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SHIELA STEWART

Seducing
THE
DARKNESS

BOOK 1 IN THE DARKNESS SERIES

Seducing the Darkness

by Shiela Stewart

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Seducing the Darkness
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*For my children, Christopher,
Matthew, and Angela.*

Never give up on your dreams.

CHAPTER ONE

Jacob's Cove, 2025
2 weeks before the total eclipse of the sun

That damn itch between her shoulder blades was driving her nuts. It had started about a week ago and hadn't let up. It wasn't the kind of itch that warranted scratching, but the kind that nagged at you from the inside. The kind that told her there was bad news in the air. She just didn't know when it would happen.

Rolling her shoulders, Trinity headed to her office. The sun was setting, and she had approximately two hours before she had to head out into the night. With her favorite black mug in hand, she sat down at her computer and booted it up.

"Hello, sexy. How may I service you today?" the strong, male voice retorted from the computer.

Smiling, Trinity lifted her cup and sipped. She never grew tired of that humorous greeting her pal, Jonah, had added to her start up menu. There weren't many people she trusted, very few with whom she truly cared about, but Jonah was one of them. Though she'd only known him for six years, she felt as close to him as she would a brother. If she had a brother. Trinity still remembered the look on his face when she'd told him she was a creature of the night.

He'd laughed at her with a belly roll that was incredibly infectious; that was until she changed into the vampire she was. His laughter had died off quickly, but thankfully, fear hadn't taken its place. He'd

sworn, using several colorful phrases, before reaching out to touch her sharp pointed incisors with his fingers.

"Well hell." Then he'd sat down and asked a million questions.

She hadn't regretted telling him for a moment.

"Show me the headlines in today's news. View only," she called out to the computer as she set her cup down and licked the remaining blood from her lips. It had just the right amount of cinnamon. Often she didn't get it right, and it ended up tasting bitter and too strong.

Scanning the headlines, Trinity frowned. The police were out another five officers, apparently. It was the third time this year that the police services had lost multiple officers. Damn pansy assed cops, couldn't handle the darkness and the creatures that lived in it. If they opened their minds to the possibilities, then they might not be so shocked when they saw a vampire devouring its prey.

Not that she approved of her kind taking innocent humans for a snack, but it was a fact of life. There were dark forces in the world, and it was time people stopped turning a blind eye to them. That's where she came in. Since the cops didn't know how to deal with the night creatures, she had to.

She continued to scan the headlines and saw that there had been several break-ins to private homes. Two armed robberies, fights on the streets, and a few fires that had destroyed some poor families' lives. People were acting like lunatics lately. Something was in the air.

Then the small photo of a smiling young girl caught her attention. Beneath it a caption no more than three lines long indicated she was the latest missing girl. It sickened her that a mere tiny caption was all the poor girl received. She was a living breathing human being, and now she was missing and all the damn paper could spare was a tiny caption at the bottom left hand side of the page.

Assholes!

Olivia Holloway had long red hair, deep green eyes, and was a mere thirteen. She was five-foot-three and one hundred and ten pounds. Last seen Wednesday morning wearing jeans and a blue t-shirt, heading to school.

She'd never made it.

Trinity memorized her features and placed the article alongside that of the first missing girl.

Kari Tanner had just turned sixteen when she'd gone missing three days earlier. She'd told her mother she was heading to the store and never returned home. And it seemed as if the cops had no leads. No news there, half of the police force was heading for places unknown

because they were too damn chicken to stay and deal with what they'd seen.

Trinity closed up the document, then checked her email. She had a pile of jokes, as usual, all from Jonah. Two statements that her bills were due in one week. She'd get to paying them tomorrow. Three messages from clients and one from a potential client. She checked out the potential first, read over his needs then sent him a reply. Looked like she had another job coming in soon. Good. The more the better; they helped pay the bills.

She replied to the other clients, then shut her computer down.

"Don't leave! I was enjoying your touch."

Laughing, Trinity hit the power button and shut off the computer. That Jonah, what a comic.



His crew was getting restless, eager to get out and find another sacrifice. Since they'd found out about the rising of the king, they'd been overly impatient. It was up to Chaos to keep them in line. He was in charge of his own small army of vampires, loyal subjects that looked to him for guidance and support. Some had been with him for decades, some as recently as the day before. But he knew how to control his soldiers, and they knew not to cross him. Chaos didn't take defiance and deception lightly. He knew what his subjects needed and was more than eager to give them what they wanted. Provided they obeyed him.

They came as he'd instructed, to the great hall in the church where they gathered for every meeting. It was the perfect set-up. No one would think a church would house a race of vampires as old as time. And those who entered that looked to the Lord for guidance were either turned away or taken into the race with one quick bite. That was how his race was growing faster each day, and his enemy's were not.

He watched the crowds of vampires mull about, chatting to one another, more than likely about the upcoming rising. It was a thrilling time to be a vampire, and he understood everyone's excitement.

But it was time to settle down.

Chaos stood up, his large frame looming over the crowd. He took pride in his size. Well over six feet three inches, he weighed a hefty two fifty. His broad shoulders looked even more menacing with the black leather cape he habitually wore. He liked the look. He also liked pulling his hair away from his face to show off the strength in his cheeks and chin. The only part of his face he disliked was his yellow

eyes.

Though he had been welcomed into the family by King Avadur, more years ago than he could remember, he did not have the translucent blue eyes or the abilities of his creator. There was only one surviving descendant of the king, and he was Chaos' enemy.

Basil Hawthorn, and the last name was laughable. He'd taken it from the minion butler who'd helped him escape from Avadur's hold. Basil was the king's only blood heir, though undeserving of it. Since Avadur's banishment ten years earlier, Basil had done nothing to keep his race from crumbling. All he had were a few stragglers that clung to him simply because he was now the reigning king. But he did nothing to deserve it. The human race outnumbered the vampires, and Basil did nothing to prevent it.

That was where Chaos came in.

As he opened his mouth to speak into the microphone, his sharp teeth slid over his lower lip. He didn't speak but simply closed his lips around his index finger and thumb and blew out a whistle that pierced through the conversation.

All eyes turned to him, and silence filled the room.

"Thank you all for coming. I understand you're excited and restless, but time will pass quickly enough and soon our time will come. Until then, you need to be patient. We will not gather another sacrifice for two more days."

The moans in the room didn't faze him one bit.

"Until then, I have arranged for a bit of a surprise." He waved his hand and four other vampires dressed in black robes walked into the room, each with a human tied and gagged in their clutches. Two males, two females.

"Release the party favors," Chaos ordered with a smile on his lips.

The robed men released their victims, then stepped to the side to watch.

The noise level was horrendous as the vampires rushed to the toys they had been given. The screams from the humans could barely be heard over the rush.

Chaos stepped back and watched as his people took their turns with each victim. They were tossed from person to person, their naked forms being groped, prodded, and pinched by clawed hands. Mouths not yet ready to draw blood suckled and nibbled on flesh ripe and ready. He smiled as a batch of vampires lifted one blonde in the air while another devoured what was ripe between her legs.

Clothing flew in the air as his people disrobed. He sat back and let

the activity lull him. He loved to watch his people at work, loved the way they took what they wanted from a race that refused to believe or accept their kind.

To most, rape was hideous, unacceptable. To Chaos it was a joy. He loved to watch, loved to participate. And he loved it when their life forms were taken in one quick bite. The human race was so delicious in every way, and he'd had plenty in his time.

By the end of the month, he would have more.



The sun had set three hours earlier, yet everything was relatively quiet. Where was everyone? Or better yet, where were the vampires? Usually on her patrols, Trinity came across several, either mulling about or attempting to capture prey. Tonight, it was eerily calm.

Something was up.

For centuries now, the vampires had roamed, claiming victims for their mate, or enslaving them for sex or blood, or simply devouring them for nourishment. Though she was a full-blooded vampire, Trinity chose not to follow in her race's footsteps. She bought her blood from a friend at a butcher shop and that was just how she liked it.

Sure, it lacked in that certain taste she had come to desire for the past seven years, but the blood that had been her lifeline then was not available to her now. And never would be again.

Basil had been her blood source, her lover, her everything. Until the bastard had cheated on her.

It was best she didn't go there again. Every time she thought about Basil and his betrayal, her heart threatened to explode.

She rolled her shoulders again. That damn itch irritated the hell out of her.

Shaking it off, Trinity continued walking through the dark streets. The poverty-stricken section of the city was prime feeding ground for the vampires yet tonight, everything was still. She didn't like it. Sure, it was great that the humans were safe, that they weren't being hunted down and their blood spilled from soft pliable veins. But why?

Why was it so damn quiet?

Usually Chaos had his men on patrol, yet tonight, not a soul was to be found. Trinity supposed she should be thankful because if Chaos's men weren't out it meant Basil wouldn't be out either. The last thing she needed was to run into the cheating bastard she had the misfortune of still being in love with.

She'd worked side by side with Basil once, trying to keep Chaos,

his nemesis, from taking out the human race. And now that she was on her own, she continued the pursuit.

Cruising the streets on foot, Trinity watched as a prostitute saddled up to a car, her long legs dressed in fire engine red fish net stockings, the dark skirt she wore barely covering her ass. Trinity moved just a bit closer, trying to catch the scent of the person in the car, leery that he might be a vampire on the prowl. When all she smelt was cheap cologne, she backed off and watched as the woman climbed into the car. Moments later, the brunette's head disappeared and the scent of male arousal filled the air.

Someone was getting a blow-job.

By her calculations, it took no more than ten minutes before the brunette's head popped back up. She slid from the car, adjusted her tank top and wiped her mouth. The cash she'd just been paid was tucked between her ample cleavage.

Ten minutes and she probably got at least one fifty. Not bad, if you could handle the work. Trinity liked sex, sure, but she sure as hell wasn't about to sleep with a man for cash. Not even when she'd been struggling with money had she even thought to stoop that low.

Some things were sacred, and her body was one of them.

Though she'd been taken before she turned twenty, she had a body that most women would kill for. Her breasts were large, her waist was thin and her hips shapely. Hours of workouts and self ritualistic exercise provided her with that fabulous body. While she'd been sexually active,

Trinity had taken pride in her nympho-like stamina.

And once again her thoughts turned to Basil.

Would she ever get him out of her mind, out of her system? She sure as hell hoped so. Though it had only been days since she's walked out on him, she hoped time would heal her broken heart.

In the mean time, she needed to keep her mind on work. And what she needed most was a good fight. Now where the hell were all the bad vamps?



He stepped out of the shadows and watched as she moved along the darkened streets. She was such a beauty, her long, blood red hair sliding to and fro along the black leather jacket she habitually wore, touching the tip of that round gorgeous ass of hers clad in those skin tight jeans she so favored. She was tall, thin, and had a body any man would kill to touch. He'd done plenty of it in the time she'd been his.

She was a woman gifted with ample breasts, and she enjoyed showing them off. He loved how she displayed them in tight shirts budging open revealing more than enough cleavage and telling the viewer she wore nothing else. Her waist was thin, her hips curvy, and he could picture them now as he held onto her while she gyrated over top of him.

Trinity, his love. She would always be his, even if she thought differently.

Basil remembered with clarity, how she felt wrapped in his arms, how she tasted, and how she moaned his name in ecstasy. And he knew it was his fault he wasn't able to have her now.

The ache in his chest hadn't stilled for one moment since she'd walked out on him, and he doubted it ever would. He loved Trinity now as he had from the very first moment he'd seen her. Completely.

But he'd had to do it, had to make her hate him and had to make her leave him. For her own safety. Even if she didn't know it.

She walked with such grace. Not that of a runway model, but of a confident woman who knew what she wanted and just how to get it. He had always been in awe of how she managed to get into those skin tight jeans she loved to wear. They looked practically painted on, and having had the pleasure of touching that round scrumptious ass of hers, he knew you could feel every intimate part of her body through the jeans. And you had to love a woman who didn't wear underwear.

He'd been a fool and had lost her, but that didn't mean he had any intentions of staying away from her. He had to make sure she was safe.

Basil watched Trinity cross the street. He recognized her restlessness in the short stomp-like steps she took. She was frustrated, and he guessed it had something to do with the lack of vamps out tonight.

Basil had an inkling as to why it was so quiet, and he didn't like it one bit. Keeping his distance, he followed Trinity.

No one was going to harm her as long as he was alive.

CHAPTER TWO

The first thing Dante Vega thought when he entered the lush fancy house was, "WOW!" He hadn't come from money but had always craved it. He hadn't been blessed with fortune; instead, he'd had to struggle for everything he'd wanted in his life.

The people that lived in this gorgeous—and no doubt, very expensive—house hadn't wanted for anything.

He suddenly felt his worth as he was led into the sitting room decorated to fit a prince. He wore faded denims, his running shoes were worn, and the pale gray t-shirt stretched tight across his muscular chest boasted he was a sex machine. His sister was always nagging him to dress better. But he figured his good looks alone would get him places.

Still, he ran a hand through his black hair trying to smooth it into place in hopes he would feel less awkward in such an opulent home.

"Madam and Mr. Holloway will be with you momentarily, sir. Please, make yourself comfortable," the Butler supplied then curtly left the room.

Comfortable he was not, but he sat in the high backed antique linen chair. "Madam and Mr. Holloway will be with you momentarily," he mimicked in the nasal, snooty voice of the butler. "Make yourself

comfortable. Shit." He snorted and shook his head. The damn butler probably made more a year than he did.

"Mr. Vega?"

"One and the same." He stood as the elegant woman entered the room, a tall, thin brown haired man at her side. Look at Mr. and Mrs. Stinking Rich. "Mr. and Mrs. Holloway." He extended his left hand in a friendly manor.

"Thank you for coming. We were overjoyed to find someone available on such short notice."

Oh, he was more than available. Truth was, he was in a dry patch right now when it came to lucrative work. "You're lucky you caught me. I'd just wrapped up a case and was thinking of taking a vacation for a few days," he lied smoothly. What sort of businessman would he be if he told his clients he was desperate?

"While I am sure you were looking forward to the time off, what we are willing to pay you will make up for it." Mr. Holloway nodded as he took a seat on the sofa next to his wife. "You received our fax?"

"Yes, I did." The amount they were willing to pay him to find their missing daughter was twice what he normally charged and would go a long way to helping him out. "It was very thorough, but I like the personal aspect as well. It's easier to get a feel for who I'm looking for when I've seen where they live, how they live, and what they loved."

"Of course." Mr. Holloway clenched his wife's hand. "What can we get for you?"

"Some pictures of her would be great. Numbers of her friends, her classmates, teachers, anyone else that knew her. If she has a diary, I'd like to take a look at it. She might have revealed something in there that could lead me to her abductor," Dante explained when the wife opened her mouth to protest. He knew it was a personal item, but if it helped to find their daughter, then why not agree.

"Not a problem." Mr. Holloway turned to his wife.

"Anna, would you get that for Mr. Vega please."

She nodded, pulling her hand from her husband's to stand, then left the room silently.

"She's devastated," Mr. Holloway spoke up, catching Dante's attention. "Olivia is our only child. She's never given us a lick of trouble."

Until now, Dante pulled out his note pad from his pants pocket. "I can't imagine what you both must be going through, but I promise you, I will do everything in my power to find your daughter."

"I know you're not the most recommended investigator. I did my

research, Mr. Vega," he said, and Dante narrowed his eyes just a bit. "You're struggling right now, and quite frankly, I like that. I believe because you need the money you will put everything you have into finding my daughter. As of now, this case is your priority and I will make it worthwhile for you."

This was one of the reasons he hated the rich. They thought they could bully people with money. But, as it was, he needed the cash, so he would have to endure a little bullying. He stood when Mrs. Holloway entered the room, carrying a small floral box.

"I've put a few pictures of her in this case, as well as her journal and a list of names of people she is acquainted with." She held the box out to Dante. "I hope this helps."

He took the box from her, his hand brushing hers, and he wasn't the slightest bit surprised by its smoothness. "Anything you can give me helps. Would it be alright if I saw her room?"

"Yes, of course. I'll get Frederick to show you the way." She hurried from the room, her eyes glistening.

"As I said, she is devastated. Bring our daughter home, Mr. Vega," Mr. Holloway said as he stood, "and we will make it worth your while."

What did the guy think? That the promise of a shit load of money would give him reason to look harder for his kid? Fuck, people were such dinks. Money didn't mean dick when it came to a life. He'd look whether the person was rich or dirt poor. A life wasn't made of money, a life was sacred. All life was sacred.

Escorted by the butler to the second floor, Dante stepped into the fancy room and his brow wrinkled. Obviously Olivia liked pink and lace. The majority of the room was covered in the color. The walls were a dusty rose floral print, the curtains in deep fuchsia silk. The canopy bed was huge and draped in white silk and lace. There were enough pink throw pillows on the bed to supply a dozen beds.

Everything looked elegant and rich. And as he stepped further into the room, his scarred running shoes sunk in the soft white plush carpet.

"Shit," was all he said as he entered the room. Olivia definitely hadn't wanted for anything in this room. He headed to the bed, barely resisting sitting down to feel if it was as soft as it looked. Opening the nightstand beside the bed, he found a paperback novel. He picked it up and leafed through it. She was on chapter fifteen, and he didn't care to read through it to see what her taste was. He set the book back in

the drawer and walked to the dresser.

He caught his reflection in the mirror and frowned. Maybe he did need to dress a little better. He smoothed his hands over his dark head of hair and smiled. Nicer clothes would enhance his good looks. Something to think about.

He turned back to his job and examined the contents on Olivia's dresser. Make-up, brushes, lotions and cleaning products, nothing out of the ordinary here. He opened the first drawer and sighed. She liked clothing, apparently, and from the looks of it, only the best. Her wardrobe probably cost more than what he made in a year. He closed the drawers and went to the closet. More clothes and a shit load of shoes. "Jesus, what's with girls and shoes?" He shut the door and walked to the other nightstand. He found it empty and assumed this was where her journal had been.

She enjoyed pop music and had a wide variety of albums in her collection.

She was a girly girl, from his impression. And with the detailed report he got from the parents, a good and very loyal child.

So how did you manage to get yourself lost?



It was just after three in the afternoon when Trinity stepped out of the shower. She walked from the washroom to her bedroom completely naked, not worrying about the open windows. The sunlight didn't bother her because every window in the shop and apartments had been replaced with solar windows when she'd told Jonah about being a vampire. The sunlight still shone through the windows, but not with a lethal force. If she could avoid getting third degree sunburn, she most definitely would.

