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HERE

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Bite Here Anthology

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### **Book Blurbs**

#### **Pure, Hot Sin by H.C. Brown**

Could there be a good side to being sucked onto a future realm? Leo Marshal thinks so; he found his dream lover, Ashrin of Ecatnie Pride. The only problem is, Leo is afraid Ashrin will love him . . . to death.

#### **The Vampire's Assistant by Stormy Glenn**

Jon Brighten had a brand new college degree, a student loan dogging him, and a spot to sleep on his sister's couch. He knew he needed to find a job and move out, especially when he heard his sister and her husband were expecting a baby. It was time to find his own place but first he needed a job.

Applying for the personal assistant position to the reclusive Nikolas Vaile, CEO of Vaile Industries, one of the largest pharmaceutical and research companies in the world, seemed a little too high seeking, but what did Jon have to lose?

His blood?

**Pure, Hot Sin**  
**By H.C. Brown**

**Chapter One**

"You belong to me, Leo."

The voice spilled over him like liquid silk, the man's face a dark shadow in the twilight. Leo lowered his head to nuzzle the hairless balls, to drink in the rich, hypnotic scent he craved. Under his palms, strong thigh muscles tensed, moving under sweat-soaked skin. Leo moved his mouth, pressing kisses up his lover's long, hard shaft. Strong fingers twisted in Leo's hair, dragging his mouth to the weeping slit.

"Open your mouth; suck me." The deep, sensual voice commanded.

Leo swiped his tongue across the tip, the familiar, rich, musky flavor bursting across his tongue. His heart clenched; he loved this man with a soul-destroying passion. This man completed him. His dream lover, his ultimate fantasy. Leo moaned in bliss. He couldn't wait to taste him again and lunged forward to slide his tongue across the velvet shaft.

*I don't know your name. Tell me your name.*

The bed began to lurch and roll. The dream faded and he awoke achingly hard and frustrated. *Damn it. Why do I always have the same dream?*

"Winds of up to one hundred and fifty miles an hour . . ."

Leo Marshall lifted the baseball cap off his eyes and yawned. *What was that?*

Stretching, he eased out of the chair and pulled up his fishing rod. The balmy summer day had vanished, hidden behind a violent, black storm front. Clouds of every shade of grey charged across the sky. An icy wind cut through his t-shirt and whipped the once glassy, blue ocean into angry, white caps. In the distance, lightning brought flashes of the coastline, misshapen behind a wall of torrential rain.

*Fuck.* Leo secured his belongings and ducked inside the cabin. On the two-way, he could hear the Coastguard giving out warnings. He radioed in his details and position.

"You won't make it to Harper's Peak; didn't you hear the warnings?" came the response. "You will have to try and ride it out. We have your position. Do you have a satellite beacon?"

Leo ran a hand through his hair. "Yes, I do, thank God."

The Coastguard signed off and Leo stood transfixed, watching the sea join the inky blue of the sky and close in around him, plunging him into twilight. The Laura Jane rolled and dipped, huge waves crashing over her bow. Leo dragged on his life jacket and pulled his way to the stern to up anchor. Wind tore off his baseball cap, dragged his long hair from its binding and whipped it across his eyes. Brushing at his face, he looked up at the savage sky; his eyes widened. "Holy fuck."

Highlighted by blanket lightning, a funnel rose from the sea. The awesome beast swirled high into the clouds and danced across the ocean like a giant hydra. Long trails of water undulated from its twisting neck with gaping maws. The wind roared, lashing salty rain into his face and tearing at his clothes with icy fingers. Leo dropped the anchor on the deck and battled his way back to the cabin. *I've got to get out of here.* He depressed the start button on the engine, once, twice.

Nothing.

He ran his arm over his face, swiping at seawater stinging his eyes, and tried again. "Come on girl."

The motor caught and burst into life. Leo laughed in triumphant desperation and fought frantically to turn the craft around. A great surge of boiling water picked up the Laura Jane and dragged the small craft up to the crown of a gigantic wave. Leo clung to the wheel, water swirling in the cabin up to his knees. The boat hovered on the crest then surfed down the shimmering wall at world record speed. Leo looked down the face of the twenty-foot wave and gasped. *I'll never out run it.*

The boat crashed into the foaming water, bobbing like a cork. It lurched to one side and the crab basket and fishing tackle slammed against Leo's legs. In his hands, the slippery wheel fought against him, spinning one way and then the other. The bow dipped sharply and the propeller broke free of the waves, the engine screaming in protest. The sea roared its discontent, and before him, a whirlpool opened up, a giant vortex sucking everything to oblivion. Leo swallowed, fear

closing his throat, ears deafened with the roar that sounded like a freight train. The Laura Jane lay on its side, dark, swirling water pinning it in its embrace. Whipped into a giant centrifuge in hell, Leo joined the speeding procession of marine debris. Above, a mountain of spinning, black water, below, a swirling orifice of black and green sank down to the depths of hell.

Leo clung to the cabin door, his legs floating in midair. The howl of a thousand devils shrieked in his head. The roof of the cabin ripped off in a whine of twisted metal. He looked up one last time, seeking the heavens. Within the madness, a strange calmness enclosed him. His fingers grew numb and slipped off the cabin door. *Goodbye, Mom and Dad.*

\* \* \* \* \*

"Draigah, come here. Look."

"Come away, it might bite."

*I'm alive.* Every inch of Leo's body screamed with pain. He tried to speak but nothing came out. Sand pressed into his face and crusted dry around his mouth. Under his battered body, cold, wet gravel pressed against torn skin. Waves caressed his feet. He forced open one eye. His gaze met two large, almond-shaped, green orbs, set in a face of opalescent ivory.

"Stand back; it's a Pride male. Do you want it to morph and eat you? Look at its eyes."

"It's hurt, Draigah. You know what mamma says . . . ."

"Yes, yes, go now. Fetch help. I'll wait with him," the one called Draigah replied dismissively.

Strong hands rolled Leo over and dragged him into the cool shade of green, coconut palms. Leo stared into more green eyes, set in an elfin face, but masculine and framed with hair the color of liquid silver. A hand with long, fine fingers brushed the sand from his mouth and pressed a bottle of water to his lips. He drank the cool liquid, a relief from his scalding throat. His voice came out in a growl.

"Thank you."

"I'm Draigah." He peered into Leo's eyes. "I will trust you to morph and heal your injuries, but know this: I will use magyck to protect my family."

Leo coughed. "Morph? I don't understand."

"Are you from the Ecatnie Pride?" Draigah's gaze swept his body.

"No, I'm from Harper's Peak; my name is Leo Marshall."

"Not Pride," said Draigah and brushed the hair from Leo's ears. He jumped back as if scalded. "You are Human—a Nomag?"

Leo lifted his hand to shield his sore eyes from the blinding sunlight. He nodded. "Human, yes I'm Human . . . I don't know what a Nomag is . . . where am I?"

"*You are in trouble, Leo Marshall,*" Draigah replied, running a hand through his hair. "You carry illness from the Nomag world. The Spell Weaver may have you killed and your body burned."

Leo drew a deep breath, unable to move more than his head. *Illness? Well, I can't fight, so I'm well and truly fucked.* He turned his head to see three male creatures striding toward him. They all looked the same: long, muscular frames and ivory skin glistening in the sunlight. They were naked but for a loincloth. *They look like Geckos, their skin almost transparent. And look at those big eyes.*

Behind them, the child walked beside a female wearing a diaphanous, blue dress. Draigah went to meet them and they all turned to look at him as one.

Draigah laid a hand on the older woman's arm. "Spell Weaver, can you remove the illness he carries and make him safe? I feel this Nomag is a sign from the Lady."

"A sign? I think not. It's fortunate he is weak and will succumb easily to my magyck. I can cleanse him, but the Pride will slay him the moment they set eyes on him. You are no fool, Draigah, look at his eyes."

Turning his back on Leo, Draigah shrugged. "He is much like a Pride male in size and coloring; perhaps they will change him into one of them."

"Humph . . . they prefer to change *females* with their bite, those they chose as mates. It is obvious *he* is male. He will have no chance of survival—it is out of our hands," The Spell Weaver replied angrily. "However, the Teal will do their duty and

save the wretched soul. And you, my dear Draigah, will tell the Pride king of your discovery."

Leo shut his eyes, his head throbbing. The scent of lilacs drifted over him and his eyes shot open. The woman knelt before him; she smiled sweetly and pressed a blue glass bottle to his lips. He lifted his head and drank down the honey-flavored liquid. Drawing a deep breath, he gazed into the woman's compassionate face. "I'm not ill, I don't carry disease."

"I am the Spell Weaver, hush now. Your presence here, just breathing our air, will bring illness to our people. It is not your fault, child. I will help you and then, the Lady willing, the Prides will not execute you. You will sleep and when you wake, you will be cleansed. Sleep now, Leo."

He looked up into her emerald green eyes, his body floating, the pain and discomfort melting away. The beach folded in on him, colors blending and spinning away into darkness.

## Chapter Two

Leo opened his eyes and stretched. *What an amazing dream.* He rolled over in the deliciously soft bed and gasped in shock. Where was he? Not in his own bed in his untidy apartment, that was for sure. Panic gripped his belly. *Calm down, you're not in any danger. These people are obviously trying to help you.* The sheets beneath him were pure white, the bedspread, thick, peacock blue brocade. Sunlight reflected on the glossy, dark wood floor scattered with sheepskin rugs. The scent of beeswax hung heavy in the air, combined with a fascinating masculine musk. *Nice place.*

His gaze travelled to a stone fireplace, with two mahogany straight back chairs on either side. The seats, surrounded by a row of gold studs, matched the brocade of the bedspread. He admired how the elegant arms of the chairs rounded gently and complimented the spirals at the back. The legs curved down to lion's head feet, beautifully carved in exquisite detail. Leo sighed and looked over to the matching nightstand that shone with the rich patina of many years of dedicated

polishing. Antiques, he mused. He loved old things, especially wood smoothed over by years of handling.

Leo sat up to peer at the paneled wooden wall, its dark color broken with oil paintings depicting forests and mountains. He strained his eyes to catch his own distorted reflection in the silver frames and tentatively ran his fingers over his face. *How badly damaged am I?* Surprisingly, everything seemed in order. He flexed his arms and legs. *Everything seems to be working.*

He turned his attention to the far side of the room. His gaze rested on an ornate door, complete with a polished, copper doorknob. *My escape route?* Next to this sat a wide mirrored wardrobe, also in mahogany. A light breeze ruffled his hair and he turned into a stream of daylight. Long, white silk drapes billowed in the wind from a huge window. He swallowed hard. There, bathed in sunshine, stood a man, his hands folded behind him. Tall — about six foot five — with muscular arms banded in gold, he had hair that hung like a sheet of wet silk over wide shoulders. Dazed and more than a little confused, Leo called out to him. "Hello."

The man turned slowly and inclined his head, his face shadowed. "Ah, so you have returned. I am Ashrin of Ecatnie Pride." He moved forward smoothly, every muscle visible in his long, black pants. "It's not often a Nomag breaches our Gate. You have travelled into forbidden territory, into another realm of existence."

*So, it's true I'm in another world, Holy cow. If this is the Pride male they said would execute me — I'm fucking toast.* His heart rapping at his ribs, he forced a smile. "I'm sorry I ended up here. Are you planning to kill me?"

"No, I am here to help you. I realize the breach of our realm was unintentional. Now my problem is what to do with you," he said in a voice smooth as molasses.

Light moved across Ashrin's remarkable face. Leo sighed in relief — this person at least looked normal. He relaxed; the man had an aura of peace around him. Ashrin moved closer and glanced down at him beneath long, black lashes. Leo licked his lips at the sight of his sinfully handsome face. *Oh-my-God, you would make a grown man cry.*



Leo took in the violet eyes with unique swirls of blue, green and silver. His gaze dropped to full, luscious lips and a strong, square chin. Farther down, his hungry eyes encountered a wide chest, slim hips and an impressive bulge wedged permanently in the front of the man's oh-so-tight leather pants. Ashrin's cough brought Leo back to reality.

*You must have really banged your head. You're in big trouble. Pull yourself together; this is no time to get randy. Especially not with a giant that could snap you like a fucking twig.*

"A pleasure to meet you. I am Leo Marshall. So those strange people . . . they are real, I didn't imagine them? And tell me, where exactly *am* I?"

"You are in the land of the Teal. You didn't imagine the ones who rescued you. The Teal, the wood nymphs who cared for you, sent a message to King Olan of Ecatnie Pride." He sat on the edge of the bed and smiled. "The Teal are gentle folk; however, now they live in fear of you escaping and raping their females. We know Nomags spread their child seed without thought of their actions."

*Oh, great.* Leo rolled his eyes and gave a grunt of displeasure. "Rape! Give me strength. I'm not interested in their females . . . well in *any* females to be honest."

"Then it was very fortunate the Spell Weaver was able to remove the illnesses you carry." He grinned, showing a dazzling white smile. "There is no disease in the land of the Five Gates and we intend to keep it that way," he said with a wave of his hand.

"Well that's a plus."

"Yes, it will go in your favor. Although, I may have trouble trying to stop the other Pride males from killing you; Nomags are not liked here," he replied with a frown.

Leo lifted a brow. "Why?"

"Those we've observed over the last two thousand years have no desire for peace and harmony. They treat each other like vermin." Ashrin brushed an invisible piece of something-or-other off his shoulder, his lip curled in disgust. "We have tribes that cause trouble occasionally and the odd demon breaks through from the Underworld. These we can control; we don't need Nomags infiltrating our Gates."

Rubbing his hands over his face, Leo sighed. *What on earth have I got myself into this time?* "If I disgust you, why did you offer to help me?"

"Ah, I will answer that question when we get to know each other better. For now, I will say it is because I *like* you," Ashrin replied, locking his gaze on Leo.

Leo stared at the incredible hunk sitting on the end of his bed. *He likes me; this can't be real.* Ashrin's warm, masculine scent drifted over him. *I know that smell. Lord, it's just like in my dreams.* He inhaled, savoring the rich, musky fragrance, his body relaxing into the hypnotic aroma. *So Ashrin is your name. I love this dream. Please don't let me wake up.* His cock tented the sheets.

He gazed into Ashrin's eyes. "You know, I didn't intend to come here. I didn't *know* you existed. I was out fishing, got caught in one hell of a storm and woke up on the beach."

"Yes, I know where they found you. I came here to examine you. The king hoped one of our females would choose you for a mate. It would solve your problem. A mate would be able to change you into a Pride. It's inconvenient that you prefer males," Ashrin said and frowned. "Now, unfortunately, unless you can prove your worth, our king may yet decide to kill you."

Leo bristled at his tone, shaking off the calming effect of Ashrin's scent. Could life be such a disposable commodity here? Hanging his head in despair, Leo moaned. "Why? Just because I'm gay?"

"It's not that you prefer males; many of us do," Ashrin replied.

Leo shook his head in disbelief. "So if I'm no threat to anyone, why can't you just send me home?"

"I wish we could," Ashrin said with regret. "Only Pride and Fae may pass between realms. Leo, this is a fact I can't change. And, as I said before, for you to become Pride we must first find you a suitable mate. As you prefer males, this in itself is a problem. In truth, very few Pride brothers find their true, male bond mate. In your case, you may have to settle with a close match. So, until we find a solution to your *problem*, you would do well to put all thoughts of home aside and try to fit in here."

Grief flooded Leo's body. "I can't possibly stay here. I have a family; my parents will think I've drowned. I can't do that to them." Leo drew a ragged breath. "You *have* to send me home."

"I'm sorry." Ashrin stood and laid a hand on Leo's shoulder. "Look around you; it's not so bad living here. If the king allows you to stay, you will enjoy a long, happy life."

Leo rolled his eyes and shrugged off Ashrin's hand. "And if he doesn't agree, it's the death sentence. I haven't done anything to justify being put to death."

"The problem is you resemble a Pride male," said Ashrin, cupping Leo's chin and looking deeply into his eyes. "You have unusual amber eyes. They bear a resemblance to ours when we get annoyed. When we get angry, we morph."

*What did he say?* Leo lifted his head and stared at him. He fell into Ashrin's gaze; a lazy feeling of peace and contentment enclosed him. "Okay what exactly *is* morphing?"

"The Prides are man and cat. We shift into cats," Ashrin replied, running his tongue over two sharp fangs. "The Ecatnie are saber toothed tigers; in cat form they are feared by the Teal," said Ashrin with a sigh. "Not many of us are welcome in this part of the realm."

*Fuck, is this guy for real? This just has to be a dream. I'll go with it, just for the ride with this amazing man before I wake up.* He looked at Ashrin and another wave of contentment swept over him, making him so relaxed, Leo had to force his eyes to remain open. He wanted to curl up in a ball and sleep. Yawning, he swiped a hand through his hair. "And your eyes change to amber just before you transform—I see."

"And I thought Nomags had no power of reasoning." Ashrin threw him a grin.

Leo frowned. "What exactly *is* a *Nomag*?"

"A Human is a Nomag—a 'no magic being'," Ashrin replied.

Rubbing his chin, Leo looked at him thoughtfully. "So, at present, I'm between a rock and a hard place. I can't leave and I can't stay. So where do we go from here?"

"For now, you will stay here with me until the king makes his decision. You must wash and dress. If you feel well enough, I'll show you my home while lunch is

prepared. We can discuss your options. Draigah has offered to continue to care for you when I return to Ecan, my home realm, to speak with the king. You do remember Draigah . . . the one who found you? He and I are of like minds," replied Ashrin with a tight smile. "The bathroom is over there," he said, pointing to an open door.

Leo looked around for a robe to cover his nakedness. There was nothing. Ashrin's intense, sexual appraisal made his cock ache. *This wasn't in the dream.* He drew a breath, slipped from the bed and strode toward the doorway. A light came on the moment he stepped inside and glistened across pristine, marble tiles. The room displayed every feature of an opulent, modern, chrome and glass bathroom.

Ashrin allowed his gaze to travel over the Nomag's body. He grinned; the Teal had removed all the hair from below the chin. *I did well to enter this delicious male's dreams and bring him here for my pleasure.* Although the Dreamscape had revealed the man was young, fit and enjoyed man love, it had only given him a glimpse of the Nomag's true self. Leo's scent was as he remembered, spicy and fresh. He licked his lips in anticipation of tasting him. This male was most pleasing to the eye, although his skin was an unusual color. His body was sculpted, with hard muscle, wide shoulders and a long, thick shaft just waiting for his attention. *Mmm, he will be a joy to dominate; already my glamor subdues him and my scent excites him.* He met Leo's gaze. "I'm glad my presence stimulates you. You're a very fascinating-looking male."

"Right back at you," Leo said, a blush staining his cheeks. He glanced down, a frown creasing his delightful face. "Oh Lord, did they have to shave me . . . everywhere?"

Inclining his head, Ashrin watched Leo's white buttocks disappear from view as he stepped farther into the bathroom. "I'm afraid it's permanent. They find body hair offensive."

*Shame, I bet his pubic hair matched those red highlights in that dark brown mane. Red like flames, to match the sweet welts I'll inflict on that tight ass.*

Ashrin walked to the bathroom door and leaned one shoulder against the doorframe. The Nomag looked exhausted; mayhap he should decrease the glamor; he was, after all, complacent to his surroundings. He tilted his head to watch the flex of muscles under Leo's delightfully smooth skin. How strange, Leo's body had a golden hue, but his delightful ass was as white as snow. *I can't wait to pry those sweet white cheeks apart and hear you moan when I take you.*

"How do you turn on the water?" Leo stood in the shower, his long fingers searching the wall.

Ashrin chuckled. "I'm sorry, I'd forgotten for a moment you're a Nomag. I'm afraid everything here works with magyck. There, I've cast a spell. You only need to place your hand beneath the shower and faucets to turn them on. I will give you a lantern for the evenings that will burn continuously."

"Thank you, but wouldn't it be easier to teach me how to turn on the lights?"

Shaking his head, Ashrin grinned. "I'd have to bite you first."

*Magyck. Give me a break. He really expects me to believe this; he didn't wave a wand or anything. I'll play along, it's only a dream.* Leo drew a breath. The shower sprang to life, perfectly heated. Warm water cascaded down his body. *Okay, so what if it's not a dream? I'll just have to play along and see where it takes me.* He glanced around and found a bar of yellow soap. He washed himself all over and checked for cuts and bruises. His body had no marks whatsoever. Ashrin stood leaning against the wall, watching every move with hooded eyes. *He looks like he wants to join me.*

Leo shot him a smile. "So, how long have I been unconscious? I was pretty banged up."

"One moon, maybe a little longer. I understand from the Teal you were extensively damaged. You are lucky they found you; there are others within the realms who are not so dedicated to helping lost souls. Draigah worked long hours to care for you," Ashrin replied. "Use the soap for your hair; it's made by the Fae."

*A moon . . . so a month . . . shit, no wonder I'm so horny.* Leo lathered his hair with the silky suds and rinsed before turning to reply. "The Fae, as in Faeries with wings?"

"Yes, of course, are there any other?" replied Ashrin with a laugh.

*I'm dreaming or I've become Alice in Wonderland. Fuck, I should've never gone to see that movie. I'm suffering delusions; yeah, that's it – subliminal image transfer or something crazy like that.* Leo stepped from the shower and reached for a large, fluffy towel of the deepest blue. He dried himself and wrapped it around his waist. He looked at Ashrin and raised a brow. "I'm hoping I don't have to wear a loincloth like the one Draigah was wearing."

"I will find you something of mine to wear, although the Teal clothing does have its advantages." Ashrin chuckled and headed for the door.

### Chapter Three

Leo touched the black clothes Ashrin had left on the bed before leaving him alone. Running his fingers over the pants, he frowned. He thought they were leather, but instead, the fabric was as light as silk. Leo held them against his body. *These look far too small and will be a bitch to wear without underwear.* He pulled them on and they molded to his body like a second skin. The shirt resembled a muscle tee in a smooth, knitted material. He bent to pull on the soft, leather ankle boots and walked to peer at his reflection in the full-length mirrored wardrobe.

