wakes, I want to be able to tell her that she is. She's so worried about her. It took an hour just to get her panties off her. That's a world record for me."

Darin threw his head back, laughing at the thought of Dylan trying to get Jade in the bed while she

worried about Lorelei. "I can imagine."

"I think that we should not let them see each other for a while," Dylan's voice was low with concern.

"Why not?"

"We do not know who is involved in it. I don't think that Jade is a suspect, but she might be. I don't want to chance anything happening to Lorelei. She is your mate and belongs with you, not that I want anything to happen to Vincent."

"You're right. Maybe we can let them speak over the telephone for a while when we wake tonight. It's too late now."

"True. And Jade is not going to wake up anytime soon. Did you and Lorelei have a chance to do what mates do?"

Didn't he wish! "No. I did not want to take advantage of her in this state of mind."

"She turned you down, didn't she?"

"No, she didn't. I think she wanted me to take a shower with her."

"And you declined?" Dylan asked dryly.

"Yes."

"You are getting soft," Dylan teased.

"I am not."

"If my mate, whoever she is, offered me to take a shower with her, she would be up against the wall right now screaming out in sheer pleasure. Ummm...to think about it, that might be my next little adventure when Jade wakes. We have to be together for the next couple of days and I do like to be a good host."

"You do," Darin said, then looked up when he heard the water in the shower stop. "I have to go. Call

me when you wake.”

“Okay.”

Darin closed his cell and set it on the table in front of him. He was mildly disappointed that he hadn't taken her up on the offer to shower with her. She had not come straight out and asked, but her body had. He only had to touch her and he knew she would fall under his spell of seduction. Or maybe he only wanted her to want him that much. His desire had never been so hard to control in all his life. He needed Lorelei like the next drop of blood. No one should desire a person as much as he did Lorelei. *Why?* Why were being mates so difficult? Difficult as in control. He loved to have control of everything. Now, he was spiraling down a path to nowhere fast. Next stop, he didn't know. He could only go for the ride, hoping that it would stop soon. He wanted to feel this way for the rest of his life. The rest of his life with Lorelei.

The bathroom door opened. Lorelei walked out wearing nothing but a t-shirt.

Damn. There goes his control again. Right out the penthouse window. He was grateful yet a little disappointed that the t-shirt went down to her thighs. Her breasts were not too large and not too small. They were the perfect size for his hands and mouth. She had a small waist, flat tone stomach, and the longest, sexiest legs he had ever seen in his life. His body hardened at the mere sight of her. “You feel better?” he asked, finally able to get the words out.

“Yes and no.”

“Why no?” Lorelei moved toward him. Her feet glided over the carpet as she moved, her hips swaying

from side to side. She moved between his legs and Darin knew that she had made a bad decision. Probably one of the worse ones in her life. He would not be able to keep from touching her, tasting her, making love to her if she stood there for too long.

"No, because," she whispered. "I am in need of something that I cannot explain. I should be grieving over my shot fiancé...ex-fiancé...but instead, I am here with you and I want you inside me so much that I cannot stand not having you. I feel your need when our minds are together. Every time you look at me, Darin, I feel your desire to be with me."

Darin watched as she moved her semi-wet hair from her face. She slowly reached down with both hands, laying them on either thigh. Darin watched her every move. He should stop her. Like hell, he would stop her from whatever she had planned.

She grabbed the tail end of the shirt, lifting it slightly.

He growled at seeing the thin black hair between her thighs. The hair was smooth against her skin. He opened his mouth several times, but no words came out. "Lorelei," he finally spoke between pants. Geez, he was panting? "I have a feeling you aren't thinking rational right now. I don't want you to regret what will happen tonight if you continue to tease me. I will mate with you."

She hiked up the shirt a little more. "You're saying, you would regret making love to me?"

"No. I would never regret ever making love to you."

"Nor would I."

\* \* \* \*

Lorelei was so going to hell for this. Teasing Darin like she was. She saw by the impressive bulge between his thighs that she was turning him on. With the amount of passion traveling through their wave link, this was something she could not explain. Something that she never thought two people could experience. A burning need that traveled through her veins like blood.

She wanted to see his fangs emerge from his gums and sink into her tender flesh, right above her clitoris. She never had that done before, but right now, she wanted Darin to do it. She wanted him to take her blood. At the same time, make love to her hours at a time. They would cum together in an endless ecstasy that would last and last until they were so weak they would not make it to the bed to sleep.

Darin growled low. "You are not playing fair, Lorelei. You cannot project those images to me and not expect me to act on them."

"Who said that I did not want you to act on them?" She pulled the shirt over her head, tossing it to the floor beside her. She smiled at him when his silver eyes intensified. They glowed with passion as if his control snapped. Faster than her eyes could follow, his hand shot out. He grabbed her around her waist, pulled her closer to him and sunk those wonderful fangs right into the spot where she wanted him to embed his teeth. Energy and electricity crackled between them, and she cried out in pure ecstasy at the pull of her blood.

Her hands drove into his thick brown hair. She pulled him closer. She was close to the edge of

cumming and he had not touched her intimately at all. Okay, his fangs were only millimeters away from her clit, but how could she be ready to orgasm like this? Warmth trailed down her thighs and she groaned.

“Darin,” she said not knowing what she wanted him to do. She never witnessed anything so erotic in her life. “I need...” She felt one hand release her waist. A second later, he plunged two fingers deep inside her wetness. Her body welcomed the invasion before exploding around his fingers.

Lorelei cried to the heavens. “Oh...God!” She bit her bottom lip to keep from yelling at the top of her voice. She did not know who was next door to them and she did not need them hearing her scream. Supernatural ears such as vampires and werewolves could pick up on it.

Darin retracted his fangs from her flesh. He removed his fingers from her while she still convulsed. She almost complained until the hand around the waist pulled her down and impaled her on top of his hardened length. His cock pushed inside her in one deep thrust.

Lorelei did not even have time to think how he got his pants undone so quickly before the next wave of passion hit her harder than the first. Darin linked their hands together and the heat spread through her entire body, from the spot where their symbols touched all the way to the toes.

“Darin!” The orgasm intensified again and she came a second time—if she could consider it a second time, or just a continuous orgasm. She did not care at this moment.



"Lorelei," Darin moaned before pulling her down and pressing his lips to hers.

She did not protest. She kissed him with just as much urgency as he kissed her. She gasped at his upward thrust and his warm tongue entered her mouth. So much for thinking vampires were cold. Nothing about Darin felt cold. Not his tongue, and definitely not his cock that was quickly bringing forth another powerful orgasm.

Lorelei moved in time with him. With each upward thrust, she met him with a downward stroke. Lorelei did not know that sex could feel this wonderful. His touch. His tongue. His...his everything felt different from what she was used to feeling. She tried to move away from him, wanting him to wait just a moment before making her cum again. She wanted him to cum with her.

"What is it?" he asked, still not stopping his movement.

She trembled from head to toe. She opened her mouth to speak, but only the harshness of her breath left her lips. She could not stop if she wanted.

"Tell me," he pleaded. "I cannot stop if that's what you need."

She would kill him if he thought about stopping. "Don't..." she moaned, "...stop." She braced herself for the orgasm she knew she would never forget. It raced inside her, needing to get out. She grabbed his shoulders, holding on for all it was worth. He released her hand and wrapped his arms around her waist, making sure she did not stop.

Beads of sweat coated both their bodies.

“Oh, Darin. Harder! Please.” He gave what she asked for. She sucked in a breath through clenched teeth at the painful pleasure of his thrust.

“I cannot hold back,” his voice trembled with every word.

“Don’t hold back.”

Darin pulled her closer and sank his fangs in the tender flesh above her breast.

Lorelei screamed. Not from pain, but from sheer pleasure that she never experienced from a climax before in her life. Every fiber in her being trembled from her release. Her body clamped down on Darin’s cock. She heard his harsh growl against her breast moments before he stiffened against her. They were cumming together. His seed filled her womb as he came. She was happy that he held her to him or she would have been on the floor by now. Darin released her breast. Lorelei only felt the warmth of his tongue sliding over the pinpricks before she closed her eyes and drifted into a light daze.

Sometime later, Lorelei moaned, coming awake when she felt his tongue now laving the inside of her thighs. She opened her eyes to see that she was not on top of Darin any longer, she now lay on the bed on her back with Darin’s head between her thighs. “What are you doing?” she asked, her voice dragging out each word. It felt wonderful. He looked up and gave her a sexy smile.

“I did not close the wound here correctly and now I am making sure to clean you.”

She almost asked why he did not use a cloth to clean the blood, but she thought duh, *vampire*,

*remember.* "Okay," her voice dragged before she closed her eyes. She moaned and he soon brought her to not one, but two releases with his tongue.

Lorelei had never been so tired in her life. It wasn't the blood loss, she knew what being weak from blood loss felt like. Making love to Darin actually tired her out. She usually would be up walking around a few hours later and cleaning up after Vincent when he would sleep his orgasm off.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

Darin woke with a snarl. His teeth extended out of his gums, ready to strike. There were several more minutes before the sun would go down, but something in the air disturbed his sleep. He looked at Lorelei, sleeping soundly beside him. His cell rang and he leaped out of bed to answer it. "What!"

"Get out of there now," Dylan warned.

Darin did not need to hear anything else. He snapped the phone shut, then went over to the boxes of clothes. He was glad that he had one of Edvina's men go shopping for him earlier. They had went and brought back the clothes, just as he wanted. "Lorelei, get up!" he said after slipping on a pair of jeans.

"What's wrong?" she asked, her head still buried underneath the pillows.

"Now!" Darin rushed over and dragged her out of bed.

"Hey!" she protested.

"Get dressed. Now!" He passed her a pair of jeans and a brown sweater.

"What's wrong, Darin?" she asked, but still slipped on her pants.

"No time to explain." He went through another box, grabbing tennis shoes and passing them to her. Darin

put on a black sweater, black boots, and a long leather coat. Once Lorelei had on her coat, he grabbed her hand.

“Darin?” she protested. “It’s still light out?”

“Yes. But...” Darin growled when he heard a woman screaming from the hallway. “Get back now.”

“What? What’s happening?”

“In the bathroom. Now, Lorelei!”

Lorelei turned and went into the bathroom as ordered. Soon as she closed the door, the front door of the room burst open. Pieces of wood and debris flew into the room.

Darin covered his face until the danger passed. When he looked up again, he saw two werewolves standing there. Both were snarling as they walked into the room.

One growled loudly.

“Sashi, live,” he whispered. His panther leaped to life.

Not even waiting to see the problem, Sashi lurched toward the werewolves. She jumped over one and landed on the bigger, black one standing behind the brown one.

Darin saw Sashi’s fangs enter the werewolf’s neck while they fell into the hallway. The brown werewolf turned to see Sashi slamming his buddy into the partition, knocking chunks of drywall from the walls. Sashi let go and they both stood in the hallway, facing each other.

Darin knew that if Sashi got into too much trouble she would return to him. Darin took a step backward to go into the bathroom. The brown werewolf turned.

He growled fiercely. His golden eyes blazed angrily toward Darin.

It leaped into the air toward Darin. He waited and then ducked as the werewolf flew over him and crashed into the wall behind him. It snarled. Stood on four legs, then turned toward him again.

Darin tried to think of anything that would get him out of this situation. He had no weapons and it looked like his werewolf friend had no intentions on turning human anytime soon, making the fight unfair.