Her skin was slightly wrinkled and very pink from the steamy shower she'd just had. Her hair lay damp, clinging to her back as she headed for her closet.

She chose a black denim, sleeveless shirt and blue jeans. Picking the black lace bra from her drawer, she maneuvered her damp breasts into the cups then reached around the back to do up the clasp. She shifted the cups until they felt comfortable.

Slipping into her skin tight jeans, she bounced up and down drawing them over her butt. They were a pain in the ass to get into, but they felt like heaven when they were done up. She pulled on the shirt, doing up all the buttons but the top three. Her black lace bra peeked with a

tempting hint in the opening of her shirt that stretched across her full breasts. Pulling her hair back, she tied an elastic around it at the back of her head. She rarely let her hair down and almost always put it in a ponytail. Less chance of getting it caught in something, and not so easy for someone to grab hold of in a fight. She decided to forgo the contacts. She was mostly going to be working from home today, so hiding her translucent blue green eyes wasn't a necessity. Another trait she'd inherited from Basil.

She told herself to stop thinking about him and dabbed on a hint of perfume.

Grabbing the disks from her office, she headed out the door and down the adjoining stairway that led down to Jonah's offices. She could hear his familiar heavy metal music playing lightly in the background as she let herself in using her key card. When the light turned green and beeped for her to enter, she yanked the door open and headed for the sound of his whistling.

Because the music was loud enough that he more than likely hadn't heard her enter, she moved stealthily. She loved to scare him any chance she could. Her day wasn't complete until she did.

Baring her fanged incisors, she moved silently towards him as he worked in his office, where he fiddled with a computer. She inched towards him, ready to jump at him when he lifted his arm and sent a glass of icy water splashing into her face.

"A little less of the perfume next time and you might have me." Turning, he let out a belly roar at the site of her. Water was dripping from her face.

"Asshole." She wiped a hand across her face, annoyed that she hadn't scared him more than anything.

"Now is that anyway to talk to the man that has your money?"

She didn't bother to retract her teeth. "Give it up, jerk." She held her damp hand out to him, still annoyed. "You know, you could have fried the computer with that asinine and immature joke." She slapped the disks she had in her left hand against his chest. "Not to mention these."

He took the disks and set them on his desk. "Nah, these babies are fried, as dead as they're going to get." He patted the skeleton of a computer before him. "And as for the disks, they're sealed in a case and a little water won't kill them. Say please."

He smiled at her oh so charmingly, the dimples by his mouth sinking in even deeper. He had a soft, elegant sort of face, one that could easily stun you and make your heart do a little pitter-pat beneath your

chest. Good thing she was immune—for the most part—to his charms.

She bore her teeth and hissed her response. "In your dreams, pal."

"Oh, if only you knew what I dreamt." He winked at her in the way he always did, then turned to his desk. It was a sin for a man to have such long lashes and big sexy eyes. He opened the drawer and pulled out a white envelope. "At least call me God."

"I'll call you dead in a minute if you don't give it up." She yanked the envelope from his hands and opened it up. "Nice."

"Always is." The door to his office opened and he looked over and smiled. "Hey, beautiful."

As always, Jonah's face lit up when he saw his wife. Trinity envied their passion for one another. And it only reminded her of the love she still felt for the man that had broken her heart. Basil had looked at her like that once, too.

"You got laid last night, stop sucking up." Ariel leaned down and kissed Jonah on the lips before turning her attention to Trinity. "Hey Trin, how goes it?"

"What have I said about talking about your sex life in front of me? Ugh!" Trinity shuddered. "Things are as they always are. You?"

Ariel was an imposing sort of woman with a large frame. But oddly enough, her face, though somewhat gruff, had a gentle quality to it that made you feel comfortable around her.

"I got laid, enough said."

"Jesus." Shuddering again, Trinity tucked the envelope in her back pocket. She didn't need to hear about their sex life. There were just some things, Trinity believed, that you didn't share. "The codes and everything are on the disks for the Manchester firm. If they have any problems—"

"I'll call you. Hey, where you off to?" Jonah asked when she headed for the door.

"My office. I have new stuff to get to. Later, Ariel."

"See ya, Trin."

With her check in hand, Trinity headed back to her office. She had a few hours to work before sundown.



Trinity stood in the shadows and watched as a group of humans exited a local hang out called Buckeye's Bar. It was a known pick-off for her kind. Most of the humans that came and went from the bar tended to leave through the back entrance which led to the alley. Then

bam! You were vamp food.

People were so stupid. Why did they think they had their faculties in order when they plied themselves with alcohol? The brain was sluggish after several drinks and thus impaired their thought process. So of course, stupid and drunk, they stumbled through the alley thinking themselves impervious to harm.

When would they learn?

Considering the past few weeks, it seemed as though the vampires were out in full force. Okay, so people didn't want to believe there could actually be such a thing as a blood sucking half dead creature taking up residence in their city. But come on, one look in the newspapers and you had to at least be worried about all the dead bodies being found lately.

Still, people never believed it could happen to them. Until they end up dead.

She watched a group of young girls—and if they were of legal age she would eat her shoes—stumble from the bar. They separated and two went off towards the street while the last wandered drunkenly down the dark alley.

Oh yeah, like this was going to end well.

"Five, four, three, two, one. Bam!" She shot her hand out just as a vampire jumped from out of the shadows and right beside the stupid young girl. Shaking her head, Trinity moved towards the screaming girl. Idiot.

"I don't think you want to be doing that."

The tall, gangly, greasy haired vampire jerked and spun around to face Trinity. His teeth were primed for the kill, his yellow eyes glaring at Trinity as if she were his next meal. The poor girl in his arms was wailing something awful.

Now you regret going through the dark alley.

"Yeah, says who?"

Trinity lifted a brow, cocked her body to one side and rested her hand on her hip. "Jesus, could you have said anything more lame? Let the girl go and no one has to get hurt." Okay, so that wasn't completely the truth. He would be more than hurt when this was over.

He would be dust.

"How 'bout I keep her and you wait against the wall until I'm done?" He jerked the girl towards him, yanking her head back to expose her neck. He was just about to bite down when Trinity placed a hand on his shoulder. He looked up and his face froze.

"How 'bout I don't." Trinity bared her fanged teeth to show him

she was not going to back off. "Beat it kid." She clamped her hand on the vampires shoulder, her nails digging into his flesh as she jerked her head at the girl. As she'd suspected, the guy was a wimp.

He released the girl who immediately ran off screaming.

"Now, you wanna take off, or am I going to have to mess up that pretty face of yours?" she asked sarcastically as she glared down at him.

"You couldn't handle me, bitch." He slapped her hand free, then curling his fingers in a fist, threw a punch at her face.

She was ready and ducked out of the way. Slicing her hand up, she chopped him in the neck, sending him crumbling on the ground. "You don't want to mess with me, jerk," she advised as she planted a boot-ed foot on his jugular. The razor blades she had attached to the toe drew a small amount of dull gray, deoxygenated blood as she pressed it just below his chin.

"Go ahead and dust him, he's useless."

Trinity glared over her shoulder at the man she had once been destined for and felt her heart ache. She couldn't stop herself from admiring the beauty of the man before her. His long dark hair floated in the light breeze sweeping away from a face sculpted of fine bone and delicate skin. He looked so dark and dangerous in that long, black leather coat he always wore. One look into his translucent blue eyes turned her heart to mush.

Then she reminded herself how much she detested him.

To show she wasn't a push over, Trinity pressed her foot harder, the razor blades cutting into the vampire's neck. His arms flailed out, trying to yank her foot away from his neck. His legs kicked wildly, but Trinity had a good ten pounds on the scrawny vamp. Tilting her toe downward, she sliced deep into his neck, finally cutting his head off. In a whoosh he disintegrated into a pile of dust, his last breaths used to scream his way to death.

She took a deep breath, shook the remnants of a useless life from her boot then turned. "Basil."

"Trinity." They stalked each other like the predators they were, neither taking their eyes off the other. "You're looking good."

Her breath always caught in her throat when she looked into those icy blue eyes of his. Unlike the rest of her race that had yellow eyes, he had the color of his heritage. He was royal. "So are you, but you already know that." She circled him, her eyes never leaving his. She knew how quick he could be, and she was prepared. "Was he one of

yours?"

"Would I have cared if you dusted him if he was one of mine?" His hand slid to his pocket and he pulled the pack of cigarettes from his pocket. "How have you been?"

She rolled her shoulders, the itch still irritating her. "Better now that I left you." And wasn't it odd how acrid a lie could taste?

"I noticed you've had your belongings gathered from our home."

"Your home," she corrected, keeping her distance from him. She knew perfectly well being close to him would have dire repercussions.

"Have you settled into your apartment then?"

He was being so nice, so civil. She didn't like it. "Why are you here, Basil?"

"I might ask the same of you, Trinity." He lit the cigarette smoothly and the flame showed a devastatingly handsome face, with curves and lines and strength.

"I'm protecting the humans," she remarked with an edge in her voice. "Always the warrior, my fiery princess." He smiled sweetly as he drew long and hard on his cigarette then smartly blew a ring of circles in the air. All without taking his eyes from hers.

"Don't call me that." She hated when he called her that. Okay, once upon a time hearing him call her that made her hot, but that was then. This was now.

"It's what you are and always will be to me."

"Yeah, I was such a treasure, that's why you decided to fuck another woman. Leave me alone, Basil."

In a quick shift that surprised her, he was in front of her, his hand clamped on her chin as he tilted her face to meet his. "Despite my indiscretion, I will always love you." He dropped his cigarette and ground it out beneath his boot.

She jerked her chin free, snarling, "You have a funny way of showing it."

Grabbing her chin again, this time he held a little tighter. "Love has many sides to it, my sweet." He sealed his words with a sharp kiss, his teeth scraping her bottom lip right before he vanished into the night.

Cursing, Trinity spat on the ground, wanting to eliminate his flavor from her tongue. Bastard thought he could come back and act as if nothing had happened. Fuck him! She still remembered all too clearly what it had felt like to walk in on him and the woman crawling over his naked body.

Shaking herself free of him, Trinity walked away. The last thing she

needed was the memory of Basil's kiss or the feel of his touch on her skin. What she needed was a vicious kill. If only she could find one.



Reappearing as soon as she was far enough not to notice, Basil watched her stalk off. He clutched one hand to his chest while the other touched his lips. He not only felt her on him, tasted her in him, but she was as much a part of him as the blood that pumped in his veins. She was now, as she would always be, the only woman he would ever love.

And if she knew the real reason he pushed her away, she might be stupid enough to come back to him. As much as he wanted that to happen, it could never be.

The hardest part of loving someone...was setting them free.

He turned away from the woman he loved and walked away into the night. His was a destiny to be spent without his love.

CHAPTER THREE

"You know, Dante, if I wasn't your sister, I wouldn't put up with this shit."

Smiling sweetly, Dante leaned down and kissed his sister's dark head of hair. "You know you love me."

She snorted. "Please, I have to love you. If I don't, no one else will. What were you doing, anyway? You reek, bro." She waved her hand in front of her face.

"I was wrapping up a case that involved manure. Enough said. I'll grab a shower as soon as you get started on those files."

"You have got to be kidding me." She slapped a hand on the huge pile on the desk. "There has to be at least a hundred here."

"One hundred and six, to be exact. And they need to be put on the computer and on disk. With last week's fire scare, I realized I'd better take care of these babies."

"I have been telling you for years to move up into the twenty-first century. You pick now to do it." Shaking her head again, Lexi opened the first file. "Aw jeez, how am I supposed to read your chicken scratch?"

"Carefully. I'm heading up to grab a shower. If anyone calls—"

"I'll tell them I killed you. Now go away before your stink burns a

hole in my eyes and I can't do your job. Shit, this is going to take me forever." As she grumbled and booted up the computer, Dante smiled and headed for his apartment.

He didn't know what he would do without his sister. They'd all been so close once, before his twin brother Danny had been abducted. Until his twin brother Danny had been abducted. Both he and his sister had been lost, and his parents had grieved something awful. To this day, Dante still felt as if a part of him had died the day his twin had been taken. They'd been identical, in every way, and without his brother, he only felt like half a human. It had been tough for him after losing a part of himself, even tougher to have watched a monster attack his brother and carry him away. No one had believed him then, that a man with fangs and yellow eyes had attacked Danny and dragged him off, but Dante knew the truth.

They'd never found his brother's body, and that had been a tough one to deal with for everyone close to Danny. Including himself.

So he spent his life looking, investigating the creatures that lurked in the dark in hopes of finding the one person that meant more to him than life itself.

Pulling the rank shirt over his head, he tossed it in the vicinity of the hamper as he headed for his drawers for a fresh shirt, pants, underwear and socks. The picture that sat brightly on his dresser made his heart ache. It had been taken on their thirteenth birthday. They'd been happy then. One week later his life had been torn in two.

He lifted the picture and gave his brother a kiss. Setting it back down on the dresser, Dante headed to the shower. When he found the bastard who had taken his brother, the guy would be dust in the wind.



She felt his hands as they caressed her bare skin. They were always gifted in knowing just where to touch to make her shiver. They skimmed along her breasts with a softness that felt like a feather's touch. His lips teased hers with gentle whispers of promises.

She wanted so desperately to give to him everything she was.

Her heart ached for him, her body begged for what only he could give her. And when she opened her eyes and looked into the soft blue of his, she came to a sharp realization of what she was about to do.

Bolting awake, she sat, panting, her hand clutched to her breast as her body vibrated with need.

It was bad enough she had to see Basil during her waking mo-

ments, but to see him in her sleep when she was defenseless, that was another. He'd come to her in her sleep and had done things to her that had left her aching in places he had no right making her ache.

And God help her, she wanted more.

Well, now she was awake and no longer defenseless. And the bastard was going to pay.

Slamming her car door upon her exit, she marched up the front steps to Basil's grand home. She didn't give a rat's-ass if she was welcome or not, and anyone who stood in her way was going to end up being very sorry. Her trusty metal railway spike, the one she'd found just after walking out on Basil, sat in her belt always ready when she needed it. And as she hammered her fist on Basil's front door, she was prepared to use it. There were occasions when she'd thought to use it on Basil for cheating on her, but she knew what kind of hell that would cause, killing off her race's king. So she'd kept it on her at all times from then on, and imagined more than once how it would feel to jam it into Basil's cold, cheating heart.

And at the same time, she felt sick with the thought.

When Cooper, his trusty butler opened the door, she didn't wait for an invitation and barreled past him. "Where is he?"

"You have no right being here, miss."

"I like you, Cooper, so I'm giving you fare warning to walk away."

He was a tall man with sable hair slicked back with some sort of grease and a face that could soothe a savage beast. She had no idea how old he was but knew he'd been with Basil since his birth. The guy looked pretty damn good for being at least a century old.

"I can't do that, miss. You have entered where you have no right being. I must ask you to leave." He moved towards her in a fluid motion.

Yeah, she had no right being here, now. Though this had once been her home, when she'd left Basil, she'd relinquished rights to entry in his home. She had no intention of staying. She only had a message to deliver, then go on her merry way.

She lifted the spike at perfect heart level and stood tall. "Don't make me do this, Coop."

"I fear you not, miss. Now, if you—"

"Back off." She yanked her arm away before he could grab her. She did like him, always had, but if she had to dust him to get to Basil, she would.

"You may go, Cooper," Basil stated from where he stood atop the

tall staircase.

Only her eyes shifted, and when they did, she felt her breath hitch. Damn him for being so utterly gorgeous. He stood there like a king, and rightfully so, as he was one.

Then she felt the spike in her hand, and she remembered why she was there. She raced up the steps and came to a dead stop directly in front of him. She lunged at him with the spike only to have him dematerialize and appear several feet behind her. Trinity stumbled and nearly fell face first on the top step before he caught her arm.

"Careful now, those things can kill."

She was not in any mood for his sardonic humor, and as she righted herself, she spun and lunged one more time. She had no intentions of killing him, just making him hurt as much as she was right now.

He caught her hand this time, overpowering her, then yanking her closer, the stake pressing to his chest. Their breath mixed as they gazed into each others eyes. "You always smell so delightful."

She jerked her hand free, lowering the stake. "You fucking bastard. How dare you come to me in my sleep. How dare you violate me in such a way."

"You came to me willingly, my fiery princess," he stated calmly, his eyes never left hers.

"Stop calling me that," she spat back. "The hell I did, you bastard! You came to me in my sleep, while I was defenseless."

"I felt you calling me in my sleep. So I came," he commented lazily, running his fingers through her hair. "You know as well as I that when you call me, awake or asleep, I am compelled to go to you."

"I never called you, but if by some rare and utterly impossible way I might have called to you, it was with disdain." Her fingers curled so tightly around the spike that they ached.

He looked at her with utter calmness. "A call is a call. How am I to distinguish as to why? You moaned my name." He stepped closer, his eyes level with hers. "And you were begging me to touch you."

She clenched her jaw, anger bubbling like a nasty cauldron inside of her. "Don't ever touch me again, Basil, or you will regret it." She pivoted, ready to storm away, when he grabbed her arm and swung her back. She had but a moment to think of something to say to him before his mouth came down hard and hot over hers. The next thing she knew, he was pinning her against the wall, one hand yanking hers above her head while the other skimmed over her body. She wanted to melt, but the fury kicked in instead.

"You want what only I can give you."

"I want you dead," she spat in his face, anger a fierce lashing.

Glaring at her with those icy blue eyes that made her body quiver, he bore his fangs, then took her mouth in a kiss that told her just what he had in mind. And when his hand slid down her body, she shivered. She'd woken before he could fulfill her and now her body was betraying her by wanting him to finish her.

"Oh, Basil," she moaned and spread her legs as his hand slid down to the heat that was scorching her. She wanted him, and God help her for it.

She couldn't help herself; she needed to feel his flesh. Tearing his silk shirt open, she clawed his chest as his hands worked her into a frenzy. His mouth seduced hers with such precision that she only wanted more. His tongue was soft as it slid between her lips, and when she bit down on it and heard him moan, the fire erupted inside of her.

She didn't object when he drew the zipper down on her jeans, nor did she protest when he yanked them off. She kicked one leg free to lift and curl around his waist. She felt his hand between them as he undid his pants, then pulled them down over his hips. And when he hoisted her up and penetrated her, their eyes met.

There was so much love in that look he gave her that her heart threatened to break. And as he drove her up, drove her over the final wave, she knew what she'd allowed.