His hair hung to his shoulders, glossy, dark brown although he had not brushed one hair on his head. He grinned at his reflection; he looked good, not at all like a man who had just crawled from his sick bed. *Why am I so fucking happy? What's wrong with me? I'm alive; that's good, but I will never see my folks again. That's bad. So why don't I care? Maybe I've been drugged? I sure don't feel drugged.*

"My clothes fit you well," said Ashrin.

Leo spun around, heart beating madly, to see him standing in the doorway. *Hell, I didn't hear him come back.* He met Ashrin's gaze. "I'm surprised; you are so much bigger than me." He rubbed his hand down his thigh. "This material is strange; I thought it was leather."

"The Ecatnie are some thousand years more advanced than Nomags. We have many fabrics, although the Fae spin most of them. Pride have no patience for such

menial tasks. The clothes will fit whoever wears them, although the style is my own design." No fangs showed in his smile. "We have advanced technology and magyck."

*I know I saw his fangs. Perhaps he can retract them. Then again, it's only a dream.*

Leo walked toward him. "This room looks like something out of English history; the furniture is surely antique."

"Yes, this is true. I enjoy Nomag history. The Ecatnie Pride are knowledgeable of the other realms' histories and cultures." He waved a hand toward the furniture. "I purchased this old castle and furnished it in Nomag period pieces. I've the ability to travel back in Nomag time and collect items, like these in this room," Ashrin replied, running a hand over the nightstand in a gentle caress.

"So if it's possible to go back and forth, why can't you send me home?"

"I'm sorry, Leo; your knowledge of our existence is a danger to us. Nomags are close to discovering the truth about dimensions; if they discovered the travel Gates, many realms would suffer," Ashrin said with a shrug.

Leo clenched his fists, anger welling up inside. "Damn it, I want to go home. Keeping me here is stupid. I won't say anything . . . nobody would believe me, anyway."

"Ah, but you will. It's in your nature," replied Ashrin. "Don't upset yourself; living here will be most beneficial."

Leo stared into his eyes and fell into his sultry pools of lust. A warm, relaxing sensation flowed over him, filling him with happiness. He drew a breath and inhaled the sweet, musky scent exuding from Ashrin's body and immediately grew hard again. *You're driving me insane with that smell.* He watched Ashrin's mouth turn up into a smile and his face grew hot. Hell, this man knew exactly what he was doing to him.

\* \* \* \* \*

As they moved through the rooms, Leo noticed the satisfaction Ashrin took from his home. They stood before a magnificent armoire in a room filled with

Georgian antiques. Ashrin ran his long fingers across the soft curve of the polished surface as if it were his lover. He lifted a silver hairbrush and turned it over in his large hand before replacing it lovingly on the lace doily.

Leo noticed the elegantly framed oil paintings and drew in a breath. "I can't say I've seen anything like those paintings before."

He walked across the room and stood before the pictures. Inclining his head, he gazed at the three unique pieces of artwork. In the first, two naked men kissed in passionate abandon, arms and legs entwined. In the second, a masked man with a whip lay into a man on all fours. The sub's head tipped back, mouth open against a gag. Red welts stood out in prominent contrast to the fair skin of his buttocks, legs and torso.

A trickle of sweat slid down Leo's back; his hard shaft pressed against the soft material of his pants. Ashrin gave him a sexy grin and moved closer. The heat from his body seared through the back of Leo's shirt. He swallowed, his throat dry from Ashrin's nearness, and moved his attention to the third painting.

The Dom, with long, black, flowing hair and golden skin stared out at him from behind the mask. A shiver of recognition shot through him. *Ashrin*. The whip tossed aside, the Dom knelt behind his sub; one hand fisted his sub's sweaty hair, dragging his head back. With his other hand, the Dom gripped his thick cock and aimed it between the sub's rosy ass cheeks.

"I can see by your reaction you are a connoisseur of fine art. Does the subject matter arouse your interest?" Ashrin said, resting a heavy hand on the small of Leo's back.

Leo dragged his eyes away from the painting and glanced over his shoulder, meeting Ashrin's gaze. "Yes, I find it arousing. I imagine it takes a lot of trust to truly enjoy."

"Trust, yes. Love also becomes very strong. The needs of both are always a consideration." Ashrin ran his hand down Leo's back and caressed his ass. "Have you had a Dom, *lamya*?"

"No, and my name is Leo."



"You know very well I know your name; *lamya* is an endearment. So tell me, *Leo*, do you just *take* your enjoyment from males, or do you *give* enjoyment?" Ashrin dropped his hand and moved toward the door.

*Fuck, this guy talks in riddles.* "I do both . . . how about you?"

Leo followed him out of the room and along a wide hallway. Ashrin stopped at the top of a flight of stairs, turned and smiled wolfishly.

"I am the master of this house and the Dom in the dungeon," he said, leading the way down the stairs. "I can see you need a night of sin after being so long confined to bed. It's unfortunate I'm leaving in two days, but shortly after I return, I'm hosting a breaking in."

Leo followed him, peering over the banister to the great hall below, complete with suits of glistening armor. He cleared his throat. "You're hosting a breaking in? Is that some sort of party? I can't say I've heard of that before."

"It's a Pride tradition; a young male's first venture into man love. The Fae and the Teal participate, as well," Ashrin replied, turning at the bottom of the stairs to wait for Leo.

Glaring in disbelief, Leo rubbed his chin. "I can't think of anything more disturbing."

"Ha, that is a typical Nomag way of thinking." Ashrin tossed his head in annoyance. "Here, it's a celebration. The breakling drinks a potion that gives him the stamina of a bull and makes him crave domination. After the first, many take him and bring him to climax. The night is one of uninhibited lust."

Horrified, Leo pulled a face. "Sounds like pack rape to me. I think I'll sit this one out."

Ashrin turned on him, his eyes flashing amber. "No, Leo, we offer love, only love and deep passion. If you're to live in this realm, I recommend you keep your opinions to yourself. Rape brings the death sentence. Like murder, it's not tolerated."

Stepping back, Leo took a deep breath to steady his nerves. This man was right on the edge of crazy. "Do your women get the same treatment?"

"Females are protected. They don't attend orgies or display themselves naked in public. To look at a mated female often results in a challenge from their mate . . . a fight to the death."

Leo snorted. "I can't see why the men behave like this then; it's beyond weird."

"We're different; the races in this realm and many others have an insatiable sex drive. Some have ménage families; many — like me — prefer males, but all males indulge in frequent sex." He raised a brow. "We are exhibitionists and get aroused watching others. It's what we do."

\* \* \* \* \*

The next two days flew by in Ashrin's company. They had walked the grounds and talked incessantly, lingered over meals and consumed a lot of wine. Leo's heart raced every time he laid eyes on the man; he wanted Ashrin and he hoped the feeling was mutual.

The following morning, after eating a sumptuous breakfast and speaking at length with Draigah, Ashrin turned his amazing gaze on Leo. He laid his warm hand on Leo's arm and leaned toward him. "I am leaving now to speak with the king."

Leo's stomach clenched, but he forced a smile. "Good luck."

"It is you who needs the luck," Ashrin replied, stood up from the table and strode from the room.

Leo sprang to his feet to follow, sensing Draigah hot on his heels.

A deep feeling of grief hit Leo the moment he walked from the castle. *Why am I feeling like this?* He stood silently beside Draigah in the weak sunshine. Ashrin leaving so soon filled him with dread. A crisp, cool morning breeze tousled his hair. In the middle of the paved courtyard, Ashrin stood beside an impressive, streamlined motorbike, his long hair clasped at the nape. He flashed a brilliant smile at Leo and walked to his side.

Pushing down the need to beg him not to leave, Leo pasted a smile on his face. "Will you be gone long?"

"A day or so." Ashrin cupped the back of Leo's head and gave him a playful shake. "You will be safe here with Draigah."

Ashrin grinned wolfishly at Draigah, pulled on a helmet and slung one long leg over the motorbike. The sleek vehicle rose in the air without a sound, shot over the castle walls and vanished from sight.

Leo whistled. "Wow, that's something else. How long have the Ecatnie been able to fly like that?"

Draigah raised one brow and turned his huge, almond-shaped eyes on Leo. "For a very long time. The Ecatnie are a special race. Most Pride shape-shifters have little magyck ability, a few have reasonable skill, but the Ecatnie are special."

Leo chewed on his bottom lip. "In what way?"

"A thousand years ago a cub was born to a Pride king, a mixture of the Goddess Boda's blood and Arious Pride. This cub had great powers. The Ecatnie Pride males all carry his blood line and his magyck," said Draigah, leading the way back into the castle.

Leo walked beside the Teal. "So what can Ashrin actually do?"

Draigah tossed a lock of silver hair over one shoulder. "Your question should be, what *can't* he do. He can't bring back the dead and it seems he can't find his life mate."

## Chapter Four

A week later, Leo strolled down to the picturesque rose garden and went through the same set of exercises he practiced every morning. He glanced around the high stone walls. This dream was a reality without escape. There was no going home. His heart sank just thinking of his parents. *Suck it up and be a man. You can deal with this. You're alive – a chip and a chair.* Leo sighed. Ashrin had returned, only to state the king had not yet reached a decision. Now, several days later, they'd still not received word, and Leo's life *still* hung in the balance. The only thing he could do was make the most of his lot, and pray Ashrin would protect him. The man liked him, perhaps even lusted over him, so how could he possibly consider killing him?

Stretching his arms high over his head, he blinked into the early morning sun. He enjoyed the solitude of the castle, although he yearned to walk in the lush forest surrounding the grounds, or visit the tall, sparkling buildings in the distance. Life here was good; he enjoyed Draigah's company, but craved Ashrin's body with a passion.

Leo noticed Ashrin's approach. The man stopped at the garden gate and watched him with interest. His actions confused the hell out of Leo. One minute he acted as if he wanted to be his lover, the next just friends. They went everywhere together and this past week had brought them closer. But not close enough for Leo's liking. The 'accidental' brushes of Ashrin's hand and the constant scent of him everywhere drove him to distraction. Hell, he ached for him; the need to push Ashrin's hard body against a wall and savage his mouth grew more maddening by the second.

Leo lifted a hand in greeting and walked toward him. "Good morning."

"And to you. I am interested in your exercise; it's similar to the moves used by our warriors. Do you practice unarmed combat?" Ashrin replied with a frown.

Leo grinned and pulled his sweat-soaked tunic over his head and held it out, dangling in his fingers. "Yes, I do. I'm a teacher of Karate in my world."

"Karate." The word rolled off Ashrin's tongue. "I thought Nomags used guns to kill each other." He raised a brow.

Nodding in agreement, Leo moved closer, giving in to the temptation to inhale Ashrin's potent scent. "They do Karate as self defense as well as sport. It has tradition and builds great self control."

"I see." Ashrin waved a hand toward a small gate. "Will you walk with me?"

Leo followed him into the stables. The old building held a fleet of immaculate transport vehicles, glistening under the overhead lights. Cars hovered like silver bullets and metallic flybikes sat in rows. They were all different, a remarkable collection of obviously expensive vehicles. Leo ran his fingers over the sleek, silver surface of one of the cars. "These are remarkable."

"Yes, they are. One day I'll take you for a ride." Ashrin placed a hand on Leo's arm. "I'll get straight to the point. The king has decided I may keep you. You'll be

restricted to Teal until we find you a mate. Tomorrow evening, I have many Pride brothers coming for the breaking in. The king has sent invitations to all males seeking a mate, to come here and view you. Should one find you to their liking, our problem will be solved," he said, his eyes suddenly changing to amber and back in a flash.

Leo covered the hand on his arm, concerned. "This makes you angry?"

"Disturbs me, perhaps," he said, waving the other hand dismissively. "I don't want you in a vulnerable position with the Pride males; they're insatiable. But the king insists I expose you to them, in the hope of finding you a suitable mate. Once chosen, he will be able to change you into Pride," said Ashrin.

"Change me?"

"It's easier with a human female, but with magyck and venom, an Ecatnie life mate could change you into a Pride. You would grow fangs and pointed ears. You would be paired with a cat and have magyck. The one that takes you would bite you and make you his forever." Ashrin looked into Leo's eyes and gave him a grim smile. "This is difficult for me because *I'm* growing fond of you, lamya."

A warm glow of hope rose in Leo's chest. He touched Ashrin's face. "I wish I belonged to you."

"Even though you know what I am . . . what I desire from a lover?" Ashrin's eyes smoldered with passion. "This doesn't frighten you, lamya?"

Leo shrugged. "No, it excites me."

A soft rumble spilled from Ashrin's mouth. He stepped forward and cupped Leo's chin, lifting it and crushing his lips with a branding kiss. Their bodies fitted together; Ashrin's large hand clasped Leo's buttock and dragged him closer. Leo twisted against him, impressed with the long, hard prick digging into his hip. *Yes, I knew you wanted me.* He inhaled, savoring Ashrin's musky scent. His hands snaked around Ashrin's nape, his fingers sinking into thick, glossy hair. He opened his mouth and dipped his tongue deep inside, lapping and caressing Ashrin's hot, succulent mouth.

Ashrin lifted his head, his eyes deep amber. "I want you. Are you ready to trust me, lamya?" he said, rubbing his thumb across Leo's mouth.

*Said the spider to the fly.*"Yeah, I guess I am."

"You will obey my every command?" Ashrin bent to swipe his tongue across Leo's cheek. "Without hesitation?"

Leo met Ashrin's gaze and melted. His breath caught and his legs trembled at the intensity of his expression. "Yes . . . but if I want out, do you have a safe word?"

"Ah . . . *lamya* . . . I can see you'll need a lot of training. However, as you are a Nomag, I will give you this small consideration. You pick a word," Ashrin said, pressing small kisses down his neck.

Trying to grab a coherent thought, Leo blinked. "*Orange* is my safe word. So when do we start?"

Ashrin gave him a slow smile. "We will start your training now. Walk to the great hall."

Leo grinned and sauntered out of the stable, across the courtyard and moved inside the castle. The great hall was a hive of activity, although deafeningly quiet; the entire staff worked silently, setting up tables for the breaking in party. Others dragged hot tubs on wheels and set them in the many alcoves around the hall. Glancing over one shoulder, he expected to see Ashrin hot on his heels. He sighed; the walkway behind him was empty. Leo touched his lips and groaned—the man tasted like lust.

Walking slowly around the perimeter of the hall, he examined the strange benches the servants had placed near the hot tubs. One sat centered in the middle of the hall. He ran his fingers over the padded, leather surface. *How unusual*. A normal-looking massage bench with a split at least six inches wide at one end running up to the center. Two brass loops glistened about halfway along on each side.

"Remove your clothes, Leo," commanded Ashrin, his voice echoing around the hall.

Leo spun around and stood staring at him. Heart rapping at his ribs, he took in the magnificence of the man. Shirtless, his powerful, golden body glistened under the overhead lights. Tight, black leggings enhanced his slim hips and powerful thighs. Ashrin carried a leather whip and he walked slowly toward him, trailing the thin strings over his broad shoulder. *Holy cow*.

Ashrin moved closer to Leo, his mouth forming a thin line. His eyes flashed. "Remove your clothes."

Glancing around at the castle staff, Leo swallowed hard. *Fuck*. He pulled his shirt over his head and kicked off his boots. He raised his chin and gazed at Ashrin's unyielding expression. "All my clothes?"

"All my clothes, *master*," replied Ashrin, swinging the whip off his shoulder and caressing it from the gold, ornate fist on the top, to the fine, leather ribbons.

Leo's face grew hot. He inclined his head toward five large men working close by. "In front of the staff, master?"

"Show me how much you trust me; strip in front of the servants." Ashrin trailed the whip up Leo's chest, over the shoulder and down one arm. "Then you must tell me what *you* desire, *lamya*. I will not proceed unless you do."

Scrubbing both hands over his face, Leo stared at Ashrin. This was beyond humiliation. How could he expect him to do this with his servants looking on? Ashrin licked a wet path across Leo's lips and trailed the whip slowly up his leg. Leo looked around the hall; the staff went about their tasks, apparently oblivious to the striptease. He pushed down his pants, allowing his rock-hard prick to break free. With another quick look at the servants, he stepped out of his pants and kicked them to one side.

Ashrin smiled at Leo's discomfort. *Yes, you will do nicely. Soon you will be begging me to flog you.* He wanted him to submit completely *without* the use of glamor. His gaze traveled over his ripe body. *Lady's blood*, he wanted to taste him. His cock grew hard at the notion of biting this male, filling him with his venom and drinking his rich, sweet blood. *Mine*.

Trailing the whip up the inside of Leo's leg, he paused to run the thin leather strands over his balls. Leo jumped in surprise and Ashrin bit back a grin. "Turn around, hands at your back."

Leo turned obediently, his heart jackhammering in his chest. A leather strap wrapped around his wrists and pulled them tightly together. Ashrin pushed him to

his knees and stood behind him, his heady scent flowing over him. Leo's skin pebbled with each caress of the whip. So gentle, Ashrin used the thin, leather strips to torment his body, bringing the flogger up between his thighs to tickle his nuts. Then Ashrin moved in front of him and stood with his long legs apart.

"Tell me what you desire, lamya." He lifted Leo's chin with the end of the whip.

Leo looked at the large swelling in the front of Ashrin's pants and licked his lips. He wanted to live his dream, to take, taste and love. Lifting his chin higher, he gazed up into Ashrin's eyes. "I want to give you a blow job you'll never forget."

Ashrin smiled and his eyes sparkled. He cupped Leo's face in his large palms. "I want to give you a blow job, *master*. You may use your teeth, lamya," he said dropping his hands and then folding his arms across his chest.

Waving uncertainly on his knees, Leo's mind went blank. *Use my teeth?* He glanced up to see Ashrin's amused expression. *To remove his leggings, doh. Well I guess I'll never be able to look at the servants again after this exhibition.*

Leo nuzzled his face against the bulge in Ashrin's leggings. Hell, his scent was so fucking delicious. He bit into the waistband and pulled down. The silky fabric slid over the swell of Ashrin's package with ease, allowing his massive cock to bounce free. The pants slipped off Ashrin's slim hips and pooled at his feet. Leo's breath caught in his throat; this man was beautiful. His long, silky thighs tensed, showing impressive muscle. His prick and heavy balls were a delightful shade of blushed gold. Like himself now, not one hair showed on Ashrin's body. He shuffled forward on his knees, eager to lick the inside of Ashrin's thigh. His master stood still, not making a sound.

"I want you to open your legs, *master*, so I may pleasure your balls."

Ashrin complied and Leo nibbled on the heavy, hairless sac and farther back to the soft spot behind. He tasted so fucking good, Leo wanted more. He trailed a path to his star and circled it with his tongue, lapping up the heavy, musky flavor. He wanted to have this ass, drive into it and crash into oblivion.

"You have not asked to lick my ass. Do you want me to punish you, lamya?" said Ashrin with a growl.



*I can play this game; it's worth it.* "Yes, master, I've been very bad."

Leo heard the swish of the whip the second before it cut across his buttocks. It hurt and so did the second and the third cut. By the fourth, he hit the wall, the pleasure-pain searing deep in his balls. He groaned and rocked back on his knees, his gaze flashing back to Ashrin's face. "I want you to instruct me how to pleasure you, master."

"Suck me, use your tongue, your teeth, drink me down and don't spill a drop." Ashrin growled and brought the whip down again, cutting across Leo's back.

All thought of servants vanished. Leo leaned forward and trailed kisses up Ashrin's bobbing shaft. He circled his tongue around the wet, sticky tip and absorbed the mind-blowing taste. This was his dream: the taste, the scent, the man he craved. He closed his eyes in bliss, took him into his mouth and sucked the thick, velvet delight. Dragging his teeth up to the helmet, he flicked the slit with his tongue. Leo wanted to hold him, draw him closer and sink his fingers into his sweet star. Straining up on his knees, he pumped his mouth, his cheeks flattening with the pressure. Ashrin's prick was so thick and long, it filled his mouth, pressing against his tongue with every silken thrust.

The whip cut across his back again, but soft hands followed, soothing the burn. Leo's eyes flashed open and he gazed up at Ashrin.

"Draigah is here to sooth you, lamyra, for your first time." Ashrin smiled down at him. "I want to watch him fuck you. I want to see you come."

Leo's mind went into freefall. *What the fuck?* Ashrin's warm hand cupped his face and he began to rock his hips, plunging his silken shaft deep into Leo's mouth.

"Do this for me, Leo," said Ashrin huskily, rubbing Leo's cheeks with his thumbs.

*You know I'll do anything to please you.* He looked into Ashrin's eyes and nodded his consent.

"Open your legs," said Draigah, resting a hand on Leo's hip. "I want to make you nice and slippery."

Leo complied and moaned with every stroke of Draigah's fingers around his passage. Mindless with the joy of Ashrin's shaft, slipping back and forth in his

mouth, he sighed in pleasure at the first thrust of Draigah's thick cock. With Draigah's long fingers gripping his arms to support him, Leo crossed over the edge of sinful delight. He groaned around Ashrin's cock; the Teal thrust deep, so thick and hot, he filled Leo completely. The room shattered into a kaleidoscope of colors; flames of pleasure licked up Leo's balls. *Have mercy.*

Ashrin's fingers twisted painfully in his hair, heightening his experience. He sucked hard on Ashrin's quivering length, sensing he was close to climax. The next second, his mouth filled with Ashrin's thick, creamy delight. He swallowed the reward from his master and licked him clean. Sagging against Ashrin's thighs, he gave in to the darkness and rode on the crest of Draigah's impending release. They peaked together. White spots danced before Leo's eyes; he exploded and called out Ashrin's name. Hands suddenly free, he collapsed on the floor with Draigah still buried deep inside him. Hot against his legs, Draigah began to move again, extending his climax.