He heard another growl from the hallway, followed by a high pitch cry. He felt for Sashi, relieved that she wasn't the one who was hurt. He turned his attention back to the beast in front of him. "Whatever the problem is, we need —"

The beast leaped, catching him off guard. It landed on his chest, claws imbedding deep. Darin screamed at the top of his voice.

\* \* \* \*

The door to the bathroom opened and Lorelei peeked out. She heard the scuffle, but Darin's scream of pain made her feel a need to go out and help him.

"No, Lorelei," Darin said as he looked at her.

Lorelei eyes widened at what she saw. Darin lay on his back. A large werewolf on top of him with its claws in her lover's chest. Darin held its head with both hands to try to keep it from biting him again. Blood poured from the wound and into the carpet.

Darin was in pain. She knew it even with him shutting his feelings out. Lorelei rushed back into the

bathroom to find anything. The curtain rod was her best weapon. She yanked it down, letting the curtain slide to the floor. She unscrewed the crystal ball from the end, leaving razor sharp steel. She braced herself before going back to the door.

She lifted the rod and charged out the door. She heard Darin's yell to go back inside, but she had to help him. She ran as fast as she could toward the werewolf. The werewolf looked at her and jumped up before she touched it. It landed behind her with grace. She knew it from the sound of the thump behind her. She turned to see Darin writhing on the floor from pain. He took a deep breath before trying to move.

"Run, Lorelei," he warned. "Now."

She could not leave him. Not hurt and fighting a werewolf.

"No. Go!" he ordered.

The werewolf charged her and she screamed. She closed her eyes, waiting on the pain, but it never came. A moment passed, then another. No pain. Only loud snarls filled her ears. The building actually felt like it shifted from the impact. Lorelei looked up just in time to see a large polar bear over the werewolf. The werewolf was unconscious and the bear stood over it, growling loudly. Not thinking about it, she dropped the rod, and raced over to Darin. "Are you going to be all right?"

"Yes," he said with a grunt.

"Can you stand?" Lorelei looked up to see Sashi limping over to them. She was covered in blood. "Sashi!" Lorelei called.

*Sashi will be okay. Take care of Alpha.*

Lorelei nodded. "Come on, Darin, we have to get you up." She had the strangest feeling that those two werewolves were not the last of them they would see. She wondered why they would attack her and Darin. Did they think that Darin had attacked her? Surely, they knew better than that.

Darin stood. "I'm okay. I have had worse wounds."

"I know. But let's go."

"Sashi," he breathed out. "Return."

The panther's body shimmered before disappearing all together.

"Zaid, return to Dylan. Tell him I said, thank you."

The bear growled in understanding. It did not materialize like Sashi had. It moved through the room faster than lightning, but brighter. It shot out the door and down the hallway.

"Keys!" Lorelei panicked as she looked around the destroyed room.

"In the car."

"Let's go."

Right after those words, two guards charged into the room with guns a hand.

Darin shifted. "Little too late. We were attacked by them."

Lorelei looked at the two men, knowing they were human. One was tall with short black hair. The other one was a little shorter with long golden hair. They both wore gray outfits that resembled police attire.

"Do we need to get you another room?" the shorter one asked.

"No," Darin answered. "We need my car ASAP."

"Yes, sir," the other one said.



The one with the dark hair stayed to survey the room. The other went outside.

"We are going to have to contact you about what happened, Mr. MaGruder."

"I know. Do it later. Right now, we have more company coming." Darin grabbed his cell and stuffed it into this pocket.

"Are you ready?" Lorelei asked.

"Yes. The wounds healed and I feel better. I'm a little weak from the blood loss, but I will be all right. Let's go," he said and grabbed Lorelei's hand.

She ran out of the room. They were walking toward the elevator when Lorelei saw that it was moving. "No!" she said, pulling him to a stop. "They are in there."

The elevator door chimed and three werewolves charged out of the elevator full speed.

"This way," Darin yelled, pulling her through the emergency door. He closed it and the impact from the werewolves on the other side made Darin jump back from the force. "Dumb animals will be there for a couple moments trying to get in when they realize they only have to change back into human form to open the door," Darin said. Suddenly another thought came to him. "Wait!"

"What is it?" Lorelei stopped.

"There are probably more down there waiting."

"I don't feel anymore, but those on this floor," Lorelei advised.

"Yes, but let's go up."

"Up! Why up? We want to go down."

"I know, but there is an emergency ladder on the

side of the building. We can make it down there.”

Lorelei frowned. “Do you know how high we are?”

“Don’t be scared.”

“Easy for you to say.” Lorelei followed him up the flights of stairs until they got to the top. They must have gone up another two stories and she thought they were in the penthouse. The door where they left the werewolves made a loud bang.

“Let’s go,” he ordered and closed the door behind her. “They are through.” He looked around. “This way.”

Lorelei followed him to the side of the building. Holy crap they were really high up.

“Get on my back and close your eyes. I would float us down, but I’m too weak. So we have to do it the hard way.”

“But you cannot carry me down that far.”

“Yes I can.” Darin turned around and bent his knees. “Get on. We don’t have much time before they noticed we went up instead of down.”

Lorelei breathed in a deep breath before she walked over and got onto his back. It seemed somewhat childlike to be hanging on to his back like this.

Darin did not wait, but stood, then grabbed the side of the ladder. “Wrap your legs around me and hold on.”

The moment he had them springing over the side of the building, she wanted to scream. Instead, she hid her face in the back of his shirt, feeling the wind as they went down faster than they should be moving down the side of a building. Before she had a chance to say stop, they were on the ground. She got down and

looked around.

"There is my car," he said.

Lorelei ran with him over to the car. Had they been moving so quickly that they made it downstairs before the guard?

"I doubt it," he said reading her mind. "I am sure that someone stopped him."

They jumped inside the car and Darin started it and drove out of the parking lot before they were seen.

\* \* \* \*

Darin reached into his pocket and flipped open the cell. He called Dylan.

"Man, it's good to see that you are living. Is Lorelei okay?"

Darin looked at Lorelei who was blankly staring out of the window of the car. "She is fine. A little shaken up. What the hell happened?"

"You would not believe me if I told you."

"Try me."

"Well," Dylan began. "They have a tape of Jade and Lorelei talking about killing Vincent."

"What!" Darin yelled.

Lorelei jumped and looked at him. "What's wrong?" she asked softly.

"I'll tell you when I get the information," Darin told her.

"Okay."

"When was this?" Darin asked Dylan.

"A day or so ago. A reliable source called me and warned me that Terrance and Zak had found the tape.

Immediately, they sent out to search for you and Lorelei. Someone at the hotel Westminster told Zak that you were there. Instead of talking it over and finding out the truth, well...you know werewolves. They hunt first and ask questions later. I called you the moment I heard they were coming."

"Thanks. I felt the disturbance in the air and woke a couple moments before they charged in."

"Be careful there are a lot of angry werewolves out there who want Lorelei dead because they are assuming that she and Jade set it up."

"How could they come up with that from a tape?"

"There's more."

Darin groaned. "Okay, what is it?"

"Jade had two tickets back to America for last night. Her and Lorelei. There is no other explanation about why they thought that she wanted to kill him. Jade told me it was only a joke when they were talking."

"Can you get that tape to me?"

"I don't think I can. I am leaving with Jade as we speak. I cannot say where we are going, but I have to keep her hid until this is over. You need to get out of here yourself."

"I will do that. Call...damn it, we need to get rid of the cells. Okay, here's what I'll do. Since I know Sashi can find Zaid anywhere, I will send her out with a message for you once I get another number."

"That sounds like a plan."

"You are beginning to care, are you not?"

"I am not!" Dylan denied. "I like Jade, but she is not my mate and I don't want to get too close to her and then I meet my mate and it does more harm than

good."

"I understand. Make sure you keep her safe."

"I will," Dylan assured.

Darin hung up the cell.

"What's the matter?" Lorelei asked, not looking at him.

"They think that you and Jade wanted to kill Vincent."

"What the hell are they talking about? I never wanted Vincent dead. The dream was only a dream and nothing more."

"I know, but were you and Jade talking about killing Vincent a while ago?"

Lorelei looked at him, but did not speak. Her eyebrows arched and she growled. "Jade and I were only joking. I did not say anything. It was Jade making crazy suggestions." She paused. "How do they know that?"

"A tape. Looks like they wanted to set you up."

Lorelei opened her mouth to speak, but no words left her lips. She seemed to ponder on something. "Jade recorded that?"

Darin shook his head. "I cannot say. They did not say she had." Darin let out a deep breath. Rage washed over him. Lorelei was upset thinking that her friend had recorded them. "I will get to the bottom of this. But first we have to leave here."

"When?"

"Right now." Darin knew she wanted to ask about seeing Vincent before she left, but she didn't. Even though it made his stomach churn at the acknowledgement that she wanted to see another man,

he knew that she truly loved him as much as he loved her. They may not have spoken the words yet, but he knew.

“Okay...okay,” she said softly. “Where are we going to go?”

“I have a cabin in Tennessee. No one knows about it, but me.”

“Tennessee,” she said with a country accent. She laughed at how off she sounded. “I have never been there. Isn’t it a boring town?”

“Exactly. There will be no one there to bother us until we settle this. Dylan has taken Jade to a private place.”

Lorelei nodded. “What time will we get there?”

“It’s a little after seven now and in an emergency, we can be on a plane in less than an hour. Tennessee is about six hours behind so in reality we will be leaving at two in the afternoon. The plane trip is about eleven to thirteen hours long, so we should get there no later than three.”

Lorelei smiled at him, then turned to look out the window.

He wished he had time to pull over and comfort her, but he doubted that. Flipping open the cell again he found out that a flight was leaving in less than an hour, which they were only five minutes away. What luck to find it now. If he knew the werewolves and he did, they would think about putting protection at the airports soon. He just hoped that Dylan and Jade got out before they thought to do it.

In less than an hour, they were on the plane and on their way to his cabin.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Lorelei wanted to be sick. For every mile they flew, she wanted to break down and cry. She had not been a good talking companion to Darin, but he seemed to understand what she was going through.

First, she and Jade joked about killing Vincent. Then someone shot Vincent. They had plans to leave, which she was sure the werewolves had figured out. She had sex with Darin, and now she was on the run for first-degree murder. She was wanted not by the police, but by a bunch of bloodthirsty werewolves who would not think twice about killing her. Or they could take her to a torture chamber until Vincent died and then kill her.

Darin came back to their seats. He had been gone for only a minute.

He touched her hand and she looked at him, smiling as much as she could. He pulled her up from her seat and up the stairs. "Where are we going?"

"Up to the presidential suite. I paid enough for this trip and I want to use it."

A woman in a dark blue flight attendant uniform was standing in front of them when they arrived. Lorelei noticed her long blond hair cascading down her back. She had light blue eyes that sparkled at the sight

of Darin. Her skirt seemed two sizes too small, but she did not seem to mind. She had a nice shape and large perky breast that were a lot bigger than hers. She was beautiful.

"Mr. MaGruder," she said with an almost childlike voice. "Is there anything I can get for you?"

"No. I and my wife are okay."

"Very well then. If there is anything, I mean anything that I can personally do for you, do not hesitate to call Heather."