She'd given in to him even when she swore she never would.

"You need me," he whispered in her ear.

His words knocked the wind out of her sails and she came rushing back to reality. "You're right, Basil, I do need you." She jerked her hands free and with a lethal smile, she lifted her knee and hammered it right into his crotch. "Dead."

He crumbled onto the floor, nearly falling down the long flight of steps they stood on, and she took great satisfaction from hurting him.

He'd caused her just as much pain when he'd broken her heart.

Yanking her pants on, she didn't bother to do them up but stomped down the stairs, leaving him writhing on the floor.

"If you don't want me coming to you anymore, then stop calling to me."

She brushed his words aside and slammed the door in her wake.



It was fitting that it would be raining. She felt as dreary as the

weather.

It was just past four in the afternoon when she arrived at the Holloways' residence. She felt safe traveling during the day, knowing they were in for a two-day steady soaking of rain. The sun wouldn't kill her if it was shining, but it sure as hell would scorch her exposed flesh enough to produce large red welts that looked unappealing and hurt like hell.

Trinity hurried from her car to the front door of the house, the rain drenching her. She took a moment to admire the beauty of the two-story Victorian-style house before ringing the bell. When the doors opened and a tall gentleman in a gray suit appeared, she wondered if he happened to be the father of the missing girl. "Mr. Holloway?"

"Who may I ask is calling?"

Ah, not the father himself, but the help. Figured. Why would a rich guy answer his own door? "Trinity Ford. I'm an investigator. I'm here to talk to the Holloways about their daughter, Olivia."

"One moment please." He closed the door in her face, and Trinity's jaw dropped. He had just shut the door in her face. How rude. When he opened it again, she was ready to give him one hell of a verbal attack. Then he invited her inside. "Right this way, Miss Ford."

That's more like it. She entered the lavish home and her eyes went wide. Jesus, they certainly showed their money. The place was top of the line everything plus a good dose of antique. How could a person live like this? Everything looked so white, so clean, so fresh. It gave her chills.

"Mr. Holloway will be with you momentarily." He held his hand out to her, indicating for her to wait in the room to her left.

She nodded and took a seat in a high back satiny fabric chair in a room as big as her apartment. She felt as out of place here as she did in a museum.

"Miss Ford."

She stood as the tall gentleman entered the room. He wore some fancy tuxedo, looking like he was off to some soiree. She had to wonder what kind of man would entertain while his daughter was missing. "Mr. Holloway?"

He nodded. "I was told you had some information about my daughter Olivia?"

"Not exactly. I'm investigating her disappearance and I was wondering if you might have a moment to talk to me."

He scratched his chin in thought. "We already have an investigator

on the case. Who sent you?"

"I'm working for the parents of the other missing girl, and I believe the two are connected," she lied smoothly.

"Ah, well then, you would do better to talk to our investigator. I'll have Jennings get you his number. If you will excuse me, I have a dinner party to attend to."

He left before she had a chance to object. "Well, don't try to help to find your daughter," she mumbled to herself, rolling her eyes. A dinner party. She didn't understand people sometimes.

"Here you go, Miss Ford."

She jumped at the voice and spun around to the butler. Man, he was fast. "Uh, thanks." She took the card he held out and was smartly shown the door and as she headed for her car, the rain soaked her to the bone.

Slipping into her car, she wiped the rain from her face and looked down at the card. Vega Investigations. She tucked the card in her shirt pocket, deciding to check him out.

Starting the car, she pulled away. She hoped the guy was cooperative. All she needed was some information, for her own benefit, to see if the two girls were connected in any way.

She drove out of the high class neighborhood, feeling more at ease now. Rich people made her nervous, even though she'd come from a well to do family. But her parents didn't flaunt their money. To the contrary, they'd lived in a modest four-bedroom, two-level split house in an average income neighborhood. She'd been raised by two loving parents and had a loving younger sister.

Until she'd lost them all.

Coming to a stop at the curb, Trinity eyed the small brick building before her, the name, Vega Investigations, printed on the front entrance. She looked around at the rundown houses and buildings and shook her head. This was the seedier side of downtown. Why would someone as wealthy as John Holloway hire someone who was so obviously beneath him? It was baffling. There had to be a mistake.

Shrugging, Trinity left her car and entered a very tidy office with a dark haired woman busily working behind the desk, cursing like a sailor.

"He is a fucking dead man." Trinity cleared her throat and the woman lifted her head. "Oh, man, I didn't hear you come in. Welcome to Vega Investigations." She flashed a charming smile so obviously strained. "How may I help you?"

"Is Mr. Vega in?" Apparently, the woman was not having a good

day. Welcome to the club.

"He's on a conference call right now. Would you like to wait around until he's done?"

"Yeah, that would be great." Her eyes drifted to the crashing sound coming from the office door to the secretary's right and the curses that followed. "Sounds like he's done on the phone."

"Apparently. I didn't catch your name."

"Trinity Ford, and you can tell him I need to talk to him about Olivia Holloway."

"One minute, please."

Trinity waited while the woman disappeared behind the door. She heard muffled voices and didn't try to pick up on what they were saying. A moment later the woman reappeared with a fake smile.

"He'll see you now." She threw the door open with a snarl.

Boy, she really was having a bad day. Stepping past the woman, Trinity entered the office and saw the back end of a gentleman crouched on the floor, busy picking up a monitor that lay smashed on the floor. "Rough day?" It seemed to be going around. He turned his head, his green eyes fanned in dark lashes meeting hers and Trinity admired his rugged good looks. His hair was a mess of black framing a ruggedly handsome and unshaven face.

"I've had better." He stood, wiped his hands on his faded jeans before holding one out to her. "Dante Vega."

"Trinity Ford." His handshake was firm but not overpowering.

"Um, excuse the mess." He hurried to clear a chair that was currently stacked with files. "I...uh...have been busy."

"Takes a lot of effort to pick up after yourself," she said mockingly taking a seat in the chair.

He smiled while sitting in the beat up leather chair behind his desk. "It's the maid's day off. So, what can I do for you? Lexi mentioned you wanted to talk about Olivia Holloway?"

"Yes." She shifted in the chair, feeling the thinness of the cushion beneath her butt. "I was told you were investigating her disappearance."

"Is that for real?" he blurted out. And when she tilted her head in confusion, he explained, "The hair, is that real or colored?"

She was asked that all the time. "What do you think? I'd like to collaborate somewhat, if you wouldn't mind."

"I figured it was dyed. It's just too red, you know, a fake red. Not that it doesn't look good. Just not real."

He was pissing her off now. "It isn't meant to look real; it's a state-

ment. Now, can we discuss Olivia or would you like the number for my hairdresser?"

He smiled as he responded. "Who are you working for?"

She blinked at him with a completely baffled look. "What?"

"Who hired you to look into Olivia Holloway's disappearance?"

"No one. I'm here on another case that I believe is linked to yours."

"Who?"

"Who what?"

"Who is this case you're working on?"

Jesus, the guy was making her head spin. "Look, all I want to do is swap some info. See what you've got and see if it will help me in my case."

Dante leaned back, giving her a deep cursory look. "Do you have any I.D.?"

"Oh, for Christ's sake." She jumped up from her chair. "All I want is some goddamn information. Are you interested in helping me find whoever took her or not?"

"Took who?"

"Fuck." She threw her hands in the air and fled the room. He was damn lucky she didn't eat humans.

CHAPTER FOUR

Chaos stood watch as the initiation took place. Two new recruits had been made, two more to add to the many. Their army was growing fast, but not quite fast enough. Even though two had been made, they had lost six this week. Four of them had been at the hands of the one that had been banished.

Trinity Ford.

The name still invoked sickness and hatred in him. She was one of their kind, yet she stalked the night, killing her race as thoughtlessly as if they were nothing more than ants. He'd give anything to take her out.

His men were currently doing a marvelous job of initiating the new recruits, whipping them into submission. But it was his final word that would tell them who it was that held their fates in his hands. The smaller of the two males was sweating profusely, yet the other seemed almost indifferent to what was happening to them.

The crack of the whip echoed in the room as did the yelp from the men. "Do you vow to always be true to your kind?"

"Yes!" they cried out in unison. Gray blood seeped from their chest wounds.

The whip snapped once more. "Do you vow to give your life for your master?"

"Yes!"

Chaos stepped up to the men hanging from the steel beam. Their blood slid down bare white chests to drip at their feet, leaving a pool of muddy gray. "For three day's you will hang, for three days you will hunger, and at the end of those three days—should you survive—you will be granted freedom to serve your master." He took a step back, then left from the room.

He entered the small office he claimed as his own and walked to the wide window on the east wall. "You did very well, Magnus. You do me proud."

"Thank you, my lord." Magnus bowed his head, his hands clasped together under the wide sleeves of his robe as he stood on patrol over the young girls.

"How are our offerings doing?" As he asked this he watched one of the females, a blonde, roll over on her cot. For the better part of the day, they were sedated. Only at night were they allowed to come out of their sedation to eat and wash. It was imperative that they remained healthy, and those that refused to eat were forced fluids via intravenous.

"The brunette seems to be resisting the drugs. She's given us a bit of trouble."

Chaos glanced over at the brunette as she lay slumped over in the corner of her cot. "You haven't harmed her, have you?"

"Of course not, my lord. But we did have to hit her with a sleeping dart. She sliced one of the guards with her utensil and nearly took his eyes out."

Chaos smiled. If she wasn't needed for the offering, he might enjoy keeping her around. "Then it was deserved as no sharp utensil should be given to the offerings." He turned to Magnus, noticing the man had yet to lift his head to face him. "A lesson you won't soon forget, will you, Magnus?"

Briefly, Magnus lifted his head and showed the gash across his left eye and down his cheek. "Yes, sir."

"I'll send out a group this evening to capture another. Any recommendations?"

"Taggart and Zane as well as Brody and Moose would be best. One of our members was taken out the other night. He was weak. Sending the stronger out, I think, would be best, my lord."

"So shall it be. See to it, will you, Magnus."

"Yes, my lord."

"Who was it?" he asked as he turned back to the women. They were so young, so nubile, and they would make the perfect offerings.

"Gavin, sir. He'd only been with us for a year."

Not strong enough yet, Chaos thought. "Who took him out? Was it Basil?"

"No, my lord. It was Trinity."

Chaos's eyes narrowed. "Trinity?" Would she ever stop her crusade to rid the world of his kind, of her kind? "That's three this month alone." And the month had just begun.

"Yes, my lord."

"Perhaps she needs to be reminded that she should keep her nose out of our business." He turned his head only. "See to that as well, would you, Magnus."

"Yes, my lord. Is there anything else?"

"Nothing for now. You may go." He gave his attention back to the women as Magnus left. Trinity was a thorn in his side that he eagerly wanted to be rid of. She'd become even more vicious since she'd been scorned by her lover, Basil, she'd become a royal pain in his ass. She took out their kind, snubbed her nose at her own race, and tried to live as though she were human.

Well, maybe it was time to remind her of who she was, and where her loyalties should lie.



Still annoyed hours later, Trinity wandered the dark, dangerous streets. All she'd wanted was to gather a bit of information from the investigator, and all he'd done was infuriate her. The man was a buffoon. She should have bore her fangs at him, maybe lunged and pretended to want to eat him if he didn't give her what she needed. Smiling, Trinity thought how pleasant that would have been to watch. And the man would have deserved it. But then the smile faded as she reminded herself to do so would put her at risk for revealing herself as a vampire. She didn't need that.

Basil.

So she was no better off now than she had been before she'd stupidly gone to the lame ass investigator for information.

Two girls were missing, and she was getting nowhere. The dumbass investigator wasn't any help and neither were the cops. She'd tried getting info from them, only to be snubbed and dismissed. Well, she could play tough, too. First thing in the morning, she was going to

ask Jonah to dig into the police computer database and find out what they knew.

The sound of muffled screams drew her attention. Tuning her ear in the direction it came, she sped off on a dead run, heading towards the scream. In the distance, she spotted two vampires in a dark alley, one holding the screaming woman by the arms, while the other tried frantically to grab hold of her legs. There was tape over her mouth, yet she did her best to draw attention to herself by screaming as loud as her muffled mouth would allow.

"It's really sad, you know," she said as she came to a stop only feet from the vampires, "that the two of you have to resort to gagging and tying up a girl just to get laid when they have a new invention called the blow-up doll."

The vampire who held the girl's arms narrowed his eyes at her while his partner's head spun to face her. They were well aware of who she was. "Fuck off, Trinity."

"Oh, Moose, now you've gone and hurt my feelings." She did a quick spin, lifting her left leg up and round house kicked him right in the jaw. The snap of bone echoed in the still night air and then the thud of his body as he hit the ground. "See what happens when you hurt my feelings."

He rubbed his jaw, only slightly fazed, and stood. "This is me not giving a shit." He lunged at her, his fists ready, his body primed for a fight.

She was prepared and dodged the blow. Spinning, she caught him in the kidneys with her elbow and took great pleasure in the high pitched squeal that came out of his mouth. Moose was huge, hence the reason for his name, but when he was injured, he squealed like a girl.

"Let the girl go, Zane," she warned the other vamp.

"Fuck you I will." He held the woman tighter, backing away slowly.

From over her shoulder she saw Moose get to his feet and the expression on his face was enough to scare death himself. Good thing she didn't scare easily. But then the girl in Zane's grip started crying, and Trinity looked over to make sure she was okay.

She heard the step only seconds before Moose's body rammed into hers. She tumbled to the ground, heavy Moose on top of her, her face scraping on the pavement. "Damn it, no marring the face." She flipped, or tried to at least, but Moose outweighed her by several hun-

dred pounds.

"What's the matter, little girl? Can't move?" Laughing, he leaned down even closer to her ear, and licked her neck.

"Aw, Jesus, Moose, that's disgusting." Then she smashed her head into his nose and once again he let out a loud girly squeal. She jumped up, ready for the next blow when she felt the sharp sting in her left arm. Turning, she had a moment to see the shadowed face behind her before everything went blurry.



Basil entered the room with a slam of the door that shook the walls. He stalked across the floor, anger registering in every step. Mostly, he was infuriated with himself, but receiving no relevant information in his search of the missing girls added to his anger. Seemed everyone on the outside was tight lipped. Not that he expected his enemies to be extremely forthcoming with information, but he'd thought his persuasive invitation might afford him some.

Maybe if he hadn't been in such a foul mood, they might have opened up to him more.

He hadn't been able to shake his mood since Trinity had left him. Cupping himself in his palm, he was damn grateful he recuperated quickly.

He supposed he deserved it.

But did she have to be so mean? He had no control when she called to him, especially when he was asleep. His blood was in her and hers in him. They were connected, and if she was in need, of anything, he was compelled to help her. And even though he'd made sure she would never come back to him, he could do nothing about her needing him and calling out to him.

He just had to make sure she was kept safe.

"I take it you were not successful?" Cooper asked, quietly entering the room.

"This time," Basil added, running a hand through his hair in frustration.

"Next time will be the charm. I'm sorry I wasn't able to keep Miss Ford from entering the other night."

"Don't stress yourself over it, Cooper."

"She could have killed you, sir."

He dismissed it with a wave of his hand. "She couldn't kill me even if it meant her life." He left the room as angry as he'd entered it. No, he was sure Trinity would never end his life. Though she felt

betrayed by him, he knew deep in her heart her love was still strong.

It would just take time to heal.

He felt the tingle inside of his mind, and he sighed.

And still she called to him.



Dante stood before The Digital Domain, glad it was still open, and scratched his head. Why would an investigator be working in a computer store? Unless....she wasn't really an investigator. Or he could simply have the wrong address.

Well, stop standing here staring at the door, you dummy, go inside and find out. You are an investigator after all.

Shaking his head, Dante opened the door and heard the familiar tinkling of the bells he, too, had over his office doors. Not many people still went the old way of announcing a customer's entrance into a store. Most went digital or electronic now. Apparently he wasn't the only one stuck in the past.

"You just caught me. I was about to close up. How can I help you?"

Smiling at the pretty brunette, Dante walked to the front counter. "I won't keep you long. I'm looking for Trinity Ford?"

"She's gone for the day. If you leave me your name, I'll tell her you stopped by."

Dante's smile slowly faded. "Do you know when she will be in?"

"She sort of holds her own hours. She comes and goes as she pleases." The woman stated as she shifted her feet. "Why don't I take your name and number and she can call you when she gets in."

"Sure. Dante Vega. Does she work on computers?"

"No. She creates programs and websites. Number?"

But she was not an investigator, Dante thought, as he recited his number. "Tell her to call me anytime. Tell her I decided we should talk some more about what she saw me about yesterday."

"Will do."

"Thanks. See ya." He left the building wondering just who Trinity Ford really was.

CHAPTER FIVE

Trinity came to in a dark room that smelled of mold and old dirt. She was familiar with the smell. Often, the older vampires preferred to sleep near damp, musty dirt where there was no light whatsoever and the crisp temperatures kept their bodies cool. She never understood it. The smell of the dirt made her nose burn. But then again, her death had been made by Basil in his bedroom with candles burning and soft music playing and flowers strewn about the room. She'd never had to live in the cellars like most other vampires chose to.

Shaking that thought away, Trinity focused her eyes on something beyond the darkness. It was handy that vampires could see in the dark. Or ones made from a true vampire, such as herself. And damn it, why couldn't she stop thinking of Basil.

There was a huge wooden plank, chiseled to a point at the end, rigged to some sort of metal arm that was attached to the ceiling. The point of the plank was painfully jabbing into her chest right over her heart.

This was not a good place for a vampire to be.

It was then she noticed she was as naked as the day she'd been born. Though she knew they hadn't assaulted her, she couldn't be so sure they hadn't fondled her when they'd stripped her of her clothing.

She shuddered, feeling very dirty.

"One wrong move and it is dusty dreams for you."

Her eyes shifted from the plank to the voice to her left. As he moved towards her, Trinity simply glared at him. Of all the vampires in the world, she hated Chaos the most. He was a cutthroat vampire that found torture as pleasing as savoring a cold beer on a hot day.

"Am I supposed to be terrified now?" she replied with a dry, dismissive tone.

Chaos stepped a little closer, his dark jacket rustling as he moved. "I would be if I were you."

"Well, isn't it fortunate that you're not me. What's the point to this...ridiculous show of dominance, Chaos?"

"Stop killing my people," he said with a stern, strong voice.

"Say please." She bared her teeth at him.