"He is tight and oh so delicious," declared Draigah, slipping free and pressing a kiss to Leo's hip. "I would like to taste him," he said, and sprang to his feet.

"We will share him again soon," Ashrin said dismissively and tipped his head toward the door. He waited until Draigah left the room then bent to help Leo to his feet. "You did well, lamya."

Leo lifted his head; his face burned with embarrassment. He glanced around awkwardly, surprised to see none of the servants gawking at them. Ashrin pulled him against his hard body and tilted his head to take his mouth. The kiss scorched, Ashrin's wet tongue pushing through Leo's teeth to explore his mouth. Leo groaned and pressed against him, his fingers closing over Ashrin's broad shoulders.

Confusion plagued him. *Why did he ask Draigah to fuck me?*

As if Ashrin had read his mind, he pulled back and gazed into Leo's eyes.

"It is all about trust, lamya. You must trust me to give you pleasure, in any way I see fit. Don't tell me you didn't enjoy Draigah fucking you?"

Leo shrugged. "I wanted you."

"You had me, lamya. I can still taste my essence on your lips." Ashrin swiped his tongue across his bottom lip. "Why do you avert your eyes; are you ashamed?"

Leo glanced at the servants. "I'm embarrassed about doing all that in front of your staff."

"They are not real, Leo. The Pride have not had servants for over four hundred years. We despise those who treat equals as lesser beings. We call them *Slaars*. My magyck creates them in any form I choose," replied Ashrin, pressing kisses down Leo's neck. "You have much to learn about magyck."

*No wonder they're so bloody quiet.* Resting his head on Ashrin's shoulder, Leo sighed. "I've only just realized this isn't a dream; understanding magyck will have to come later."

Ashrin smiled wickedly and held him tightly. The next second his stomach clenched and the room folded in on itself. He clamped his eyes shut and clung to Ashrin. The nausea stopped abruptly and he opened his eyes to find they were in Ashrin's room.

Leo blinked and looked around. "What just happened?"

"We jumped. I thought you looked a little too exhausted to walk," replied Ashrin, dropping his arms. "Jumping from one place to another is quite usual for Ecatnie."

Leo swallowed; he would never get used to magyck. He had seen little of the powers Draigah had described to him. However, Ashrin continued to surprise him. He drew a deep breath and let it out slowly. "Uh huh."

"Come. We will bathe and then after breakfast I'll take you out to see Teal." Ashrin headed for the bathroom. He turned at the doorway and smiled at Leo. "I'm glad you've made friends with Draigah. He has great stamina; you will never want with him around."

Leo scowled. "I see."

Following him into the bathroom, Leo leaned against the vanity and folded his arms across his chest. He frowned at Ashrin, biting down anger. "I was expecting *you* to take my ass. I didn't plan on being a new pet for Draigah."

"I know, but I'm the master and *if* you want to please me, *you* will do as I say," he replied and stepped over to drag Leo into the shower.

Ashrin grinned into the steamy air and soaped Leo's ridged body. So, his sweet Nomag wanted exclusivity. This, he must earn. *First, you must become my sub and obey me without hesitation, lamyā. When I bite you, your life will change. I must be sure; forever is a long time.*

Running his soapy hands over Leo's back, Ashrin pulled him close. He hugged him against his body and skimmed his hands over Leo's chest. He groaned; Leo's silken skin was a sensory delight under his palms. The touch of Leo's soft buttocks nestling against his belly made him weak with passion. Ashrin moved his hips, his cock filling rapidly. He nestled it in the cleft of Leo's sweet ass. *I could slip in and take you right now.*

Water cascaded down their bodies in a warm caress, removing the sweat of sex. Under his fingers, Leo's heart thundered; the Nomag was upset with him. *If you only knew how Draigah begged me to have you.* Taking Leo's earlobe between his teeth, he bit down gently, flicking the tender skin with the tip of his tongue. He found Leo's flat nipples and twisted them between his fingers and thumbs. *I want to fuck you and make you tremble beneath me. Soon, sweet Nomag.*

Leo tipped his head back on Ashrin's shoulder, allowing the water to flow over his face. He wanted him and only him. His face burned with the memory of Draigah's fucking. Hell, he had enjoyed it. True, he liked the man; he was gentle and kind of sweet, but as a lover, no — not his type at all.

Ashrin's long fingers stroked his belly and coaxed his cock until it stood up with want. He groaned and leaned back against Ashrin's hard body, enjoying the feel of Ashrin's prick rubbing between his tender buttocks. Ashrin sucked his neck, giving him love bites from throat to shoulder, his mouth hot, demanding. His large hand closed around Leo's shaft and began to pump. Leo groaned with each delightful scrape of Ashrin's fingers across the sensitive slit. His lover knew just the right pressure to use to drive him to release.

"Let yourself go, lamyā. Come for me." Ashrin cooed in his ear.

Leo's hands came up to grasp Ashrin's soaking hair, the heat from his body burning through Leo's skin. He moaned, dissolving in the passion, and tumbled over

the edge in long spurts. Ashrin continued to stroke him and then he shuddered, emptying hot cum over Leo's back. He turned and captured Ashrin's mouth in a blistering kiss. Leo clung to him, wanting more and complained the second Ashrin pulled away. "I wish we could do this all night."

"I thought Nomags had no stamina," Ashrin whispered against Leo's lips. "You may enjoy the breaking in party after all."

## Chapter Five

Two hours later, heart hammering, Leo clung to Ashrin and they flew over the forest on a flybike. The sun glared down from a brilliant, blue sky and glistened on the many lakes dotted around the countryside. To the west, vast expanses of variegated flora extended to an indigo sea. There, wind whipped the ocean into dancing whitecaps. Waves crashed in a foamy spray on a long, sandy beach snaking away into the distance.

Leo looked ahead through the shimmering heat haze to an oasis of sparkling glass towers, the only sign of civilization apart from the scattering of villages along the coastline. As they reached the perimeter of a large city, Ashrin's voice came through his helmet.

"This is the Ecatnie quarter of Teal. I'll take you to the local tavern; we will probably run into some of my Pride brothers. Stay close to my side." He laid a warm hand on Leo's leg.

The flybike landed softly in a parking lot beside a row of similar vehicles. The tavern took up the entire ground floor of a fifty-story glass building. The tinted windows gave no glimpse of the patrons inside. Leo removed his helmet and squinted in the bright sunlight. *No advertising signs.*

"Here . . . put these on. Don't let anyone see your eyes," Ashrin said and handed Leo a small black package.

Leo turned the parcel over in his hand. "Put this where?"

"Sorry," said Ashrin and touched the center of the package.

The black, shiny paper unfurled into a strip of mirrored plastic. Leo picked it up carefully and stared at it. Ashrin grinned boyishly, took the black strip from his hand and pressed it over Leo's eyes. Leo touched his face; the sunglasses molded to his skin. "Neat."

"I know you have shades in your world." Ashrin chuckled. "I love it when you look confused."

Leo lifted his chin. "So how do I look?"

"Like a Pride," replied Ashrin and turned away, sauntering off toward the tavern entrance.

Strange, crazy, heavy metal music blasted through the open door. Inside, booths lined the walls, packed with Pride males. In the center, noisy card games were in progress around six round tables. Opposite the card tables, a busy bar ran the length of the room.

Leo followed Ashrin to the bar and they squeezed between a pair kissing and a male cleaning his fingernails with a dagger. The barman, a young, blond male with the most exquisite elfin features, walked toward them wearing nothing but a smile.

"Ashrin, where have you been?" The barman said, leaning across the polished, wooden bar to cup Ashrin's face and plant a kiss on his lips.

Leo narrowed his eyes. "He's been with me."

"I've missed you, Lut," Ashrin replied, running his tongue over his teeth. "It's true; the king insisted I babysit this cub."

"He looks of age to me," Lut replied, reaching to touch Leo's face.

Stepping backward to avoid him, Leo bumped into the male with the knife. He turned and smiled at him. "Sorry."

To his horror, the man held up a bloodied finger and then inclined his head to Ashrin. "He drew first blood. I get to challenge your sweet cub and here I was thinking the day was a total loss."

Ashrin's eyes turned deep amber, his fangs dropped and a growl rumbled in his chest. Leo glanced from one to the other, not knowing what to do next. The room fell unnervingly quiet, all eyes turned toward them.

"I don't think so; he is an Outlander. You're out of order," Ashrin replied, moving in front of Leo.

"Ah huh, unbroken as well, I bet. Is he your candidate for the party tomorrow night? I hope so; I would love to grind his ass."

"No, he's my guest. What are your terms?" Ashrin said, pressing a hand on Leo's arm in an obvious gesture to silence him.

"Silver. One and two. Losers fee, five hundred credits."

*Are you insane?* "You want me to fight him? What about his magyck?" Leo murmured.

"Can you take him without magyck?" replied Ashrin in a whisper.

Leo rolled his shoulders. "Oh yeah."

"Done," said Ashrin, turning to glare at the man. "Give me a moment to explain the terms to my friend."

The man raised a fist to the crowd of onlookers. A cheer went up and side bets exchanged hands in a flurry of excitement. Abandoning the card games, the men swiftly moved tables and chairs to form a ring. Leo inclined his head toward Ashrin to listen to the terms.

"You will both wear silver to prevent the use of magyck. One and two means, he will fight you first. If you win, then two of his friends will fight you. The loser pays the winner five hundred credits."

"Credits?"

"You have money, we have credits. Take him out and if you need help with the other two, I'll jump us out of here and worry about my reputation later," replied Ashrin with a grimace.

Leo cracked his knuckles and removed his jacket. "I won't need your help."

"Oh, one other thing. Pride males are about ten times stronger than Nomags," said Ashrin, taking his jacket and folding it over his arm.

"Don't you *think* you should have told me that snippet of information *before* I accepted the challenge?"

Ashrin shrugged and watched the crowd at the bar surge forward and push Leo into the makeshift ring. Lut whooped like a siren then sauntered into the center, holding two pairs of silver cuffs high above his head. He approached both men and secured the cuffs around their wrists.

"Let the fight begin," Lut announced and stepped into the crowd.

Leo's opponent threw Ashrin a smirk and licked his bottom lip slowly. Ashrin dropped Leo's jacket on the bar and turned to look around for a weapon. He grabbed a broomstick leaning against the wall, snapped off the head and pushed his way to the front of the rowdy crowd. Leo's face had drained of color, his expression hidden behind his shades. His lips drawn into a thin line, he moved slowly, deliberately, circling his opponent. They danced around for some minutes, evaluating each other. Ashrin bit the inside of his cheek; Leo was easily half the weight of his opponent but he would strike like a snake. The fighters ducked and weaved, neither prepared to make the first move until the crowd grew restless.

"Bail, Bail, Bail." The mob chanted and began to stamp their feet.

"Bail, is that your name?" Leo asked. "If you wanted a dance why didn't you just ask me?"

Leo wrinkled his nose, Bail's offensive scent burning his nostrils. The big man lunged forward and aimed a blow at his chin. Like lightning, Leo attacked, striking Bail in the armpit then spinning away to kick him in the chin. The blow landed with a sharp, satisfying crack. A spurt of crimson blood shot from Bail's mouth and he crumpled over. Leo stood back, hands raised in defense. The crowd roared and the Pride males pushed forward for a better view. Drinks spilled and glasses crashed to the ground, sending wicked shards in all directions.

Leo searched the noisy mob and found Ashrin close by, his eyes burning amber. On the floor, Bail roared, mad as hell, his pudgy hands grabbing for Leo's feet. His back to the crowd with no escape, Leo sidestepped and leapt across Bail. The man staggered to his feet and ran at Leo, knocking them both to the floor. They rolled over the broken glass and the pools of sticky, red alcohol. Leo ground his teeth



and pushed hard against Bail's chest. The big man's face was a mask of concentration as he pinned him to the floor. Bail cursed, his stinking breath close to Leo's face.

"I'll make you pay, pretty cub," Bail said with a bloody smile. He pressed down, pushing the air from Leo's lungs.

Gasping, Leo raised both hands and boxed Bail's ears. The man wailed and rolled off him, holding his head.

Leo gulped in fresh air and got slowly to his feet. "Still think I'm a cub?"

Two men dragged Bail from the circle and two more stepped in to challenge him. *How do I get myself into this shit?* One had a ragged scar down one cheek, the other a snake tattoo. They were both big, lumbering men. *At least I have speed and agility on my side.* Leo moved his back to the surging rabble, to keep both of them in front of him.

Ashrin whistled and Leo flicked his gaze toward him, to see him holding up a broomstick in his long fingers. He held up his hand and when Ashrin tossed it to him, he caught it easily. Leo twirled the stick back and forth in front of his opponents. *That's right, boys, watch the stick, not me.*

The mass of drunken Pride cheered for blood and stamped their feet, the noise rising and falling in a crescendo. The temperature in the tavern increased unbearably. The air was rank with the smell of testosterone and spilled wine. A trickle of sweat ran down Leo's back. He spun the stick and waited for the first move. *Keep them off balance.*

The men whispered to each other and chuckled. Tattoo hung back and waved Scarface forward, grinning like a monkey. *Stupid move, boys.*

They moved in the classic action-reaction play, like pieces on a chessboard. *So predictable.* Leo moved three paces to the right. Scarface attacked diagonally, lunging awkwardly and swinging his massive fists. Leo ducked to one side and brought the stick down in an arc, striking Scarface across the back of his knees. Then, in one fluid movement, he brought it up between the man's legs. Scarface squealed in pain and fell to the floor, clutching his groin. *Check. One down.*

The stick twirling in his fingers, Leo whirled to face Tattoo. Tattoo, grim-faced with fists the size of ham bones, advanced, ducking and weaving like a prizefighter.

In a split second, Leo twisted around, leg raised, and brought his heel down sharply on the bridge of Tattoo's nose with a sickening crack. *Check*. The momentum brought Leo back around to finish him. He raised the stick and smashed it down on the back of Tattoo's head. The man fell silently to the floor. *Checkmate*.

Breathing heavily, Leo spun the broomstick. His gaze darted around the startled crowd. So many of them, he would not stand a chance if they decided to attack. Ashrin, smiling proudly, pushed into the ring to stand beside him. Relief flooded over Leo and he turned to give him a grin.

"The winner is Ashrin's cub," declared Lut and moved close to Leo to remove the silver cuffs. He winked up at him. "You *are* a sweet thing. You must visit me soon. What name do you go by?"

"His name is *Leo* and he is not after stray ass," growled Ashrin, taking Leo's arm and pulling him toward the bar.

Ashrin picked shards of glass from Leo's arm and cast a simple spell to heal the small cuts. He gazed at Leo's face and pushed down the temptation to swipe the damp hair from his brow. This Nomag had balls. His heart swelled with pride, he lifted his hand and rubbed his knuckle along the line of Leo's chin. "You've surprised me, lamy."

"I'm astonished you had doubts. I told you I could fight, that I'm a teacher," replied Leo, taking the offered glass of beer from Lut and gulping it down.

Ashrin rested his elbow on the bar and gazed at him. A bead of sweat ran down Leo's neck, dragging Ashrin's attention to the soft skin and the throb of the vein in his neck. A rush of desire gripped his belly. Inside his head, his cat whined. "*Bite him, make him ours.*"

"Is everything okay?" Leo placed his glass on the bar.

Blinking, Ashrin smiled. "Sure, it's just that I want to be alone with you right now."

"Me too, fighting makes me horny as hell," Leo replied, giving him a slow, sultry smile.

"Give me a print, Leo, so I can get the wager into your account." Lut interrupted them, pushing a small, round box at Leo.

Ashrin pressed his thumb onto the scanner. "Put it in my account; as I said, Leo is an Outlander. I'll settle with him later."

"Where is he from?" said Lut, putting the scanner under the bar.

"Doucheron. We need to get going; give me a couple of sandwiches to go and some beer."

"Taking him on a romantic picnic, how sweet . . . are you quite well, Ashrin, my love?" Lut replied with a grin.

Ashrin growled and aimed a blow at Lut. "Well enough to beat you senseless if you don't hurry."

Laughing, Ashrin turned to Leo. "It's hot, and we pass a river on the way home. I thought we might stop for a swim, have a bite to eat?"

"Perfect," Leo replied.

## Chapter Six

Ashrin parked the flybike under the shade of a weeping willow and they climbed off. He turned to Leo and pulled him roughly into his arms. "I want you. I need to see the smooth, white flesh on your ass flushed from my whip. I want to drive into you, hear you call out my name when you come."

"I want you too . . . here and now." Leo dragged off the shades and pressed his mouth hard against Ashrin's lips.

Sinking his fingers in Leo's hair, Ashrin drank in his scent with a brutal kiss. He wanted to brand him, take him, to make Leo crave him and only him with passion. His cat roared, driving him to the brink of sexual madness. He pushed the beast inside him down, promising to slate his desire to bite, later. The cat surged forward, demanding instant satisfaction.

Ashrin gave a silent sigh; he could not take Leo now, even in this ideal setting. Although the thought of touching all that downy skin and finally tasting Leo's essence was enticing. *I can't risk losing control.* He dragged his mouth away. "I

can't take you, not now. If I did, I know I'd damage you. I don't want to do that. I want you to enjoy the pleasure-pain. I need you to take all that I can give and beg for more."

"I trust you. I know you won't hurt me," Leo replied.

*Lady help me. I will hurt you and then lose you forever.* Pushing his hands up Leo's shirt and reveling at the silky, warm skin under his palms, Ashrin shook his head slowly. "Would you trust me after I took a branch from this willow and cut your ass until you screamed? Would you want me out of control with lust?"

"Yes, I think I do," Leo said, cupping Ashrin's backside.

Ashrin broke away and swore under his breath. His cat purred with triumph. He straightened his shoulders and glared at Leo, knowing his eyes were amber with rage. "I'm on the edge now, damn it; don't push me to do this. I want you to beg me to fuck you, not beg me for mercy. In this state, I have *no* mercy, Leo."

"I have my safe word, remember?" replied Leo confidently.

Ashrin gave a snorting laugh, stepped forward and fisted Leo's hair, dragging him close. Brutally aroused, he crushed Leo's lips, dominating and taking. Under his fingers, Leo trembled but did not attempt to move away. Ashrin pulled back and whispered against Leo's lips. "I am Pride; when my cat takes control, I will not hear your *safe word*. Do you want me now, Nomag weakling?"

"I love you, I trust you," replied Leo in a soft voice.

Pushing Leo away and dashing the back of his hand across his lips, Ashrin stalked over to the flybike. "Then you're a fool. I'm taking you home and for the Lady's sake, don't touch me."

\* \* \* \* \*

Half an hour later, they arrived back at the castle. Ashrin, stone faced, waited for Leo to dismount, and then stood up and glared at him.

Leo reached out to touch his arm. "What did I do to upset you?"

"I said, *don't touch me*." Ashrin ripped off his helmet, flung it against the wall and stalked off.

Dumfounded, Leo stood in the stable and watched Ashrin's retreating back. *What the hell caused that?* He walked slowly through the courtyard and into the rose garden. His shoulder ached and he went through a few stretching exercises to loosen his muscles. The familiar movements calmed his turbulent thoughts. He inhaled the heady, floral perfume from the multicolored rose bushes and watched the progression of wispy clouds cross the hazy, blue afternoon sky. A deep feeling of rejection had him catching his breath. He had no idea how to deal with Ashrin's strange mood change. Perhaps if he had a word with Draigah, the Teal may just be able to enlighten him.

He walked back to the castle and down the short flight of steps to the kitchen. The aroma of fresh bread and roasting meat met him at the door. The Slaars worked along stainless steel benches, preparing meals in silence. As he walked into the large room, one turned to look at him.

"Do you require food?"

Leo looked down at the young male and smiled. "Yes, thanks. Where is Draigah?"

The Slaat blinked blindly into space for a few seconds then turned his empty gaze on Leo. "He is with the master in the dungeon."

Another Slaat set a large meat pie and a jug of wine on a nearby table. His stomach rumbled the second he inhaled the savory pastry's aroma. Leo sat down, ate slowly and sipped the rich wine. *In the dungeon with Draigah?* His stomach dropped. Could Ashrin leave him wanting and seek out another's company? He had to find out. He stuffed the last bite of pie in his mouth and washed it down with wine before jumping to his feet.

Ashrin had proudly shown him the dungeon during his tour of the castle. It was not in the bowels of the building as he had expected but on the first floor with windows along one side. A narrow walkway ran between the open casements and the outer wall of the castle, accessible by a door from the end of the hallway. Wood paneling fully covered the glassless gap along the bottom half with a woven, raffia screen across the top. When he first saw the partition, he imagined it must be a concealed place to watch the punishment within the dungeon.

He ran from the kitchen, and taking the steps two at a time, reached the second floor a few minutes later. Heart thundering, he crept past the dungeon entrance and slid through the door at the end of the corridor. Standing still and trying to control his breathing, Leo edged his way along the walkway. He listened intently, straining his ears until he reached the raffia screen.

He clenched his fists at the sight in the room. The air filled with Ashrin's thick scent. His heart hurt and his head began to spin. Ashrin lay face up on a bench with Draigah straddling him. The side on view held nothing from Leo's gaze. Deep lash marks crisscrossed Draigah's back. Ashrin's long fingers kneaded Draigah's red, welted buttocks. Draigah fell forward and made soft, mewling sounds. They kissed in long, slow deliberation, like long-time lovers. Draigah slipped his bloodied body forward then back to take Ashrin's thick prick deep in his ass. Draigah flung his long hair over his shoulder and sat up, grinding his hips.

Leo bit his bottom lip, and with a deep feeling of hopelessness turned to leave. His head spun; nausea rose in his belly. Shit, how stupid he was to think that Ashrin would want *him*. That scene in the dungeon was love, pure and simple. He stumbled along the corridor and took the hallway to his room. Inside, a Slaar was polishing the furniture. He marched up to it and touched its arm. "Tell me the meaning of the word, *lamya*."