Lorelei snarled and if Darin had not tightened his hold on her, she would have scratched the bitch's eyes out. How dare she flirt with him in front of her?

Darin kept calm as he spoke. "If I need anything personally done to me, I guarantee you that my wife, Lorelei, can provide those needs. I do not think we will need any assistance from you for the rest of the trip."

That statement made Lorelei smile. Heather, on the other hand, stormed down the flight of stairs without another word.

Lorelei finally got a chance to look around. There were two chairs in the middle of the floor facing a large screen. Along the side of the plane were comfortable looking benches lined with white leather and big enough to lie on your back and not fall off. Lorelei noticed that there were no windows at all.

"Shall we?" Darin said finally. He pointed to the two chairs in the middle of the floor.

"You didn't have to do this," she said before sitting.

Darin sat beside her. "I know, but the babies are whining. The constant talking was really getting on my nerves. You were not talking and that worried me



also." He smiled at her. "We will have two meals delivered in about two hours. I know you are hungry so if you want to snack on something while we watch a movie, you just ask and I will get one of the attendants to get it for you."

"I'm sorry," she said.

"Why are you sorry?"

"I'm not the best company right now. I'm only thinking about how my life went from high class to on the run criminal. I cannot cry because I have cried so much in my life that I have built up a tolerance for pain."

"Sweetheart," he mumbled. "Come here."

Lorelei stood and moved over to his seat. She sat on his lap. Her arms went around his shoulder and she mumbled quietly into his chest.

"What was that?"

"I said the t-shirt that you bought at the gift shop is too small."

Darin laughed at her joke. "I know. It was either the large plain white shirt or the one that had *Welcome to England* on the front with the picture of the Eiffel Tower on it."

"That was cute." She leaned back to look into his eyes. She knew that she was about to laugh. To think of Darin in a tourist shirt would be good blackmail.

"Blackmail?" He lifted an eyebrow, which was so cute when he did. "Wearing a shirt like that would get me kicked off the Dark Guardians for sure. I can suffer with a small t-shirt for a while."

"It still looks good on you."

"Thanks. How about a kiss before the movie

begins?"

Lorelei leaned down to kiss him, but stopped mere millimeters away.

Darin watched her curiously.

"How about you make love to me before the movie? You kind of took advantage of me last night."

"I took advantage of you?" he sounded shocked. "Baby, you were practically raping me. Some of those thoughts of yours are really amazing, and I'm lusting to try them."

"Sounds like a plan. Think that—a"

"Mr. MaGruder," another assistant walked up to the top floor.

Lorelei laughed when a low rumble began deep in his throat.

"Yes," his words were hard and cold.

"We were wondering, did you want shrimp or lobster with your steaks?"

"What do you want, Lorelei?"

"You," she said and shifted in his lap. She was amazed to feel his cock pressed against her buttock.

"You have me. What do you want to eat? And stop doing that."

Lorelei never had so much fun in her life. Just the short time with Darin, she had laughed more. He let her enjoy herself more. With Vincent, he would not let her have fun. His woman did not make jokes. His woman was a woman in public and did not embarrass him. Holding hands embarrassed him. Everything that did not involve him embarrassed him.

Not Darin. He did not want her to get up because the woman had come up here. She did not have to sit

straight and look ahead when a man watched her. At the airport, Darin had actually told her that he enjoyed that another man found her attractive. At first, she was shocked that he thought that another man looking at her excited him and then he explained. The part that he enjoyed was knowing that no matter how the man looked, what the man said to her, she would want him and only him. She felt the same with him when it came down to other women. Darin promised her that he would never cheat on her. Unless she wanted a threesome. That got him a jab in the ribs with her elbow. He grunted, letting her know he wasn't completely healed, but she did not apologize, saying that he deserved it. "I will have the shrimp," Lorelei said.

"Same for me."

"Excellent choice," the woman said before heading back downstairs.

"Trying to make love here may not be the best choice," Lorelei said. "I don't want anyone walking in here and seeing us."

"I don't know if I can stand you being so close to me, sitting on top of me and not have you. If I have to take you, then they would just have to get an eyeful. I will not wait to have you when you are in need of me."

\* \* \* \*

Darin looked into Lorelei's black eyes as she stared at him. The next three words left his lips before he could stop them. "I love you." Darin waited on her respond. For a moment, she only watched him contentedly,

contemplating what to say, how to respond. Darin almost thought she wasn't going to respond until she opened her mouth to speak.

"I always thought that I loved someone and used those words so much until it had no meaning whatsoever. I now know that what I thought was love was only lust and fear." She looked at him. "I know that when I say those words again. I will mean them."

Darin opened his mouth to speak, but she pressed a finger to his lips, quieting him.

"You did not let me finish. Even though it's only been a couple of days, people of the world would think that no one could fall in love that quickly. I know I could. I love you, Darin." She removed her finger.

Darin's heart swelled at the words. No woman had ever told him that she loved him and he has never let himself fall in love with anyone. He was, at one point of his life, just like Dylan. An opened bird. Out for a release and that was it. No commitment. Nothing. Only him. He always thought about himself first. Now, with Lorelei in his life, he would put her above himself. Always.

He threaded his fingers into her hair, pulled her down, and poured all his love into the kiss. Not as he planned, the kiss intensified quickly. Sparks flew. The Earth shifted underneath them until it was only Darin and Lorelei. Lorelei moved in his lap, placing her knees on either side of his thighs so that she could sit firmly on his now rock hard erection. There was no way in hell he would last this trip without having her body. If he had to take her in the bathroom, as unromantic as it sounded, he might have to.

She pressed down.

He tensed at her mound pressing firmly onto him. He wrapped his arms around her waist, holding her closer. She moaned into his mouth, moving in time with his hips to get a small taste of the pleasure they wanted.

He pulled away from the kiss, looked into her black eyes and saw they had dilated until they were jet black. A sea of lust swirled around those eyes. Lust that was for him and only him.

"I don't think I am going to be able to last thirteen hours and not have you once," Lorelei breathed quietly. "I don't think I can last another thirteen minutes."

Darin laid his forehead against hers. "I was thinking the same thing. The next time I am inside you, I want to make love to you slowly. Tenderly. The first time, I was not in control as much as I wanted to be. I want both of us to be naked, in a nice comfortable bed where I can and will worship your body from head to toe. My pleasure is giving you pleasure."

"Anytime you are inside me, I know you will give me pleasure. As for last night. We both wanted it and our bodies demanded it. We could not stop it if we wanted. It was wonderful. I enjoyed every moment of it."

The room dimmed seconds before the screen lit up white and bright.

He felt Lorelei move. "Where are you going?" he said, holding on to her waist.

"Moving off you so that you can see the movie."

He turned her so that she still sat in his lap, but she

could now see the movie. "We can still kiss and I can make you cum a couple times during the movie. I know you will enjoy that."

She groaned when his hands went to the front of her jeans. With his thumb, he pushed down and heard her intake of air. He smelled her body, aroused and needing his. He played with her for a moment before removing his hand. He received a low growl from her.

"What about you?" she said a little out of breath. "Could you stand to make me cum and not cum yourself?"

"I did before. Maybe not able to hold out so long this time since I know that I have had you before. I think I better wait until we are almost home before I play those of games with you."

Lorelei laughed. "So much control slipping away from you."

"It snapped the moment I laid eyes on you. I knew there was no getting my control back when I made love to you."

"Good," was all she said before leaning down to kiss him.

The kiss was sweet and quick. She lay back on his shoulders and they began watching the movie.

\* \* \* \*

"I know it was wrong, but what was I going to do?" Jade said for the fiftieth time.

She paced back and forth in front of Dylan. They had made it to South Carolina about an hour ago. Once they made it off the plane, Jade told him an interesting

story. "But you are best friends?"

"I did not do it to hurt her!" she said, then kicked the chair from in front of her. It skidded across the floor and hit the wall before crashing to the floor.

"Vincent had a knife to my throat and told me to record us talking about killing him. If Lorelei had taken the bait, then he would have not married her. He did not want a wife that wanted him dead. She did not, just like I knew she wouldn't."

"Okay," Dylan said, then stood in front of her. "What about you and Vincent?"

Jade's black eyes began to water at the thought. "Vincent raped me. Along with his ghouls. I told him no and he still did it. He took my virginity. I wanted to wait until I was married before I had sex. He did not care. He said he was sorry because he was close to turning."

"And you did not believe him."

"Fuck no. He wanted me ever since I began hanging out with Lorelei. The bastard..." She walked around him and began pacing again. "He came to my flat the day of the full moon. He wanted to talk about Lorelei and wanting to marry her. I let him in because we had gotten close and I thought it was okay. He..."

She let out a deep wail that shook Dylan to the core.

"I said *no*, but he insisted that I wanted him and his guards. He said that I use to look at him in a way he knew a woman wanted a man. I did not. I never wanted him. Never! He took my only possession that I cherished. The three of them did."

Dylan walked in front of her and held her while she cried.

“When I went to talk to Lorelei, he told me to record her or he would tell her that I wanted him and seduced him one night while he was close to changing. I could not do that to Lorelei. I care for her and I wanted to tell her so many times of what Vincent had done. I was going to once we got back to Texas. I had planned to just lay it out and see how it goes from there. Now, this shit happens. What the hell am I going to do? What about Lorelei? She is wanted for attempted murder which could change into murder soon and she had nothing to do with it.”

Dylan rubbed her back as she broke down and cried some more. “It’s going to be all right. Trust me. Lorelei is with Darin now and no matter what, Darin would never cheat on her. She will forgive you and as soon as we find out who did it, we are going to kill that bastard.”

Jade looked up at him. “Where are they? I need to talk to her.”

Dylan shook his head. “As a precaution, we are not using our cells due to the ability to track them. For now, only thing we can do is sit and wait.”

“I love Lorelei and I did not tell anyone that we were going to leave. No one but my friend Yvonne.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes and I’m sure she did not tell anyone. She did not even know that Vincent was a werewolf.”

\* \* \* \*

Vincent opened his eyes and at that moment, pain filled his entire body. What happened to him? He tried



to move, but noticed that he could not. The room looked foggy. His eyes could not adjust fully.

"Glad you are awake," a voice spoke.

It resembled someone speaking through a voice box to change the voice yet he knew it was in his head. The person stood over him in all black. He tried to focus his eyes, but could not. He only saw the outline of the person and dark clothing.

"You were missed so much when you were shot." The person laughed. "Not by all. I had to come see for myself and make sure that you were dead. They were able to get that bullet out, but the poison is a different story. You are dying, Vincent. Dying like the fleabag you are. Once I find that woman of yours, she's dead also."

Vincent's eyes widened at the person talking about killing Lorelei. Where was she anyhow? He hoped that she was smart enough to hide.

"Too smart if you ask me. Her new lover is taking care of her."

*New lover? What new lover? Lorelei did not have a new lover.*

"Oh, yes she does. I heard through the grapevine from Jade's friend, Yvonne, that Lorelei planned to move out the moment you took leadership. She was going to leave with Jade. They had plane tickets and all. She wanted Darin and I can assure you they have had tons of sex by now. It hurts to think that your fiancée wanted another man and she is probably having him right now." The person laughed again. "She is Darin's mate. As I heard."

The word mate echoed into Vincent's head

repeatedly. Lorelei was Darin's mate. Not his? Anger burned through him stronger than the pain in his body.