"I wouldn't be so smug if I were you, Trinity. I do have the upper hand." Waving his hand, the point of the plank pressed against her skin with a little more force.

She didn't wince or hiss or even show one ounce of fear. That would give him too much leverage. "And you know killing me would start the biggest war your kind has ever seen."

He closed the distance between them. "I don't intend to kill you, my dear. Just rough you up enough to get my point across."

"You know, that word keeps coming up. Funny, huh, as I have one stabbing me in the chest right now! All I would have to do is open my mind and call Basil and this would all be over with and you and your kind would be in the fight of your life."

Chaos didn't show any signs of being fazed. "You would call him for help after what he's done to you?"

That grated. Did everyone know that she'd been made a fool of by Basil? "I didn't say I was calling him for help. I can get out of this perfectly fine on my own. I thought you might like a visit from your sworn enemy."

His laughter, a high, squeaky sound rippled in the dark dank room. "Aw, are you still hurt at the fact that he was banging another cunt while he was pretending to love you?" He wasn't quite quick enough to stop the wad of saliva she spat at him. Wiping it from his cheek, he snarled at her as he stepped back. "Have at her boys, but do leave her breathing in the end."

Trinity had a moment to think, "Shit" before the four snarling beasts entered the room, whips ready. If her arms and legs hadn't been tied to the damn brick wall, and whatever drug they'd hit her with

dulling her abilities, she might have fought them off easily.

"I'm gonna take great pleasure in having my way with you, sweet thing."

She'd rip her own arms off to stop him from going any further.

"I bet she tastes great. What do you think, Reggie, should we take a taste?"

"Try and stop me."

"Go any further and die, pigs." She squirmed, realizing that she had been drugged enough to dull her strength. Damn it.

"Ooh, I'm scared."

"You should be." The four beasts turned as Basil materialized behind them.

"Shit," one said as he scurried away from Trinity.

"Good, now the rest of you back off as well, and we won't have to start anything," Basil warned, his fangs bared.

"Go away, Basil, I can do this on my own." Trinity struggled, fighting the ropes holding her in place. It grated on her that he would come to her rescue, even though she knew without his help, she would have been defenseless against the beasts. And he wouldn't be here if she hadn't been thinking of him in the first place.

"Sure you can, my sweet. But a true gentleman, such as myself, couldn't possibly leave a damsel in distress without aiding in her rescue."

"Aw, fuck." Why did he have to talk like that? It always turned her heart to mush.

"How about you back off?" one of the beasts challenged.

"Don't be an ass, Mudge. Do you have any idea who this is?" another beast remarked.

"Slime," the beast denounced, his chin jutting out, his fangs bared.

"There is always one." Shaking his head, Basil began by simply twirling his index finger and had a dust cloud forming on the ground.

"One."

"Let's get the hell out of here," one of the men cried out.

"Fuck that," another spat, eyes defiant.

"Two." Basil twirled his hand, creating a vortex of dirt nearly as tall as he.

"Jesus, Basil, can't breathe here." Trinity coughed, keeping her eyes closed. She hated when he used his powers like this. But creating a tornado was one of his favorite forms of distraction against his enemies. It was a good weapon, providing you weren't caught in the

cross-fire.

"I ain't budging, buddy," the beast defied, holding his arm over his mouth, blinking his eyes rapidly as the dirt caked his face.

"Three." With a loud roar the vortex swept them all up, spinning them endlessly without any effort on Basil's part.

"Jesus, Basil, enough. I can't fucking see or breathe." Trinity hacked, her eyes watering something fierce. She felt the stake as it was pulled back, then her arms and legs being released. She was about to step down from the platform when she felt herself being swept up in his arms. "Put me down."

"I will when we're out of here. Get on my back."

"Forget it." She shoved him, trying to break his hold.

"It's the quickest way out of here, now get on my back."

Growling, she did as he asked.

As he changed into a silver wolf she straddled his back and wrapped her arms around his neck. He took a running charge and burst through the open doorway and down the corridors, avoiding the vampires charging after them. His feral growl and fanged teeth were enough to have them backing off. Everyone knew perfectly well he could rip into them faster than they could attempt to break away.

The instant Basil made it out of the compound, she tugged on his ear. "This is good, let me off." She tugged a little harder when he refused to stop. She huffed as he ran through the front gate and down the road before coming to a stop.

Trinity climbed off his back and wiped the dirt from her burning eyes. "I don't need your help."

He turned to her, still in wolf form and bore his pearly white fangs before transforming back into a man. Rolling his neck, Basil turned and swept a sultry look over her body. "Could have fooled me. Here." He removed his long jacket and held it out to her.

"I don't want your clothes either," she snorted, her lip curled.

"Suit yourself. Personally, I like looking at you in nothing but your birthday suit."

"What?" Glancing down, she nearly gasped. She'd forgotten that she was nude. "Give me that." She snatched the jacket from Basil and slipped into it. "Are you following me now?"

"I heard my name being mentioned."

She glared at him with a great deal of hostility in them. "Get over yourself already."

"You know, I'm the one that should be pissed at you after what you

did to my dick."

"You deserved it." Holding the jacket closed, Trinity turned and stalked off.

"No man ever deserves that." He hurried after her.

"You're not a man."

"Ouch!"

"Fuck off, Basil." Trinity stopped to get her bearings. She had no idea how far from her apartment she was. And the drug was still in her system, disorienting her.

"Keep going straight for the next few blocks, turn left, straight for another six, then right, and you should be on your block," he supplied as he followed at her side. "Or, I could change back into a wolf and give you a ride home."

She narrowed her eyes at his innuendo. "I like to walk." It helped to clear her mind.

"Fine, walk. Want to tell me why Chaos' men had you?"

"I messed with his men. Guess he didn't like it much." She rubbed her arm, remembering now the sharp sting she'd felt in her tussle with Moose.

"He'll hear some words from me. No one, no one, takes my woman hostage and—"

She stopped abruptly and in doing so, he slammed into her back, knocking her forward. "What did you just call me?"

"I will not have anyone hurting you, Trinity."

The tone in his voice sent shivers throughout her body. It wasn't the anger she heard in it, but the vow. "I'm a big girl, Basil, and I can take care of myself just fine."

"You may think you're brave and capable of taking care of yourself, but we both know you need me."

If there wasn't steam coming from her ears, she would be surprised. "How dare you. I don't need your help; I've never needed your help."

"You and I both know that is not true. Where would you be now, my love, had I not come to you and changed your life?"

She refused to answer that because it would prove him right. She would have been alone, broke, and most likely working as a waitress in some dive, barely able to make ends meet. "What the hell is wrong with you? Why can't you just leave me alone?" she snapped at him.

"Because, I love you," he said simply.

She snorted. "Yeah, you loved me so much that you showed it by

banging another woman in our bed.”

“I know I made a mistake.”

“Bravo for you. Now fuck off.” Spinning around, she marched on the paved sidewalk in quick angry steps.

“You’ve never made a mistake in your life?” he threw at her, catching up to her pace.

“Yeah, it was allowing you into my life in the first place.”

“Don’t you dare put the blame on me. You wanted me as much as I wanted you. More.”

Yeah, she’d wanted him, and it grated that she still did. “Just get out of my face, Basil.”

“We’re connected, Trinity.” He grabbed her by the arm and spun her to face him. “And you know you need me as much as I need you.”

“If you needed me so much, why’d you cheat on me?” She jerked her arm free. “And unless you want a repeat of our last encounter, you will back the fuck away and leave me alone.”

Nodding, he turned and walked the opposite direction.

“Damn it!” Kicking the dirt, Trinity continued on her way. Why did he have to turn her insides to jelly every damn time he was near her? And why the hell did she still have to be so damn far gone on the cheating bastard?



Yeah, he’d been a bastard and she was right to hate him for what he had done to her. And it was so hard to stay away from her when she was inside of him as surely as the blood that ran through his veins. He wanted her back in his life in the worst way. He knew he was sending her mixed signals; hell, he was feeling anything but stable right now. He knew it was best to keep her out of his life, but to be without her was killing him.

He needed to remind himself why he was doing this. His father was somehow finding a way through his banishment to communicate with him and to threaten him. The dream had been so vivid, so real that even after he’d woken, Basil had felt his father’s presence.

And the warning still echoed inside of him.

“I will not only do harm to you, my son, but to those you hold dearest. No one will be safe if they’re near you.”

His mind had been set then. He’d kissed Trinity goodbye that day as she went off to work and set his plan in motion. The prostitute had been more than willing to spend the day with him for the amount he paid her. And when his beloved walked through the doors to their

bedroom late in the evening, she found him wrapped in the arms of another woman.

It had broken his heart to hear the pain in her voice, but it was a pain he was willing to bear for her safety.

And until he knew his father was not going to break out, he would have to let Trinity believe he was a cheating bastard.

Even if it killed him.

CHAPTER SIX

Another girl had been taken, and it had been right before her eyes. Trinity stared at the caption before her in the newspaper and cursed. If she'd been on her game and hadn't had Basil on her brain, she wouldn't have been caught off guard, drugged, and taken away. And the poor girl wouldn't have been abducted by the vicious brutes. But as much as she wanted to blame Basil, she knew it was no one's fault but her own. She should be strong enough to keep him from her thoughts.

She was strong and she was more than capable of taking care of herself. It graded on her that he would call her weak. Well, she'd prove to him she wasn't weak.

Basil's jacket hanging over her chair caught her attention.

Setting the paper on her desk, Trinity lifted the long, black leather coat and headed for her door. It was just past seven in the evening and the sun was low enough that she could step out into the back alley behind her apartment. As the door shut behind her, she tossed the jacket on the gravelly ground, then pulled out a pack of matches.

She was going to take immense joy in lighting his precious jacket on fire. She heard the back door open, then click shut but never took her eyes from the jacket.

"What are you doing?" Jonah asked, coming up beside her.

"Getting rid of some trash."

"Why are you burning something that looks as if it cost more than my life?"

"Because it belonged to a pig." She struck another match and dropped that along side its brother. It wasn't burning but melting and going out instead.

"That's Basil's jacket? You're not going to ignite it that way. Leather doesn't burn well, thank the gods."

"Fine, whatever, then I'll try this." Spinning on her heels, she dove into the garage dumpster for some paper to add to the jacket. What she needed was kindling.

"Why do you have Basil's jacket?" He stepped back as she dumped a pizza box as well as a good amount of newspapers on top of the jacket.

That sucker was going to light up fast now.

"Because he's a pig." She didn't want to get into the reason. And she wasn't about to tell Jonah that she still loved Basil and ached for him every day.

"Well, I know that. What did he do now?"

"He pissed me off." She struck another match, decided to light the whole booklet on fire before dropping it on the pile of garbage. To her joy, it ignited immediately and she let out a whoop as it burned bright.

"What else is new? But you still haven't told me why you have it."

"I just do." Look at that sucker burn.

"Is he still alive?" When she tilted her head and looked at him under her lashes he amended. "Did you off him?"

"No."

"Then how did you get his jacket?"

"What's with all the questions, Jonah?" She watched as the jacket beneath the fire began to melt and curl. What a wonderful sight.

"Just curious. Did you have sex with him, Trin?"

She turned on him, clenching her jaw. "Back off, Jonah."

"Oh, Trin."

"Don't, don't 'oh, Trin' me. I didn't go to him; he came to me, in my dreams. Okay, so I called out to him, but I was asleep, defenseless. That didn't mean he had the right to do what he did to me. And yes, I let him fuck me, and believe me, I regret it now. But I got back at him." She watched the jacket burn, and it felt anything but satisfying.

"By burning his jacket?"

"No, by kneeling him in the groin. This is because he rescued me." The fire was dimming and that, too, annoyed her. She wanted to watch it burn some more.

"I'm lost."

"I don't want to get into it now, Jonah. What are you still doing here?" She stomped out the fire then scooped up the ruined jacket. This she would send to him to let him know just how she felt about him.

Jonah ran his card over the alarm pad and the door clicked open. Grabbing it, he let her in first. "I had some stuff to finish up before I headed home. You have a few messages on the board. What are you going to do with that now?"

"Send it back." She dropped it in a box along with a good amount of dust from the paper and cardboard box, then turned to grab a pad and pen. On it she wrote in big, bold letters. "Come near me again and this will be all they will find of you."

"I am so glad I never piss you off."

"You always piss me off, Jonah., But lucky for you, I like you." She dropped the letter on the dust and melted leather, then closed the box, taped it up, wrote the address on it then dug out a mail slip. "What messages?"

"Huh? Oh, for you? Don't know. Ariel said some investigator came by. Cute, too, or so she said." He rolled his eyes.

"What did he want?" She slapped the mail slip on the top beside the address, then set it by the door for the morning mail pick up.

"How the hell am I supposed to know? Read the note. You know, the only way you're going to be rid of him forever might be to kill him."

She turned to Jonah with surprise on her face. "Why would I kill him? I hardly know him."

Now Jonah's face wrinkled with confusion. "Basil?"

"The investigator."

"I meant Basil."

"Oh." She yanked the notes from the board and glanced over them. "You know I can't."

"Then why did you just imply you would. He knows you can't either."

He had a point. "You're pissing me off now, Jonah."

"Right."

"Do you have any work for me?"

"Not at the moment. He's not going to give up on you, Trinity."
"Goodnight, Jonah." Spinning around, she headed out the back way. She was in the mood for a kill.



He was pathetic, really he was, and he knew it. It was a Friday evening and where was he yet again? In his office, working. And so what? Who said just because it was Friday, he had to have a date or some plan to do something? Christ, he was too old to have to worry about making plans to party on the weekend. He was a grown-up now. And why was he trying so damn hard to convince himself?

Shaking his head clear, Dante went over what he had on file already on his case. His informant in the precinct told him that yes, the cops were linking all three missing girls together in one case. Three girls going missing in the course of a month and a half, all similar in age. You have to think it's all related.

The ringing of the front door gave him pause, and he cursed himself for forgetting to lock up. Instinctively, Dante reached into the drawer where he kept his weapon. Now who would be visiting him at eight in the evening on a Friday night? Someone who wanted trouble, that was who. Rising from his desk, gun in hand, he inched towards the door.

In one, quick, well-trained move, the gun was up and aimed as the person stepped towards his office door.

"Jesus." Letting out a long breath, he lowered the weapon to his side. Trinity Ford could thank her lucky stars that he didn't have a nervous trigger finger.

"Jumpy much?"

"I don't usually have visitors this late in the evening." He disengaged his weapon as he headed for his desk.

"Then why was your door open?" Trinity followed him.

"I forgot to lock it." He set the gun back in the drawer, then took his chair. "You got my message, I see."

"Wouldn't be here if I hadn't." She took the papers from the chair and set them on his desk. "How do you live like this?"

"I find it comforting. You here to fix my computer or pretend to be an investigator?" She lifted her jaw and the overhead light reflected in her eyes and made them sparkle. She had oval eyes in a stunning blue green that he found incredibly sexy.

"Fine, you pegged me. Mostly I work with computers."

"Mostly?"

"I dabble with investigating."

"But you don't have a license?"

"Is that a problem for you?" she nearly barked it.

He shrugged his shoulders. "We'll see."

"How did you find me?"

He smiled as he leaned back in his chair. "I do more than dabble as an investigator. Another girl's been abducted."

"So I read. Connection?"

He shrugged again. "How did you get into this investigation?"

"A friend of mine asked me to look into it. Her friend's daughter is one of the missing."

He smiled as he leaned forward, resting his chin on his knuckles. "A friend of a friend sort of thing."

Her jaw tightened. "Right. You?"

Liar. But he decided not to pursue it. She might have something that could help his case. "Hired by the family of missing girl number two. How do you see it?"

"I think they were abducted by aliens or maybe some monster got a hold of them and used them for a late night snack. Or a serial abductor."

"Right." He wondered what she would think if she knew such things as blood sucking monsters actually did exist. "You wanna go get a drink, and we can discuss this some more?"

"Sure, why the hell not."

"Great. I know this place, great appetizers."

"Works for me."



She followed him in her car to a small pub two blocks down. For a second she thought that the place was deserted, it looked so dark and there weren't a whole lot of cars parked around it. Then the instant he opened the doors, she heard the hard pumping music which told her the place was not deserted.

The room was dimly lit with round tables scattered about. Hard music blasted from overhead speakers, and off to her left, she saw people actually dancing on a small dance floor about the size of her living room. Trinity wasn't too sure how she and Dante were going to hear each other over the loud music.

"Hey, Dante—wait, wait just a damn minute."

"Shit." He lowered his head and quickened his steps. "Just ignore him, okay."

"Who is he?" Trinity wanted to know as she followed after Dante through the crowded room.

"My brother in-law."

Ignoring him didn't seem to be working, because he came rushing towards them. He had a hard face covered in a days worth of stubble, and his voice was gruff when he spoke

"Who do we have here? A date perhaps? Murray Latruce, and you are?"

"Trinity, but I'm not his date," she stated emphatically. "Oh." His expression grew somber "So then, you're...what?" "We're both on the same case. Can we use the back room?" Dante asked quickly.

"Sure."

"Can you bring me a lager and..." Dante turned to Trinity, waiting for her order.

"Whatever beer you have on tap is good with me."

"Sure thing." Obviously disappointed, Murray headed back to the bar.

"Don't ask." Dante shoved the door open, waiting for her to enter first.

She lifted her brow but stepped past him and into the room. Did she look like the sort that liked having a man hold doors for her?

The music wasn't as loud here, and the room was lit brighter than the bar area. Trinity wondered what this room might be used for. "I'm not interested in your love life, or lack there of. Let's just get to the missing girls."

"You don't have much patience, do you?" He held a chair out for her.

"Not when it comes to missing people. All the cases are connected." She took a seat at the table, deliberately choosing a different one than the one he held out to her. She was not a lady and didn't like being treated as such.

"I agree. Three girls go missing in such a short period of time is too much of a coincidence. The age of the girls varies, but none are over sixteen There are no similarities in looks. They don't attend the same schools, churches, or have any common extracurricular activities. Thanks." He smiled when the waitress brought their drinks. "So it's my guess that he isn't looking for someone in particular, or comparing them to someone in particular. I think it's random."

"You think it's just one person doing this?" She knew it wasn't. She just wanted to get his take on it and see if he had any idea why or where they might be kept.

He shrugged as he set his mug of beer down on the table. "Most serial abductors work alone."

She set her beer down, licking the remaining liquid from her lips. "Most."

"So what do you have?"