"*Lamya* is the Ecatnie word for *sex slave*." The Slaar replied and returned to his work.

## Chapter Seven

Sated, Ashrin lay back and scrubbed his hands over his face. Damn. He had caught Leo's scent the moment he stepped behind the screen. *What am I supposed to do?* His cat, rampant with lust, had demanded satisfaction. He had little choice but to slake his desire with Draigah. His cat had surprised him; so soon after a kill he should be fat and sleepy. He groaned, recalling his cat feasting on a deer, deep in the forest. *I still have to tell Leo about feeding the cat.*

He smiled at Draigah and took the warm cloth from his hand. He knew the Teal loved him, a love he could never return. He played his part and gave Draigah the affection he needed to participate in these brutal pursuits. He wiped off the traces of sex and glanced over at the damage he had inflicted on his friend. Lady's blood, he had gone too far this time; Draigah was a bloody mess. Leo would not have survived such a beating.

The air around Draigah shimmered and the Teal's skin rippled. Ashrin swallowed and looked away; he hated watching Draigah shed his skin. The sight of him peeling off the bloody ectoplasm always made him shudder. The sound of ripping flesh made his stomach heave with the realization he had just made passionate love to a reptile.

"What troubles you?" said Draigah, sitting beside him.

Ashrin stared at the ceiling, his head resting on his hands, his feet crossed at the ankles. "Leo. He was watching behind the screen. My week of taking things slow has just back fired on me."

"Do you think he's your life mate?" replied Draigah softly.

Sitting up, Ashrin met Draigah's troubled gaze. "I *know* he is and I care for him deeply. I'm sorry if this hurts you."

"You've explained the situation to me many times. I *do* understand, but you must realize this isn't easy for me."

Ashrin snorted and rolled off the bench. "I'm not your only lover. You can't expect to keep four Pride males happy forever. I've walked in Dreamscape seeking my mate. Leo came to me, he *belongs* to me and I *will* have him."

"I'm surprised the Lady hasn't struck you down for causing that hurricane," replied Draigah, jumping to his feet.

Ashrin pulled on his pants and glared at his friend. "She accepts anything in the pursuit of a mate. My problem isn't with the Lady. It's with Leo; he's Nomag, he'll never understand why I took you this afternoon. They think differently than we do; they have different values."

"Then you must bite him," said Draigah with a smile. "Or lose him. I hear Bail wants desperately to make him his lamya. The word is he will bite him at the first opportunity."

Shrugging into his shirt, Ashrin growled. "If he makes one move toward Leo, I'll kill him."

\* \* \* \* \*

Leo paced his bedroom, racking his brain. The image of Ashrin and Draigah burned into his mind. The significance of what had happened slowly set into place. Leo stopped pacing and walked to the open window. Outside, the castle gardens looked a little too perfect; were they an illusion too? He punched his fist into the palm of his hand. *I'm a prisoner. Ashrin has been playing me for a fool. He never intended on changing me; he just wants a sex slave. God help me.*

Spinning away from the window, he strode to the door. The castle was quiet but for the soft music drifting from the great hall. *Another soothing ploy, no doubt.* He slipped silently down the stairs, across the great hall and along the passageway leading to the courtyard. The need to get away for an hour or so paramount in his mind, he took the postern gate, ran across the open meadow and into the forest.

Leo walked along a well-trodden path, weaving its way under a canopy of lush greenery. He inhaled the familiar fragrance of wet leaves laced with the scent of primrose. Ivy clung to dark, iron bark trees with branches outstretched to the sky. Moss poured over exposed roots of massive oaks, dotted with red and yellow toadstools. Under his boots, many years of leaf mulch spread out like an autumn carpet. He stopped and rested one hand on the trunk of a tree and stared at a procession of ants carrying a dead cabbage butterfly high above their heads. The small insects moved like a battalion of soldiers, each knowing instinctively when to help with the burden. *This, at least, is real.*

He straightened and drew in the sweet forest air. What he needed was a plan. If Ashrin did not want him, well, he would find another Pride male. Surely there



would be some guy at the party who would fancy him. In fact, anything would be better than staying at the castle and watching Ashrin fawn over Draigah.

Continuing to negotiate the soft path, he heard a long growl to his right and froze on the spot. A cat the size of a small elephant sat licking its bloodstained paws not two paces away. The animal looked up at him and purred. *What the fuck?* Leo stood perfectly still and tried desperately not to scream. Sweat broke out on his forehead and trickled into his eyes. *Think. He's just eaten so he'll only kill me for sport.* He pushed down the instinct to turn tail and run back to the castle. Stepping backward slowly, he edged away, blended into the undergrowth and headed out of the forest.

"Hey, not so fast."

Leo turned slowly to see a naked man emerging from the bushes. "I need to get back to the castle. Didn't you see that fucking cat?"

"Uh huh." The man plucked a bundle of clothes from the fork of a nearby tree and began to dress slowly. He raised his head and winked at Leo. "From the color of your eyes, I assume you're the Nomag. I'm Max; I've come for the breaking in and to see you."

"Fine, now I really have to go."

"Ashrin didn't tell you about his cat, did he?" Max replied, shrugging into his shirt.

His gaze travelling furtively across the forest, Leo shook his head. "No, is it dangerous?"

"I am the cat you saw; all Ecatnie have such cats." He sat on the leaf-strewn ground to pull on a pair of boots. "If you change, you'll have one too." He sprang to his feet. "Surly Ashrin explained this to you?" Max asked, walking slowly toward him.

Leo's eyes widened; he rubbed his chin. "Not in so many words. He said Ecatnie were both men and cat. To be honest, I thought he was joking."

"Our cats need to hunt, so once a week we let them out. Most of us live close to a forest and we keep them well stocked," Max said, coming to his side. "I've just

hunted, so my cat is under some control for the party tonight." Max turned down the path.

Falling into step beside Max, Leo frowned. "So sometimes you can lose control?"

"Our cats rule our sex drive, and they have voracious appetites. If they aren't satisfied, *often*, they can alter our judgment. Allowing them to hunt makes them sleepy and easier to control," said Max, leaning close to sniff Leo's neck.

Leo stopped and glared at him. "Why are you smelling me?"

"You'll find many Pride will scent you tonight. It's our way of deciding if you are a probable mate. I must say your scent is very erotic. Do you find me appealing?" Max looked into Leo's eyes.

*Here we go again.* Who would not be attracted to this man? Long, blond curls hung down his back, tied at the nape. His face was angelic, with full lips and opal eyes. He had the body of Adonis and was hung like a horse. Leo cleared his throat and met Max's steady gaze. "You're very . . . good-looking."

"Thanks," replied Max. Laying a hand on Leo's shoulder, he leaned toward him and whispered in his ear. "I'm a great lover; perhaps we should get together *before* the party?"

*They are all sex mad. How do I get out of this . . . then again he might be my way out. I'll smooth talk him and see where this goes.* "Thanks for the offer, perhaps later. I should get back; Ashrin will be worried. I'll walk back to the castle with you. Do you come to these parties often?"

"I wouldn't miss one." Max grinned and squeezed Leo's shoulder.

"How many usually come to a breaking in party?"

"Tonight? Maybe twenty or so Pride from the various realms. Ashrin usually only has a select few but the king insisted he invite all those looking for a male," he replied, letting his hand slip possessively under the back of Leo's shirt. His cool fingers brushed absently across the welts on Leo's back.

They broke into the sunshine and Leo glanced up at the castle. In the first floor window, he easily made out Ashrin's face and leaned into Max's side. *Yeah take a good look.*

## Chapter Eight

Ashrin jumped down to the entrance of the passageway outside the great hall and waited for Max. Blood boiled in his veins; he cursed and pasted a smile on his face. "Max, the first to arrive, as usual. I see you've met Leo."

"Yes and I think we are matched; not a true bond but one I could live with," Max replied, giving Leo a squeeze.

His gaze fixed on the possessive arm around Leo's waist, Ashrin lifted his chin and glared at Leo. "Will you wait for me in my sitting room; I need to speak to Max."

"Sure," said Leo and pressed a kiss to Max's cheek. "I'll see you later." He walked past Ashrin without a second glance.

"Your room is ready."

"Uh huh." Max raised a brow and inclined his head. "He's your mate; do you deny it?"

Ashrin ran both hands through his hair and stared at his friend. "Is it that obvious?"

"I'm guessing he's the Nomag you've been following in Dreamscape. The hurricane was a cover for a portal to bring him here. I wasn't born yesterday; your magyck signature was all over it." He placed his hands on his hips. "My question is, did you glamor him to love you?"

Lifting his gaze to watch Leo climb the stairs, Ashrin sighed. "To love me, no, I didn't. To ease his transition, yes. I told him he could never go home. At the time, I wasn't aware he had any living relatives. He misses his parents, worries about their grieving. There is only so much one can surmise from another's dreams."

"Why didn't you tell him you could take him home after the change?" Max replied.

Ashrin turned and strolled into the great hall with Max at his side. He stopped and stared at the ground. "I didn't want him to have a choice."

"So if he loves *you*, why the hell is he chasing after *me*?" Max snorted and pulled his friend around to face him.

"He saw me fucking Draigah. This wouldn't be an issue but just before, I rejected him. My cat was crazy; I would've killed Leo. Fact is I brutalized Draigah so badly he had to shed."

"I could feel lash marks on Leo's back; have you forgotten Nomags take an eternity to heal? You will never be able to slake your lust with him unchanged. Why do you need to make your lovers subordinates? Is it to prove your conquests worthy of you?" Max said, lifting a whip from a holder against the wall and flicking it. "You know gentle loving is good too."

Minutes ticked by while Ashrin considered the question. Complete submission, trust and the thrill of seeing the red welts on skin was his fetish. Dominating, taking and feeling his lover quiver made his climax better. *His* climax better.

He rubbed his chin and glanced at Max, who stood watching him with a frown. "That is certainly a thought-provoking question. When I think of Leo, I want to love him long and slow. Then this is overshadowed by the thought of seeing his white ass marked with my whip."

"He is already marked by your whip." Max returned the whip to its holder. "Does your cat crave to bite him?"

"Hell yeah, lately it's like a whining female."

"Well then, forget about making him your lamya and make him your life mate. Give him the choice to submit . . . or not. Make him an equal not a sex toy," said Max squeezing his arm. "Now do tell me about tonight's candidate. Is he open to all comers?"

Ashrin laughed. "He's a Fae male, so tender, I could fuck him myself. He is destined to be in a ménage with Lars of Bannock. Lar's wants his ass with a passion but wanted to wait until I could organize a party. Tonight, he will get his wish. I have it on good authority he will accept all offers because at the end of the weekend Lars intends to bite him. I guess he wants him well broken in."

"Lady's blood, I haven't had wings for a while," Max replied, running his tongue around his teeth. "Put me down for an early ticket; I like them tight."

\* \* \* \* \*

An hour later, Ashrin strolled into his sitting room to see Leo standing staring out the window. He shut the door with a bang and waited for him to turn and face him. "So you have decided to play the field. Max is quite a catch, although it won't be a true bond."

"Unlike you, he doesn't want a slave. I don't intend to be your *lamya*. Yes, I know what it means. You're a liar, Ashrin, and a brutal, controlling beast. I was a fool to trust you. *You* don't deserve anyone's trust," he said, his voice just above a whisper.

He's in complete control, his *Karate* training, no doubt, Ashrin mused. He opened his arms, palms up and poured his glamor over him. "I know what I am. I also know you love me." He pointed to his chest. "I can feel it here."

"Stop it," Leo growled, shaking his head vigorously. "Stop doing that; I know you're using magyck to placate me. Be a fucking man and deal with this without magyck."

*He can recognize glamor, Lady's blood.* "Very well. Now tell me you don't love me, that you don't crave my body. You *be a man* and recognize what we might have together."

"Love isn't being someone's slave. You destroyed what I felt for you, the second I saw you with Draigah. Do you love him? Is that the way you show love? By stripping a man's flesh from his body? I don't want or need that fucking kind of love." Leo folded his arms across his chest and turned away, his eyes glistening with unshed tears.

Ashrin touched his shoulder. Leo shrugged his hand away and spun to face him, his face contorted with rage.

Drawing a deep breath and letting it out slowly, Ashrin shook his head. "You don't understand."

"Oh I *understand* just fine. A few cuts on the ass and a good spanking make me as horny as hell. That . . . that, what you did with Draigah . . . that was fucking disgusting. You take spanking to a completely new level . . . you . . . *you* are a sadist. And if you *think* for one second I'm into that crap . . . you are well off base." He pushed past Ashrin and stormed out.

\* \* \* \* \*

Leo stalked down the corridor and into his room. He shut the door softly and leaned against it, covering his face with his hands. *Get out of my head.* Pushing away, he tore off his clothes and went into the bathroom to stand in the shower. Tears pricked the back of his eyes. He swore colorfully and banged his fists on the tiled wall. "You bastard, how could you play with me like this?"

A long while later, he crawled from the shower, his skin wrinkled and pink. He wrapped a towel around his waist and went into the bedroom. On his bed sat a neat pile of clothes. He picked up the black loincloth trimmed with gold between his thumb and finger. "Do you expect me to wear this?"

Throwing the garment on the floor, he strode across the room and flung open his wardrobe. He rolled his eyes at the empty interior. *Okay, so we play it your way.*

Leo wrapped the loincloth around his hips and slipped on the sandals. He stood staring at his reflection in the mirror. *I look like an idiot.*

A scratch on the bedroom door drew his attention. He opened the door. A Slaat delivered a message to join Ashrin and his guests for dinner. Leo followed him down to the dining room, off the great hall. Inside, Ashrin, Max and Draigah looked up at him from their seats at the table. Refusing to take his usual seat beside Ashrin, Leo took the seat opposite Max.

"Leo is angry with me." Ashrin explained. "He insists my session with Draigah this afternoon was disgusting." He rolled his eyes. "Do tell him I didn't hurt you, Draigah; he won't believe me."

"I am not marked, Leo." Draigah stood and displayed his back. "I'm sorry if we distressed you." He sat down and opened his hands. "I have no claim on Ashrin. We're just friends; you have my word."

*Sure you are.* "Fine, now can we drop the subject? I would like to know why my clothes are missing."

"Tonight, we all wear loincloths. I knew you would have a problem complying so I removed your clothes," said Ashrin, filling his plate with roast meat from a platter in the center of the table. "Are you sure you'll be able to cope with all the fornication tonight . . . seeing as you're so squeamish."

*Two can play at that game.* "Sure. I'm planning to find myself a mate, so you don't have to worry; I'll be out there enjoying myself along with everyone else."

## Chapter Nine

Two hours later, Leo stood on the balcony overlooking the great hall. He chewed on his lip. Below him, the party was in full swing. Laughter mixed with the loud music and couples indulged in foreplay in every conceivable nook and cranny. Slaars, their skin a shimmering blue, glided between the guests, offering drinks and finger food. Ashrin had an imagination, Leo conceded. The Slaars were identical, beautiful elfin creatures with white, cherubic curls. Silver loincloths draped their supple bodies.

Grasping the railing, Leo bent forward and scanned the crowd. As usual, no females graced the castle with their presence. The warm, musky scent emanating from below was a heady mix. It obliterated the comforting smell of Ashrin. *My drug of choice.*

The scantily clad males, both Pride and Fae, indulged in every sexual fantasy in and around the great hall. They were shameless and either participated or watched with relaxed ease. Below him, on the foot of the stairs, a magnificent, yellow-winged Faerie, his face contorted with ecstasy, had his toes sucked. *Hmm, that looks interesting.* Leo met his emerald gaze and smiled.

The Faerie licked his rosebud lips and pulled off his loincloth, exposing an impressive prick. The look in the Faerie's eyes was a blatant invitation; Leo shook his head slightly in refusal. Immediately regretting his choice, he sighed. After all, the male looked beyond tasty. Soon another Pride male joined the pair and immediately dropped to his knees to take the Faerie's hard cock in his mouth. Leo groaned, his hand fisting his own erection.

A trumpet sounded and Leo dragged his gaze away from the action on the stairs. A man dressed in a black loincloth, his faced covered with a feathery mask, led a collared Fae male on a long, golden chain. Leo considered the man, his gaze fixing on the short flogger he held in one hand. He lifted his gaze to scrutinize the man's face. The black mask covered his eyes, the long feathers blending with his midnight hair. Naked to the waist, like all the guests, he displayed a muscular upper body of the most desirable golden hue. Leo's stomach went into freefall. *The man in the portrait.*

*Ashrin.*

A crowd gathered to surround the couple. High above, Leo enjoyed an unobscured view of the proceedings. The Fae flashed a brilliant smile and then dropped his eyes the second the Dom turned to face him. Others rushed forward to remove the Fae's loincloth and push him face down on the bench. They cuffed his hands to the side. The Dom raised the flogger.

Leo swallowed hard; his stomach clenched with every blow inflicted on the Fae's tender, peach fuzz skin. The Dom smiled wickedly and bent over to lick each welt and Leo's heart began to knock against his ribs. Then finally, positioning himself between the Fae's thighs, the Dom fisted his long, golden curls and drove into him. Leo sagged against the banister, the deep pain of loss drawing a sob from his lips.

Ashrin stood in the doorway watching Leo with interest. He smelt his desperation, the change in his scent a confirmation of his true feelings. He moved forward slowly and slipped his arms around Leo's waist. His palms caressed Leo's soft skin and he drew him against his body. Flesh pressed against flesh and desire



flamed through Ashrin. Leo trembled against him, his long fingers covering his face. Ashrin kissed his neck, letting his tongue linger on the throbbing vein.

"I guess you are here watching for the same reason I remained in my room."

"Ashrin?" Leo turned to him, a desperate expression on his face. "Then who is that downstairs?"

"Lars of Bannock. He's a good-looking male, don't you think?"

"I thought — " Leo broke off with a sob.

Inclining his head, Ashrin groaned and took Leo's mouth. Leo's cool hands snaked around his neck and pulled him closer. Their tongues danced, tasting, exploring. Ashrin dropped his fangs and dragged them across Leo's bottom lip, puncturing a small hole. The taste of Leo's blood ran across Ashrin's senses; his venom pouches flooded painfully. His cat roared, recognizing its mate. *No going back now.*

Some minutes later, Ashrin lifted his head and gazed down at Leo's swollen, blood-stained lips. "I've wanted you for a long time. I entered your dreams so that you would know me and then created the hurricane that brought you here."

"You did *what*?" Leo looked at him incredulously. "*You* brought me here?"

Ashrin ran a thumb across Leo's lip and smiled down at his confusion. "I wasn't aware you had a family. I was selfish; I wanted you no matter what the cost."

"I won't be your slave and there's no way I'll allow you to beat me half to death either. That's not love and you know it," Leo spat, his expression like thunder.

Ashrin gave into the temptation and licked the blood from Leo's cut lip. He moaned. "I don't want a slave . . . I want a mate. Agreed, I like to spank and use the flogger . . . but as I did to you before. You enjoyed that, didn't you . . . ? Well, apart from Draigah fucking you."

"Yes, I did enjoy it, but I wanted to feel *you* inside me. What about the whipping you gave to Draigah and how does he fit in to all this?"

Slipping his arm around Leo's waist, he led him into his bedroom and pushed the door shut. "I lost control of my cat . . . if we were mated, that wouldn't happen. He demanded I bite you. It wasn't time to do that, so the only way to satisfy his lust

was to take Draigah. I know it looked brutal . . . it was . . . but that's how Draigah likes it. I beat him and he begs me to cut him deep; he enjoys pain."

"I saw the way you made love to him after . . . *made love* . . ." Leo replied, turning away.

Ashrin dragged him against his body, holding him tight. "In my head, it was *you* . . . it's always you. I *love* you."

He pushed Leo onto the bed and rolled on top of him. Looking down into his eyes, he lowered his mouth and crushed Leo's lips in a searing kiss.

Leo drank in Ashrin's scent and opened his mouth to taste his unique flavor. He wanted him, loved him, but how long would it last? Ashrin's fickle emotions worried him. Ashrin's hands were everywhere, touching, caressing and finally, tearing Leo's loincloth from his hips. Ashrin slid down his body, kissing a wet line to his shaft and then pushed open his thighs to apply liberal amounts of cool lube to his passage. Leo rolled to one side to climb to his knees and Ashrin chuckled and pushed him onto his back.

Leo raised a brow. "I don't understand."

"I'm loving you," purred Ashrin, settling himself between Leo's legs. "Haven't you ever had a male like this before?"

Leo pulled up his knees and slipped his hands into Ashrin's hair. "Oh yeah, but no one quite as well-hung as you."

The heat from Ashrin's body enclosed him; his heart pounded. Leo relaxed with the pressure of Ashrin's hot shaft against his ass. Ashrin's opal gaze met his, and the next second sizzling heat slid inside. He gasped, his ass stretching to capacity to accept the size of Ashrin's shaft. Buried deep inside, Ashrin bent and licked a wet path up Leo's neck, his silken hair brushing his chest. Leo shivered under Ashrin's intense gaze.

"I want to mate you and change you into Pride. It's a lifetime commitment. Will you have me forever?" Ashrin purred, rocking deep inside him.

"Yes."

Ashrin's attention settled on the throbbing vein in Leo's neck. Sinking deep inside his tight, erotic heat, he fought the desire to ride him to damnation. His cheeks hurt, the venom sacs filled to bursting. He dropped his fangs and sunk them deep into Leo's soft flesh. Blood, sweet and delicious, flowed into his mouth. His cheeks contracted and he released his venom, pressing his fangs deep. He raised his head and bit again, aware of Leo's gasps of pleasure. The venom would make Leo insatiable. Ashrin lifted his head and grinned; by the morning, Leo would be Pride and bonded to him for eternity.