The door opened and someone wearing all white came in. It had to be a nurse. "How are you doing today?"

"I am good," the other person in the room said. "Do you think that you will be able to get the poison out of him in time?"

"I don't know. It's hard to say."

The person began to whisper, but Vincent could still hear.

"It's damaging his organs from the inside out and we cannot stop it. He has internal bleeding. His sight is probably blurry. I also doubt that he can hear that well. I have never seen this poison before in my life. Whoever shot him really wanted him to have a long agonizing death."

"Too bad. I will be back to sit with him later." The person in black left the room.

"Time for a shot of codeine. We might as well keep you comfortable."

Vincent tried to moan out that the person who tried to kill him, or was killing him was the one visiting him. He made little grunting noises, but that was it.

"I know," the doctor said. "It hurts. I am going to dull that in just a moment."

*No, you stupid ass. The one who is trying to kill me is in my room! Listen to me!* Vincent knew the moment they had injected his IV, his eyes immediately closed and soon he would be asleep.

\* \* \* \*

They had been kissing for what felt like hours. The moment the food arrived, Lorelei moved to her seat and they ate while watching the movie. The second they finished eating, Lorelei had tempted him to come lay with her in her chair. He had. Rather than lying next to her, he decided to set firmly between her legs. She wrapped her legs around his thighs while they kissed. He noticed one thing he really hated. She had on pants right now. A skirt would be so much easier to hide. He knew that half of the passengers were asleep and he wanted his mate, but he wanted their next time to be in bed. Together.

"Please make love to me, Darin. I need you inside me now."

He looked down at his mate. She wanted him, begged him to take her. "Here, baby?"

"Yes. I need you."

He reached down to unbutton her jeans before he heard footsteps of someone coming up the stairs. He moved from on top of her.

"Is there —"

"No!" Lorelei snapped, before he could.

She had draped one arm over her forehead and he knew all the interruptions were really pissing her off. This was going to be a long flight. He knew he could make them go away, but they would just come back. It was mandatory for them to check on them almost every hour.

"Sorry," the woman said, then headed back down stairs.

“Okay, I give up,” Lorelei said with a snort. “I am going to sleep.” She pulled the cover from under her and tossed it over her body. She turned on her side and closed her eyes.

Darin moved over to the chair bending down beside her. He moved the arm cushion out of his way and she opened her eyes to him. “I am sorry that this is not the most private flight there is.”

She smiled. “I am in no way upset with you. These women keep flirting with you and I’m sick of it.”

“I know.” He smoothed her hair from her face. “We have already discussed this. I don’t want them. I want only you.” To prove his point, he moved his hands from her head, smoothing down the side of her neck. Lorelei closed her eyes briefly at the feel of his nails scraping across her flesh, not deep enough to draw blood, but just enough to make her feel it. He moved lower, removing the sheet from her body at the same time. He cupped her breast in his hand. Her shiver of pleasure let him know just how sensitive she was to his touch.

“I only want to pleasure you,” he spoke quietly. He quickly slipped his hand under her shirt and pushed the bra up so that he could touch her naked flesh. She moaned low, sending a jolt of desire right to his groin. He massaged her breast for only a moment, knowing that he would not have long before someone would be back to disturb them. He moved down and Lorelei rolled onto her back as he did. With one skillful hand, he un-did her jeans. He could not hold the hiss of excitement when he dipped into her jeans to find her body hot and wet with need.

"You are so wet, Lorelei. How I would love to make love to you right now." Lorelei responded with a moan and lifted her hips, which allowed him to thrust two of his fingers inside her. "So tight. So wet," he whispered. He moved his fingers slowly, but couldn't do much with her pants still on. He wanted to please her so much right now. He moved his fingers faster when her hips moved restlessly against him.

"Feel so good," she mumbled. Lorelei's head went from side to side.

"I bet you would feel better around my cock thrusting into you, filling you, fucking you until you cum apart underneath me." He hissed when she coated his fingers with her warmth. "When we are alone, I am going to make love to you day and night. No one will be there to hear me make you scream." She placed a hand on top of his. He pressed down on her clit with his thumb and that's all it took. Her hips buckled and she came.

"Darin," she groaned.

He let her ride out her pleasure. Her body bucked against his fingers. He saw her bite her bottom lip to keep from yelling out in pleasure. When her body stopped pulsing, he removed his fingers. She opened her eyes to stare at him as he brought his fingers to his lips, tasting her. Last night she was sweet to the taste, tonight she tasted of liquid fire. "You have a taste I would never tire of." She reached over and grabbed his head, pulling him close. She touched her lips to his. They kissed for a long moment before he pulled back.

"I want to make you cum in my mouth, Darin."

A tremble wracked his entire body. He was hard

with need, but he could not control his urges if he let her do that to him. He would have them naked in zero seconds flat. He moved her hair from her face. "As much as I want that, I want to cum inside you, not your mouth. Not yet at least. We will have time for that when we get to the cabin—you and me and no interruptions." He sat in the seat beside her. He had a long night ahead of him. He was hard. His woman was beside him, and there wasn't a damn thing he could do about it.

"I love you," she told him.

"I love you, too. Now get some sleep."

She rolled over to look at him. "What are you going to do?"

"Watch you while you sleep and thank God for sending you to me."

"So sweet."

"After that, I will ask for my erection to go down. I don't want to get off the plane with one. And having one for the next eight hours would be torture for any man."

Lorelei laughed.

"I'm glad you think that it's funny. I sure don't."

She smiled.

"Go to sleep. I will be fine."

Lorelei nodded and soon she was asleep.

Darin watched her for a long while until he knew that he was crossing over the time line and night quickly turned to day. He soon was asleep in the chair.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

After the almost unpleasant trip on the plane, Lorelei and Darin had left the airport and were now in a rent-a-car to his cabin. Lorelei's body felt drained of energy after such a long flight. She needed sleep in a nice comfortable bed. She closed her eyes, jerking upward in the seat when her head began to drop from tiredness.

"Don't worry, Lorelei. You can sleep if you need. We will not be to the cabin for another fifteen minutes," Darin's soothing voice spoke from the driver's seat.

Lorelei yawned. "I want to stay awake. This place is so beautiful." She laughed. "From what I can see in the dark."

Darin's laugh made her look at him.

Her smile turned quickly to a frown. "What are we going to do, Darin?"

"What do you mean?"

"Now? Are we just going to run for the rest of our lives? I want to be able to go out in the daytime again and not worry about a werewolf trying to kill me."

"I know it sounds bad, but it's not. We are going to clear your and Jade's name."

Lorelei wondered what Jade and Dylan were doing right now.

"Probably the exact same thing I want to be doing with you. Making love."

"Could you not read my mind? What if I had been thinking something erotic?"

Darin's laughter sent shivers down her spine. "Then I need to stay in your mind if you are. I want to see what you fantasize about. I know they are about me."

"Not a chance."

"Mine are about you," he told her.

"I believe you." She sat back in the seat. "What about your family? Do you have any birth brothers and sisters?"

"No brothers. I do have a sister named Fantasy."

"Fantasy?"

"Yeah. She is a magician—"

"What? The famous *Fantasy* is your sister?" she interrupted.

"Yes, she is."

"My god!" Lorelei breathed out.

Darin looked at her for a moment before looking back at the road as he tried to stay on the narrow path. "What is it?"

"The world always wondered how she did those amazing tricks. It's because she is a vampire, isn't it?"

"Dark Guardian, for better term. But yes, she is a vampire. She uses her powers to help with the illusions."

"That is so neat. I caught her show in California about eight years ago. She was so amazing."

Darin laughed. "That's my little sister."



"Have you seen her lately?"

Darin shook his head. "It's been about fifteen years since I personally saw Fantasy. Not since the last family reunion."

"Wow, sixteen years? That's a long time. Why so long?"

"We are not a big family. My mother and father live in different places all over the world. My sister travels all the time with a busy schedule. It's hard to just meet up for family fun time. After five hundred years, there aren't many places to go together that we have not seen already."

"Just how old are you?"

"I'm seven-hundred and eighty-seven years old. My sister is around six-hundred and ten."

"You look good to be that old. I mean...you look good for your age." Lorelei never thought that a person could live that long and look that good. Darin did not look a day over twenty-one years old. He was drop dead sexy. One of the best lovers she ever had. Maybe those seven hundred years paid off well. Not that she cared how many women Darin had been with over his lifetime. What he did before her time would not interfere with the way she felt now.

"Good," he said. "I am glad you think that way."

Lorelei growled. "You read my mind again and no sex for you, buddy."

"Wow, we are all ready married."

She frowned. "Why do you say that?"

"Because you are withholding sex. That's part of being married. No more sex."

Lorelei could not help but laugh. "No it's not."

“What about your family?”

Lorelei turned away. “I don’t want to talk about them. I betrayed them by leaving them for Vincent. My mom, her name is Baina, did not like the point of me leaving for Vincent. She did not like him and I did not listen. Soon, my mom stopped calling and I stopped caring. My entire world was wrapped around him.”

Lorelei did not know how much leaving her family in South Dakota was a big mistake. Vincent had literally fucked up her entire life. She left everything for him and now that she saw the light, she knew that she had truly made a terrible decision. She should not have gone with Vincent at all. She should have stayed away from him at all cost. If she had, then she would not have been hurt for so many years. She would not be on the run for murder.

On the other hand, she probably would have never met the man who made her heart work overtime at the mere sight of him. She finally loved a man who she knew loved her just as much. And she would never have to worry about him going out and cheating on her with another woman when he changed for three days.

What the hell was she thinking? Why did she want to be a werewolf in the first place? She did not like hairy men and she did not want hair sprouting over her body. Vincent had to be a crazy phase she was going through.

Now Darin. She loved him with all her heart and soul. The love that she thought she had for Vincent did not even come close to what she felt for Darin. How could a person fall in love so quickly? She did not

know. She would never know or care.

"What about your father? Is he still with your mother?"

Lorelei was startled out of her thoughts at Darin's voice. "Yeah. They are still together. Happily married." Lorelei thought about the fact that she never saw her father or mother upset with each other. She doubted her father watched her mother's every move. "They love each other. But they are not so proud of me right now."

"When this is over, how about we go and visit them?"

Lorelei's eyes widened in shock. "I don't know. They might not want to see me."

"They are your parents and they love you."

"I don't know. You want to meet my parents?"

Darin laughed at her question. "Of course I do. Just as I want you to meet mine. There is no telling when that would be."

"True. With the way you all meet, I will be old and gray when I see them."

"I..." Darin stopped talking, making her look at him.

"What is it, Darin?"

"We haven't had a chance to talk really, but I want you to really become my mate. I want to convert you."

Lorelei had not really thought about that part. If she were willing to become a werewolf, would she be ready to drink blood? She knew that they still could eat human food. She saw Darin eat before, but did she want blood to be her main source of nourishment? Did she want to say goodbye to the sun? "What will

happen if I don't?"

"If you mean would I force you, the answer is no. I love you and you are the only woman that I truly will love. If you want to stay human, then I will choose to grow old with you and when you die, I will die."

"But you have so much to live for. I would not want you to do that."

He grabbed her hand with one of his, the other on the steering wheel. "I would for you. If you don't want to be changed, it's okay. I will still love you."

"I didn't say no. Would I have to have blood?"