"Same as you. No similarities, nothing linking them in any way." Aside from the fact that she was sure they had all been taken by vampires. Whether they were still alive or not was anyone's guess. She hoped they were, but with vampires involved, it was questionable.

"Well, this was fruitful." Lifting his mug, Dante gulped down more beer before asking, "How'd you get into computers?"

Disappointed that she hadn't learned anything more about the abductions, Trinity leaned back and decided to just go with the conversation. "In this day and age, a person would have to be stupid not to get into computers."

He chuckled and lifted his left hand. "Hi, my name is stupid."

Her brow furrowed. "You had a computer on your desk."

"Yeah, but I'm about as illiterate on them as a new born baby."

"Get out!"

"God's honest truth. My sister—my secretary—has been trying to get me to learn more about them. But I just can't get into it."

"There's nothing to it, really."

"Easy for you to say."

She shrugged, nudging her half empty beer aside.

"Well, I'd better be off." She wasn't one to sit still for long periods of time, and aside from that, she needed to patrol.

"So soon?" He cleared his throat. "I meant, the night is young." He smiled shyly.

"I have an early morning," she added as she stood. "Let me know if you find anything more."

"You, too."



Dante had been right about one thing. The night was still young, for those that lived off the night. She didn't think that the girls were still alive. Not when their abductors were vampires. The only thing a vampire wanted a human for was their blood and sex, and keeping

them as slaves for both purposes. She just had to find out why young females were suddenly being stalked and taken.

The night was active, as it usually was on a Friday. Even with the news reporting three females abducted in the last month and a half, young girls were stupid enough to venture out, alone then yet. Those that stayed in packs would have a better chance of making it home, but the ones that walked alone wouldn't. How the hell she was going to protect all of them was anybody's guess, but she had to try.

She chose the usual clubs downtown where she knew some of the vampires hung out, waiting. The music roared out every time the door was opened to let more people in. Stupid, Trinity thought. Why would anyone wait hours to get into a place just to be crowded like sardines in a can and listen to some bad music? The smell of sweat and a mixture of perfumes and cologne as well as the dry ice they used to smoke the place up for ambiance was nauseating in itself. Then add in the drunks, the druggies, and the stupidly horny and it made for a very bad place. In her opinion, at least.

That damn itch she'd been having lately was back, and it was driving her nuts. Rolling her shoulders, she watched two redheads staggering from the bar's exit and towards a dimly lit street.

Here we go again, She kept to the shadows as she followed after them. Uneventfully, they made it to their car and drove off. She hoped the cops were out tonight and those two were hauled in to sleep off their drunk.

Turning back to the club, she waited and watched for the next two hours and was glad nothing had happened. So far. But the night was still young.

"Can you smell it?"

She didn't jump, but slowly looked over at Basil who appeared next to her. She hated when he just appeared out of thin air, but she knew he loved that entrance the best. "Your stink? Always."

He didn't sneer at her but slowly lifted his hand and lit the cigarette between his fingers. "The blood of a human. Does it still draw you in, make you hunger, make you want?"

"I've got a strong will." Deliberately, she shifted away from him. It wasn't only the smoke that bothered her—and always had—but his scent. It pissed her off that he could still make her ache.

She waved the smoke away annoyingly and shifted just a bit farther away. "Why are you skulking, Basil? Because if you're following me, I am going to so kick your ass."

"I was in the neighborhood."

She glared at him and growled her response. "If you're here to drink, let me warn you now that I won't allow it."

"Who am I supposed to drink from now that I no longer am nourished by your blood?"

She chose not to answer that. "Why does it seem that you're always around, lurking in the dark, around places that aren't your usual hang-outs? Unless....there's a reason?" The thought stabbed into her, and though she didn't want to believe it, she had to ask. "Are you trying to take more females of your own? Are you the one abducting young girls?"

With one quick and easy flick, he tossed the cigarette into the darkness. The red tip glowed as it flew through the air before landing on the gravel to bounce and spit out a cloud of red sparkling fireworks. "I will not even dignify that with an answer."

"It's so obvious, now that I think about it. I was young when you took me, made me yours. Is that what you're doing, Basil, making another mate?"

His icy blue eyes narrowed dangerously as he stepped closer. "I have a mate and to think you would even have such a thought sickens me."

"You don't have me, Basil." Her voice grew dangerous. "If I'm so wrong, then do explain to me why you're always out in the darkness, skulking near all these young girls?"

"The very same reason you are, my dear." He ran a finger along her face, making her scowl.

She snorted, stepping away from him before he decided to do something stupid, like kiss her. "Please, I hardly think you're out here looking to find the person or persons responsible for taking four innocent girls."

Leaning against the building behind them, Basil looked off into the direction of the bar and the people waiting in line to be allowed inside. "You think so little of me and that's a shame. But I suppose I've done it to myself. Yes, Trinity, I am looking to find out who took those young girls, as you are. And why you might ask?" He shifted towards her, sliding in nice and close and making her pulse speed up. He laid his fingers on her cheek, then slowly slid them along her face. "Because I have a feeling I am connected to the reason they've been taken."

She had all but a moment to open her mouth to respond when he closed it with a mind numbing kiss, then pulling away, turned into a dog and scampered away.

Now what the hell did he mean by that?

CHAPTER SEVEN

She needed to see Basil, even though being near him only made it harder to walk away from him. But his words the previous night, had struck more than a little curiosity in her. And she was well aware that he might have actually said that just to get a rise out of her and have her show up at his door. But she had to be sure.

Yanking her door open, she actually jumped a little when she saw Dante standing on the other side.

"Hi, I was hoping you would be in."

"I was just leaving."

"It won't take long."

Reluctantly she stepped aside, and in doing so, scented his arousal. "Is this about the missing girls?"

"Not really. I thought I would come by and see if you wouldn't mind helping me get more acquainted with modern technology."

"Huh?"

His lips curved up and the dimples in his cheeks sunk in more when he smiled. "Computers. I thought maybe we could set up a time for you to come by and help me become a modern civilian."

"You have the weirdest way of saying things. I'm not the one you want for that. You should talk to Jonah, my partner. He's better at teaching than I am."

"Oh, well...I just thought, since we knew each other and are working on this case together, you could—"

"Whoa, wait up there. We are not working this case together."

Disappointment settled on his face. "Right, but we are collaborating. Look, I just thought I would feel more comfortable having you teach me. That's all."

Her eyes narrowed as she began to catch on to his thinking. "You want me."

"Yeah, to teach me how to become computer literate."

"No." She leaned a hip against the door frame. "You want this body, you want to touch it, taste it, fuck it."

"Whoa, Jesus, talk about blunt." He wiped a hand across his face.

"It's the truth." She was never one to mince words.

"Okay, yes, I find you attractive, but, Jesus..." He wiped his hand across his face again. "Look, I should leave now before I end up embarrassing myself even more. Call me if you find anything new on the missing girls." He left with quick, efficient steps. Trinity shook her head as she shut the door. The last thing she needed was another man chasing after her for sex.



It was such a nice evening, and he so loved watching the sun set. It was low enough in the sky that it couldn't do him any harm, so he chose to sit out on the veranda to enjoy it. Beside him on the table sat a glass of Chardonnay and a cigarette smoldering in the ashtray. The scent of both wavered upwards to strike his nose, but it was the aroma of spicy soap that drew his attention

He knew it was her even without turning around.

"I had thought to see you sooner than now." He lifted the cigarette to his lips and took a slow, meticulous drag from it before tapping it out. "Struggling with your emotions were you?"

"I was busy. I do have a job, you know," Trinity added as she stepped out in front of him.

He looked up at her enchanting face and the scowl that she held in place so diligently. "And how is Jonah these days?"

"I didn't come for small talk, Basil."

He shrugged a shoulder, lifting his wine. "I received your gift this morning. That was an expensive jacket, I'll have you know." And the note she'd added with it had done more than upset him. She actually worried him. Would she dare carry through?

"And now it's dust." She took a chair across from him, stretching out her long legs. "What the hell did you mean last night?"

"I said a lot of things the night before. What in particular are you speaking of."

She clenched her jaw. "Cut the crap, Basil. Why do you think these missing girls have anything to do with you?"

"Care for a glass of wine?"

"No," she said abruptly.

Casually, he took a sip from his glass before replying. He so enjoyed making her wait. "A rumor."

"What about it?"

"I heard one." He set his glass down and leaned back in his seat.

"About what?" she asked through gritted teeth.

"My father."

Her eyes perked up. "Get out?"

His father, King Avadur, was the first male vampire to have been created, centuries ago. He had been chosen by the queen, Rajana, as her mate. Basil was the one and only child they'd created together, before his father had deserted the queen with his son, locking her behind the Realm of Mystics. But Basil had made sure his father paid by locking him away in the Dark Realm. Well, the betrayal towards his mother was only one of the reasons. Attempting to rule the world was the major factor in his decision.

"As I said, a rumor."

"Okay, so what if it is a rumor, tell me about it?"

He had her attention now. "I've heard rumors of a resurrection."

"What? How?"

He shrugged and raised his glass once more. "Like I said, it's a rumor I heard casually."

"And you decided to look into it. But what does that have to do with the missing girls?"

"I don't know that it does, but I'm curious."

"Don't play coy with me, Basil. How would the abduction of these girls play into it?"

"There's a parchment," he said after a moment, "hidden for centuries, that tells of a resurrection spell using five virgin females. A prophecy if you will."

"Five? Four have been taken already."

"If indeed they were taken for that reason."

"Too much of a coincidence for me. Where is this parchment?"

"It's vanished as of late."

Her brow lifted. "Do you have it?"

"No." He sipped.

Her eyes narrowed. "You said that awfully fast."

"Why would I have it?"

"Seems appropriate for you to have it. You could use it to resurrect your father."

"I don't have it, and I don't want it loose either. Was there another reason you came by to see me?"

"You're evading the question, Basil."

"Yes, I certainly am." He stood now, setting his wine on the table to crouch down at her feet. "Do you remember all the nights we sat out here, watching the night arrive, making love under the stars?"

"Give it up, Basil."

"Give what up?" he said innocently as he took her hands in his, playing with her fingers, imagining them caressing his back, running through his hair.

"Trying to get me back." She tried to pull her hands away. "It isn't going to happen. You hurt me, Basil, and I won't get over that any time soon." She stood up and finally managed to tug her hands free then hurried off into the impending darkness.

Closing his eyes, Basil remembered the first time he took her to his bed. How innocent she had been, so naive, so pliant. She'd been so needy, so alone, and he'd given her everything she'd needed. They'd lived happily for many years. Until...

Standing, Basil grabbed his glass of wine and gulped the rest down. If he could change things, and have stayed faithful to her, he damn well would.

But until he knew who it was trying to raise his father, she was better off without him.

It had been a hard enough task banishing his father to the Realm of Darkness, but he'd managed it. He couldn't have his father taking control of the human race the way he'd planned. Watching him create one of the world's most horrifying men, Hitler, and using him to gather humans for food and slavery had been the final straw that had broken him. It had taken him years to find the right ritual, then more time waiting for the right moment. A total eclipse of the sun. He'd sacrificed innocent creatures then, though not humans. And had sent his father away to be dealt with by the Dark Mystics.

And now it appeared that he was finding his way out.

Basil was determined to prevent that, in any way he could.



Dante sat behind his desk, arms folded across his chest. Maybe he was sulking, just a bit. Maybe he was hiding, too, but so what. It was his office, if he wanted to lock himself in it then that was his choice. Besides, he had work to do.

Women, who could figure them? He'd never met a woman like Trinity before. She was bold, strong, honest, and friggin' sexy to boot. She had the kind of body that made a man sit up and beg. Which he hadn't, yet she'd made him feel just as low. Okay, so he wanted her. But did she have to be so blunt about it?

"What?" he snapped in response to the knock on his door.

"Oh, put a sock in it. I have a file for you to look at."

"Slide it under the door."

"I will not. Open up, Dante, or I will unlock it. I do have a key, you know."

Damn it, so she did. Grunting, he stood, stepped over a pile of files on the floor and unlocked his door. "Thanks." He tried to grab the folder and shut the door, but she was quicker.

"I don't think so. We need to talk." She stepped past him. "You've been in a funk all day. What the hell's your problem?"

"I don't have a problem." He sulked back to his desk.

Stepping over the files, Lexi shook her head while glancing down at the pile of files littering the floor. "I thought you were going to get rid of all of these?"

"I will, eventually."

"You're a packrat. Now, what's up?"

"Nothing." He didn't want to get into why he was sulking with his sister who'd been nagging him to get out more and date.

"Suit yourself. Since you're already in a pissy mood, I might as well make it worse. Why the hell are you looking into the occult?"

"I've been thinking of taking it up," he remarked casually as he glanced over the file.

"Oh, Dante."

His eyes met hers and the pity he saw made him sick. "Don't, 'oh, Dante', me."

"You have to stop this. It's over. He's gone, and there is nothing you can do to bring him back."

Dante shoved from his desk abruptly, sending the chair rolling back quickly and hitting the window behind him. "I'm not trying to bring him back, Lexi. I'm trying to find the bastards that took him."

"It's been twenty years, Dante. You need to let it go."

"Never!" he snapped at her, slapping his hands on the desk as he leaned down towards her. "As long as I have breath in my lungs, I'll hunt for the bastard that took him."

"And you think you'll find him by delving into the black arts? Come on, Dante. Danny's dead. Not missing, dead. It's time you moved on."

"I'm not delving, Lexi; I'm searching. I believe someone involved in the darker magics is responsible for Danny's disappearance, not death, and I am not stopping until I find out who it is." He stood up and walked to the door.

"Dante—" He slammed the door on her protest.



Trinity's conversation with Basil continued to work over inside her mind even hours after she had left him. If what he thought was true, then someone was snatching up young, virginal girls to use as a sacrifice. But who, if not Basil? Who would want to raise the vampire king and for what purpose? Vampires had been managing just fine all this time without him. What reason would there be for bringing him back?

He'd let her go too easily.

Damn it, she didn't want to think about that. She didn't want to think about her feelings for Basil. Yet here they were, sneaking up on her again.

Sighing, Trinity kicked a rock in her path. Since she'd walked out on Basil, she had so hoped he would come to his senses. She loved him, beyond reason, but he'd hurt her, and that hurt was the reason she stayed away. Would she, if he promised to be faithful, run back to him?

In a heartbeat.

Yet the memory of walking in on him with that woman was a pain she couldn't get over.

He'd pledged his undying love for her and had given her a ring. It had been a gorgeous, two-tiered ruby with shattered diamonds all along the band. They'd made love for hours until exhaustion had taken them both over. Two days later, after spending an entire day working with Jonah on a particularly stubborn virus that had taken over a local businesses computer, she'd stumbled home to shower and change before heading back to work. And found Basil, with another woman, in their bed.

She'd thrown a fit, then thrown the ring at his face, and left. She

hadn't returned since.

And she wouldn't go back to him now, despite the ache in her heart.

"Fancy meeting you here."

Her head snapped up and she saw Dante standing before her. She could feel the tension coming off of him like smoke and felt akin to his emotions. She was rather tense right now herself. "Hey."

"Come here often?" She tilted her head, and he held his hands up to the dark street before them. There were no clubs here, no stores, no reason anyone would be here at midnight.

"I was walking." Which wasn't a complete lie.

"A little far from your place, isn't it?"

She shrugged. "I like to keep in shape. What are you doing here?"

"Me? I...um, decided to take a walk." He smiled at her and his white teeth glowed in the overhead lights.

"Got a lead?"

"Nothing concrete. You?"

She shrugged, looking off into the dark night, keeping a watchful eye for any signs of activity. "Nothing more since we last talked."

"About that—"

"Look, if I have anything I think might help your case, I'll let you know. Aside from that, we don't need to talk."

"What I have in mind doesn't involving talking."

She backed away, knowing full well what it was he wanted. She didn't need more complications in her life right now. "Look, Dante—" He caught her completely off guard when he grabbed her arm and yanked her mouth against his. She felt the heat pour off of him, the sexual need emanating in ripples. And when his free hand slid around her waist to rest on the small of her back, she planted a palm on his chest.

"That won't happen again," she said with a pointed finger. What was it with men, thinking they could take what they wanted when they wanted? "Business, Dante, nothing more." She stormed off, more annoyed than she had been before.

Damn, she needed a kill.

The commotion caught her attention, and as she looked around, she saw where it was coming from. A convenience store was being robbed, and from what she could tell, it had just gotten started. Rolling her shoulders, Trinity headed towards the brightly lit store. What the hell was with people all of a sudden? Maybe it had something to

do with the solar eclipse coming up.

It always seemed to bring out the crazies.

Staying in the shadows, she watched through the windows. From the looks of it, there were only two of them. The kid holding the gun on the man behind the cash register looked as if he was maybe eighteen. He had a black mask on his face and wore a black shirt and pants, but his body looked young. One sniff told Trinity he was as nervous as a cat in a room full of bulldogs. The other boy was holding a gun on two terrified patrons and looked as if he might be around the same age as his partner. He, too, wore all black, but she could see the blond tail of hair dangling from beneath his mask. Both guns were cocked and ready to fire.

Sensing that it was not going to end happily, she opened the door and walked into the store.

At the jingle of the doorbell, both gunmen turned their weapons to her. The boy closest to the door twitched and the gun went off, the bullet catching Trinity in the right shoulder.

It was enough of a blow to send her back, hitting the door she'd come in through. Grabbing her wounded shoulder, she heard the two gunmen, arguing.

"Oh, fuck. Fuck!"

"What the hell are you doing?"

"I freaked, okay. Fuck!"

"Is she dead?"

"I don't know."

She wasn't dead, but the bullet fucking hurt. It was like fire in her shoulder, and she knew the instant the bullet was removed it would be gone. That would have to wait. She had to deal with the prick that had shot her first. With vampire agility and speed, she bolted up, charging at the boy who'd shot her, knocking the gun from his hand as she took him down. The pain sliced into her shoulder as she hit the ground, rolling with the boy. Using her elbow, she knocked him unconscious, then jumped up to go after the other guy. He fired at her. She dove, catching him in the legs and bringing him down. The gun went flying off behind them as they struggled on the ground. This one was tougher than his partner and put up a good fight.

It took everything in her power not to let her demon surface.

She heard the police sirens in the background and lifting her fist, slammed it into the kid's nose. The crack of bone rang out, as did his scream, blood splattered out as she hit him one more time. Uncon-

scious, he dropped to the floor, his head hitting the linoleum. Bolting up, Trinity had a moment to notice all eyes were on her before she tore off through the back. The last thing she needed was the cops.