Leo's pang of fear subsided the second Ashrin's fangs pierced his throat. Hot lust surged through his body. Flashes of Ashrin's life invaded his mind and he knew in that moment, Ashrin truly loved him. Then Ashrin lifted his head and began to drive into him, riding him with a fury, his eyes—cat's eyes—never leaving Leo's face. The room shattered into a rainbow of bliss with each pass of his pleasure spot. *Oh yes.* The heat from Ashrin's body stoked a furnace of desire deep in his balls. Leo hovered on the edge of consciousness, aware only of intense pleasure.

"Do you love me?" Ashrin groaned, grinding against him.

Leo gasped his reply. "More than life."

Ashrin's blistering shaft seared into him, driving him with pure, hot sin. Black spots danced behind his eyes. He rode the wave of ecstasy with Ashrin to a long, shattering, joint climax.

\* \* \* \* \*

A week later, Leo awoke, curled in Ashrin's strong arms, and smiled into the twilight. He stretched in contentment. Being Pride suited him, although the ears were a little hard to get used to, but his hair covered them. The cat—now *that* was a completely different experience. *Creepy* would sum it up in one word. His body had not changed much, although Ashrin assured him his lifespan had now tripled. Magyck tingled in his veins, another advantage. Soon, he would be proficient enough to change his appearance with glamor and return home to introduce Ashrin

to his parents. *Home*. Leo looked into Ashrin's sleepy face; *he* was his life now and he would never leave him.

He rolled onto his stomach and pressed kisses down Ashrin's chest. Under his lips, Ashrin stirred and opened his eyes.

Leo smiled at him. "Why don't you have Draigah over to stay anymore?"

"Because he enjoyed your ass just a little too much," replied Ashrin, cupping Leo's face.

Leo slipped from his grasp and continued to kiss a path down his chest, his belly, inhaling his dizzying scent. He nuzzled his hairless balls and licked the sticky top of his magnificent shaft. Every moment with Ashrin was a dream come true. Ashrin's long fingers slipped into his hair.

Leo looked up at him and raised a brow. "And why is that a problem?"

"You belong to me, Leo."

~The End~

### **About the Author**

H. C. Brown lives in Queensland, Australia, where she enjoys walking along the long, white sandy beaches.

She loves to read and finds peace in painting waterfalls and fairies. Her passion is writing, which she does most days. She finds that variety is the spice of life and her stories run the gamut, from a murder mystery series to historical, paranormal and time travel – all with a healthy dose of spice.

She married her very own alpha male and he is her love and inspiration. Learn more about H. C. Brown by visiting her [Web site](#).

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**The Vampire's Assistant**  
**By Stormy Glenn**

**Chapter One**

"Hello, my name is Jon Brighten. I'm here to apply for the personal assistant position." *That sounded so freaking lame*, Jon thought. Why else would he be dressed in some damn suit holding his resume in his hand? The older woman behind the desk had to think he was a complete moron.

"Resume?" the woman asked in a *take no prisoners* kind of way.

Jon felt a chill of foreboding shoot down his spine. Still, he held out his resume to the woman. He winced and stuck his finger quickly into his mouth when the paper cut him as it slid through his hand. A soft inhale from the secretary caught Jon's attention.

He arched an eyebrow at her as he watched her eyes kind of glaze over as she looked at the drops of blood on the corner of his resume. Shit! That was his last copy too.

"Paper cut?" the woman asked as she glanced up at him.

He frowned, feeling like a complete moron. He nodded. "Yes, sorry about that. I'm afraid I don't have another copy with me. Maybe we could make one?" he asked hopefully.

The woman turned a brilliant, hundred-watt smile in his direction. Jon marveled at the transformation. The smile made her seem a whole lot less *commandant of the prison camp* and much more friendly. He felt even more shocked when she held out a box of tissue to him.

"Here, you just take care of your cut," she said. "I'll take care of your resume."

"Uh, thank you," Jon said as he pulled a couple of the tissues out of the box and wrapped them around his sore finger. Paper cuts hurt like the dickens.

"Please, have a seat, Mr. Brighten," the woman said. "Your name will be called when it's time for your interview."

Jon nodded and turned to face the rest of the room. Several other people sat waiting – both men and women – and every damn one of them was dressed to the nines. Competition for this job would apparently be stiff.

Jon wasn't surprised by the caliber of people applying for the job. It was a great position, personal assistant to Mr. Nikolas Vaile, owner and CEO of Vaile Industries, one of the biggest pharmaceutical and research companies in the world.

Jon didn't think he had a chance in hell of landing the job, especially after seeing the other applicants. They all looked like they had Ivy League degrees and silver spoons growing out of their asses.

Jon had a community college associate's degree in liberal arts and a \$13,000 student loan dogging him. He didn't even have his own place because he couldn't afford it. He slept on his sister's couch and that welcome mat was wearing thin.

Jon started across the room to sit when he stumbled. He took several quick steps to stop himself from falling. Once he regained his footing, he glanced back to see what tripped him up, his face heating. Nothing there. What the hell?

He mentally rolled his eyes as he found an empty seat by the door and started the long process of waiting. The ten or so people in the room before him meant he'd be there awhile.

He watched several of the other applicants get called into another room, one at a time. Many came back out pale white, which didn't help Jon's nerves any. He didn't know who gave the interviews but they must have been more hard-ass than the bulldog secretary.

Feeling jittery and nervous, Jon got up and walked over to the desk. "Excuse me, ma'am, could you point me to the men's room?"

"Certainly, Mr. Brighten," the secretary said, smiling at him once again. "Just go down the hallway to the second door on the left."

"Thank you." Jon smiled back then walked out of the office, heading down the hallway. It never hurt to butter up the help. Maybe she'd put in a good word for him with the big boss. And maybe pigs would fly out of his ass.

Jon quickly went to the bathroom. He washed his hands, wet a paper towel and wiped down his face, surprised he wasn't sweating buckets. Resting his hands on the edge of the sink, he looked at himself in the mirror.

This is nuts, he thought. No way in hell would he get the job. Clearly almost every other applicant far outweighed him in class, education, and experience. Heck, he'd never even seen the inside of an Ivy League school.

The only thing Jon had was a deep drive to be something better than what he was now. A hunger for success he'd developed in spades after watching his stepfather jump from job to job almost his entire life. Well, when the man wasn't doing time for some petty crime.

Carl Payne was the perfect example of everything Jon didn't want to be. The man epitomized lazy, sleazy, and just plain disgusting. His only true pastime seemed to be drinking beer with his slime ball buddies and beating up every member of his family.

Because of his stepfather, Jon never touched alcohol—not even a wine cooler. In his experience, alcohol gave people excuses for the things they did. Jon never wanted to feel so out of control he hurt someone.

He was pretty close to feeling out of control right now, though. His nerves were fried. The economy sucked and it didn't seem like anyone was hiring. Jon had a college degree and he couldn't even get a job flipping burgers.

After hearing his brother-in-law, Ben, complain to his sister again last night about when Jon would be moving out, Jon decided he'd apply for every job he could find, no matter what.

Ben wasn't a bad guy, and he adored Jon's baby sister, Gina. But they were barely making it financially. Having an extra mouth to feed was hard, even if Jon tried to help out around the house as much as possible. The odd job here and there brought in a little money but it just wasn't enough. Jon needed to find his own place.

He took in a deep breath and let it out slowly. He checked his appearance in the mirror, groaning when he spotted the large water spot on his white dress shirt. Just fucking perfect. Could his day get any worse?

He grabbed some dry paper towels and tried to wipe away as much of the water as he could. Shaking his head, he tossed the towels in the garbage then ran his fingers through his brown hair, wishing just once the curls would behave themselves. No matter what he did, his hair would just bounce all over the place.

Figuring there was nothing else he could do to make himself any more presentable, Jon made his way back down the hallway to the office. He opened the door then stopped, glancing around in surprise. The waiting area, filled only minutes ago with about a dozen people, was totally empty.

Jon took a step into the room, the office door closing behind him with a soft whooshing sound. His heart began to sink as he looked around the empty room and listened for any sounds. Had someone gotten the job already?

A loud crash from the room behind the secretary's desk startled Jon. Curious, but also fearful, he took a hesitant step closer, then another and another until he could peer around the edge of the doorway.

His eyes widened and his jaw dropped as he took in the destruction of what must have once been a beautiful office.

Chairs lay overturned or broken into pieces all over the floor. A large, wooden desk sat on its side near one wall. Shattered picture frames, torn books, and shredded papers littered the room.

Terrified he might have walked in on a break in, Jon started to back out the door. A deep rumbled growl behind him froze Jon in his tracks. Low and menacing, the sound made Jon's blood run cold.

He'd only heard that type of growl once before in his life, right before a rabid dog tried to attack him. He'd fought for his life then, and he felt pretty sure he would be fighting for it once again, only this time he didn't think the growl came from a rabid dog.

As slowly as he could, Jon turned to face whatever was behind him. He had just enough time to see red glowing eyes devouring him before a blur of motion took him to the floor with a loud thud.

The pain exploding in Jon's back as he hit the floor was nothing compared to the pain ripping through his throat. He tried to fight back, hitting and scratching,



biting at the body pinning him down, but the *thing* holding him in a death grip was too strong.

As Jon's vision began to blur around the edges, he absently wondered at the strange taste in his mouth. Blood, obviously, based on the coppery tint, but somehow sweeter, less metallic.

How weird was that?

## Chapter Two

Nikolas raised his head and stared down at the body beneath him. He licked his lips, and growled at the delicious flavor exploding across his tongue. So sweet, so succulent, so . . .

Nikolas frowned as the red haze of bloodlust enveloping him started to clear and he realized where he really was. He tasted blood on his lips, coating the inside of his mouth.

The ripped skin and blood trickling down the neck of the man lying unconscious on the floor testified to the fact Nikolas fed and fed well. His breath caught in his throat as he realized he might have killed the man.

His hand trembled as he reached down to check the man's pulse. A deep sigh of gratitude and relief fell from his lips when he realized the man still lived. Unfortunately, the slow heartbeat told Nikolas the man lived but by a miracle.

He hadn't killed during feeding in over 800 years. Nikolas took great pride in that fact. So why did he attacked this man in such a brutal fashion? His control was absolute, always there, always strong, at least, until now.

From the look of the injuries he'd inflicted, that control had flown right out the window.

He bent down and ran his tongue over the deep gash in the man's neck, hoping his saliva would close the wound as it usually did. The sweet flavor of the man's blood burst across his tongue again. Nikolas groaned and licked again, then again. His cock hardened and he had the insane urge to sink into the man's tight body.

Disturbed by the lurid thoughts floating through his mind while the man lay injured and unconscious on the floor, he sat up and stared down at him, studying him carefully.

He had a full head of brown, curly hair, a straight nose, high cheekbones, and a square jaw. His face was glorious to look at and he had the most luscious lips Nikolas ever saw, but . . .

A small, red drop of blood marred the man's plush lips. Nikolas inhaled sharply. He quickly leaned back down and licked at the small drop, his eyes closing in anguish when he tasted his own blood.

"Bloody hell!" Nikolas whispered as he pushed his trembling hand through his hair.

And he *was* in hell. Despite what Hollywood portrayed in the movies, a human could not be converted by exchanging blood with a vampire. A human could, however, become *mated* to a vampire by exchanging blood. It just depended on the amount of blood exchanged, and Nikolas had no idea how much the man took.

A noise outside of his office door made Nikolas tense. He turned and crouched over the man on the floor, his claws extending, and a low growl rumbling through his chest.

"Mr. Vaile?"

Nikolas sniffed the air, recognizing the scent of his secretary, Bella. Some of the tension in his body faded, but he remained alert and guarded. He felt an insane need to stay hovered over the man beneath him.

"Bella," he said simply, frowning when she appeared in the doorway a moment later and the desperate urge to protect filled him again. Nikolas never felt anything like it in his life.

"Oh, my — oh, Nikolas, what have you done?" Bella whispered as she tried to rush past him to get to the man on the floor. "Is he alive?"

Nikolas turned to watch Bella run her hands over the man. He barely suppressed the growl building in his throat. Just the very sight of Bella touching the man made Nikolas want to rip something apart, starting with Bella. Damned

strange. She'd been with him for nearly twenty years, and he'd always trusted her completely.

"Bella," Nikolas spit out through gritted teeth, "you need to step away from him."

"Nikolas, don't be ridiculous," Bella said as she checked the man for injuries. "Jon is injured. He needs our help."

"Jon?" Was that his name? Nikolas wanted to strangle Bella when she rolled her eyes.

"His name is Jon Brighten," she said. "He came here to interview for the personal assistant position." Bella glanced around the destroyed room and frowned. "I gave you his resume but I doubt you could find it in this mess."

Nikolas could feel the weight of her displeasure as Bella glanced back up at him.

"Have you totally lost your mind, Nikolas?" She waved her hand at the injuries on Jon's neck. "You could have killed him."

"Bella, you really need to step away from him," Nikolas said as the desire to attack her grew stronger. "I don't know how much longer I can keep from hurting you if you keep touching him."

Bella's eyes widened. She slowly scooted away from Jon, watching Nikolas carefully the entire time. The moment she was away from Jon, Nikolas dropped to his knees and gathered the man into his arms.

"Nikolas?"

He shook his head as he gently cradled Jon's body to his. "I don't know what happened, Bella. One minute I was going over resumes and the next Jon lay on the floor with blood all over him. I don't know what I did."

"I wonder . . . ?" Bella started crawling across the floor, lifting paper after paper to read over them. Suddenly, she let out a small cry and crawled back to kneel a few feet from Nikolas, holding out a piece of paper.

"This one?" Bella asked. "Were you reading this resume?"

Frowning, Nikolas took the paper and started reading over it. A sweet odor floating on the air caught his attention, a scent so sweet, Nikolas had to close his eyes for a moment as rampant desire stormed his body.

"Nikolas."

He opened his eyes and tried to focus on Bella. All he really wanted to do was sink his teeth back into Jon's neck and drink his sweet flavor . . . then he wanted to sink his cock into the man's body. He'd never been so aroused.

"Smell the edge of the paper, Nikolas, the upper corner."

He frowned, his gaze darting over to the dark smudge on the corner of the paper. He brought it to his nose and inhaled. Nikolas's heart pounded as the sweet scent of Jon's blood filled his lungs.

"What the hell – ?"

"Jon cut his finger when he handed his resume to me. When I gave the resume to you, you ordered everyone out. You said no more interviews. I cleared out the office and went to file some papers." Bella shrugged. "I found you and Jon when I came back."

"So, I didn't lose control because . . . it was the scent of his blood?" Nikolas turned to stare at the man in his arms as understanding filled him. "Do you know what this means, Bella?"

"He is your Rajaaka."

### **Chapter Three**

Jon's head felt like it was about to explode with pain. His neck felt even worse. His entire body felt like it was weighed down with lead weights. He couldn't even lift his hands. But then warm liquid dripped over his lips and slid down his throat, and he moaned softly in delight. His throat was dry as a desert and whatever was being fed to him tasted like ambrosia.

He wanted to thank whoever cared for him but he couldn't even lift his eyelids to see them. What happened? Why did he hurt so much? A ripple of terror

coursed through him until someone whispered soft words in his ear and a warm body cuddled next to him, calming his fears.

"Shh, Jon, you're going to be fine," the man said. "Just rest. I'll take care of you, keep you safe."

Jon turned his head toward the deep voice, seeking the comfort it conveyed. He didn't understand the draw of the voice or the body next to him, and it hurt his head too much to figure it out.

As a strong hand gently brushed the hair back from his forehead, Jon snuggled his face against the broad chest under his head and let himself drift off again. For the first time since he could remember, he felt safe.

"Just sleep, Rajaaka."

So, he did.

\* \* \* \* \*

The first thing Jon realized as consciousness came to him was how warm he felt, but not like he was swaddled in blankets. He felt warm inside and out, his entire body flowing with heat.

He opened his eyes, blinking a few times as the light's glare blinded him. Once his eyes adjusted to the brightness, confusion filled him when he realized his head lay on a man's chest.

Jon lifted his head, tilting it back until he looked into the deepest blue eyes he'd ever seen. His breath caught in his throat at the intensity he could see in the gaze looking back at him.

"Uh, hello," Jon croaked, his throat dry and a little sore. He wondered if he had a cold or something.

"Hello."

Jon was graced with a smile so bright and delighted it made him start to remember something but then the memory faded.

"How are you feeling?"

"Fine, I guess." Jon frowned. "What happened? Am I sick?"

The man flashed his brilliant smile again, capturing Jon's attention and making his heart pound just a little bit faster.

"No, Rajaaka, you are not sick."

"Jon. My name is Jon."

"I am well aware of that, Rajaaka."

There was that smile again. Jon leaned into the hand caressing the side of his face before he could stop himself. The man's touch felt so good, making his skin tingle, but a second later, realization set in. He jerked back, his face flushing with heat. Jon dropped his gaze. How embarrassing! How could he act this way with a complete stranger?

"I'm sorry," Jon whispered. He started to push himself away, but the arms surrounding his body tightened, keeping him plastered against the man holding him. "I think—I really need to go."

"I kind of like you just where you are."

Jon's mouth dropped open. He looked up to find those same deep blue eyes gazing down at him. "Who are you?"

"Nikolas Vaile."

Oh damn! Jon's head dropped forward as he realized he lay wrapped in the arms of the man he'd hoped would be his new employer. Well, that clearly wasn't going to happen now. He wasn't sure what happened, but apparently he'd done something—fainted, maybe—to embarrass himself. He just needed to get out of there as fast as he could before he lost what dignity he had left.

Jon tried to resist the hand lifting his chin, but Nikolas seemed to be having none of it. Jon allowed his face to be tilted but kept his eyes downcast. From his vantage point, he could see Nikolas's broad chest rise and fall.

"Jon, Rajaaka, look at me."

Jon raised his eyes, not sure what expression he would find on the handsome man's face. The hard body pressed against his made Jon's breath come in and out in rapid little pants. He tried to look away, fearing the man would see the desire Jon knew must clearly be showing in his eyes, but a strong attraction made him seek Nikolas's gaze. He sucked in a breath, shocked by the lust he could see burning in

the man's eyes. This was Nikolas Vaile. He could have anyone he wanted, man or woman.

"Do you know who I am, Jon?"

"Yes," Jon replied. "You said your name is Nikolas Vaile. I came here to apply for a job with you, the personal assistant position."

Nikolas nodded and continued to brush the curls back from Jon's face. "I'm afraid the personal assistant position is no longer open to you."

Fuck! Jon dropped his gaze. "Yeah, I kind of figured as much." Despite Nikolas's protest, Jon pushed himself away and turned to sit up, realizing with a bit of shock he was lying on a bed. "Where am I?" he asked as he looked around the room.

"This is my penthouse on the top floor of my office building."

"Nice." Jon snorted. "Guess commuting to work isn't a problem for you then."

"No, not really." Nikolas chuckled. "I have a private elevator leading to my office below us."

Jon's legs trembled as he got to his feet. He grabbed one of the wooden posts at the top of the bed to steady himself then started for the door.

"Where are you going?"

Jon glanced back at Nikolas, surprised to find the man sitting on the side of the bed, a forlorn look on his face. Jon gestured toward the door and started toward it. "I need to head home."

"Why?"

Jon blinked. "Um, I need to go find a job?"

Nikolas grinned and shook his head. "That is no longer an issue, Rajaaka."

"But you said the personal assistant position wasn't available anymore."

"It is not for you," Nikolas said as he stood and crossed the room. "I still need a personal assistant but you are no longer fit for the position. Your duties lie elsewhere now."

Immediately, anger overshadowed Jon's confusion. How dare Nikolas play with him over something so serious? "Since the position is no longer available to me then there is no reason for me to stay."

Nikolas now blocked Jon's exit. Once again, he lifted his hand to caress Jon's face. "I can think of many reasons for you to stay."

Jon inhaled sharply as Nikolas's meaning became clear. He gritted his teeth and clenched his fists at his side, trying very hard not to deck the man. "I may need a job, but I am no one's whore."

Nikolas's eyebrows shot up nearly to his hairline. "I would hope not. I would be very disappointed to find out you were involved with anyone. It would not make me happy."

Jon struggled to follow Nikolas's train of thought. He could see the desire burning in the man's eyes. Jon wasn't stupid. He knew when someone wanted him, and Nikolas most certainly did. Jon just didn't understand *why*.

"Why?" Jon asked, voicing his question.

"Do you not scent it?" Nikolas asked quietly as he moved closer. He stroked the side of Jon's face then brushed his thumb over Jon's lips. "Do you not feel the connection between us, Rajaaka?"

Jon frowned. "You keep calling me Rajaaka. What does it mean?"

"Mine."

## Chapter Four

Nikolas didn't give Jon time to respond before he lowered his head and covered Jon's mouth with his own. He could feel Jon's shock in the sudden stiffness of his body. But then he melted against Nikolas, groaning as he opened his mouth to Nikolas's exploration.

Nikolas's calm was shattered by the hunger welling up inside of him as he kissed Jon's mouth. He slipped his hands down Jon's arms then gripped his hips, pulling him closer. He caressed the length of Jon's back.

The hard shaft pressed against him told Nikolas Jon's desire mirrored his own. He couldn't be more thrilled at the prospect. To not be desired by his Rajaaka would be a nightmare of epic proportions.



Jon groaned, his hands tightening on Nikolas's shirt. Nikolas felt a low rumble build in his chest. Before he could stop himself, he licked his way down to the soft pulse in Jon's neck and sank in his teeth.

Jon arched toward Nikolas. The combination of Jon's hard body pressed against his and the taste of sweet, hot blood exploding across his tongue created a heady combination. And knowing it was his Rajaaka he held in his arms only added to the desire coursing through his veins.

Using his superior strength, Nikolas picked Jon up in his arms and carried him back over to the bed. He lowered him to the mattress, moving to cover Jon's body with his own.

Nikolas extracted his teeth and licked the bite mark closed before lifting his head to look down into Jon's dark, chocolate brown eyes. He smiled, nearly overcome with the knowledge that the man he held in his arms was his Rajaaka . . . the one he'd searched for all these years.

"I want to make love to you, Rajaaka," Nikolas said softly.