"Yes. But the older you are, the longer you can go. Have you not noticed that I have not had blood for two days? The little I took from you was not for supplement. I fed from you for the erotic feeling of it all. I have bagged blood when I want and I will have to go out tomorrow night to buy some."

"So you just go to a blood bank for blood?"

"Yes. I don't like feeding from humans as much as I used to. I get the same strength from feeding from the bag blood and I don't have to worry about someone finding out about us."

Lorelei nodded. "Then I might consider it if that's the case."

"That would make me happy to have you with me forever."

He lifted her hand and kissed the back of it.

\* \* \* \*

Darin pulled up to the cabin. The first thing he noticed was that the lights were on. Good old, Petiri, had come

just as he called for him to do. He hadn't been here in over a good five years and he knew the dust had built up on the place. He called Petiri from the airport and asked him to come clean up a bit. He had a maid who came once a month to do some dusting, but he knew Petiri would clean the house from top to bottom. Thick black smoke puffed from the chimney, letting Darin know that he had, not too long ago, started a fire in the fireplace. He pulled up into the driveway and cut off the car. "Lorelei, baby, wake up." He touched her shoulder lightly and she jerked awake. "It's okay. We are here."

Lorelei yawned, then opened the door to the car. "Is someone here?" Lorelei asked when she got out of the car.

"Yes. I have a friend who works for me when I am here. His name is Petiri."

"Petiri," Lorelei repeated.

"Yes." He grabbed her hand and led her toward the door. "Remember when I made the call from the airport?" When she nodded, he continued. "I called him, happy that he hadn't left for the winter. He tends to get cold here and leaves."

They went to the front door and were met by a tall man, maybe six-feet-three inches tall. He had light blue eyes and golden short hair that touched his shoulders. A beard lined his jaw, giving him a businessman look.

"Darin," the man said in a thick British accent. "So good to see you, man."

"I know." Darin released her and shook Petiri's hand. "This is my mate, Lorelei."

The man's blue eyes lit. "I cannot believe it!" he

sounded shock. He grabbed her hand and brought it to his lips. "A woman to make him settle down."

Darin growled at Petiri kissing her hand. "You have me mixed up with, Dylan." He wrapped his arm around Lorelei's waist and pulled her away from Petiri. Darin knew Petiri only did that to upset him. He heard that Petiri had a long record for getting women into his bed. He did not want him trying to get Lorelei's attention.

"Do not worry, Darin. Your mate is safe," Petiri said with a laugh.

"Thanks for setting this up. I will need you to go out for me tomorrow. I doubt that I have any blood here."

"I have already stocked the refrigerator with enough food and blood to last six months. The maid will come at night to clean instead of every month. You still have clean clothing here, but I am afraid I did not know of your lovely mate coming and I did not do any shopping for her. Is there anything I can get Lorelei?"

Darin looked at her. He knew that she would not want to wear the same thing every day or go around naked like he would enjoy.

"In your dreams buddy," she told Darin reading his mind. "T-shirts and jeans are my preferred choices."

"Don't worry," Petiri said. "I'll get my wife to go with me and get what she thinks would be good for you. I don't want to buy any girly things that I will not see you in myself."

Darin growled.

"Just kidding. What's your size? Around an eight?"

Lorelei nodded.

"No problem. I will be back when you wake with

new clothes.”

“Thank you,” Lorelei said.

“You are welcome. Have fun and don’t get into trouble out here.” He winked at Lorelei.

As he walked by, Darin put his hand on Petiri’s shoulder. “No one is to know we are here. There are a bunch of werewolves looking for her.”

“Stole her from one of them, I see. Well don’t worry. No one will know you are here.”

“Thanks again,” Darin said. After Petiri left, Darin pulled her inside and closed the door. “Welcome to my cabin.”

\* \* \* \*

Lorelei paused at the sight of the living room. The place was huge for starters. Large glass windows surrounded the room. A large fireplace was going. Next to the fireplace sat a big screen television. Two brown leather couches and a large brown coffee table occupied the middle of the room. Underneath the table, was what looked like an expensive rug with unusual dark and light brown patterns. There were two lamps on the coffee tables beside the couches. Large pictures hung on the walls and a huge ceiling fan spun lazily from above.

“I will give you the grand tour tonight. For now, we both need a nice long nap.”

She yawned, not arguing with him about that logic. She wanted to lie on the floor and go to sleep. “This place is beautiful,” she said, then yawned again.

“Thanks. Now to bed with you.”

Darin led her up a flight of stairs where they came to an impressive playroom with a large pool table and foosball table. A large couch occupied the other space and another large television set. They crossed the room to another flight of stairs. They climbed the steps until they came to a large hallway with several wood doors.

He walked her down to the last door, which led to a room with a large bed next to two big windows. A large television was mounted against the wall. A couple of plants sat on a small dresser and a lamp on one beside the bed. The room was a little small, but cozy.

Darin quickly closed the door and keyed in some numbers on a keypad. "There is a bathroom across the hall. Before you go downstairs, press the code, twenty-two on the pad."

Lorelei let Darin undress her before stripping out of his clothes. He led her to the bed, pulled the covers down. After she lay down, he went over and flipped the light switch, turning off the light. The moon shined through the room, illuminating everything.

He lay beside her. Lorelei wanted to make love, but her body needed sleep. Darin turned her on her side so that she laid facing away from him. Lorelei moaned at the feel of his warm flesh pressed against her. She did not miss the hard length of him against her backside as she moved closer to him and smiled when he groaned from her teasing. Darin kissed her neck, making her shiver from the feel of his fangs on her neck.

"I love you," he whispered, "but I can tell you are tired. If you continue to tease me, I will take your body."



Lorelei laughed. "I was just getting closer to you."

"Why don't I believe you?"

Lorelei turned her head. "I love you also. Goodnight."

Darin rose up and kissed her briefly on the lips. "Good day you mean."

"I forgot. You have me on this crazy schedule now." She turned back, feeling his arms go around her waist as she settled close to him. Soon Lorelei was asleep, her lover holding her.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

*L*orelei groaned as the nightmare taunted her.  
“You wanted me dead so you can fuck him? Didn’t you? I lay here half-dead while you are with him? You betrayed me, Lorelei. You Betrayed me!”

She turned in the darkness to see Vincent walking toward her. “No,” Lorelei said. “I did not. I loved you, Vincent.” She took a step backward. “I really loved you.”

“And now you love Darin?” He stopped a few inches from her. His tied his long, golden hair away from his handsome face. He wore black pants and a white silk shirt. The look on his face told her he was upset, but not as nearly as angry as he usually would be.

“Yes. I do,” she told him honestly. “I love Darin with my heart. He is my true mate, unlike you were. I am sure you will find someone else.”

Vincent looked away from her, then turned back to stare into her eyes. “I do not want another, Lorelei. You are who I love.”

“I know, Vincent.” She reached up and touched the side of his face. “Do you not want me to be happy at all?”

Vincent nodded. “Darin makes you happy?”

“He really does.”

“Then I can do no other than be happy for you.”

*She wrapped her arms around Vincent's neck. "Thank you so much for giving me this."*

*He hugged her briefly before letting her go.*

*"I can do no other than make you happy." He looked at her. "I have to ask you this one question. Were you involved in trying to kill me?"*

*She gasped. "No, Vincent." She shook her head. "I would never try to kill you. I want to find out who tried to kill you because I am running and hiding."*

*"Okay. I believe you. Wake and be happy, Lorelei."*

Lorelei woke, opened her eyes to see she lay in bed with Darin. The bright sunlight beamed through the windows and the first thing she did was try to cover Darin, but she noticed that he was not burning. Didn't vampires burn in the sun?

*Sun proof glass, sweetheart. It's all around the house. It helps people think that I am not a vampire when they see me walking around the house in the daytime.*

Lorelei turned to look at Darin who had not opened his eyes, but she knew his voice. She moved from the bed, deciding to take a shower. She looked at the clock on the table to see that it was four in the afternoon. She had slept the day away. She looked inside the dresser and found one of Darin's dark blue t-shirts. She grabbed it, knowing it would do for now. After pressing the code in on the keypad, she went across the hall and into the bathroom. She never thought that a cabin could look so homely. The bathroom had a nice size shower in it with a small sink next. It was very cozy. Smaller than she was used to, but she liked it.

She turned on the shower, sighing when the water began to spray from the nozzle. She waited until the

water warmed before stepping under the mist. The water felt so good on her skin. She loved this time of the year. She loved the cool weather, especially when it was nice and warm inside like now.

She dipped her head under the water, wetting her hair. It'd been so long since she experienced such a stage of relaxation. Deep down, Lorelei knew she and Vincent had truly spoken to each other while she slept and in some way, he gave her his blessing to be with Darin. He must know that they could not get the poison out of his system. If they could, she doubted that he would allow this relationship. Not that he could stop it if she did not want him to.

She jumped when a blast of cool air hit her skin. Darin stepped into the shower behind her. She smiled. "What are you doing up so early?" He wrapped his arms around her waist. The warm water pounded against their skins.

"I could not sleep when you got up." He leaned closer to her, holding her to him. "What has you thinking so hard?"

"Nothing really. I'm okay."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes." Lorelei sighed when Darin moved one hand from around her waist to cup her breast. She hissed at the contact. How could just one touch make her go from zero to sixty in one second? He kissed her shoulder, letting his fangs graze her skin. "That feels nice," Lorelei moaned.

Darin's other hand dipped lower and his finger played across her clit. Not touching, just teasing her. She bucked against his hand, wanting more contact.

She wanted to move to get him closer to the place where she wanted him to touch, but he refused to give her what she wanted. His hand on her breast played with her nipple, pulling it softly, before switching breasts. "Darin. Please," she begged.

"I have to know what you need," he whispered close to her ear.

She knew he knew exactly what she wanted. The proof of his desire pressing against her back showed enough evidence that he was also horny as hell. When she did not speak, he thrust a finger inside her, giving her a taste of what she needed, but not what she truly wanted. She pushed against his hands, her legs going weak in the process.

"Tell me, Lorelei."

Her head rested on his shoulders. He nipped at her skin more than once. Sometimes pressing lightly, other times making it sting with pleasurable pain. She pressed against him, loving the low moan she extracted from him. "I want you inside me right now. Something that I wanted from the first time you made love to me. From the first time I saw you." His shiver of excitement at her words made her body warm once again. Liquid heat oozed from her body.

"You are really wet now that you asked for what you want," he said, still moving slowly with his fingers.

"Darin. Please!" He removed his hands from her body, pulled her back toward him and in one simple movement, entered her from behind. She hissed at the new sensation. He actually stretched her more this way. She moaned at the way he filled her. She pushed

back with every plunge into her body. She felt her body tremble at the approach of her rising climax.

“I can feel you. You are close to coming.”

He pushed deeper, making her moan again. His hands on her waist kept her from moving away from him. Her body began to tremble.

“That’s it, cum for me, Lorelei.”

Lorelei leaned back, her body moving faster and faster to achieve her goal. She moaned loudly. Her body stopped moving, every muscle clamping down on his shaft. Her body released in an ecstasy stronger than any she had ever experienced. She cried at the top of her voice, still unable to move at the powerful climax ripping through her body. She breathed out. Her muscles finally relaxed around him—around his cock.

“Baby,” Darin whispered. His breathing was as labored as hers. “I did not want to cum just yet.”