Holding her shoulder, blood seeping through her fingers, she ran through the exit doors that led to the back alley and bolted off into the dark.

CHAPTER EIGHT

By the time Trinity entered her apartment, she was feeling incredibly weak and exhausted. Her shoulder felt like it was on fire, and she cursed violently as she headed for the bathroom. She hated doing this, but it had to be done. If she left the bullet imbedded in her skin, it would become inflamed and begin to rot. The joys of being a vampire. She didn't get infections like the living did. Oh no, she rotted, and that was not something she wanted to have happen. You couldn't disguise flesh rot with perfume.

Flicking on the light, she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror. She looked like hell, all sweaty and bleeding, her eyes dark. "Oh fuck, I liked this shirt." And now it was toast.

She tore it over her head, wincing when the pain lashed out in her shoulder. Tossing the shirt aside, she searched for the tweezers in the drawer. Finding them, she held it under some hot water to sterilize it. She grabbed the towel on the rack and took a deep breath.

"Here goes everything." She inserted the tweezers into the hole.

"Holy-mother-fucking-shit," she cursed as the pain seared into her arm. Biting down hard, her teeth gnashing, she probed the hole with the tweezers, searching for the bullet. She knew it hadn't gone all the way through, or the wound would have healed by now. So where the

hell was the bugger? When she hit the bullet, she let out a weak cheer. That had been the easy part.

Closing her eyes, counting to five, she began to wiggle the tweezers beneath the skin, the sound of flesh squishing as she probed to get a grip of the bullet. Damn thing was stuck in a fucking bone. Gritting her teeth, she realized she wouldn't be able to do this alone. Pulling the tweezers from the hole, she dropped them in the sink and hung her head, trying not to black out. There was only one person who could help her now, and damn it, she hated calling him.

"Basil, I need you," she spoke out loud, knowing he would hear her.

Her legs shook and she crumpled to the floor. Resting her head against the wall, she waited. It had only been seconds, but to her it felt like hours before Basil finally appeared.

He took one look at her arm and shook his head. "What have you done now?"

"Just shut up and get it out." She wasn't too sure how much more pain she could handle.

Spotting the bloody tweezers in the sink, he lifted them, then turned on the hot water. "Couldn't get it yourself I see."

"It's imbedded in the bone," Her head felt light and airy.

"You want something to bite down on while I do this?" he asked as he knelt down in front of her.

"Just get it over with." The sooner the better.

He took her arm in his hand, shifting her so he could get a better angle, then lifted the tweezers. He sniffed the air, leaned closer and sniffed her. "You've been with a man."

She opened her eyes and was surprised how close he actually was. "Let's remember why you're here, Basil."

"With a human?" He sniffed, then scowled. "With a human," he said with disgust.

"I wasn't with anyone." She nudged her head towards her arm. "Do you mind?"

He stood, angry now. "I smell him on you. His cologne, his scent. Don't lie to me."

"Oh, for fuck's sake, Basil, I'm in pain here. Come on." Sure, she could insist she hadn't slept with a man, but for one, she was in pain, and two, she liked making him think she'd slept with another man. See him writhe in pain for once.

Still angry, he sat back down on the floor, Taking her arm, and lifting the tweezers, he began, "Was he the one that shot you?"

She hissed as he inserted the tweezers into the hole in her arm. "No."

"A stranger then?" he asked as he probed her arm.

"Jesus, Basil, can we save the twenty questions for after you remove the damn bullet from my arm?" The tweezers hit the tip of the bullet, and she sucked in a long breath when the pain shot from her shoulder to the tips of her fingers.

"You might want to hold onto something." He spread the tweezers a little more inside her arm and she nearly bit her tongue. "This is going to hurt like a bitch."

"Whatever. Just get it over with." She grabbed the towel rack and held on.

"This isn't the time for bravery. I could pour you a stiff drink—"

"Just get it over with," she insisted and, opening her eyes, saw the look in his. "I can handle it, honestly, Basil."

He drew in a deep breath, then continued.

She felt him chip at the bone with the tweezers, probing deep into her arm. The air around her began to swirl.

"It wasn't that you weren't enough for me, Trinity," he spoke as he wiggled the bullet out of the bone.

She was in too much pain right now to give a damn.

"Fuck!" she cursed as the bullet split the bone in her arm a little wider.

"Almost out," he promised, softly.

The towel rack snapped with the force of her grip as the bullet slid from her arm. "Shit! Shit! Shit!"

"Would you like to keep it, as a memento?" He held the bloody mangled bullet in her face.

"No! I need a drink." The burning sensation was still there, though not as bad as it had been; it was still an irritation.

He dropped the bullet in the trash can then held his hand out to her. "You should wash it with warm water and soap."

"I know what to do." She took his hand and let him help her to her feet. "Thanks."

"You're welcome. Did you have sex with a human, Trinity?"

He just wasn't letting up, and the hurt she heard in his voice made her heart ache. "Give it up, already. If, if, I did sleep with someone, it's none of your business. We're done, remember?" Leaving him alone in the bathroom, she went for her liquor cabinet and the bottle of scotch on the top shelf. She opened the bottle and took a long swig from it,

then poured a good dose of it over her arm. "Fuck!" she cursed as the fire erupted in the wound.

"A hot shower would have been much less painful. Will you at least tell me how you managed to receive a shot in the arm?"

"I stopped an armed robbery in progress." A hot shower would have worked, sure, but the alcohol would do more to sterilize than hot water would. And it had the added analgesic she was looking for as well.

"And received a bullet to the arm in the process. Was it from the police?" He helped himself to her scotch, not bothering with a glass.

"No, it was from a jittery kid who thought he was up for the task of robbery." She took the bottle back. "I appreciate your help, but I'm kind of bushed now and I'd like to get some shut eye."

"Do you have any idea how looking at you like this tears me apart?"

"It was only a bullet, non-life threatening."

His brow lifted and a faint smirk curled his lips up. "I wasn't talking about the bullet." His eyes briefly flitted to her chest before he smiled at her and vanished.

She glanced down, saw her nudity and cursed. How could she have been so stupid? Shaking her head, she took the bottle with her to bed, and crawling under the covers, she was out in an instant.



They had the five sacrifices. Now all that was left to do was to wait. Chaos stood in front of the glass window on the door, admiring the new virgin that had been brought to him. Five virgins, five sacrifices, all for his king. Now, they had to wait. One week, one long week they had to wait before the ritual could take place.

Turning the handle, he opened the door and stepped inside. He needed to see them close up, touch them, feel their purity.

There were three blondes, one redhead, and a brunette.

It would be good to have the king back. He missed his creator dearly. Having been the first kill of the king's only son, Chaos had been brought into the family and welcomed as a second son. He never thought of Basil as his creator, simply because it had been the king who had instructed his son how to do the kill, how to create another being. He'd given his life for the king, and it was the king who he called his creator.

Until the king had been taken away.

Chaos still felt the pain at losing his father now as he had when the king had first been banished. And he still resented that Basil had taken over as reigning king. Some king he turned out to be. He had no kingdom, only a few useless devotees who hadn't deserted Basil for Chaos' team.

At least he could take some comfort in knowing that.

And in knowing that soon the kingdom would have its proper king once more.

He reached a hand out to touch the soft silkiness of the redhead's hair, and the instant he did, he was struck with it.

Furious, he spun around to touch the other females. When he didn't receive the jolt, he turned back to the newest. Taking her face in his hands, he felt the drug in her system, and the impurity that was inside of her. Releasing her abruptly, he left the room, locking it in his wake.

"Magnus," he called out loudly as he hurried through the halls. "Magnus!" he yelled louder.

"Yes, my lord?" Magnus appeared before Chaos, looking dazed and sleepy.

"The newest is not a virgin."

Tilting his head, Magnus commented sluggishly. "She isn't?"

"No. Who brought her in?"

"Thaddeus."

"Get him. Now!" Magnus hurried off while Chaos walked the halls. His people knew what to look for and they knew what to take. How was it one had been taken that wasn't a virgin? This couldn't be happening. They had preparations to tend to, and the time was dwindling.

"Yes, sir?" Thaddeus asked in a groggy voice as he entered the room. He was a mousy character with dull brown hair and a pale complexion.

Chaos turned to the young man, narrowing his eyes. "You brought in the newest offering?"

"Yes, sir, I did. Just this evening."

It was coming off of him like waves of heat. "And how did you find her?"

"I took her from her bedroom."

"Was that before or after you had your way with her?" The look of utter shock on the boy's face didn't please Chaos. "You imbecile!" He slapped Thaddeus' face good and hard. "Do you know what you have done?"

"I couldn't help myself, sir. She was so nubile, so....tasty." He licked his lips like an idiot.

In a flash, Chaos was on him, pressing him to the wall, his hand clenching the boy's throat. "And because of your insolence, we will need to gather another." He released the frightened boy and turned to Magnus. "Have him neutered."

"What? No!" the boy gasped as Magnus grabbed hold of him.

"And, Magnus," he said as he walked away. "Make sure the blade is dull." That would teach the boy to play with what wasn't his.



It had been a rough night for Trinity. Every time she'd rolled over she was reminded of the bullet that had been in her arm. It was a good thing she didn't need regular sleep like humans did, but still, a few hours of peace would have been nice. The hot water from her shower had loosened up the stiffness a little, but the pain was still there when she pulled the t-shirt over her head.

She brushed her hair back, then tied it in a ponytail that dangled along her back. Opening her fridge, she grabbed the bottle of blood and poured a full cup. She needed replenishing after the night she'd had. With a dab of cinnamon, she set it in the microwave and ran it for twenty seconds. Just enough to take the chill out of it. She preferred her blood warm, not iced.

Grabbing the cup, she headed to her office. Booting up the computer, the comical welcome didn't even make her smile. Man, she was feeling rough.

"Show me today's headlines," she instructed the computer as she took a sip from her cup. While the headlines scrolled before her she rolled her sore shoulder. Even with her healing abilities she knew it would be days before her shoulder would feel normal. "Computer stop," she ordered and leaned in closer to the screen.

It was at the bottom and, once again, only a small caption. It was pissing her off that the local newspaper didn't think a human's life was more important than the new road construction.

The body of seventeen year old Candace Smart was found early this morning in an alley off 4th Avenue. She had been reported missing from her home early yesterday morning. Her body was found by the trash collectors and was called in immediately. The police aren't saying much, only that they have no leads.

Trinity snorted. "Bastards," she said as she rose from her chair, furious with herself for not being able to save another life. She needed Jonah to break into the police databanks and get her more information.



"Great, you still look crabby," Lexi stated, taking a seat across from her brother behind his desk.

"Did you see this?" He held up the paper, pointing to the small caption of the latest girl who had gone missing, ignoring his sister's comment.

She glanced over the caption, then nodded. "It was on the news this morning. So sad."

"Do you know how many of these cases there are each year? Victims with their throat ripped open and the blood drained from their bodies." He set the paper down, ignoring his sister's snarl.

"I don't like how obsessed you're getting again, Dante. You're scaring me."

His eyes met hers and he could see the sadness in them. "I'm not obsessed, sis, just driven."

"And sometimes they intertwine." She reached out and took his hand. "Please, just let it go."

"I can't, Lexi. Not until I find out who was responsible."

"What makes you think the person is still around? The cops had no leads and the case was closed years ago."

He pulled his hand back and pointed to the paper. "Because of this. There have been twenty cases, this year alone, of victims with their throats torn open and blood drained. And its only April, Lexi. It isn't human," he watched for a reaction.

"Oh Jesus, Dante."

"That is exactly what happened to Danny."

"Dante, don't."

"No one believed me then, but I know what I saw. It was a monster that took him and ripped his throat open and drank his blood before dragging him off."

"Stop it! This is ridiculous."

"That's the problem, Lexi; everyone is like you. In denial. There are...things, in this world, that aren't normal, aren't human."

"Fiction," she retorted.

"Truth." He stood now, folding the paper. "I have some leads to check out. I'll be gone most of the day, but I'll have my cell on if you

need me."

"Dante..." He paused and turned to her. "Please don't do anything stupid."

He smiled and hoped it would put her at ease. "You should have told me that years ago when I opened this business. See ya, sis." Waving at her as he left, Dante wished his sister didn't worry so much.



"You think you can just snap your fingers and I'll do what you want? You think I can just press a button and get into a secured computer and look for the info you want? This is illegal, you know. What if I get caught?"

"Are you done?"

"One more," Jonah promised. "I'm not a robot. A please and thank you would be nice."

Trinity rolled her eyes, then put a hand on Jonah's shoulder. "Why do we have to go through this every time I ask you for a favor?"

"Because, it's fun, and...I like to see you squirm. Okay, let's get into this baby and see what she can do for me."

"You really do need help." Pulling up a chair beside him, Trinity watched as his fingers flew over the keyboard with fast, efficient moves. He really was a wiz with the thing.

"Yeah, I'm a sick, sick, man. Wanna take my temperature?" He winked at her and wiggled his eyebrows.

"Sure, I haven't shoved anything up a person's ass in a long time."

"Shit, Trin, I can actually feel that." He shuddered, then let out a whoop when the computer blipped. "I'm in."

"Good, get me everything on the girl that was found this morning and the four other girls that have gone missing."

"Give me a sec to find the right folders." He worked his fingers over the keyboard, typing in his request. "Why the fascination?"

"They're innocent."

He glanced at her briefly. "Not good enough." He turned back to the computer.

"I have a hunch there's more to this than just some missing girls."

"A hunch, huh? Yes, I got it! I am good." Lifting his arms in the air, he shook them, cheering, and in doing so, bumped into her sore shoulder.

"Shit!" She winced, grabbing hold of her shoulder. "Wanna not kill me while you're cheering?"

"What's up with your arm?"

"I got shot last night." And the fucker wasn't healing up fast enough.

"What?" He spun in his chair, grabbing her arm to look.

She tugged it free. "Basil removed the bullet and I'm just fine now."

Jonah looked up at her with disapproving eyes. "Basil?"

She knew that look. "Well, I would have called you, but I remembered the last time you saw one of my wounds. You crumpled on the floor like a baby."

"Someone had sliced your guts open. Excuse me for being a little queasy. Why'd you get shot?"

"Worry about getting into the files." She tapped the computer monitor.

"I'm in." He turned the monitor to face her. "Did he spend the night with you?"

"No, he left after he pulled the bullet from my arm." She leaned in to read the contents. Even though the cops didn't announce to the public that they knew of the vampires rampaging their city, they didn't hide it in their files. "I knew it. A vamp must have gotten her. Let me see the files on the missing girls."

Jonah worked his fingers over the keyboard in a quick, fluid motion and opened the next file. "Was that all he did, pull the bullet from your arm?"

"Yes, Dad. I was a good girl. I didn't sleep with the bad man." She snorted as she read the contents of the file on the monitor. "Can you shoot this to my comp?"

"Sure." He sent the file to her computer, coded, so it couldn't be traced. "You gonna tell me why all this is so fascinating to you?"

"You a virgin, Jonah?" she asked as she stood.

"Um, last time I looked, no."

"Then you have nothing to worry about. Catch you later." She left the office, heading to her suite.

CHAPTER NINE

It had been a while since the last time he'd walked into the Realm of Mystics. And like the time before this, he'd come asking about his father.

Basil stood in the white misty room, waiting to be heard. "I come in request of answers."

"The prince arrives without an offering so the prince will receive no answers," the soft female voice chanted out to him.

"I have an offering." He held his hand out and the dollar sized gold statue sparkled in his palm. "It is rare—"

"The idol of Perpetual Wisdom," the voice finished for him. "A worthy offering."

The statue disappeared from his palm, and Basil hoped it was enough to get him what he wanted. "I come seeking answers to the prophecy denoting Avadur's return."

"The king is trapped as he was before and will be until the sun is gone."

"I know that, but I've heard rumors of his rising, of a ritual to raise him."

"Five virgins slain on the day of the solar eclipse, at the moment

when the new moon entraps the light.”

“Yes, that’s the one. Is it true?”

“Five have been taken; one’s blood was not pure, so another must be taken.” The voice echoed in the misty room.

“The solar eclipse is in less than a week. What can I do to stop it?” Basil was willing to do anything to prevent his father’s rising. He liked his life, liked being alive, and he knew if his father were to be brought back, life as he knew it would end.

“Prevent the sacrifices.”

“I’ve been trying, but—”

“Try harder. Another will be taken tonight. Stop it. You must not fail, my son.”

Running a hand over his face, Basil drew in a deep breath. He knew his mother wanted Avadur kept locked up for his betrayal to her as much as he wanted his father kept locked up to save the human race. His life with his father after he’d been taken away from his mother had not been an easy one. He’d been forced to create, beginning with the creation of Chaos, and many others there after. Though Basil was raised by the most hideous creature known to man, he had most of his mother in him.

He had a kind heart.

Basil didn’t believe in taking a life for no reason, and had refrained from killing the innocent after he’d managed to break free of his father decades earlier. Trinity had been his first since leaving, but he’d known from the moment he encountered her that she was meant to be his.

She would always be his.

And as soon as he was sure his father was securely locked up for good, he would explain everything to Trinity.

In the meantime, he had to stop the ritual.

“I will not fail you, Mother.”

He couldn’t afford to.



The darkness was soothing, especially for a creature of the night. Though, there were times when she missed the sunlight, the way it had felt on her face as it warmed her skin. The way it sparkled on the water creating a shimmering affect that looked like tiny diamonds. But now, because she’d been turned into a vampire, the sun was an enemy. No, she wouldn’t disintegrate if she stepped out in the sun-

light, but it would burn her and cook her flesh if she was out in the sun long enough. It was not a pleasant feeling, or a pleasing look.

It was just after one in the morning, the perfect time for a vamp to be out on the prowl. Though it was a weekday, there were some young people out and about. Could she be sure another would be taken tonight? No. But she wasn't about to give up. The police report had said the young girl found dead had been pulled from the safety of her own room. What kind of world was it when a child wasn't even safe in her own bed?

How was she supposed to protect them if they were being scooped from their warm, comfortable, and safe homes?

At least she had to try.

She wished she knew more about this so called prophecy. Why would someone want to raise the king? What purpose would they have to bring him forth?

The damn itch she'd been feeling for weeks was back. Rolling her shoulders, the one where the bullet had entered still a bit sore, she turned. And there he was.