Jon inhaled, his eyes widening. "J-Jon."

Nikolas smiled and reached up to caress the side of Jon's face again. He couldn't get over how soft the man's skin felt, how wonderful it felt to just touch him. He couldn't wait to feel Jon's naked body pressed against his. The sensation would be like wrapping himself in warm silk.

"I know who you are, Rajaaka." Nikolas saw the wonder in Jon's deep brown eyes and smiled. What color would those eyes be when the man was in the midst of an orgasm? "I still want to make love to you."

"I-I don't even know you."

Nikolas could see the confusion in Jon's face, the uncertainty. He could also see the desire to give in. Nikolas stuck his index finger into his mouth and pricked it on one sharp fang.

"You know me," Nikolas said as he rubbed his bleeding finger over Jon's lips. "You know me better than anyone in the world."

Nikolas growled low in his throat when Jon poked out his tongue to lick at the blood on his lips. He rubbed against Jon's tongue with his finger then slipped it into Jon's mouth.

Nikolas inhaled sharply. His cock grew achingly hard when Jon's lips closed around his finger and the man began sucking on it. He felt each draw of Jon's mouth on his finger in his cock.

Nikolas suddenly knew his Rajaaka was going to be big trouble for him. He seemed very oral. Nikolas had no doubt Jon could get him to come just by sucking on his finger. He'd probably pass out from ecstasy if Jon sucked on his cock.

When Jon's brown eyes fluttered up to his, Nikolas knew he was lost. He clawed at Jon's clothing, ripping them away. He needed to feel the man's body beneath his hands. He needed to feel his body pressing down on Jon's. He just needed.

Nikolas's lips followed his hands. He kissed each inch of naked skin he bared until Jon writhed under him, small pants and moans falling from his lush lips. And Jon had the fullest lips Nikolas had ever seen.

"Nik-Nikolas," Jon moaned beneath him.

"Petjya, my sweet," Nikolas corrected. "I want to hear you call me Petjya."

"Petjya?" Jon frowned. "I thought your name was Nikolas."

"It is. Petjya is, um . . . ." Nikolas frowned as he tried to best to translate the ancient vampire word into one Jon might understand. "It is like lover or mate. It is the proper way to address someone you are intimate with."

"Are we going to be intimate?"

Nikolas glanced down at the nearly naked body beneath him then looked up to give Jon a feral grin. "That's the plan." He leaned down to take one brown-hued nipple into his mouth.

Jon cried out and arched up into him. *Ah, a sweet spot*, Nikolas thought. One he planned to exploit to its fullest.

He moved his mouth across Jon's chest to the other nipple, finding it already pert and stiff. He growled as he latched onto the hard little nub, nipping Jon

accidentally with his fang. Hot, sweet blood blossomed in his mouth. Nikolas sucked harder, wanting more of the satisfying taste.

"Ni-Ni — Petjya, please!" Jon wailed.

The sound of his Rajaaka pleading for release ramped Nikolas's arousal to a fever pitch. Refusing to release the nipple in his mouth, Nikolas reached down and ripped the rest of Jon's clothing from his body.

He stripped his own clothing away at the same time, bemoaning the fact he had to let go of Jon's taut nipple to get his shirt over his head, but the feeling of Jon's naked body pressing against his more than made up for it. Nikolas hunched over Jon. He grabbed him by the hips and pulled him up until their cocks brushed together.

Jon's legs surrounded him, wrapping naturally around his waist as if they had been there a hundred times. Nikolas delighted in the way his tanned hands looked against Jon's pale skin, the contrast both amazing and mesmerizing.

"I'm going to love you now, Rajaaka," Nikolas said. The dazed, wide-eyed look Jon gave him filled Nikolas with joy. He stroked his hand down Jon's side, his gaze following, eating up every inch of Jon's naked flesh. "I'm going to claim you and make you mine."

No doubt, Jon had no idea how true those words really were. He probably thought Nikolas meant he was going to fuck him, claim him sexually, but what would happen between them meant so much more.

While the blood they'd exchanged started the connection, their first sexual interlude would cement the bond between them. The exchange of blood and semen would create an unbreakable bond.

And that's exactly how Nikolas intended things to be. Now he'd found his Rajaaka, he didn't plan to give him up. Very few of his kind were lucky enough to find their bond mates, the one meant only for them.

Nikolas leaned over Jon and claimed his lips again. He was mildly surprised at how eagerly Jon surrendered to the kiss. Nikolas wrapped one hand around the side of Jon's head, anchoring the man in place. He stroked the other hand gently down Jon's side and hip.

Jon responded so well to Nikolas's touch, moaning and arching up into him. Nikolas shuddered slightly, overcome by the mere feeling of Jon's body pressed against his and the knowledge he was about to claim his Rajaaka.

His tongue licked purposefully at Jon's upper lip then delved inside to explore. He felt Jon's slighter body move closer, as if seeking more contact. Gripping Jon's hair tightly, Nikolas kissed and licked Jon's lush lips, devouring them. He would have climbed inside Jon's warm body if he could have.

As it was, Nikolas knew if he didn't get his cock in the man soon, he might pass out. His blood was pounding through his body so fast he already felt lightheaded. He tingled every time his skin brushed against Jon's.

Nikolas hissed and jerked back when Jon bit his lips. The small nip didn't break the skin, but Nikolas almost wished it had. The smoky look of desire burning in Jon's eyes seared through Nikolas, ratcheting his need yet another notch higher.

He reached over and grabbed the lube out of the nightstand drawer and popped the lid to pour some out on his fingers. Dropping the bottle on the bed, Nikolas grinned down at Jon.

"How do you want this, Rajaaka," he asked, "on your back or on your hands and knees?"

"I . . . I . . . I don't know." Jon blushed so beautifully when he was flustered.

Nikolas decided to make things easier for his man. He reached down between them and stroked his fingers over Jon's puckered hole. The full body shudder he received in return for the light caress overjoyed Nikolas.

He pressed in with his fingers, inserting one into Jon's tight hole. The delight Nikolas felt when Jon's body sucked him right in knew no bounds. His Rajaaka was made for him, craved him. Nikolas couldn't wait to feel Jon's tight body wrapped around his cock.

He pushed in with another finger, scissoring them back and forth, readying Jon's body. Nikolas would die before he let anything happen to his Rajaaka. It was his ultimate duty now to protect the man from harm, even from his own hand.

Jon pushed back when Nikolas added a third finger. His whole body moved, his legs spreading wide. He looked wanton, desire incarnate. He looked perfect. *And he's all mine.*

"Ca-can't . . . ." Jon groaned, his head thrashing around on the pillow.

Nikolas pulled his fingers from Jon's body and quickly lubed up his cock. Grabbing Jon's legs, he pressed them back to his chest, baring the man's stretched hole to his hungry gaze.

Scooting forward, Nikolas watched the head of his cock press against the small, puckered entrance. His hands tightened around Jon's legs as he slowly pushed inside. The sight of his engorged, darkened shaft sinking into Jon's pale white body astonished him.

Nikolas pushed, burying his entire cock. Jon stilled. Nikolas stilled. Nikolas glanced up to find dazed brown eyes staring back at him. Jon seemed to be holding his breath, as if he waited for something. He was, he just didn't know it.

"My Rajaaka," Nikolas whispered. "I claim you now."

Nikolas started thrusting, his body moving quickly in and out of Jon's tight hole. He couldn't believe how right this felt, how wonderful the silken heat gripped him. Nikolas knew it wouldn't be long before he came. He'd never be able to hold out against something that felt so good.

The faster he thrust, the more Nikolas could feel the connection forming between them. Just a little longer and the bond would be fully formed, never to be severed. Nikolas's pulse raced at the mere thought.

Once the bond between them formed, he would never be alone again. He would have a connection to someone, mental and physical, for the rest of his life, someone made just for him.

Overwhelmed with the sensations shooting through his body, Nikolas leaned down close to Jon, staring him straight in the eyes. He wanted to see his Rajaaka's face when he said the bonding words.

"I pledge to thee my love and faith. I offer my life to thee, my blood for yours. I will be your night as you shall be my day. I'll stay with you forever, my love, my Rajaaka. I pledge this oath for all eternity. To the world, may we be one soul."

Jon blinked. His mouth fell open. Nikolas pulled back until just the head of his cock remained in Jon's body then thrust forward with all the desire he felt coursing through him.

Jon cried out, his head pressing back into the pillow beneath him. His body arched up into Nikolas and went tense as the space between them was filled with his hot seed. Jon hands grasped desperately for purchase, finding a hold on Nikolas's shoulders.

Nikolas turned his head and sank his fangs into the soft skin of Jon's throat. He moaned as the sweet taste of the man's blood filled his mouth. One more hard thrust and Nikolas erupted, filling Jon's body with his release.

The haze surrounding Nikolas filled with color – reds and blues, greens and pinks. Every color of the rainbow flashed through him until the haze suddenly settled on a white so pure it almost blinded Nikolas.

He cried out as a stabbing pain hit his head. A moment later it disappeared and he blinked rapidly. As the haze began to clear, Nikolas felt something else in his head, a soft whisper of a presence. It was something he'd never felt before.

Nikolas extracted his teeth from Jon's throat and lifted his head to look down at his bond mate, his Rajaaka. Jon's face looked serene, and a soft smile played across the man's lips. His eyelids fluttered as if he wasn't quite conscious.

*My Rajaaka*, Nikolas whispered softly, using the telepathic connection that had formed between them as he gently stroked the side of Jon's face with his fingers. His heart pounded with joy, amazement, and just a hint of wonder, at what he held in his arms.

Jon's eyes fluttered until they opened and he looked up at Nikolas with eyes that were no longer chocolate brown, but rather gold. Nikolas had never claimed someone before so he didn't know if the change in color was a result of the bonding, but he suspected it was so.

"How are you?" he whispered.

Jon's face flushed and he glanced away.

Nikolas grabbed the man's chin and brought his face back to his. "How are you, Rajaaka? Do you hurt anywhere?"

Jon shook his head, his eyes still avoiding Nikolas's. "I feel a little dizzy and my head kind of aches but I'm fine."

"It will pass, Rajaaka," Nikolas said. "It is part of the claiming."

## Chapter Five

Jon cocked his head to one side, confused. "The what . . . ?"

"The claiming, Rajaaka, making you mine for all eternity."

Jon's heart pounded. He suddenly felt so distressed it was like a physical pain in his chest. A madman had just totally rocked his world. Sad, really. Nikolas Vaile was a beautiful man who made love like a god. Too bad he was also crazier than a loon.

"I need to use the bathroom," Jon said – anything to give himself a few minutes where he could gather his thoughts . . . and then run. He groaned softly when Nikolas pulled free of his body and rolled off to the side, letting Jon up.

"The bathroom is right through there," Nikolas said, pointing to a door on the far wall.

Jon nodded and rolled off the bed. He leaned down and grabbed his clothes as he went. He quickly shut the door behind him and leaned back against it, rubbing his hand down his face as the events of the night filled his mind.

He'd come for a job interview and ended up fucking the man he wanted a job with. How messed up was that? Even if Nikolas hadn't said he could no longer have the job, Jon knew he wouldn't have taken it. You didn't get a job by sleeping with the boss.

Now Jon just had to decide what he was going to do. He still needed a job and a new place to live. He couldn't stay at his sister's house much longer. But first, he had to figure out how to get out of Nikolas's penthouse without making a scene.

He went to the sink and quickly washed up. He grabbed his clothes and pulled them on then rested his hands on the counter and looked at himself in the mirror. He squinted, taking in the golden color of his eyes. They had always been dark chocolate brown. Now they weren't. What the hell?

And what the fuck were those two strange, pink puncture marks on his neck, right over his jugular vein? He frowned, remembering Nikolas biting his neck. He didn't realize until now the bite broke the skin.

Jon grimaced and leaned closer. They were actually holes — or rather, the healed-over wounds of two perfectly round holes. But how could that be possible? Jon's hand started to tremble as he rubbed it over the two marks.

There could be no way the strange thoughts suddenly floating in his head could be true because it would mean Jon was the crazy one, not Nikolas. Jon tried to put all the pieces together but when he did, a cold shiver of fear shot down his back.

The job interview late in the afternoon, the red, glowing eyes, the teeth marks . . . all of it added up to one conclusion in Jon's brain and made him more scared than he could ever remember being in his life.

Nikolas Vaile was a vampire.

Air rushed in and out of his chest so fast he couldn't seem to catch his breath. He pressed his hand to his roiling stomach and sank down against the wall. He just had mind blowing sex with a vampire.

"Oh, my god!" Jon whispered as he realized he'd been bitten. Would he turn into a vampire now? Would he need to suck blood for the rest of his life, give up sunshine?

"Rajaaka?"

Jon's gaze snapped toward the voice. He pushed his foot against the door to keep Nikolas out then laughed softly to himself. He was trying to keep a *vampire* out by pushing his *foot* against a door. How stupid could he get? Nikolas could probably destroy the damned thing with his pinkie.

"I'll be out in a minute." Jon hoped his voice sounded somewhat normal instead of hysterical, like he felt. He took several deep breaths then got to his feet. He walked over to the sink and splashed some cold water on his face.

Glancing at himself in the mirror one more time, he shook his head. He *looked* normal enough, although maybe a little pale. As he turned away from the sink and walked to the door, he wondered if he was pale because he was silently freaking out or because Nikolas had drank his blood.



Jon opened the door, jumping a little when he found Nikolas standing directly on the other side. The man looked worried, the corners of his lips turned down into a deep frown.

"Oh, hey, I was just washing up a bit," Jon said quickly.

He forced himself not to jerk back when Nikolas reached out to stroke the side of his face. He didn't want to do anything to piss the man off. He was pretty sure Nikolas could rip him limb from limb. If not, he could definitely drink him dry, Jon thought hysterically. He could see the bottoms of Nikolas's fangs sticking over his lower lip.

But instead of the terror he'd expect to feel at such a sight, Jon had a sudden desire to lean into the hand caressing the side of his face. He wanted nothing more than to wrap himself in Nikolas's arms, feel the man's body pressing him down into the mattress again.

"Are you well, Rajaaka?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," Jon said. He pulled away and walked farther into the bedroom, glancing around for the door. He needed to get out of there and fast, before he gave into the allure of Nikolas's handsome body.

The damn man was walking around naked . . . and aroused.

And damned if Jon could stop himself from taking in the beauty of Nikolas Vaile. The man was drop-dead, wet-dream-fantasy gorgeous. He had wide shoulders, thick muscled arms, an abdomen Jon could bounce a quartet off of, and a cock sexy enough to make Jon's mouth water.

Damn! Just . . . Damn!

"Hey, this has been a lot of fun but I need to be heading home," Jon said as he edged closer to what he hoped was the exit.

"You would leave me, Rajaaka?"

Jon frowned at the anguish he could hear in Nikolas's voice. Seriously. What the fuck? It wasn't like they had declared undying love to each other or anything. Had they? Jon racked his brain.

He remembered Nikolas speaking some words to him but he didn't quite remember what they were . . . not exactly. He just remembered the deep timbre of Nikolas's voice as he spoke, not the actual words.

"My sister is going to get worried about me if I don't get back. I was just supposed to be going on a job interview and —"

"You need me as I need you, Rajaaka."

Jon's heart fell. He closed his eyes against a wave of confusion. Nikolas had turned him into a vampire. He just knew it. He'd never feel sunshine on his face again, never feel the first morning light. He'd have to drink blood to survive.

Jon absently wondered if he would now kill for what he needed. Would he hurt the ones he loved? Be a mindless monster? Could he ever eat anchovies and garlic on his pizza again?

"I really need to go," he whispered. He clenched his fists as he turned and headed for the door.

"I'll be here when you need me, Rajaaka."

Forcing himself to ignore the saddened tone in Nikolas's voice, and the desire he felt to throw himself into the man's arms and never leave again, Jon kept moving. But once he reached the door, he paused and glanced back, taking in all the man was, before steeling his resolve, turning, and walking out.

Jon choked back an inexplicable sob. Leaving Nikolas had to be the most difficult thing he'd ever done. He felt like his heart was breaking into tiny little pieces with every step he took away from the man. By the time he reached the ground floor, he could barely breathe. Tears streamed down his face.

Jon hailed a cab and climbed in, giving directions to his sister's apartment before leaning back against the seat. He wiped the tears away but more fell. There was a deep, aching hole in his heart and Jon was afraid the only way to fill it was to go back to Nikolas.

When the cab pulled up in front of his sister's apartment, Jon grimaced. He could see light from inside the small house and knew someone was up. He'd hoped to have a few moments alone to compose himself before he faced his sister and her husband. Hell, before he faced *anyone*. His thoughts were scrambled, making his

head ache when he tried to organize them. He just wanted to curl under his blankets and sleep, maybe dream about Nikolas.

"Jon?"

He heard his sister call out the moment he opened the door. A moment later, Gina's face appeared around the kitchen doorway.

"Well? How did it go? Did you get the job?"

Jon braced himself and shook his head. "No, I think they hired someone else."

"Oh, Jon." Gina's shoulders slumped and the eager smile of greeting on her face fell away. She glanced over her shoulder and down the hallway to her bedroom door. Jon knew Ben was in there. When Gina looked back, Jon knew he wasn't going to like what she had to say.

"Jon, you know I love you and I would do anything for you but —"

Jon held up his hand to stop her. He didn't want Gina to actually say the words he knew were about to come out of her mouth. "I know. You and Ben have been nothing but helpful to me and I can never thank you enough."

"Jon —"

"Just give me until the end of the week, okay?" he said. "If I can't find something by then I'll go stay at a friend's house."

"You know I don't want it to be this way, Jon, but —"

Again, he cut her off. "Gina, seriously, it's okay." He walked over to give her a hug. "You've done more for me than anyone. You have your own family to worry about. Besides, I'm a grown man. I can take care of myself."

"It's just, well, with the baby coming and all, I —"

"Baby?" Jon's mouth dropped open. "What baby?"

Gina flushed. They both glanced down at her flat stomach, Gina lovingly rubbing her hand over it. "We found out today. I'm just three months along."

"I'm going to be an uncle!" Jon shouted. He grabbed Gina around the waist and swung her around.

"Put me down." Gina laughed as she smacked him on the shoulder. "I'll throw up on you."

He gently set her back on her feet. Leaning down, he kissed her on the forehead. "I'm happy for you, sis. You and Ben deserve this." He grinned. "I'll be the best uncle in the world." He tweaked Gina on the nose. "And I don't want you to worry about me. I'll be fine."

"I still wish — "

Jon pressed a finger to Gina's lips. "Shh. It's fine. You and Ben have been wonderful. I couldn't ask for a better sister or brother-in-law. I'll find something. Don't worry."

Gina smiled but Jon could see the worry in her eyes. As his big sister, she'd been worrying about him since he was in diapers. Jon seriously doubted Gina would ever stop fretting about him. She'd make a great mother.

"I met someone tonight," he said as he turned away and walked into the kitchen, Gina fast on his heels. He needed to give her something else to worry about. His love life always seemed to be at the top of her list.

"Really?" Gina asked. Her voice sounded excited, just as Jon knew it would. "Well, tell me about him. What's his name? What's he like? Is he cute? What does he do?"

Jon laughed. "Believe it or not, his name is Nikolas."

"Nikolas?" Gina frowned. "Where have I heard his name before?"

Jon leaned back against the counter and crossed his arms over his chest. "Nikolas Vaile, the man I was interviewing with," he said then waited for the fallout. It wasn't long in coming.

"Oh my god, Jon," Gina whispered. "Is that why you didn't get the job? Were you flirting at your job interview? And with Nikolas Vaile?"

Jon chuckled. "No, I wasn't flirting at my interview. I never actually got to the interview. I went to the bathroom and by the time I got back, everyone was gone, even the secretary. I assumed someone else got the position."

"So, how did you meet Mr. Vaile then?"

Jon shrugged. "I heard a noise in the office and went to investigate. I must have slipped and hit my head or something because when I woke up, I was lying on a bed and Nikolas Vaile was sitting beside me."

Gina giggled and covered her mouth with her hand. "Is he cute?"

"Gorgeous."

"Did you kiss him?"

Jon felt his face heat up. Before he could even answer Gina, she started jumping up and down, squealing.

"You did! You did!"

"Yes, we kissed." *And a whole hell of a lot more.*

"Are you going to see him again?"

"I don't know." Jon was pretty sure he would. Just thinking of the man made him ache.

"Why not?"

"I barely know the man, Gina."

"So?"

Jon rolled his eyes. His sister thought he was the best gay catch in the city. She thought anyone would be thrilled to receive Jon's attention. Jon wasn't so sure. He tended to be picky about the men he dated, which meant he didn't date much.

"He invited me back to visit." Jon could at least give that information to Gina, even if he wasn't sure he'd ever go back, no matter how much he wanted to.

"That's something, isn't it?" Gina asked. "He wants to see you again."

*Or drink my blood,* Jon thought to himself even as he nodded and agreed with his sister's assessment. "Yeah."

"Well, are you going to see him again?"

Jon shrugged and pushed himself away from the counter. "I don't know. He seems like a nice guy and all but we just met today. Besides, we're talking about Nikolas Vaile here. He's like mega rich. I'm not sure we're on the same planet, let alone in the same class."

"Bullshit!" Gina snapped. "If he says he's interested, then he's interested. Stop finding excuses to not see him again."

Jon held up his hands in surrender. He chuckled at his sister's outrage. "Okay, okay, I'll think about going to see him, promise. Right now, though, I could really use some sleep."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Jon," Gina said. "I didn't realize how late it was. I just wanted to hear about how your interview went and then, well —"

"And you had to hear about my love life instead."

"Yeah, something like that." Gina laughed as she preceded him out of the kitchen. She paused in the hallway, turned and planted a light kiss on his cheek. "I love you, baby bro, you know that, right?"

Jon smiled. "I do. And I love you too." Jon gave a playful tug on one of her long, silky curls. "Now, go join your husband and tell him I said congratulations on the baby. You two will make wonderful parents."