Lorelei smiled. She had been so caught up in her own orgasm that she had not noticed she made Darin cum with her. Now that she had relaxed, she actually felt his seed deep inside her, yet his cock was still hard. “I could not help it,” she purred and pushed back against him.

He growled. “I know.”

He slowly eased from her body. Lorelei turned around and kissed him. The kiss would have intensified until she heard her stomach growl.

Darin pulled away. “Hungry?”

“Yeah. I guess I am.”

Darin reached around her and turned off the water. He heard Claudia, the maid, downstairs a couple

minutes before he came into the shower. "Let's go eat."

"I don't have anything to wear," she told him.

He grabbed a towel, wrapped it around his body before passing her the other. "Yes. Petiri brought them here earlier today. I heard him going into the other room around noon." After drying off, Darin went into the room to retrieve the bags of clothing and brought them back to her.

After pouring them on the bed. Lorelei saw that there were all types of underwear, bras, t-shirts, jeans, lingerie, dresses of all styles and colors. There were also several coats and a couple of sweat suits. "How did he guess my bra size?" she asked after putting on one of the bras.

Darin laughed and slipped on a pair of jeans. "I told you what Petiri was. He is really good at these things."

"He *is* good," she said, then grabbed a pair of black lace underwear. "Tell him I said thank you." After rummaging through the piles of clothing, she put on a pair of blue jeans and a black t-shirt. She did not need to put on a coat. The house was warm enough and she did not plan to go outside.

"Let's go eat," he told her.

A short woman with short black hair greeted them as they entered the kitchen. "Hello, Mr. MaGruder."

Lorelei inhaled the smell of the food cooking. What hit her most was the smell of freshly brewed coffee. She did not care it was the middle of the night. She wanted coffee.

"Hello, Claudia," Darin greeted. "Ésta es mi esposa, Lorelei." *This is my wife, Lorelei.*

Claudia turned around and began to speak in what

had to be Spanish. A language Lorelei never learned and so could not understand what she said.

“She said how are you?” Darin answered her unspoken question. “She only knows a couple of words of English.”

“Well, tell her fine and I said hello.”

“Ella está muy bien y ella dice hola.” *She is fine and she says hello.*

Claudia spoke again.

Darin said, “Si. Let’s sit and eat.”

They went to the dining room and sat at the wooden table.

After dinner, Darin gave her a tour of the cabin. If they were still here in the summer, she had to try the Jacuzzi outside on the balcony. After the tour, they sat and watched television. When the maid left, they made love several times in the living room before watching television through the night.

Lorelei knew that she could get used to living like this. Happy. Joyful. Loved. Most of all, happy. She never wanted to leave here. Never.



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Three Months Later...

Lorelei had never been so sick in her life. Everything she ate for the past two days made her sick to her stomach. She would vomit it back up in less than an hour after eating it. Another wave of sickness washed over her and she leaned over the toilet again.

"Lorelei," Darin's voice filled with concern from the other side of the door. "Open the door."

After the wave finished, she flushed the toilet. Crawling on all fours, she unlocked the door. Darin came inside and had his arms around her before she could blink.

"Come on." He lifted her from the floor and laid her on the bed.

"Thanks," she said when he handed her a glass of water. "I don't know what's wrong with me." She took a sip of the water, then handed it back to him. Darin went into the bathroom and came back with a cool towel, laying it on her head.

"I have something to tell you," Darin said.

Lorelei moaned at the sound of his voice as her head throbbed. "What? Am I going to die?" She had been

taking Darin's blood while they made love. She didn't consume a lot, but just enough to dilute Vincent's blood from her system. Darin told her when she was ready, he would convert her. She was ready, but she knew he would not do it while she was sick.

Darin smiled at her. "No. You are very far from dying."

"Then what's wrong with me?"

"You are pregnant."

\* \* \* \*

In the months, Darin has known Lorelei, he had never seen her look so serious before in his life. She did not smile. Not even smirk at what he said. He wanted to tell her earlier about her situation, but the time was never right. He knew that she could get pregnant, but lately, she had been sampling his blood while they made love. He did not stop her, wanting her to get use to the taste so that he could convert her. The blood only succeeded in making her immune system stronger and easier to conceive. When he heard the second heartbeat about a month ago, he decided he wanted to wait to tell her. Maybe she knew and did not want him to know. Lorelei was very good at keeping him out of her mind when she wanted so he did not know if she knew it or not.

"Excuse me! What did you say?"

Darin laid his hand over her stomach. "You are pregnant with our child. A female we created."

Lorelei laughed hysterically. "I did not know that vampires could make babies. You never told me that

part. I thought that you guys were only made. And since my monthly is screwed up to a point I sometimes miss a month, I never thought that I was...was pregnant."

"No." Darin moved his hand from her stomach. "Even though it is a little harder for a woman to get pregnant from a Dark Guardian, it's not that rare." Darin took a deep breath. "You do not want to have our child?"

Lorelei stared at him for a long moment. She opened her mouth several times to speak, but no words came out. "Yes. I love you and our baby. I did not expect to become pregnant now. I am going to have to plan for..."

Darin heard the doorbell. "Be right back." He hurried down the stairs and opened the door to see Dylan and Jade standing in the freshly fallen snow. "Come in," Darin said, not surprised that Dylan had come. He told him a month ago where they were and he had expected him sooner.

They haven't had any problems since they have been here. Vincent was still on life support and so far, the werewolf clan was not going to look for them unless Vincent actually died.

"Hi, Darin," Jade said, stepping inside.

"Hello, Jade."

Darin closed the door. He was surprised that Dylan had stayed with Jade for so long. Could his friend actually be falling in love?

*Alpha! Alpha! Let Sashi come out and play.*

Darin could not argue with Sashi. She had not really been out to play since they had been there. "Sashi,

live." He felt the rush of heat travel through him before the black panther appeared in front of him.

"Hi, Sashi," Dylan said as he rubbed the panther's head.

Darin watched Sashi walk around Dylan in circles.

*Let Zaid out to play. Let Zaid out.*

"Zaid, live," Dylan commanded.

The white polar bear stood in front of Dylan, large and dangerous looking.

"You two go outside and play. Do not get into any trouble," Darin told them.

*We will be good, Alpha.*

In a blink of an eye, both were gone from the living room.

"Where is Lorelei?" Jade asked.

"She isn't feeling well," Darin answered.

"What's wrong with her? Does she have a cold?" Jade's worried voice let him know she still cared for her friend.

"No. She's...she is pregnant. I just told her."

"Way to go," Dylan said and patted Darin on the shoulder. "How far along?"

"I'm guessing two months. She has been sick for the past couple of days."

"It will pass. If she was converted, she could handle it better. You can still convert her, you know?"

"We talked about it and she was trying to get use to taking blood. I will turn her when she is ready." Darin motioned for them to follow him. "Come on, she is upstairs."

"Who was..." Lorelei began to speak when he came into the room and stopped when she saw Jade and

Dylan. "Jade?" she said with a smile.

"I missed you so much," Jade said. "How are you feeling?"

"I feel a lot better. I'm pregnant."

"I heard. That's wonderful. You and Darin are going to have a beautiful baby."

Lorelei laughed. "I hope so, but for now she is making me sick to my stomach." Lorelei looked at Dylan. "You have been taking care of my friend, Dylan?"

"Oh yes. Several times a day sometimes," Dylan answered.

Jade hit him on the arm. "Stop that!" Jade looked back at Lorelei. "He is good when he's not trying to get into another woman's panties."

"You said that you did not care. We were strictly friends."

"I don't care who you screw. As soon as this is over, I am leaving. I like you, but I am not looking for a relationship!"

Darin chuckled. "You two sound like a married couple."

"It seems that way sometimes," Dylan said. "Dylan, don't lick me there. Dylan, that will not fit there. My legs don't go that way. Wait, and here's my favorite part, *I don't swallow.*"

Darin saw Jade grind her teeth in an effort not to kill Dylan.

"This better end soon," Jade said. "If they don't kill me, I will kill him."

Lorelei laughed. A sound that brought joy to Darin. She hadn't laughed in days and he was so happy to

hear her laugh again. He sat on the bed next to her and moved her semi-wet hair from her forehead, happy that she had stopped sweating.

"I am so glad to see you guys," Jade said after a long pause.

"Thanks," Lorelei said weakly. "Darin, how about you show them to their room. I need to sleep a while."

Darin leaned over and kissed her lightly on the lips. "Okay. I will come and lay down with you a while."

"Okay."

Darin stood from the bed. "Follow me."

Once Darin showed them a room, Jade spoke. "I need to talk to Lorelei."

"I know," Darin acknowledged. "Not now. Not while she is sick. Dylan explained everything to me."

Jade eyes widened. "Did you...did you tell her?"

Darin nodded. "Yes. About two weeks ago. I spoke with Dylan and he told me."

He heard Jade's quick intake of air. "Does she hate me? I did not mean to do it."

"She does not hate you. She still loves you and she said that she would never be mad at you because of that. She knew Vincent and she believed that you did not do it to hurt her. You can talk to her when she is better. Not tonight though. She needs her rest." Darin saw tears in her eyes.

Dylan walked up to Jade, pulling her close to him. "That's why I came. Darin thought that it would be better if I bring you here to talk to her," Dylan told her. "She is not mad at you."

"But why did you tell him, Dylan? I wanted to tell her."

"I know." Dylan smoothed her hair. "We all want this right."

Jade began to cry and Darin walked out of the room.

\* \* \* \*

"How is Jade doing?" Lorelei asked.

"She is good." Darin looked away from her. "I told her you know about what happened."

Now, it was Lorelei who looked away from Darin. It hurt to know that her best friend recorded the conversation, but Darin explained that Vincent would have killed Jade if she had not. Now, the sex part, she knew that should have hurt worse than it had, but it hadn't. That bastard took Jade's virginity. That was what hurt her more. "Did you tell her that I was not mad?"

"Yes."

"Good. I need to talk to her," Lorelei said, then tried to get out of the bed.

"No." Darin pushed her back on the bed. "You need to rest."

"But I want to talk to her."

"You will have time to catch up tomorrow." Darin stripped out of his clothes.

He lay on the bed beside her. Lorelei snuggled close to him.

"How's your sickness?"

"It's okay. I feel a lot better."

"That's good. I need to convert you as soon as possible. It would make the delivery easier."

"Can we do it while I'm pregnant?"

"Of course. I can send you to a deep sleep so that you cannot feel the pains of the change. The baby will be safe."

Lorelei yawned. "Is she going to be a vampire?"

"The baby?"

"Yes."

"No. She will be what is called a Daogna. A baby born to Trueloves. She will have a longer life. Up to five-hundred years, in hopes her Dark Guardian will find her before then. She will still need to be fed during the day, so we will have to hire a nanny for her and we can take care of her at night."

"What about blood?"

Darin chuckled in her ear. "She is a regular baby that needs milk. She will not require blood."

"Good, I don't think I could watch her suck down blood."

Darin rubbed the palm of his hand over her stomach. "I cannot believe that I would be one of the lucky ones to have a baby. I love you so much."

"I love you also."

Darin kissed her cheek. "Sleep now."

\* \* \* \*

"Vincent! Vincent, are you awake?"

Vincent opened his eyes, focusing on the person standing in front of him. Unlike a month ago when he could not see, he saw her clear as day now. Eve Dudley stood in front of him.