"I should have known it had something to do with you," she hissed at Basil as he stepped out of the shadows. "Why are you here? Are you following me, again?"

"I'm not following you, Trinity. I was merely on the prowl."

He looked like a man on the prowl. His dark hair was combed back accenting his smooth face. She couldn't help but notice he'd bought a new coat, and that it fit perfectly to his tall thin frame.

What woman wouldn't want him? She certainly still did. "If you've got a yen to have some cheap hussy yank your noodle, find her someplace else."

His eyes darkened as he spoke. "It isn't a woman I prowl for. I'm watching for our brothers."

"You getting dates for your men now, Basil?" She knew she was being bitchy, but damn it, she was hurting.

Shaking his head, Basil lifted his hand to his mouth and drew on the cigarette between his fingers. "I have it under good authority that another female will be taken tonight. I'm here to stop it."

She gave a rather undignified snort that had him lifting his eyes to her in astonishment. "Right."

"Believe what you like, Trinity." He blew a cloud of smoke in the air that sat still in the breezeless night.

He was such a baby when he didn't get his way. "Fine, so say I

believe you. Who gave you this tip?"

His booted foot kicked at the gravel beneath his feet. "The queen."

She froze for a brief second then turned to him with absolute interest. "You saw Rajana?" Basil rarely spoke of his mother, but she knew enough that if he'd spoken with her now, it was serious.

"I spoke with her, yes." He tossed his cigarette to the ground and tilting his head up, sniffed the air.

"And?" She followed him as he moved along the dark alley.

"And what?"

"What did she have to say?" Where was he going? "Will you just stop for a minute, Basil, and tell me what you heard?"

He did stop, but not because of her request. "Do you not smell it?"

"Smell what?" But as she let her guard down, she did indeed smell it. "Blood."

"And plenty of it. Animal. And it's foul." He turned to the huge trash bin and took a closer look. "There's one in here. And I don't think he found his way in here himself."

"Oh, for Christ's sake, Basil, it's a dead dog. Someone probably killed it then dumped it. What did the queen say?"

"That another would be taken tonight because the one last night was impure. Why would someone just dump the poor creature in the trash? He deserves a proper burial."

"Basil, it's just a dog." She turned him now and saw the hurt on his face. "What?"

"It's an innocent creature."

"Jesus, you are unbelievable. Can we get back to what your mother said?"

"Give me a moment." Flipping open his jacket, he pulled his lighter from his shirt pocket then reached into the trash can for some paper.

"What the hell are you doing?"

"Sending it to its peace." He flicked the lighter on, and the paper caught fire instantly. He dropped it in the trash then watched as it ignited the dog.

"Fuck, this is ridiculous." She held her arm over her nose to cover up some of the stench of burning animal hair and flesh. "Okay, the dog is toast now, can we finish our conversation?" She'd never seen him like this before. What was his deal?

"You used to have a heart, Trinity." He turned to her, sadness showing on his face.

"Yes, I did, until you ripped it out with your adultery. The queen?"

she said with impatience.

"I did what I did for your safety."

"What the hell does that mean?"

"Nothing. I went to ask if the rumor had merit. She told me it did, more or less."

He really was in a weird mood today. "Okay, so what is this ritual anyway?" She could feel the heat from the flames as it charred the dead dog, so she moved further away.

"Five virgins' blood needs to be spilled on the day of the solar eclipse to raise the king."

Trinity stood there for a moment in a complete daze before she spoke up. "That's what the girls are for?"

"Yes."

"My God!" It sickened her to think of the poor girls and what fate held for them if they weren't rescued. "How does it work?"

"A circle of virginal blood must be made on sacred ground, inside a pentagram, with each virgin placed on every point. A prayer is given, a plea, to ask for the return of the king, then each girl's throat is slit and the ground drenched in their virginal blood. All before the sun returns to its full power. The Dark Mystics put a cloak, so to speak, over the sun in the land where the ritual takes place after the king is returned. Darkness will remain until all parties are killed."

"Jesus!" Her mouth actually went dry. "Okay, so someone wants to raise the king. But why?"

"Why not?" He turned back to the trash can as the fire slowly diminished.

She puzzled over it all for a moment, watching the smoke fill the air. "Okay, so someone wants him back. Why are you trying to stop it? And don't pull any crap with me this time, Basil. I want the truth." She saw him hesitate before finally responding.

"What do you think will happen to me should the king return? I banished him and had him locked away. Do you think he'll be pleased with me?"

Ah, now she understood. "No, he'll be royally pissed."

"Bingo," he tapped his nose.

"So who would want to bring the king back?"

"I only know one person. Chaos."

Baffled, Trinity tilted her head as she spoke. "But why would he want to bring the king back? He's got a good thing right now, and a pretty good following."

"He's small potatoes, and he knows it. When I banished my father, Chaos was his right hand man. He did whatever my father asked, no matter how horrendous it was. My father had power way beyond Chaos', and he knows it. My father was very close to ruling the world and taking out a good number of the human population when I banished him. Chaos was not happy with that."

"Or with you, I presume." Now she finally understood their animosity for each other.

"You know how much he hates me."

"Yeah. So how did you find all this out? Did the queen tell you someone was trying to break your father out?"

"No." He sauntered off, his hands in his pockets, his long coat flapping in the breeze as he moved.

She followed after him. He had her full attention now. "Then how did you find out about the ritual to raise him?"

"My father told me." He turned the corner and continued to walk away.

"Whoa, wait up there, bub. You can't just walk off after such a statement." She caught up to him, taking hold of his arm. "What did you mean by that? How could your father tell you if he's locked away?"

"He came to me in my dream state, which only means someone is close to breaking him out. After the dream, I did some investigating, and I found out a parchment entailing a ritual to free him has recently gone missing."

She quickened her steps to catch up with him. "How long ago did you have this dream?"

"It doesn't matter."

"It does to me. How long have you known about this?" And why didn't he trust her sooner to tell her what was going on. They'd been close once...before he had betrayed her that was.

"You don't need to know." He turned and she stepped into his sight. "Back off, Trinity."

He was dark and dangerous in his human form, but when he changed into his natural form, he was devastating. His icy blue eyes, eyes of his true heritage, gleamed with a sexuality that had drawn her in from the first moment she'd seen him as he truly was. And it did just as much to her system today.

"Not until you tell me. I won't give up, Basil. How long have you known about this, and why the hell didn't you tell me sooner?" She bore her fangs, showing him she was more than ready to take him on.

"Because I was trying to protect you," he growled low and feral.

"Protect me from what?" she growled back.

"My father," he spat at her, his eyes glowing.

"Who is locked up. And besides, I don't need your protection, Basil. I can take care of myself just fine."

He shook his head, a snorted laugh escaping his lips. "Not against my father you can't."

"Well, you don't need to worry about me anymore. You gave up that right the night you decided to screw another woman in our bed."

"I did that for you," he bellowed.

"Excuse me?" What the hell was he saying?

"I did it to save you, Trinity." Grabbing her by the elbows, he yanked her against his chest so hard her breath whooshed out. "I did it because I knew it would be the only thing that would drive you away from me."

"Well, it worked." And as hard as she tried to break free of him now, he held her tighter.

"Yeah, it worked, and now you'll be safe."

"You've lost your mind. I don't have a clue what—" Then it hit her. "Did he threaten you? Did he threaten to kill you, and you didn't want me to grieve for you so you pushed me away?" If that was the case, the guy was a complete dickhead. She'd mourn him even though she was furious with him for cheating on her.

"Oh, my sweet fiery princess." He drew her closer, their lips a whisper apart. "I could care less about my life. I have no life without you." He yanked her against his mouth and the kiss he planted on her was as possessive as she'd ever felt.

And when he released her she felt more unsteady than she had in a long time. Until he spoke.

"It wasn't my life that was threatened, my love. It was yours."

He vanished before her and left her gaping in the dark.



He hadn't meant to tell her everything, but it just came out. She'd infuriated him, which caused him to forget his common sense, and of course, when his common sense was down, he spoke without thinking. Now that she knew the truth it put her in more danger. Especially if she decided to come back to him. He'd just have to make sure that didn't happen.

He stalked the night, camouflaged as a dog, much like the one he'd

sent to his eternal peace only moments ago. Though so many of his kind chose to feed off of animals, he chose not to. He was, after all, very much a part of them. Could he not transform into any creature he desired? Of course he could, and therefore he chose never to feed off of one.

They were like family to him, and since he no longer had a family, he took what he could get.

He'd hoped Trinity would be part of his family

The memory of the look of hurt on her face when she'd walked in on him with the prostitute was something he could never get over. He would never forget the hurt he felt from her, and the devastation he felt when she threw the ring at him and left.

And now she knew the reason for his infidelity.

He stalked the dark streets, and the lack of vampire activity was worrisome. It either meant the last girl had been found, or it was going to be a long night.

Prowling about in dog form, he waited and watched.

He had no doubt now that Chaos was behind the abductions, and the attempt to raise the king. Chaos had always wanted power, and though he'd tried hard in his early days to appease the king, he'd always been second best.

But now that Basil had betrayed his father, Chaos might actually get his wish.

And that terrified Basil to no end.



Trinity spent the better part of the night walking and thinking. The words Basil had said to her swirled around inside of her head like a nasty vortex. He'd slept with another woman to get her to leave him, to save her from his father.

Damn fool. Why hadn't he just come to her with the truth? Why hadn't he told her he'd had a message from his father and that her life was threatened? Did he have to be the macho protect the damsel in distress? She was capable of taking care of herself.

Damn idiot fool.

And though her heart had been filled with love for him before, it swelled with it now. And even though it pissed her off that he hadn't confided in her, hurt her by his betrayal, it touched her that he would try to protect her.

Even if he'd gone about it in all the wrong ways.

Damn him. Damn her, for still being so far gone on him. And damn

her for needing him now.

CHAPTER TEN

It was just before dawn when Trinity appeared in Basil's bedroom. He was still asleep in the red silk monstrosity of a bed she'd once shared with him. The room hadn't changed since she'd been here last. It was still lavishly designed in bold reds and white. Walls in white, curtains and bedding in red, window shades in black to keep out the sunlight. The sheer white lace surrounding the huge bed floated in the light breeze from the fan on the ceiling. Even in the darkness of the room she could see him as clear as day. And her body yearned.

She'd walked away from him once. Now...now she wanted.

Very quietly, she slipped from her clothing, then inched her way towards the bed. She needed to feel his hands on her body, to taste his lips on hers, to feed from him. They hadn't fed off each other in far too long.

Lifting the silky blanket covering him, she was pleased to see he still slept in the nude. And on his back.

Straddling him, she leaned down to nibble on his neck.

Basil stirred, but not fully awake yet. Smiling, he surrounded her body with his arms. The instant her mouth touched his lips, his eyes popped open. "Trinity?"

"Shh," she laid a finger against his lips. "I need you," she said sim-

ply as she lowered herself onto him. The instant his hard-on touched her, parting her moist, silky skin, she felt the urgency of her need envelop her. Sitting up, she rode him with a wild abandonment.

His hands pulled her down, and she gave him her mouth as eagerly as she gave the rest of herself. And when his fingers slid through her hair, releasing the band that held it together, she smiled wickedly. She knew how much he loved the feel of her hair on his bare skin. Lifting her mouth from his, she sat up, smiling as her hair fell from his fingertips to feather over her naked breasts.

Her body was on fire with need. Every pore on her skin was open and alive. She could feel the breeze from the overhead fan as it tickled her skin. His hands were urgent as he caressed her breasts, rolling the nipple in his thumb and forefinger, his body hard as it penetrated her.

"I want more," she demanded and, grabbing him, flipped onto her back, holding him in place over top of her. Lifting her legs, wrapping them around his waist, she pulled him into her, arching her back so he could press in deeper.

Grabbing her hips, he lifted her higher and plunged. The scream she let out was not in pain, but a primal scream and made him come instantly.

Bucking wildly, Trinity kept him going until finally he collapsed on top of her, exhausted. "More," she panted and threw him onto his back, his body bouncing on the bed.

"What the hell has gotten into you?" he managed, then his eyes crossed as she slid down and took him in her mouth.

She loved to watch the emotion on his face as she slid her mouth over him, as she teased the tip with her tongue. And she loved that hiss of both enjoyment and pain as she slid her fanged teeth along his shaft. She released him with a pop, then slid seductively up his body, her tongue trailing the center of his belly and straight up. Straddling him once more, she whipped him with her long hair as she rode him wildly.

"More," she insisted, bucking wildly. Her short nails clawing and digging into his chest. She could feel her own orgasm teasing her, but she wanted so much more than just a quick release. And she knew to achieve it, meant to feed.

Grabbing hold of his head, she yanked him up and shoved his mouth to her neck. "Bite me," she ordered.

When his tongue slid out, her head fell back in anticipation. But then he cruised along her chest until he had her nipple in his mouth. Her body felt tight with need, hot with anticipation and when his

tongue slid out and flicked the tip, she thought she might go insane.

"Now!" Trinity demanded, her body aching, desperate for its release.

Smiling, he slid the nipple from his mouth and teased her with his teeth.

"Damn it, Basil, now." Laughing, he slid his teeth along her breast, and she moaned with delight. And when he finally lifted his mouth and sunk his teeth deep into her carotid artery, spearing the flesh on her neck, she felt the flash of heat shoot right into her belly.

"Yes," she cried out and lowered her head to his shoulder. Baring her fangs, she bit down, hard. Sucking wildly, Trinity felt his blood coat her tongue like hot sizzling sin, stinging as it slid down her throat. It energized her as it filled her. Throwing her head back, she cried out with her final release.

Exhausted, Basil fell back against the bed, panting. "Shit."

Her eyes closed, Trinity savored the flavor of him in her system and smiled. Now that was more like it.

"Had your fill?"

She had, but despite that, she knew she would need more. "For now," her voice purred seductively.

Running his thumb along her mouth he took it into his, sucking off the blood that still coated her lips. "I'm ready any time you are."

"I could tell. Never did take much to get you hard." And as it was, he was still as solid as a rod inside of her.

"Not when you're around, at least. What brought this on?"

"You were hard when I came to you." Looking down at him now, looking so content, she could see her nail marks on his chest. Red welts streaking down his pale skin. It was very alluring and gratifying.

"I was dreaming of you," his voice deepened sexily.

"I'm sure." She slid off him, and he whined a protest, which made her feel ever so smug. "You haven't changed the room."

"Why would I?" He sat up, resting on his elbows, watching her.

She shrugged, scanned the room for the band he'd pulled from her hair. "I'd thought after I left, you'd make it more to your liking." It had been her choice to have the room in red and her choice to have the bed surrounded in white silk.

"It reminds me of you, so I keep it. You still have such a damn fine ass."

Looking up from her position of all fours on the floor, she smiled

proudly. "Thank you." Then her mood changed drastically as she saw it lying on the floor. Grabbing the lace garter, she stood up, anger filling her face. "You had someone tonight. God, how stupid could I be. You were still hard, but it wasn't because of me. It was because of her." She threw the garter at him then furiously began dressing.

Damn him. Damn her for needing him.

He slid from the bed, tossing the garter aside like so much used meat. "Did you smell another female on me when you came to me?"

"No, but—"

"Because there wasn't one." He took her hand and she jerked it away. "Trinity."

"When?" she asked, yanking on her jeans. She was such a fool. "No, don't tell me. I shouldn't have come here." She knew that now, even as her body thanked her for the release.

"Trinity—" Grabbing her clothes, she ran from his room and out into the night, not even bothering to finish dressing.



Basil sat on the bed and held the garter up on one finger. Had she not have been so hurt by his betrayal she might have noticed it had once belonged to her. No, he hadn't changed anything in the room, because he so hoped she would return to it. Permanently. And when he'd woken to find her straddling him, he'd thought that time had come.

He had betrayed her, even if it had been for her own safety. But a betrayal was still that, and it still hurt the heart. He knew hers was a fragile one, even if she refused to admit it.

And that was why he had gone for that particular betrayal.

He knew it would be just the right one to send her packing.

And now they were both paying for it.

Damn his father. He'd nearly ruined him once, and now it seemed he'd finally accomplished it.

Basil was nothing without his Trinity.



Yeah, okay, so the sex had been great. She felt better now than she had in a very long time. But the pain of discovery was a sharp one. Her heart ached with the truth. She still loved Basil, probably always would, and he was still the only man that could fulfill her so completely.

It was too bad he was an unfaithful son of a bitch.

Shaking herself from the thoughts in her head, Trinity thought the best thing to do was to dive into some work. She'd been slacking on her web designs lately, and one of her clients wanted his done in a week. Time to get her booty to work.

Sitting down in front of her keyboard, the window shades down, the light overhead burning bright, Trinity began to work. Within an hour, she had one project done and was raring to go. The energy soaring in her body was making her antsy and itchy. She knew perfectly well it was because she'd fed from Basil and now his energy, his life force was coursing through her veins.

She needed to work it off, and she knew just the perfect solution.

Slipping into a pair of tight workout shorts and sporty bra, Trinity headed for the basement and to her exercise equipment. It helped to stay in shape in order to hold her own in a fight. So she worked her body and worked it hard.

She was in the middle of pummeling the punching bag after going an hour lifting weights and running on the treadmill, when Jonah walked into the basement. She saw him tip-toe to the bench against the wall, then set two cans of beer beside him.

She heard him mumble, "Why does she have to listen to this crap?"

"I heard that," she informed him, throwing a sharp right jab to the bag and sending it spinning to the left. "Vampire hearing, remember?"

He pursed his lips and popped the top of his beer. "Wasn't sure you could hear anything with that music blaring. You're scaring the customers away."

"It's past four; I highly doubt the place is packed." She threw a right, then a left, before shaking her arms and bouncing in her spot. "One of those mine?"

He lifted the second can and gave it a shake. "If you want it, yeah." He grinned foolishly.

"Bastard." She'd just let the beer sit long enough so that it wasn't still foamy. Grabbing the towel on the chair behind her, Trinity mopped up her damp face as she moved towards him. "And besides, you wouldn't be bringing me a beer if the shop was still open." She knew he didn't drink on the job.

"There's always a first time for everything. You gonna drink this or what?" He held up the second can.

Smiling wickedly, she snatched the one from his hand and gulped down half. Teach you to shake my can, buster.

"Bitch! So, what's up?"

She smiled proudly. "Nothing. You?" She slung the towel around her neck to catch the sweat dripping down her back.