\* \* \* \* \*

Jon shivered and pulled the covers up to his neck, turning on his back in an attempt to get comfortable on the tiny living room couch. This was the third night in a row he had trouble sleeping.

And when he did sleep? Good god, the dreams! Every one of them revolved around Nikolas. Nikolas making love to him. Nikolas *drinking* from him. Jon hadn't experienced any unusual cravings — didn't imagine *himself* latching on to someone's neck, despite his initial fears. He only ached to have *Nikolas* drink from *him*. He craved it more than he craved his next breath.

Nikolas dominated Jon's thoughts whether he was awake or asleep. He couldn't stop thinking about the man, couldn't stop remembering what Nikolas could do with his hands and his lips and . . . .

Jon groaned. He'd been in a near-constant state of arousal since meeting Nikolas, and his hard cock throbbed. He felt like a randy teenager who'd just discovered gay porn.

Masturbating didn't seem to help either. Jon had wacked off so many times in the last few days he thought his dick might fall off. One little thought of Nikolas and his damn cock jumped to attention, ready to go. He could have pounded nails with the thing . . . into cement!

He'd get a few moments of relief when he came then be hard again within moments. He barely had time to wipe the cum off his abdomen before thoughts of Nikolas sent him right back to where he was before he came.

Jon sat up and rubbed his hands up and down his arms. His skin itched, ached. The pit of his stomach felt like it was one big knot. He'd been this way for days. He didn't know what it was but it scared the crap out of him.

He leaned his head back against the couch and closed his eyes. His mind immediately filled with Nikolas's presence. Jon could almost feel the strong arms encircling him as if they were really there.

*Why are you doing this to me? Why can't I stop thinking about you?*

*You are my Rajaaka.* Nikolas's voice filled Jon's head. Jon wasn't surprised. He'd been hearing Nikolas's voice in his head since the night they'd slept together. Jon was pretty sure he was going crazy.

*Come to me, Rajaaka. I will care for you.*

Jon sighed. What choice did he have? The time he asked for from Gina was at an end. He had to go, whether he liked it or not. Nikolas's penthouse would do just as good as any place else.

Jon stood and walked into the kitchen. He wrote out a quick note to Gina, letting her know he was going to stay with a friend and he'd call her in a few days. He kept the letter purposely vague, unwilling to let his sister know exactly where he was headed. After propping the note up against a coffee mug on the kitchen counter, he grabbed his bag, quietly let himself out of the house and started down the street to nearest bus stop.

Thirty minutes later, Jon arrived downtown. The hairs on the back of his neck stood up the entire bus ride. He'd felt like he was being followed, but when he'd looked, he couldn't see anyone watching him.

Trying to shake the odd feeling, Jon walked the few blocks to Nikolas's building and went inside. He ignored the smiling security guards who watched him walk to the elevator, and the people nodding at him as they passed by in the hallway. He didn't stop to talk to anyone until he stood in front of the secretary's desk.

"Hello, my name is – "

"Jon Brighten," the secretary finished for him, smiling broadly.

"Uh, yeah. I'd like to see Mr. Vaile."

"Certainly, Mr. Brighten," the secretary said as she stood and walked over to Nikolas's office. She opened the door and moved aside. "Please come in and make yourself comfortable. I'll let Mr. Vaile know you are here."

"Thank you," Jon said as he slid past her and into Nikolas's office. He set his bag down by the door, confused when it closed behind him. What in the hell was going on? The bull dog secretary had been way too nice, too friendly. Did everyone know he'd slept with Nikolas?

Depressed and yearning for something he couldn't quite define, Jon walked over to stare out the window. He didn't understand this overwhelming desire he had for Nikolas. At this point, he wasn't even sure if he needed to understand it. He just knew he craved the man.

He ached for Nikolas.

## Chapter Six

Nikolas's heart pounded as he opened his office door and spotted Jon standing in front of the large, floor-to-ceiling office windows. He looked dejected, his shoulders slumped and his skin paler than normal. Yet he still looked like the most wonderful thing Nikolas had ever seen.

Jon needed time – time to get used to being claimed – but the waiting had nearly killed Nikolas. Luckily, the waiting was over. Jon had come back and he'd never leave again if Nikolas had anything to say about it.

"I don't understand this need I have to be near you, Nikolas." Jon spoke so softly, even with his superior hearing Nikolas had to strain to hear the words. "I'm confused and scared and I want to know why I can't stop thinking about you."

Nikolas walked up behind him, hesitantly wrapped his arms around Jon and gently drew him close until the man leaned back against him. He leaned down and inhaled Jon's masculine scent, feeling instantly dizzy and lightheaded.



"You are my Rajaaka," Nikolas whispered against Jon's neck as he rubbed his face against him, "forever bound to me."

"A-am I a vampire?"

"No, Rajaaka, you must be born a vampire. You cannot be made into one."

"But you're a vampire, aren't you?"

"Yes." Nikolas wouldn't lie to Jon even if he could feel the small shudder of fear go through the man's body. "I am a vampire, but I will never hurt you. You are my Rajaaka. I am incapable of hurting you."

"What does that mean . . . Rajaaka?" Jon whispered as he leaned his head back against Nikolas's shoulder. "You keep using that word."

"I told you, it means you're mine."

"Yeah, but... oh god!"

Nikolas stroked one hand down Jon's chest to the edge of his pants. A flick of his wrist and he was able to push under the waistband. He wasn't surprised to encounter a rock-hard cock. Being newly claimed, Jon would feel the need to mate and mate often.

Nikolas flicked his tongue against the bite mark on Jon's neck even as his hand wrapped around the man's straining cock, gently stroking him. He heard Jon moan, felt him tremble and inhale sharply.

"Nikolas, please."

"Petjya," Nikolas corrected, repeating his words from the first time they were together. "I will hear Petjya from your lips."

"I need — I need to know —"

"I know what you need, Rajaaka." Nikolas stroked Jon's cock faster. "I will care for you."

When Nikolas licked the side of Jon's neck, scrapping his teeth along the man's soft skin, Jon seemed to melt into him. Nikolas knew the arm he had wrapped around Jon's waist was the only thing keeping him from dropping to the floor.

"Petjya!" Jon cried out just as he came. Hot spunk streamed from his cock and covered Nikolas's hand a moment later.

At the same time, Nikolas sank his fangs into the soft flesh of Jon's neck; the man's sweet nectar filled his mouth.

Nikolas felt overwhelmed as he retracted his fangs. He needed. He ached. His cock throbbed. He needed to take him again, to feel his cock sink into the man's silky depths until he felt nothing else except his Rajaaka.

"Hands on the window, Rajaaka," Nikolas bit out between clenched teeth. The moment Jon leaned forward and placed his hands against the reinforced glass, Nikolas pushed the man's pants down and off his legs.

He nudged Jon's legs apart and knelt behind him. Jon's body quivered as Nikolas grabbed his ass cheeks and spread them apart. Nikolas leaned forward and ran his tongue over Jon's puckered hole.

"Oh, fuck me!"

"I intend to," Nikolas replied before applying a liberal dose of spittle in and around Jon's hole. He'd have to remember to stock his office with lube in the future. He had a Rajaaka to care for now. Until then, he'd have to loosen his mate up the old-fashioned way.

Nikolas licked and stroked, pushing against Jon's pink hole. He could feel Jon's legs shaking against him. The man's entire body seemed to vibrate with each stroke of Nikolas's tongue.

Jon's cries were heaven to Nikolas's ears. He savored each one, wrapped himself up in the sweet sound, knowing he was giving his Rajaaka unimaginable pleasure. The knowledge was almost enough to make him come in his pants.

As it was, Nikolas didn't think it would take much. His cock ached so much it actually hurt. He jumped to his feet and searched the room for something, *anything* he could use to ease his way. He'd rather cut off his arm than hurt Jon, even if it meant he couldn't claim him again.

Nikolas's gaze settled on a small bottle of all-natural, non-scented hand lotion on the bookshelf near his desk. He raced across the room with unnatural speed then back, not gone from Jon for more than a second or two. He couldn't bear to leave the man's side, now that he'd returned.

Squirting a good amount of lotion onto his cock, he lubed himself up and then spread the remaining amount on Jon's tight hole, pressing his fingers inside to insure he was stretched enough.

Nikolas groaned, a heady feeling filling him when Jon's body sucked him right in as if it needed to be filled. Nikolas quickly pulled his fingers out and grabbed his cock, guiding it into Jon's ass.

A long, drawn out cry fell from Jon's lips as Nikolas sank right in up to his balls, and Nikolas echoed that sound of desire with one of his own.

"Fuck, you feel so good, Rajaaka." Nikolas groaned as he started moving slowly, then faster and faster.

He gripped Jon's hips as he pounded into the man's tight hole. Jon's little cries had turned into one long wail. Nikolas struggled for breath. All the air seemed to have been sucked out of the room.

"Petjya!" Jon's body stiffened.

Nikolas cried out as Jon's inner muscles clamped down on his cock. The man climaxed, ropes of pearly white cream shooting all over the floor and the window.

Nikolas delighted in hearing the ancient endearment come from his Rajaaka's lips. He knew Jon didn't understand the significance of the word, the deep meaning behind it, but Nikolas did.

And the knowledge sent him right over the edge after Jon. He tried to keep his claws retracted as he came but felt them dig into Jon's hips even as he filled the man with his seed. The intensity of his orgasm made it impossible for Nikolas to stop.

Nikolas hunched over Jon and held the man's body close to his. His heart beat rapidly in his chest. He could feel Jon's heartbeat as well, the pulse in his neck throbbing as blood pumped quickly through his veins.

Nikolas groaned as his softening cock fell free of Jon's ass. Smelling Jon's blood, a scent that would forever be imprinted on him, Nikolas dropped to his knees and lapped at the small claw marks on Jon's hips, his saliva closing the small cuts up.

His heart ached. He had lost control and harmed his Rajaaka. Only moments ago, he'd promised Jon he would never hurt him and yet he'd gone ahead and done just that. Nikolas could only pray Jon would forgive him and not leave.

He turned Jon, wrapping his arms around Jon's waist, burying his face in Jon's abdomen. "Please forgive me, Rajaaka. I have no excuse for hurting you. I lost control and I—"

"That was you losing control?" Jon chuckled as he buried his hands in Nikolas's hair. "We might have to try that a little more often."

What? Surely he hadn't heard the man right. He'd dug his claws into Jon's skin. He'd hurt him. Jon had to be angry at him, maybe even disappointed.

Nikolas opened his eyes and glanced up at Jon. He was stunned to see a very satisfied grin on Jon's lips. The man looked much happier than when he first arrived. His skin glowed; the worry lines around his eyes had lessened.

"You're not mad?"

"Are you kidding? You can fuck me against the window anytime you want."

Nikolas grinned and got to his feet. He wrapped Jon up in his arms and hugged him, not caring in the least his pants were down around his ankles and Jon wore none at all.

"I promise I will care for you in the future, Rajaaka," Nikolas whispered. "I will not let my loss of control rule me again."

"Does that mean you won't fuck me against the window again?"

"I'll fuck you against the window, the desk, the wall, anywhere you want," Nikolas whispered, his heart throbbing with joy. "I'll fuck you anywhere and everywhere you want."

Jon leaned his head back to look up at Nikolas, his face suddenly serious. "We need to talk first."

Nikolas nodded. They did. Jon deserved to know how his life was going to change now they had bonded. Nikolas had wanted to explain it to Jon before he left but he knew Jon needed to understand why they belonged together.

Now that they'd bonded, being separated for long periods of time would cause them both physical pain. Nikolas needed Jon's blood as much as Jon needed to Nikolas's semen. It was an exchange of life giving essence.

"Let's go upstairs to the penthouse and get more comfortable," Nikolas said as he pulled up his pants and buttoned them. "We can talk there."

Jon nodded and straightened his own clothing. Nikolas watched him push a shaking hand through his hair as he glanced absently around the room. Jon seemed disconnected, almost disoriented.

But he settled down the moment Nikolas wrapped an arm around him and led him to the elevator to his penthouse suite. Neither of them spoke as they rode up, the silence surrounding them like a thick fog.

The moment the doors swooshed open, Jon bolted as if he couldn't stand the enclosed space anymore. He rubbed his hands roughly up and down his arms. Nikolas stepped up behind him and took over, caressing Jon's arms.

Jon sighed deeply and leaned back against him. "Why do I feel this way?" he whispered. His voice trembled with anguish. "What's wrong with me?"

"I am sorry, Rajaaka," Nikolas said. "I did not know the claiming would be so hard on you. I wish I could spare you this but I would not give you up."

"My name is Jon," he snapped, "my fucking name is Jon!"

Nikolas could hear the distress in the man's voice and knew he was close to breaking.

"Your name is Jon Brighten. You are twenty six years old. Your mother's name is Margaret Payne. Your father's name was Vincent Brighten. He died when you were a child and your mother remarried Carl Payne." Jon turned to look at Nikolas, his mouth hanging open. Nikolas continued. "Your sister's name is Angelina. She's married to Benjamin Thomas. They are expecting their first child."

"How —?"

"Did you think I would not investigate you?"

"But . . . why?"

"You are my Rajaaka. I want to know everything about you."

Jon pushed away from Nikolas and took several steps back, placing almost the entire room between them. He started rubbing his arms again as he stared at Nikolas.

"You keep saying that, calling me that," Jon said. "I want to know what it means, and you're not going to get away with some half-baked, bullshit explanation this time. I want the truth."

"Rajaaka means lover, mate, um . . . consort. I claimed you when we had sex, made you my bond mate."

"Bond mate? Claiming?" Jon asked. He looked slightly dazed. "What does that mean? We just had sex. How can you claim me just from sex? You're a vampire. I'm sure you've had sex with hundreds of people. Don't you guys like, live forever or something?"

Nikolas grinned, amused at Jon's assumptions, which were like most people's. "I have had sex with many people, that is true. And I have lived a long time, hundreds of years, in fact."

"Just how old are you?"

"I was born in 1367."

Jon's eyes widened. "Dude, talk about robbing the cradle."

"I have seen many things in my life, had many lovers, but I have never had a Rajaaka before. I only have one and I have waited my entire life for you." Nikolas drew in a deep breath, Jon's scent reaching him even from across the room. "Now that I have found you, I will never be alone again."

Jon opened his mouth as if he was going to say something then snapped it shut. Nikolas could feel the force of his gaze. Jon's golden eyes showed his curiosity and confusion, and maybe just a hint of sadness.

"You've been alone? Why? I would think the great Nikolas Vaile had people throwing themselves at his feet."

"That is true, but none of them were you." Nikolas opened his mouth to tell Jon there was a down-side to all of this, but then changed his mind. The man had enough to get used to, for now. He slowly moved closer to Jon, one step at a time until he stood within arm's reach.

"None of them were your Rajaaka, you mean?"

"Exactly." Nikolas reached up and stroked his hand over Jon's cheek, elation filling him when Jon leaned into his soft caress. "None of them were you."

"Why me?" Jon asked. "What's so special about me?"

"You called to me from the first scent of your blood; that's the way it is for my kind."

Jon swallowed hard. "Do you mean you will be drinking my blood?"

"I've already drank your blood," Nikolas said as his fingers trailed down Jon's neck to the two small puncture marks in his neck. "And I will drink from you again. Now we are bonded, a few drops of your blood will sustain me far longer than any other blood I could drink."

"Wi-will it hurt?" Jon whispered.

"Has it hurt before?"

"I don't remember you taking my blood before. I just know you've done it. I saw the marks on my neck." Jon's gaze suddenly flickered up to Nikolas's. "You took my blood during sex, didn't you?"

"I did. It is very erotic for my kind to take blood during sex. It heightens the feeling for both me and my partner, raises our awareness of each other and the pleasure we bring to each other."

"Will you continue to take my blood when we have sex?"

"If you will allow me to." Nikolas rubbed his thumb over the pulse beating in Jon's neck. "I can take your blood without the sex, if you prefer." Nikolas would do whatever Jon felt most comfortable with but he was hoping for the sex part of things.

"Does it hurt if you take my blood when we're not having sex?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"You are my Rajaaka," Nikolas said. "You would feel only pleasure at my touch. That is why your arms feel like they itch and your body aches. You need me as much as I need you."

"I don't understand."

"I pledge to thee my love and faith. I offer my life to thee, my blood for yours. I'll be your night as you shall be my day. I'll stay with you forever, my love, my Rajaaka. I pledge this oath for all eternity. To the world, may we be one soul." Nikolas grabbed Jon's chin and tilted his head back, looking down at the man intently. "Those are more than just the ancient words of my kind. They bind us together. You need to give to me just as much as I need to take from you.

"I share my essence with you as you do with me. By giving your blood to me, you give me life. I give you life in return every time I make love to you and your body accepts my semen. It prolongs your life to match mine."

Jon's eyes widened again and then he burst out laughing. "So, saying, 'Not tonight, dear, I have a headache', could kill me?"

"No, you would not die from not accepting my essence but your life cycle would slow to that of a normal human until you passed away." Nikolas grimaced at the thought. He didn't want to spend the next several hundred years without Jon.

"Tell me the rest of it."

Nikolas cleared his throat and continued. "I cannot take the daylight. It would kill me. You will now be my daylight as I will be your night. That means you will bring me calm and peace while I will give you strength and power."

Jon frowned. "Will I be stronger, like you?"

"And faster," Nikolas said. "You will not take on all of my traits but many of them. You will be stronger, faster. You will be able to withstand much more than you ever have before."

"And in exchange?"

"You will give me peace, as I said." Nikolas brushed the brown hair back from Jon's face. "As a vampire, I can lose control if I become enraged or get injured. You will calm me, help me maintain my control. You will keep me from hurting anyone."

"Is that what happened to you the night we met?"

"No." Nikolas shook his head. "When you cut yourself on your resume, the paper soaked up your blood and I scented it, scented you. It sent me into a bloodlust that did not clear until I drank your blood and started the bond between us."

"What's the rest of it?" Jon asked. "Something about eternity and the world?"



"I pledge myself to you for all eternity. You will be the only one in my life, Rajaaka, for all eternity."

"Seriously?" Jon's eyebrows shot up to his hairline.

"Yes, I pledged myself to you. I can never have another, never love another. You will be my Rajaaka until I draw my last breath. I will stay with you forever."

Jon grinned. "Cool."

Nikolas chuckled. "To the world, may we be one soul. Those are the last words of the claiming. It means our souls are merged. I am in you as you are in me, here . . . ." Nikolas tapped his fingers against Jon's heart then reached up to tap his fingers against Jon's temple. *And here*, he finished telepathically.

"Ni-Nikolas." Jon's face paled. "You-you . . . ."

*I can talk to you mentally as you can with me*, Nikolas replied silently. *That is part of merging our souls.*

*Can you read my mind?*

Nikolas was elated to hear Jon in his head. His eyes stung with tears — something he hadn't experienced in over a hundred years. He inhaled slowly, taking in Jon's scent. It calmed him immediately, as Nikolas knew it would.

"I can hear you when you speak to me but your thoughts are your own. You have to actually project your thoughts to me in order for me to hear them."

Jon looked relieved. While Nikolas wished Jon didn't want to hide anything from him, he understood. No one wanted all of their thoughts heard by other people, even their bond mate.

"Speaking in this manner is very intimate, Rajaaka," Nicolas continued. "No one but you can hear me and I can hear no one but you. This is something reserved only for bond mates."

"Can you always hear me when I *project* to you?"

"Yes."

## Chapter Seven

"Do you know how weird this is?" Jon asked as he gazed up at Nikolas.

"I have a fair idea, yes."

"You're basically saying the scent of my blood drew you to me? I am now somehow bonded to a vampire?"

"Yes."

"And you need my blood to survive."

"Yes."

"And our souls are now bound together, we can talk to each other mentally, and you will never be unfaithful to me." Jon arched an eyebrow at Nikolas. "Does that about cover it?"

"Well, there are the whole *I'll protect you with my life, I need to mate with you often so I don't lose control*, and *I need you more than my next breath* things, but yes, that about covers it."

"Wow, you guys don't play around with this shit, do you?"

"No."

"So, why do I ache when I'm not close to you?" Jon asked the question uppermost in his mind.

"I told you, you need me as much as I need you. Now that we've bonded, we cannot be apart for long without needing to be together. The longer we go without touching, the harder it will get."

"That kind of puts a new spin on not going to bed angry, doesn't it?"

"I would prefer not to, that is true, but I suspect we will have our arguments. We have different personalities and will need to get to know each other, to compromise, if we want this to work." The grin crossing Nikolas's face made Jon shiver. "Be thankful. In the old days, if our Rajaaka were human, we just chained them to a bed and held them captive."

Jon felt his face flush as he thought about Nikolas chaining him to a bed. To have the big, strong man ravage his body while he was tied down and unable to resist? The thought sent lust rushing through him.

His gaze snapped up when he heard Nikolas inhale sharply. The blue of Nikolas's eyes was starting to bleed out, red replacing the vivid color. Jon's heart started to pound, but was it fear he felt now, or arousal?

"You want to be tied down?" Nikolas growled.

Jon's face burned but he couldn't look away from the intensity of Nikolas's gaze. He shrugged. "I've thought about it."

Without warning, Nikolas lifted him into his arms. Jon yelped. The room flew by him as they raced through the penthouse. He laughed when he felt a mattress at his back, Nikolas's body pressing him down into the plush surface. Strong hands gripped his wrists and held them up over his head.

"Rajaaka." Nikolas's voice was deep, rough, barely recognizable. His eyes glowed red.

Jon gave in to the sudden, overwhelming urge he felt and arched his head back, baring his neck.

He cried out as Nikolas struck, sinking in his fangs. A flash of intense, mind-numbing pain quickly faded as Nikolas started sucking. Jon couldn't help but buck against the man. His cock swelled as the pain turned to pleasure.