"Man, you are a tough kill. I thought the poison would have killed you by now, but it's taking longer



than expected. You are not getting any better and as the doctors say, you are getting worse, but you just will not die." She touched the side of his face. "You killed my lover, Vincent. You remember, don't you? Reidar Warren, the werewolf you shot that night when you met your little bitch of a mate, Lorelei?" Eve paced in front of the bed.

He noticed when she lifted her other hand, she had a gun in it.

"You remember don't you? You killed him for that whore. I loved him and I promised that I would kill you for what you did to me." She stopped pacing to face him. "I would kill you right now if your guards would not come in and arrest me. Since I cannot kill you, I can let you know this. It took a while, but we found your mate...oops... ex-mate. They are living it up in Tennessee. One of Reidar's men saw Darin's boys shopping for blood and he decided to follow him. He followed him back to a cabin and they saw Darin. They called me and guest what? We are making a special trip to Mountain Glory. I will kill Lorelei and Darin if he gets in my way. If he doesn't, I might keep him for myself. He looks delicious. I don't usually do vampires, but he looks so good. When I come back, I will kill you also."

Vincent knew if he still pretended to be hurt, the one who tried to kill him would come back. He waited endless days for the person to come back who claimed to try to kill him and now he knew the identity. He would stop her and find Lorelei at the same time.

Eve kissed him on the lips before leaving the room.

Vincent pressed the button for the nurse. Seconds

later, a nurse came into the room followed by Terrance and Zak.

“What can I do for you?” the nurse asked.

Vincent picked up the pad he had laying beside him and scribbled on it. *Take the tubes out.*

The nurse read it. “Mr. Cochran,” the nurse began. “I cannot. You cannot breathe without it.”

He wrote something else. *Yes, I can. I have been well for over a month.*

The nurse’s eyes widened at what he wrote.

“Go get the doctor now,” Zak ordered.

Vincent began to write on the pad and showed it to Terrance.

“Okay...okay,” was all Terrance said before running out of the room.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Lorelei woke around two in the afternoon. She had not felt this good or this hungry in a very long time.

She got up from the bed and went to take a shower. After the shower, she dressed and went downstairs to find something to eat. She was so glad that Petiri stocked up on the junk food. She was startled when she spotted Jade on the stool eating something.

Jade looked up and smiled. "Lorelei," she said with a smile. "You want something to eat? The maid cooked spaghetti and meatballs."

"I could use that." She went over to the pot and began fixing her a plate. Lorelei got a glass of water and sat beside Jade.

"You okay? I heard about your sickness."

"I thought I had food poisoning, but then I knew something else was wrong after two days. Now, I feel so much better."

"I'm sorry," Jade said as Lorelei brought the first bit of food up to her lips. "I didn't..."

Lorelei dropped the fork and hugged Jade. "I know. I know you did not mean it."

"I didn't," Jade said with pain in her voice. "He raped me. I did not want him. I would never do that to

hurt you.”

“I know. It was not your fault.” Lorelei began to cry also. “Please stop crying, Jade. You are making me cry and I cannot afford to lose any more water,” Lorelei said with a smile.

Jade laughed and let her go. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. I know you did not go to Vincent. He was a dirt bag.”

“Please believe me that I was going to tell you when we got to Texas.”

“I believe you. Now eat. We are not going to worry about it. Okay?”

“Okay.”

Lorelei sat on her chair and began to eat. They ate in quiet for a while until she heard someone coming down the stairs. Darin came down wearing a pair of black pajama pants and a white shirt. Damn! He looked so good. It’s been only a couple of days without having him inside her, but it seemed to be so much longer than that.

“Hey, baby,” Darin said, then kissed her on the cheek. “Good afternoon, Jade.”

“Hello, Darin. How are you?”

“I’m okay.”

Dylan came down the stairs moments later.

“I’m glad you are eating,” Darin told Lorelei.

“You and me both.”

Lorelei rubbed the tattoo on Darin’s arm. “Why don’t you let Sashi out to play?”

“I did and she came back late. She is sleeping now. Her and Zaid.”

“Want something to eat?” Lorelei asked.

*Yes. You. I need to make love to you this day.*

Lorelei looked into his silver eyes and saw the need in them. She wanted him also, but she wanted to go for a walk with Jade for a while. For some reason, she needed to walk. *Later, Darin. I want to go out for a walk.*

*Okay, but make sure you stay on the land.*

*I will.*

“Are you up for a game of pool?” Darin asked Dylan. “The girls want to go for a walk and talk about how good we are in bed.”

“We do not!” Lorelei denied.

“Why would we want to do that?” Jade asked. “I mean the talk about the sex part? Dylan isn’t that good in bed at all.”

“Baby,” Dylan purred. “You cum so many times when I take you, I cannot keep up with the numbers. I know you enjoy me inside you.”

“Screw you,” Jade said.

“Meet me back in the room and I can do just that.”

Jade turned to Lorelei. “Are we going for that walk now because I am going to strangle him if we don’t?”

Lorelei and Darin laughed.

“Yes. We are. Let me get a jacket and we can go.”

“Be careful,” Darin told Lorelei for the sixtieth time.

She put on her coat. “I will. I walk outside by myself all the time. Its daylight and we have another three or four hours before the sun goes down. I will be back before then.”

Darin wrapped his arms around her waist. “I know, but you were not feeling well yesterday and I’m still worried that you’ll get sick. I now worry about you and our baby.”

She kissed him briefly on the lips. "Don't worry. Women have babies all the time."

"True, but not my woman. I love you and I don't want you or the baby hurt."

"I know."

"Do you really have to go for walk right now?" Darin pressed closer to her so she could feel his desire against her stomach. "I really need you right now."

Lorelei moaned at his contact. She held onto his shoulder as he kissed her neck. "Darin. I need to go for a walk to make sure everything is right with Jade." She hissed when his teeth bit down on her neck. "You do know how to make a girl want to change her mind."

"That's exactly what I am trying to do." He bit down hard, making her arch toward him. "Is it working?"

Lorelei laughed. "Yes."

He looked at her and frowned. "I cannot tell if me trying to seduce you is making you laugh."

"It's not you. I feel a butterfly feeling in my stomach. I think it's the baby moving."

"Really?" His eyebrow arched.

"Yes," she said, then pulled his hand to her stomach. "Right there. Do you feel that?" The feeling intensified when Darin touched her stomach. As if the baby knew Darin was around. She smiled. "It's moving more."

"I feel it. Is that the baby?"

"Yes."

Darin smiled. "Make sure you come back soon," Darin told her. "I am in need of you."

"You are always in need of me."

With another quick kiss, she left the room and headed downstairs.

“So, you are in love?” Lorelei teased Jade.

“With Dylan! Hell no,” Jade said with a frown. “He’s a good lay and all, but I am not going to fall in love with a Dark Guardian who is looking for a mate.”

“Dylan is looking for a mate?”

“Not really. He explained to me about mates such as you and Darin. We are not mates and not that I want to be his mate.”

Lorelei linked her arm around Jade’s arm. To Lorelei, Jade seemed a bit upset about the fact that Dylan wasn’t her mate.

Jade changed the conversation. “Enough about Dylan. I see that you and Darin have gotten up close and personal.”

Lorelei laughed. With her free hand, she touched her stomach. “Really up close.”

“Don’t you want to have the baby? You don’t seem so sure about it.”

Lorelei did want their baby. It was Darin’s and her child for all times. Nothing could change that, no matter what happened to them in the future. They had created a precious gift. Something some vampires thousands of years older than they would never create. She took this as a sign from God that He wanted her and Darin to have something from their love. “I love knowing that Darin and I have made her together.”

“Her? You know what the baby is already?”

“Darin says it’s a girl. I’m sure he knows.”

“Pretty sure he does. Are you going to let him

change you?"

Lorelei had not really thought about if she wanted to. To be with Darin for the rest of her life was a dream come true. She loved him. Really loved him. She would never want to be with anyone else. "I thought about letting him change me later on today. I love Darin with all my heart. I just wished that this would be over."

They continued their walk on the trail.

"I want this over with also, Lorelei. Have you heard about Vincent's condition?"

"Not really. They are not giving out the information. He is still alive, as far as I know. When Darin calls the hospital, they say that he is unable to receive any calls."

"At least he is not dead."

"I never wanted him dead."

"I know." Jade took in a deep breath. "We are going to have to plan a big baby shower."

"I don't know a lot of people here, Jade. Remember Vincent did not allow me to have many friends."

"I know. However, you have hundreds of them back in South Dakota. We can go there and have the baby shower."

"I don't know. I left without a goodbye. I don't think they will welcome me back with open arms."

"We all forgive and forget."

"True. We cannot do that if we cannot be seen in public."

Jade laughed.

"Don't you thin..." Lorelei began, but a familiar female's voice stopped her.

"Hello, Ladies."



Her and Jade turned. "Eve?" Lorelei said with confusion in her voice. "What are you doing here?"

"To kill you of course."

Lorelei released Jade's arm. She looked around to see werewolves stalking out of the forest. Their eyes were red as fire. They were snarling and growling at them as they kept them at bay.

"And Jade also."

Lorelei shivered with fear as she thought about her baby over her life.

"Why?" Jade said standing closer to Lorelei. "Why kill us? We had nothing to do with Vincent's death."

"Oh really?" Eve pulled a small player out of her purse. She pressed play.

Jade's voice spoke first.

"I got it."

"What?"

"Kill the bastard."

"You're joking, right?"

"Maybe. Maybe not."

"I know you cannot do it, but what a thought, aye?"

"It's a thought. Maybe I should kill him. He deserves to die. Nope. I cannot do it."

"Okay. Just a suggestion. If you want to, there are so many people out there who would do it. The other suggestion is still open also."

"Which one?"

"Me, you, moving back to the states. I miss Chicago and I know my family would take me back with open arms. Plus, you can stay with me until you get on your feet."

"But she said no," Jade defended Lorelei. "She would not kill him. And I lied about Chicago."

"I know. We all know you lied."

"But I never wanted Vincent dead," Lorelei repeated.

"I don't know." Eve put the player back in her purse. "That's a reasonable reason to kill you. Vincent is the leader and you tried to kill him to get the money."

The werewolves came closer, ready to strike at Eve's order.

*Darin!*

*I know.* His voice came quickly. *I felt your fear. We are on our way now.*

*But how? It's still sun out.*

*The trees are blocking large portions of the sun. You stay away from Eve. We are on the way.*

Lorelei grabbed Jade's hand and squeezed it.

"Now, you must die, Lorelei."

"I would not do that if I was you!" A loud dangerous snarl followed the command.

Lorelei released Jade's hand and spun around to see Vincent, Zak, and Terrance walking up to them. She felt tears stream down her face at the sight of Vincent. Her breathing labored with fear.

"Vincent," Eve snarled.

"Yes," he answered and walked up to her. He looked at the werewolves around them who had stopped to stare at him. He raised his hand at the werewolves. "Eve has betrayed you. She was the one who had me shot, not Lorelei."

"How did you... You were in the hospital half-dead."

"No, I was not. I waited, knowing that you would come back and show yourself. The doctors healed me

over a month ago. I needed to know who tried to kill me. The poison that you used on me did not work. It just took longer for me to get it out of my system." Vincent walked toward the werewolves. "I do not want you to harm these women. I will not charge them with anything. I will take Eve back to England where she will be charged with attempted murder. You all will decide her fate."

"No!" Eve screamed and in a blink of an eye, threw a blade in the air toward Lorelei.

Lorelei saw it coming, but could not move fast enough to get out of its way. Jade jumped in front of Lorelei only seconds before the blade entered her. The blade entered Jade's body right into her heart. "Jade," Lorelei screamed. "No!" She went to the ground beside Jade. Lorelei picked her friend's head up and laid it on her lap. "No, Jade, you cannot die on me now." Jade trembled in her arms. Blood poured from her mouth. Lorelei wanted to pull out the blade, but knew better.

"You bitch," Eve snarled. "I wanted you dead, not her."

Terrance and Zak had caught Eve by the arm and held her from moving.

"No!" Dylan immediately went down to his knees and grabbed Jade up in his arms. He did not speak, but simply lifted her up and carried her back to the house.

Lorelei began to cry at the blood staining her hands. This was the second person she cared about who got hurt because of her. She did not fight when she felt strong arms go around her and lift her up off the ground. She had no doubt it was Darin. She laid her head on his shoulder, crying as he carried her back to

the cabin.

\* \* \* \*

Darin laid Lorelei on the sofa in the living room. He did not want Vincent in his bedroom and he knew that he would follow them back to the cabin. Lorelei's black eyes were red from crying when she looked up at him.

"Is..." she began to say, then stopped when more tears flowed. She sat up on the sofa. "Is Jade going to be okay?"

Darin sat on the couch beside her. He pulled her into his arms. "I don't know. Dylan is taking care of her."

"It's not fair, Darin. Everyone I am close to gets hurt. I don't want to lose Jade. I cannot lose her."

"You will not lose her. Trust me," Darin assured. He looked up when a sound came from the door. "Come in." Darin felt Lorelei shiver from fear when she saw Vincent walk into the room. He held her closer, never wanting her to fear anyone, not even Vincent.

"How is Jade?" Vincent asked.

"Dylan is taking care of her," Darin responded.

Vincent nodded. "And Lorelei?"

Darin knew from the way Vincent looked at them together on the sofa, he did not like the fact that Lorelei was in his arms the way she was. He did not care what happened today. He would not let Lorelei go back to Vincent. Not ever! "She's hurt about her friend."

"No." Vincent shook his head. "The pregnancy."

Lorelei's fear rolled off her in waves. She shook so hard, Darin had to wrap his arms around her to keep

her from running away from Vincent. *Be calm.* He whispered into her mind.

Lorelei looked up at him, then toward Vincent.

"She is okay," Darin answered.

"She looks a little pale, that's why I asked."

"Oh that." Darin grabbed her hand. "She was going through morning sickness for a while. She actually started feeling better today."

"Good." Vincent stood at the door, staring at them. "Lorelei," Vincent called. "This is not going to be easy, but I see that a choice has been made. I would never try to force you to come back to me. I can say that I am sorry for what I did to you. To try to keep you by my side, I pushed you away. I hope that you and Darin have a wonderful life. You are truly his mate and not mine. I know that mates are born, not made."

Lorelei moved to get out of his arms. At first, Darin started not to let go, then he let her stand.

She walked over to Vincent and they stared at each other for a moment. "Thank you," she whispered. "You will find someone for you, Vincent."

Vincent smiled. "Not as good to me as you were."

Lorelei laughed. "No. But if you treat her like a woman instead of an object, you will have a better life."

Vincent reached out to take her hand.

Lorelei did something Darin was not prepared for, but he was not going to get upset about it. She wrapped her arms around Vincent's neck, giving him a hug. Vincent did not move at first. Finally, he returned the embrace for a short moment.

"Bye, Vincent," Lorelei said, then let go.

"Make sure you invite me to your baby shower," he said. "Goodbye, Lorelei. Darin, please inform me of Jade's progress."

"We will."

Vincent turned and walked out the door.

Darin was at her side. He grabbed her hand and walked her upstairs.

"Where are we going?" Lorelei asked.

"We both need a long bath."

"You just want to make love in the bathtub again."

Darin laughed. "That, too."

"Can I see Jade first?"

"Not yet. First, we are going to make love, then I am going to convert you tonight. I cannot go through another day like this. I could not get to you fast enough."

"Why did you not send Sashi?"

"Because we knew the odds were high and I would never send my guardian out to be hurt. I knew you were not far away." Darin walked her into the bathroom and closed the door. After turning on the shower, he undressed, then undressed Lorelei.

"I love you," Lorelei told him.

Darin led her into the shower. "I love you, too." And to prove it, he spent the next couple of hours showing her. They made love so many times that he lost count how many climaxes he brought Lorelei to before finally converting her and letting her sleep.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN SOUTH DAKOTA

Three months later...

“I still cannot believe that you met such a handsome and respectable man, dear,” Lorelei’s mother, Baina said as she set the platter of food in front of Lorelei. “I did not like that Vincent fellow at all. Now Darin, I have taken a liking to.”

Lorelei rolled her eyes. “Don’t let him hear you say that. He already has a big enough ego.”

Baina laughed. “Where are the fellows anyhow?”

“They went out by the pool for a smoke and a drink,” Lorelei answered.

“Why did you guys wait so late to let us know about your little bundle? You look like you are about to explode.”

Lorelei looked at her mother. Her brown curly hair hung long past her shoulders, her black eyes watched her closely. “I know,” Lorelei sat back in the seat. “I’m only six months and I feel like I’m nine months already.”

“I cannot wait to see my granddaughter. Your

brother, Taylor, is glad to see you. The last time he saw you, he was fifteen."

"Yeah, and I cannot believe that he is eighteen already."

Her brother walked into the room, his black hair still wet from the shower. He had on a pair of blue jean shorts and a green shirt. His black eyes sparkling as he looked at her.

"Speaking of the devil," Lorelei teased.

"Where have you been, Taylor?" Baina asked. "The party ended hours ago? Aren't you glad to see your big sister?"

"Of course I am. I have a date in a few and I wanted to at least take a shower." He looked at Lorelei. "Wow, I did not know women got that big while pregnant."

"Taylor!" Baina yelled.

"If I could get up from this chair, I would kick your butt all around this room," Lorelei threatened.

"You cannot push me around any longer, big sis."

"You behave," Baina chastised.

"Mom," Taylor whined. "I was only kidding." He gave Lorelei a kiss on the cheek. "Glad to see you again, sis."

"You, too, bro."

"Where are dad and Darin?"

"Out back," Lorelei told him.

Taylor went outside.

Her mom sat beside her. "Are you sure that you are okay? You look a little pale, dear."

Lorelei never would be able to tell her mom or dad that she and Darin are Dark Guardians. She loved the night and she would spend it with Darin for all



eternity.

Dylan came down the stairs, holding his fledgling's hand.

The night Darin converted her, Dylan converted Jade. They were actually reborn about the same time. The only difference is Lorelei's change was permanent and Jade's change will only last five-hundred years unless Dylan gives her blood by then. With the way they were, Lorelei had no doubt that Jade would have a full vampire life as a Triane.

Lorelei did not know what she would do if she had lost Jade that night. Jade and Dylan went their separate ways after about a month. Jade stayed with them and Dylan went back to South Carolina. When they called him and told them that they were going to South Dakota to see their mom, Dylan jumped on a reason to see Jade again. The moment they saw each other, they ran up to her old room for a little more private get together.

"Where have you two been?" Baina asked.

Jade let go of Dylan's hand, looking like a guilty child whose mother caught her with her hand in the cookie jar.

"Sorry, Mrs. Riese," Dylan said. "But I have not seen Jade in a long time and we were, talking."

"You two were having sex."

"Mom!" Lorelei turned two shades of red.

"I understand, but now, you are here. That's all that counts."

"The men?" Dylan asked.

"Out back talking about women," Lorelei said.

"That's my sort of conversation," Dylan said with a

smile. He gave Jade a kiss, then headed outside.

Jade walked over and sat on the couch beside Lorelei's mother. "Dylan told me Vincent said he misses you and hopes you are doing well."

"Thanks," Lorelei said with a sigh.

"What's wrong, dear?" her mother inquired.

"I heard that he had another fiancée."

"That's a bad thing?" Jade asked.

"No. I just hoped that he has changed since he was now officially part of the Dem...I mean...leader. He needs to know that women do not want a man who hurts them."

"So true. I believe he has learned his lesson. They would not have let him in if he was the same."

Lorelei turned to see Sashi walking into the house and come sit beside her.

*Alpha says that he needs his mate.*

*Tell Alpha no.*

*Why do you deny, Alpha?*

Darin often used Sashi to get to her. She loved Sashi just as much as she loved Darin and she usually couldn't say no to whatever Sashi asked for. *Oh, I see how this is. Darin sends you because he knows I cannot say no to you. Tell him he will have to deal with me later. She patted the panther. Go back to Darin, but do not disappear. My mom and dad do not know what we are.*

*I know. Alpha let me go when your dad was in the bathroom.*

"Hi, Sashi." Baina said, still a little afraid of the black panther. "Where have you been?"

"I think that Darin had her in the cage for a while," Lorelei answered.

"I cannot believe that you keep such a wild animal. Doesn't she try to attack you?"

"No. Darin's had her so long, she only knows how to be a big softy."

Sashi looked up to see Darin walking into the house, followed by Lorelei's father, Taylor and Dylan.

"Hey, baby," Darin bent and kissed Lorelei on the forehead.

"Hey. What were you talking about out there?"

"Women," Darin said.

Lorelei hit him on the shoulder. "Not funny."

"That's what Dylan told me you'd say."

"Dylan will have to deal with Jade later for that. And you for what you sent Sashi in here to do."

Darin laughed. "I love you and you know that."

"I love you also."

"When are you planning on leaving?" Taylor asked.

"Tomorrow night after the shower," Jade said. "Everyone will be here around seven."

"Good. I'm going to bed. I am tired," Lorelei told them.

"Yeah, right. Darin..." Dylan stopped talking when Darin looked at him.

Darin helped her get up from the chair. "Good evening, I will see you all later tonight."

"You all have such strange sleeping habits," Gavin, Lorelei's father, said.

Her father's usually all black hair had changed to all white, but it still looked good on him. His black eyes stared at Lorelei for a long moment before looking back at his wife.

"We all work such crazy hours at my companies.

Clubs to be more precise. We are always up all night and sleeping all day. We go from place to place to see how they run and so when we don't visit a club, we keep the same sleeping patterns."

"It's fine," Baina said. "See you tonight. Everything should be ready to go."

"Thanks, Mom and Dad." Lorelei kissed both parents on the cheek before walking up to her old room.

Darin had her in his arms so quickly the room spun. He kissed her and, just like the first time their lips touched, it sent a rush of warmth and passion through her body. He released her lips and pressed his forehead against hers.

"I waited two hours to do that," Darin told her. "I cannot wait to get you home where I can make love to you all day and night."

Lorelei smiled and rubbed her stomach. "If we keep at that, we will have another one of these sooner than we expect."

"A token of our love." He placed his hands on top of hers.

"Yes it is. I will always love you, Mr. MaGruder."

"And I will always love you, Mrs. MaGruder, and will for the rest of my life."

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I've been a writer all of my life. As a young girl I remember reading books and writing my own short stories. I have an active imagination and over the years learned to bring those emotions, characters and pictures to life. I read everything while growing up. I love all types of books but my favorites are paranormal romance books.

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