"Petjya," he groaned, knowing Nikolas liked hearing the word. Jon spread his legs, and Nikolas settled against him. Jon planted his feet in the mattress and started pushing up against Nikolas. He could feel their hard cocks rubbing together through their pants.

Nikolas sucked harder. Jon thrust up harder. The intensity of the sensations racing through his body overwhelmed him. He dug his fingernails into the palms of his hands as he cried out, filling his pants with his unexpected release.

A split second later, Jon felt Nikolas's teeth pull from his neck. He looked up just in time to see Nikolas arch his head back and roar. He felt an answering dampness seep through Nikolas's pants as the man came.

When Nikolas looked down, his fangs were fully extended. Jon watched, fascinated, as a single drop of blood slid down one fang. Nikolas's tongue stuck out and licked it away.

"Rajaaka," Nikolas hissed, his eyes slowly turning from red back to their normal, vivid blue.

"You like the thought of holding me down, don't you?" Jon watched in fascination as the man — who'd lived hundreds of years, and had probably

experienced more sexual diversity than Jon could ever imagine — blushed. Nikolas averted his gaze as if he was embarrassed. Jon pulled his hands free of Nikolas's grip and reached up to cup the man's face.

"If I can admit I like to be tied down, you can admit you like tying me down, hmm?"

Nikolas chuckled. "I suppose so."

"Can I feel your fangs?"

Nikolas hesitated a moment, but then he slowly opened his mouth, showing off a set of gleaming white fangs. Jon reached over and gingerly stroked his finger down one fang. His gaze snapped up to Nikolas when the man groaned.

"Do you like me touching your fangs?" Jon whispered, fascinated by the play of emotions crossing Nikolas's features. He could see the flush of arousal filling Nikolas's face, despite the fact the man had come just moments before.

Jon grabbed the sides of Nikolas's face again and pulled him down until their lips met. He purposely stuck his tongue out and gave one fang a soft caress, then the other. Nikolas groaned and opened his mouth wider, his entire body shuddering against Jon.

"You do like this."

"It's very intimate," Nikolas croaked, "like you're stroking my cock with your tongue."

Jon liked the idea. "Can I get you to come from doing this?"

"God, to have you lick my fangs while I fucked you." Nikolas shuddered again and groaned. "I think I would die from it."

"And here I thought vampires were immortal." Jon chuckled.

"No, just very hard to kill, but that might do it."

Jon licked Nikolas's fangs again, overjoyed at the little groans Nikolas made each time he did it. Fangs were a vampire's erogenous zone. Who knew?

"Rajaaka, please, you have to stop," Nikolas groaned.

"I thought you liked this."

"I do." Nikolas grinned. "Maybe too much."

"You can like something too much?"

Nikolas chuckled. "I've come twice in the last hour, Rajaaka. I think I might need to save some of it for later tonight when I can get you naked."

Jon felt Nikolas's loss the moment the man rolled away from him. It felt like the temperature had suddenly dropped several degrees. He leaned up on his elbows and glared at Nikolas.

"I'm not sure I'm like this claiming thing very much, Nikolas."

Nikolas looked up at him, eyes wide. "Why not?"

"How am I supposed to get anything done if I can't be away from you?" Jon frowned and rolled to sit on the side of the bed. He pushed his hand through his hair, frustrated and feeling needy again. "I have to find a job, move out of my sister's house. Gina and Ben are expecting a baby and —"

"You are my Rajaaka," Nikolas said as he waved his hand absently in the air dismissively. "What I have is now yours, just as if we had entered into one of your human marriages. My lawyer has already drawn up the papers. They just need your signature."

Jon's mouth dropped open. He couldn't even speak, could only stare at Nikolas in complete shock. He started to wonder once again if Nikolas was crazy. Or maybe he'd just heard Nikolas wrong, misunderstood what the man said.

No one signed away as much money as Nikolas was worth. He was the CEO of one of the biggest pharmaceutical and research companies in the world. He had to worth millions, if not billions.

"Nikolas, you're not serious."

"Of course I am. If we were married in the eyes of your people, we would share all of our worldly possessions, would we not?"

Jon frowned. "Well, yes."

"In the eyes of my people, when you became my Rajaaka and we bonded, we were married."

\* \* \* \* \*

Jon sat in a chair just off to the side of Nikolas's desk and watched him work. The phone seemed to ring off the hook but Nikolas handled every caller as if he had all the time in the day.

When he wasn't talking on the phone he was either working on paperwork or on his laptop. Several times, people came to meet with him. Jon sat in the corner the entire time, silently observing how Nikolas Vaile ran his empire.

Part of him simmered at being ignored. No one coming in gave him more than a cursory glance, as if he didn't matter. If someone looked too long, a low rumble would sound from Nikolas' chest.

Jon found Nikolas's possessive behavior amusing. The man seemed intent on protecting him from the world. In fact, this was the first time in the last three days Jon had been there that he was allowed into the office while others freely came and went.

Nikolas took him out to get a new wardrobe then to dinner. He just wasn't allowed out without Nikolas close at hand or a group of heavily armed men to protect him.

Jon snickered when Nikolas's second phone began to ring. The man scowled as he glared at the offending object. Jon rolled his eyes and walked over to pick it up. Nikolas's eyebrows shot up but he didn't object.

"Nikolas Vaile's office, how can I help you?" Jon said into the phone.

"Louis Redgrave here," a gruff voice answered. "I need to speak with Mr. Vaile."

"Hold one moment, Mr. Redgrave, while I see if he can get away." Jon didn't bother covering the mouthpiece. Instead, he merely looked at Nikolas. *Louis Redgrave*, he said silently. *Do you want to talk to him or should I take a message?*

Nikolas chuckled and shook his head. *Take a message. I'll call him back later.*

Jon nodded and put the phone back to his ear. "Mr. Redgrave, Mr. Vaile is on a conference call at the moment and can't get away. He did want me to assure you he would return your call the moment he was free. Is there a message I can take for Mr. Vaile?"

"Just tell him to call me, damn it."

"I would be happy to, Mr. Redgrave."

Jon waited until the other man hung up then did the same. He grabbed a note pad and wrote down the time and date of the call and who it was from, then handed it to Nikolas. Setting the phone back on the desk, he walked back over to his chair and sat down.

Realistically, Jon was bored out of his mind. Sure, Nikolas answered any question he asked. The man took several breaks, and a few long lunches, during which they dirtied the windows again. And at the end of business, all of Nikolas's attention was centered on Jon.

But Jon just wasn't one of those people who could sit around and do nothing. He spent the better part of five years studying his heart out to get a degree while working one, two, sometimes three jobs, which was why it took him five years instead of one to finish his education.

Restless, Jon stood up. He went behind the desk and leaned over Nikolas's back, wrapping his arms around the man. He kissed Nikolas's cheek. "I'm going to go see my sister. I'll be back in a couple of hours."

"No!"

Jon straightened, dropping his arms as he took a step back from Nikolas. "You said I wasn't a prisoner here."

"You're not, it's just . . . ." Nikolas pushed his hand through his hair then dragged his palm down his face. "You're not a prisoner here, Rajaaka. You just can't go out without an escort."

"Why?"

"You're not safe."

Jon frowned, crossing his arms over his chest as he walked around in front of Nikolas's desk so he could look him in the face. "Why not? I'm still the same man I was three days ago, a week ago. What's changed?"

"You're the Rajaaka of Nikolas Vaile, that's what's changed."

"And?"

"And there are people out there, my kind and yours, who would stop at nothing to get to me. Taking you or hurting you is the quickest way to do that."

Nikolas's lips thinned as he gritted his teeth. "I would give every last thing I owned to have you returned safe to me and they know it."

"Who?" Jon absently rubbed his arms to ward off a sudden chill.

"Anyone who knows me," Nikolas said quietly as if he were afraid to voice the words. "Anyone who knows what you mean to me. Even when you were away from me I watched over you. I had to keep you safe."

"Petjya." Jon's heart warmed to hear Nikolas's words. He walked around the desk and into Nikolas's waiting arms. "I don't want to cause you any problems, Nikolas. I certainly don't want anyone to kidnap me or harm me but I can't just sit here and do nothing. I'm bored out of my mind."

"What would you like to do?" Nikolas brushed the hair back from Jon's face.

"Well, I do have a degree, you know, and I did originally come here to interview as your assistant. Why not give me a try?"

Nikolas's eyebrow arched. "You really want to be my personal assistant?"

"Who better to assist you than your Rajaaka, huh?" Jon grinned. "We do everything else together. Why shouldn't we work together?" Jon wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. "Besides, it gives us a good excuse to spend time alone in our office."

"As you wish, Rajaaka."

Nikolas pulled away from him and reached for his phone, and Jon frowned. He'd expected a kiss or something, a soft caress at the very least. Being bent over the edge of the desk would have been nice.

"Bella, I want another desk brought into my office, a phone and a laptop." Nikolas glanced over at Jon and grinned. "I also need a cell phone, office supplies, and a Blackberry filled with all of my appointments, phone numbers, and pertinent information."

Jon blinked.

"I want these items brought immediately to my office but knock first." Nikolas hung up the phone and grabbed Jon, pulling him back into the curve of his body. "I want one promise from you."

"Anything."



"Beware what you offer, Rajaaka."

"Why?" Jon chuckled. "You would never hurt me, you said so yourself."

"True, but I still need this promise from you."

"Fine." John sighed. "What is it?"

"Promise me you will go nowhere without me, not even to the bathroom unless it is the one here in our office. Don't leave this room except to go out to see Bella. And never leave the building or go anywhere with someone you do not know. If there's a problem and you can't find me, find Bella. She will protect you."

"Is Bella a vampire like you?"

"Bella is my mother."

"You're kidding, right?" Jon suddenly remembered every stupid thing he'd ever said in front of the woman, the way he tripped over air. He felt his face turn red. He was pretty sure the blush went all the way down to his toes.

"Do not worry so, Rajaaka, my mother knows who you are. Who do you think brought me your resume?" Nikolas stroked the side of Jon's face. "She scented your blood and knew we would have a connection."

"She knows I'm human, right?"

Nikolas chuckled. Jon rolled his eyes, knowing the answer before the man even spoke. Of course Bella would know he was human. She could smell it just like Nikolas could.

"Oh man, holidays around here are going to be mighty interesting."

"Holidays?" Nikolas asked.

"I usually try to get together with my family for a little while during the holidays. I'm hoping we can still celebrate, your mother, you, me, Gina, Ben, and the new baby, not to mention my mother, assuming we can drag her away from my dirt bag stepfather." Jon frowned. "Do vampires spend holidays together?"

"If that is your wish, Rajaaka, then it will happen."

Jon melted against Nikolas. The man had a way of giving things to Jon that made him go all mushy inside. He was starting to wonder at his good luck. Nikolas gave him everything he ever wanted: acceptance, mind blowing sex, respect for his abilities. It all seemed almost too good to be true.

Jon laid his head on Nikolas's shoulder and tugged on the edge of Nikolas's red silk tie. "Petjya, is there anything about this whole bonding thing I don't know about, something you're keeping from me?"

"Why would you ask this?" Nikolas covered Jon's hand with his own, pressing it against his chest.

Jon shrugged. "This thing between us just seems too good to be true. I feel like I'm waiting for the other shoe to drop, you know?"

"Come, Rajaaka," Nikolas said as he backed up to his chair and sat down. He gestured to his lap.

Jon arched an eyebrow at the man. There was not much difference in their size. He'd look ridiculous sitting on Nikolas's lap.

"Please?"

Jon rolled his eyes, knowing he couldn't refuse, and walked over to sit on Nikolas's lap. He rested his head on Nikolas's shoulder and waited. This explanation was sure to be a doozy.

## Chapter Eight

"There are many things you have yet to learn about being the Rajaaka to one of my kind but I have no doubt you will master all there is to know. Being my Rajaaka will not be easy. I am a very powerful man in my world . . . um . . . like a prince in your human world."

"You're royalty?" Jon squeaked, leaning up to look at Nikolas in horror.

"No, no." Nikolas chuckled. He could see the worry on Jon's face. He seemed more concerned now than he had when he'd found out about him being a vampire.

"Our race does not have royalty as you would think of it. There are tribes of vampires all over the world instead. Each tribe has a territory. Another vampire may not enter that territory without permission."

"And if they do?"

"They face execution."

"Seriously?" Jon gasped. "What if it's an accident?"

"They have the right to plead their case, ask for sanctuary or clemency, but they can still face execution. If another vampire enters our tribe's territory, he or she must immediately report to our security. Failure to do so could mean death."

"That is kind of overkill, isn't it?"

"Not at all, Rajaaka. There are many rogue vampires in the world, those that refuse to submit to the rules set down by our council to keep us hidden from human eyes, to keep our kind safe and keep the humans safe from us. Many of these rogues don't care if humans are hurt or killed."

"But you do?"

Nikolas stroked his hand through Jon's hair. He sounded upset, a little freaked. But these were all things Jon would need to know about living in Nikolas's world. He just wanted to ease him into it a little bit at a time.

"Our council has very strict rules about how humans are treated. Why do you think I operate this company? One of our research departments developed a blood substitute several years ago. We are the major supplier to vampires around the world. It keeps us from drinking the blood of humans, which is forbidden except under extreme circumstances."

"But . . . ." Jon shuddered just a bit. "You drink blood from me."

"You are my Rajaaka, Jon. That makes you special. Only I may drink from you and never to the point where you could be harmed. I take your blood to sustain my life and to cement the bond between us."

"Then you can't get in trouble for drinking from me, right?"

"No, Rajaaka, I will not get into trouble from taking your blood."

Jon's sigh of relief made Nikolas's cock hard. He could only assume Jon's relief came from knowing that Nikolas could continue to drink from him. Nikolas could barely hold onto his control at the thought. He gripped the arm of his chair with one hand, his claws digging in.

"Do you like it when I take your blood, Rajaaka?" Nikolas growled low in his throat.

Jon's face flushed and he quickly buried it in Nikolas's neck. Nikolas gave in to the bloodlust coursing through his body. He lifted the man, swinging him around until Jon straddled his thighs, facing him.

Nikolas gripped Jon's chin and tilted his head back. He leaned forward and raked his tongue across Jon's neck, and the man shuddered in his arms. Nikolas growled and scraped his fangs over the same spot. Jon's hands clenched against his shoulders.

The thread holding Nikolas's control in place snapped. He dropped his hands down to Jon's ass and grabbed him by the seat of the pants, fisting the material in a tight grip. With a mighty yank, Nikolas ripped Jon's pants, splitting them down the seam. Jon got to his feet, allowing Nikolas to strip the ruined slacks from him.

But Nikolas wasn't finished. He wanted to see all of him, feel every inch of Jon's naked flesh pressing against him. He pulled the rest of Jon's clothing from his body until the man stood fully naked before him. Nikolas's breath stuttered in his throat as he tried to inhale.

"Damn, you're beautiful."

"And all yours," Jon said as he held his arms out to his sides. When he started to twirl in a little circle, Nikolas grabbed him and pushed him down onto the desk, bending the man at the waist.

He reached over into a drawer and grabbed the large bottle of lube he insured had been stocked in the room. He popped the top and squirted some out on his fingers.

Jon eagerly spread his legs, accepting Nikolas's fingers into his ass. Nikolas's heart filled to overflowing as little moans came from his Rajaaka the moment he started stretching him.

He was amazed each and every time he made love to Jon at how accepting the man's body was of him. Jon seemed to accept everything Nikolas threw at him, his cock, his fangs, his life.

Nikolas only had two fingers in Jon's body but he couldn't stay out of the man a moment longer. He pulled his fingers out of Jon's ass and replaced them with his cock.

He went slowly, pushing in just a little at a time, knowing he hadn't stretched the man fully. But he had to be inside Jon. He might die if he didn't feel the man's hot silk hold him.

Jon didn't protest. He just spread his legs more and pushed back until Nikolas felt his balls brush against Jon's body. He paused for a moment to savor the feeling of being inside his Rajaaka then started to slowly thrust into Jon's ass.

"Rajaaka, Jon." Nikolas groaned. "I love how your body accepts me, needs me."

"Always need you, Petjya."

Nikolas cried out. Jon's words resonated in his mind, creating a crack in the thick wall Nikolas erected around his heart centuries ago. All that was his Rajaaka crawled right in.

"Petjya, wait." Nikolas stilled. "I want to turn you over."

Nikolas pulled out of Jon and flipped him over onto his back. He wasted no time in grabbing Jon's legs and holding them apart then pushing his hard, aching cock back into him.

"You want me like this, Rajaaka?"

Jon shook his head then crooked his finger, motion for Nikolas to come closer. Confused but willing to give Jon anything he wanted, Nikolas dropped Jon's legs and leaned over his body.

"I want those fangs."

Nikolas groaned and shuddered. He wasn't sure there was a more perfect bond mate on the face of the planet. He leaned closer to Jon and opened his mouth, barring his fangs to Jon's tongue.

He thrust into Jon's ass with the first swipe of Jon's tongue against his fangs. The twin sensations were enough to make Nikolas wonder where his stamina went. He pulled Jon's body closer to the edge of the desk then began an all out assault on him, pounding into the man's tight ass.

"Harder, Petjya, fuck my ass harder," Jon demanded in between licks.

Nikolas thought he might pass out as Jon's tongue swiped over his fangs again. All the blood in his body seemed to be rushing to his engorged cock. He felt lightheaded. He gripped Jon's hips tighter and thrust harder, faster.

Jon's looked up at Nikolas. His golden eyes twinkled and glowed. They hypnotized Nikolas in a way he never experienced before. He couldn't look away. It was like looking into the sun, or at least what Nikolas imagined the sun would look like if he'd ever seen it in real life.

"Rajaaka," Nikolas whispered in wonder.

"Take from me, Petjya."

Nikolas's heart thundered. Tears of heart-pounding joy came to his eyes at Jon's willing gift. His need to orgasm was forgotten as he looked into Jon's golden eyes and stroked the side of his face.

"My Rajaaka, my beautiful Rajaaka," he whispered. "I pledge to thee my love and faith. I offer my life to thee, my blood for yours. I'll be your night as you shall be my day. I'll stay with you forever, my love, my Rajaaka. I pledge this oath for all eternity. To the world, may we be one soul."

"Yes!" Jon exclaimed as he arched back. "Petjya!"

Nikolas sank his fangs into Jon's throat and sucked the man's sweet essence into his mouth. His body felt alive, vibrating with the life-giving blood Jon so willingly offered him.

Nikolas started pumping his hips faster, driving his cock into Jon's body with a force that moved the desk across the floor. He was determined to give to Jon just as Jon was giving to him.

Nikolas reached down between their body and grabbed Jon's cock, jerking the shaft with the rhythm of his thrusts. The pants in his ear, the grip of hands on his shoulders, and the legs wrapping around Nikolas, all worked together to drive him insane with lust.

Nikolas could hear Jon's small moan of protest as he pulled his fangs free of Jon's throat and licked the small bites clean. He knew taking the man's blood was a pleasurable experience for Jon. But, just this once, he needed something a bit different.

Nikolas bit into his wrist then held the bleeding appendage out to Jon.

"Please, Rajaaka, take from me as I have taken from you."

Jon watched him for a moment then closed his lips over the bite mark. At first, Nikolas felt nothing, but then the tip of Jon's tongue brushed against his skin. Jon groaned, his eyes falling closed as he started sucking.

"Jon!" Nikolas bellowed as he felt the same sucking sensation on his cock, Jon's body gripping him tightly, massaging his dick with a silky warmth that sent Nikolas right over the edge into oblivion.

Nikolas's grip on Jon's cock tightened. Using his vampire speed, he jerked the thick shaft faster and faster. In mere seconds, Jon's head fell back and his body arched up into Nikolas, warm liquid filling the space between them.

Nikolas gripped a handful of Jon's hair and slammed their lips together as his orgasm took hold of him and he filled the man with his essence. He could taste his blood on Jon's lips. It was tinted with Jon's unique taste.

Nikolas continued to thrust, unable to stop, unable to give up the exquisite feeling of his bond mate's body. His hips moved slower and slower as his orgasm wound down but Nikolas still couldn't leave Jon's body. He never wanted to leave Jon's body.

Nikolas finally stopped moving and lifted his head to look down at his bond mate. Jon's skin was flushed with life. His smile was serene, as if he was exactly where he wanted to be. Nikolas could only hope so.

Nikolas stroked his hand down the side of Jon's face until the man's eyelids fluttered and opened, golden eyes looking up at him. Nikolas smiled down at Jon. He wondered at the feelings rushing through his body. Feelings he'd never felt before.

"I think I'm falling in love with you," Jon whispered.

"You think?" Nikolas chuckled.

Jon smirked, sending a shiver of delight through Nikolas.

"Well, I still haven't seen how you are as a boss. I might decide working for you isn't worth it. You could be crabby, unorganized, a real monster to work for."

"And if I am?"

"Then I guess I'll have to be only your Rajaaka instead of your personal assistant."

"A much worse fate, I'm sure."

"Oh, I don't know. I think I have enough influence with the big boss to keep you in line."

"The big boss?" Nikolas asked in confusion. "I thought I was the big boss."

"Nikolas Vaile might be the boss of this office but my Petjya rules everything else." Nikolas shivered as Jon's hand stroked from the side of his face, down his neck and chest, to his hip. "My Petjya rules my heart, my mind, and my soul."

Nikolas's chest hurt as his heart seemed to swell. He dropped his head to rest it against Jon's. "I don't think I can survive without you, Jon," he whispered softly. "I don't even want to try. You have become the center of my world."

"Of course." Jon grinned. "You would be lost without me. I'm your Rajaaka *and* your personal assistant."

~The End~

### About the Author

Stormy Glenn believes the only thing sexier than a man in cowboy boots is two, or three, men in cowboy boots. She also believes in love at first sight, soul mates, true love, and happy endings. Stormy welcomes comments from readers. You can find her web site and email address at [www.stormyglenn.com](http://www.stormyglenn.com)

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