"Been busy repairing fried computers. Same old shit, different day. The in-laws are coming into town this weekend, so Ariel's been busy getting the house ready, cleaning everything."

"And driving you nuts." She grinned as she lifted the beer to her lips.

"Big time." Cautiously, he popped open the other can of beer. When it didn't fizz over, he sent her a toothy grin. "Something's up with you."

She shook her head, swallowing. "Nope." She didn't like how he was staring at her.

"You're a terrible liar, Trin." He touched his beer can to hers. "You know you can talk to me."

She knew that and felt silly that he had to say it. "I just found out from Basil that he slept with that bitch to save me."

Jonah's brow lifted with mock interest. "Come again?"

She let out a long breath, took a sip from her beer then went for it. "What do you know about virgin sacrifices?"

His eyes widened just a bit. "About as much as I know about inter-planetary travel. New hobby?"

She snorted. "You never cease to amaze me with your stupid humor. I have it under good authority that there will be five virgins sacrificed on the day of the solar eclipse."

"Bizarre. What a world we live in. I take it that you got this info from Basil?"

She finished off her beer then crushed the can like it was nothing more than a piece of paper. "Yeah."

"I'm lost. What does this have to do with Bastard—I mean Basil, sleeping with another woman to save you?"

"A long time ago, Basil had his father banished to the Realm of Dark Mystics. Recently, his father came to Basil in a dream and made some threats."

Jonah rubbed his hands together eagerly. "Against Basil?"

She shook her head. "Against me."

"Oh. Okay, so what if he made some threats. He's locked away I assume, right? So what harm can he be?"

"We think Basil's nemesis, Chaos, is trying to break him out."

"Not good I take it?"

"Worse than not good." She needed to move about, still having the

ants in her pants feeling. "You think it's scary to walk out in the dark now, it'll be worse if the king is released. He is the most evil creature ever to have lived." Or so she'd been told by Basil several times. The stories Basil had told her about the abuse he endured at the hands of his father gave her nightmares. And it pained her to know he'd been through such horrors.

"What makes him so evil?"

She turned to Jonah, tossing her empty can in the recycle bin next to him. "Does the name Hitler ring a bell? Basil's father, Avadur created him. They'd planned on creating a super race of vampires, and in order to do so, they had to capture several hundred humans and turn them at once. Avadur liked to brainwash, torture, and starve his creations into submission to get them to rely only on him. His concentration camps were just that. Training ground for the truest evil."

"Get out!"

"I kid you not. He had a good number of humans ready to be made and his plan was in motion, that was until Hitler decided to go out on his own. Avadur put an end to him. Basil banished Avadur directly after."

"Christ!" He swiped a hand across his pale face.

She continued. "You know how Basil can transport himself, vanish at will and reappear? And how he can alter his physical form to look like anything he wants? He has those abilities because he is the only true creation of the original two vampires. Only the king's powers are ten times stronger than Basil's, and Basil is the last of the true race with these abilities."

"How come? Aren't they all descendants of his?"

"No, Basil is the only true bloodline from the king and queen. The rest of the vampires are half breeds, a lower form of vampires. Each time a vampire creates another, their powers are diluted. They can't transform or change form."

"And thank God for that."

"So apparently Avadur came to Basil in his sleep, and threatened me. I'm not sure how, but it was enough to scare Basil, and he, well, thought the only way to keep me safe would be to—"

"Hurt you in the worst possible way. I can't say I condone his actions, but his intentions were honorable. And if you tell him I said that I will kick your ass."

"I love him, Jonah," she sighed. "I went to him this morning to be with him. To take him back. He was with someone else."

"When you got there?"

She shook her head and suddenly longed for another beer. "No, but at some point. I have never in my life had so many mixed emotions swirling around inside of me. And I don't have a clue what to do about them. I love him, so much it hurts, but..."

"You're scared he'll hurt you even more."

She nodded, wiped her sweaty face on the towel. "But I don't have time to deal with my broken heart right now. I have a ritual to stop and innocent girls' lives to save." She tossed the towel at his face as she walked past him. "Thanks for the beer."



Dante saw Trinity exit her apartment as he pulled up to the curb. She was dressed in a tight pair of blue jeans and a blue jean jacket. Her hair was pulled back in a long, flaming red braided tail that fell to her waist. She had a backpack slung over one shoulder and looked as if she was on a mission.

Slipping from the car, Dante followed her at a safe distance. He was curious where she was off to and what she had planned.

He had a feeling she knew more about the missing girls than she led him to believe. And maybe if he followed her now, he'd find out what that was.

What woman in her right mind would be out at two in the morning, walking the dark streets, alone? Did she have a death wish? Did she not know how dangerous the nights were in Jacob's Cove?

Well, he would just have to make sure nothing happened to her.

The moon shone bright in the cloudless sky as Dante continued his pursuit.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Trinity knew what she was about to do was risky, but she'd come prepared.

She wanted answers, no matter what the price.

Crossing the street, a lamp overhead burnt out and darkness surrounded her. Barely noticing it, she continued on her way. She was headed to the one place she knew where vampires hung out. It was an underground club where the undead could do as they pleased, be as they were and drink as much human blood laced with alcohol as possible.

As she approached the door leading to the tunnel, she had a vague sensation of being followed. Turning, she only saw darkness. Rotating her shoulders, shaking off the uneasiness, she yanked the door open and took the steps down.

She spotted the guard at the bottom of the stairs, protecting the entrance. Carefully she lifted her arm over her back and slipped her trusty spike from her pack.

"I need to see some I.D."

Nodding, Trinity curled her fingers around the spike, then in one quick motion, drilled it into his chest, right over his heart. He had only a moment to show his shock before he crumbled into a pile of dust.

"There's my I.D." Rolling her shoulders, Trinity tucked the spike in her belt loop, then double checked to make sure the large metal cross and the jug of holy water were still intact.

Slinging the pack over her shoulder, she yanked open the door.

The sound was deafening, and for a race that didn't have to worry about losing their hearing, they enjoyed their music loud. It surprised her more than a little that there were no guards inside the doors. Why they thought one guard outside the facility would save them was beyond her.

Where was he now? Dust, that was where.

Stealthily, she moved through the crowd, the vampires and demons amongst her moving about to the music, barely noticing her. As she stepped up to the DJ's pit, she pulled the spike from her belt loop and shoved it into his chest before he could speak. Still using the spike, she jabbed it into the digital player, putting a stop to the punk music it had been playing.

"Hey!" someone shouted.

She turned and bared her fangs. "Trust me; I'm doing you all a favor. That music is crap. Now, who wants to tell me why Chaos wants to raise the king?" Prepared for the backlash, she whipped the cross-bow from her back and aimed it, ready to kill. "Go ahead; I'm itching for another kill."

"You're not welcome here, Trinity."

Her eyes shifted to where the voice came from and she saw a tall, gangly vampire dressed in a god-awful yellow floral shirt and red jeans. "Do I know you?"

"I've heard about you."

"Well, since we don't know each other, you'll refrain from using my name." With that said, she pulled back the bow, and shot the arrow at the badly dressed moron and watched as he turned to dust. "Now, I'll ask again. Who's going to tell me why Chaos wants to raise the king?"

"Go to hell!"

Without turning her head, Trinity aimed the arrow and dusted yet another vampire. "I can do this all night."

"Why are you doing this?"

She turned and saw a young woman, terrified, clinging to a tall, broad man beside her. She was human. Sometimes the humans liked to frequent the vamp bars, in hopes of being turned. She hated those humans. They were pathetic, thinking life would be so much better as a vamp. "Because, I was bored. Go home, honey. Trust me, you won't

like sucking blood for the rest of your life. Now, anyone else?"

"Chaos has his plan, and you're not part of it," someone shouted from the crowd.

"Shut up!"

"No, no, let him speak." Her eyes trained to the short demon in the center of the room. "What is this plan? Do tell."

"We will reign when the king arrives."

"Shut up!"

"Really, and why is that?"

"Because, the darkness will be permanent."

"Shut up." Turning, the vamp pulled out a knife and slashed the demon's throat, putting an end to anything more he might have said.

"Hmm, so he plans on making it dark. Do explain more." She already knew most of it but she hoped someone else would provide more.

"Fuck you, Trinity," another vampire spouted.

"Now, now, that's not very nice." She heard the door latch and her eyes shifted to the back of the room to Dante as he entered the room. "Shit." What the hell was he doing here?

"What do you think you're doing?"

She didn't turn to Basil as he appeared beside her, but instead, made her move into the crowd. "Saving an innocent life." She'd seen the looks on the vamps' faces when they'd noticed who'd entered, and she knew just what they were thinking. Fresh meat. Hooking the crossbow over her shoulder, she pulled out her spike, and another from her pack and began stabbing with both hands as she raced to Dante. Out of the corner of her eye she saw Basil turn into a wolf. She could hear his teeth ripping at the flesh of those he attacked.

She could see Dante pull something out of his jacket, then saw the vamp turn to dust before him. So the guy could protect himself, great, but that didn't mean she was going to stop helping him. "What the hell are you doing here?" she asked sharply as she killed another vampire right beside him.

"Following you. Left," he warned her as another came at them.

With a flick of her wrist she turned him to dust as well. "Idiot!" Grabbing hold of Dante's arm, she jerked him towards the door, and hopefully, to safety. She could hear Basil chomping away at flesh behind her and figured he could take care of himself. He usually did.

"Do you want to get yourself killed?" she yelled at Dante the instant they were at the surface.

"I know how to take care of myself." His eyes went a little wider as

he glared at her. "You're one of them."

She licked her pointed teeth before speaking. "How do you know about my kind?"

Dante's head jerked to the door as it opened, his stake ready for the kill. Before him, a vicious blood thirsty wolf appeared, blood dripping from his mouth. He stepped in front of Trinity to protect her. "I've got you, don't worry."

Trinity frowned, shaking her head. "I don't need protecting, pal. That's just Basil. Change back, Basil, before this guy stabs you."

Dante gasped as the Basil transformed into a human. "What the hell?"

"I ought to smack some sense into you. What the hell were you thinking, going in there half cocked, demanding answers?" Basil shouted at her, getting right in her face.

She felt Basil's fury float over her like hot waves of air and shrugged it off. "I didn't go in there half cocked, I came prepared."

His eyes drifted to the crossbow at her side. "A crossbow, a fucking crossbow? Jesus, Trinity, are you that stupid?"

"Watch it, pal," she warned him, spike ready.

"He was a wolf." Dante managed in a low voice, staring at Basil in amazement.

"Great!" She threw her hands in the air, turning to Dante. "Snap out of it, okay." She smacked his face good and hard and was glad when she saw the anger erupt. "Why the hell were you following me?"

"I was curious where you were going. I came by...well, we won't get into that now. You're a vampire," he said with a hint of shock in his voice.

"You brought a civilian? Jesus, Trinity, you are stupid," Basil eyed the man beside her.

She turned sharply on Basil. "I didn't bring him, he followed me. What are you, deaf? He just told us that. And if you call me stupid one more time, I'll make sure you never use that dick again."

"I should have known. I never saw you in the daytime, always at night. And that night, when we met up and I kissed you, I thought you felt a little...cold. No disrespect."

"He's the one? Jesus, this is the guy?" Basil said with hurt in his voice, as he eyed Dante suspiciously.

"I can't deal with this shit now." Flicking her head, the tail of her hair barely missing Basil's face, Trinity stormed off.

"You're the one she slept with," Basil responded in a threatening

tone.

"Let it go, Basil," Trinity warned, turning back to him. She didn't like the tone in his voice or that he was close to finding out the truth.

Dante's eyes went wide. "What? No, no, we didn't sleep together. I want to, but she—" Basil growled and

Dante swallowed hard. "Who are you?"

Basil changed into his vampire form and took a step towards Dante. "Your worst nightmare."

"Yeah?" Dante stood a little taller, facing the menace before him, stake ready.

"Yeah," Basil challenged, baring his fangs.

"Stop it! Jesus, what the hell is with men? Give them a dick, and they think they rule the world." Trinity stepped between the two, planting a hand on each chest. "Break it up." She shoved them both, causing them to stumble back. "I don't have time for this right now. You, go home," she pointed to Basil. Then to Dante she said, "You, where is your car?"

"I didn't bring it."

"Great. Come on then." She grabbed his arm and tugged him along with her as she moved down the dark street. She narrowed her eyes when Basil appeared beside her. "Leave."

"Not in this lifetime."

"Charming fellow. How do you know him?" Dante inquired.

"I created her," Basil interrupted proudly, keeping up with the both of them.

"You don't own me, Basil," Trinity retorted.

"Basil?" Dante laughed. "Nice name."

"Back off, Basil," Trinity warned him evenly. She knew perfectly well he was about to rip Dante's throat out. "Go home; I'll deal with you later."

"And leave you alone with...him," Basil grunted.

She stopped short and turned to him. "I have no intentions of sleeping with him, if that's what's got you bugged."

"We'll see," Dante said cockily.

"You are not helping," she snapped at him. Holding Basil off was not easy. Taking a deep breath, she lowered her tone as she spoke. "Please, I can't deal with the both of you right now. All I'm going to do is see him to his place and then go home."

"My car is parked outside your place," Dante informed her.

She heard the low rumbled growl from Basil as she turned to

Dante. "Why is your car by my place?"

"I told you, I came by to see you."

"Great, just fucking great." Shaking her head, she grabbed Dante by the arm and dragged him along.

"How long have you been a vamp?"

"I don't want to get into it now."

"I want to talk to you about all this, Trinity," Dante insisted.

"Not tonight."

"Why not tonight? Now seems like the perfect time," Dante persisted.

She dragged him along, not slowing her speed at all. It didn't please her that Basil hadn't listened and was still following her. "I'm not in the mood to talk to you."

"But—"

She turned on him with a growl, cutting him off. "There's your car, now go home, Dante, and don't ever try something that stupid again."

"It wasn't stupid. I know how to take care of myself."

She shoved him towards his car. "That's what they all say, right before their throats are ripped out. Go home." She waved him off as she headed for the back entrance to her home. Basil right on her heels.

He followed her up the stairs to her apartment. And though for a brief moment she thought to slam the door in his face, she knew it would be a wasted effort. He'd just materialize in her suite anyway.

"Drink?"

"No," he said curtly, as she headed to the fridge.

"Suit yourself." Pulling out the jug of blood, she poured a mug full then set it into the microwave.

"How could you let that...that...man, kiss you, touch you?" he said finally.

"Get over it, Basil." She turned to him and frowned at his expression. It didn't seem to matter how many times she told him she hadn't slept with anyone, he didn't believe her.

"Do you want him?"

"No," she said sharply, taking her cup from the microwave.

"Then why did you kiss him?"

"Look, Basil, what I do with my body now is my business. We're not together any longer."

"You came to me only hours ago. You came to me," he emphasized.

"Yes, and I stupidly thought we might have a chance. That was before I found your slut's garter."

"You shouldn't talk about yourself that way."

Infuriated and baffled, she turned to him. "What the hell are you talking about?"

He took her hand in his, held it firmly when she tried to jerk it away. "That garter you found belonged to you. You wore only that as you waited for me to come to our bed the day before..."

"You cheated on me?" she reminded him.

He tugged her closer, their lips a feather's touch apart "It was yours, my love. There has been no other woman since that day you found me in the arms of another, and there never will be again."

"Those are only words, Basil." And how was she supposed to believe him?

"I die a little each day I'm without you, my sweet," Basil murmured softly as he kissed the side of her neck.

She wanted to melt, he always did that to her. It wasn't just his words, but the way he said them, the way he...meant them. "Stop."

"Without you in my life, there is no purpose," he whispered against her ear.

"Basil, please." He was making her resolve crumble.

"You have my heart, Trinity, now and forever." With that said he scooped her up and into his arms and carried her to her bed. He laid her down gently, then crawled over top

of her, nibbling on her ear. "I need only you to survive."

She was lost to him and surrendered.

He undressed her so smoothly she hardly noticed when he slid her clothing away. He rained kisses over her body, with lips so soft they caressed like silk. His tongue was hot as it teased a line down the center of her body before coming to a stop at the apex between her legs. As his eyes took hold of hers, he made a slow circle with his tongue over her labia, teasing each moist lip with his teeth. Then with one long lick he slid his tongue over her, making her moan. Using his fingers, he spread her lips, then kissed her clit once before flicking it with his tongue.

He knew just how crazy that could make her.

He twirled her clit with his tongue, then stopping for the occasion kiss and flick before continuing to swirl it. Her body was on fire and with each touch of his tongue she felt the heat rising.

Then he pressed a finger inside and sucked mercilessly until she was writhing and begging for more.

He bit the inside of her leg and the feel of his sharp pointed incisors

caused a ripple effect throughout her entire body. Lifting her hips, she urged him to press his fingers in deeper while her hand slid down to rub her clit to explosion. He covered her with his mouth and drank in her juices as the orgasm careened through her.

Then he flipped her over, pulled up her hips and spoke in her ear softly. "You are the only one that molds me this well, my fiery princess," he stated as he penetrated her soft, silky flesh.

She spread for him, taking him in, feeling him deep inside of her. Nothing felt as heavenly as this moment, as him joining with her. His hands gripping her hips, he thrust himself into her over and over again, to the point that she thought she could take no more.

On all fours, her hands clawed at the sheets, her teeth ripping them to shreds as her body was being glorious pounded.

She arched her back, allowing him deeper and felt the heat building like a raging fire inside of her. As it scorched her, she let out a loud scream and felt him, hot and liquid, pour inside of her.

CHAPTER TWELVE

*Jacob's Cove, 2025
Three days before the eclipse*

The room was dark, all but for the lanterns hanging from the walls, cascading flickering candle light. The shadows played eerily over the stone like claws stretching out toward him.

There was a scent in the air that was all too familiar.

"There is my son, my pride, my joy."

Basil spun to where the voice had come from and saw no one. But he knew without a doubt who had spoken to him.

"My betrayer."

The lanterns flickered as a gust of wind shot through the darkened dungeon. He recognized it now. He was standing in his home, in the dungeon. The dungeon he'd been kept in to feed off of the slaves when it had been his father's home.

"You will not get to me this time, father," he warned, the threat heavy in his voice.

"It is not you I wish to get to."

The lanterns flashed with a brightness that nearly blinded his eyes. And as they tried to focus, he saw what hung on the wall.

Or who, rather.

"Trinity!" He rushed to her but she vanished before he could reach her. "You leave her alone. She has nothing to do with this," he

screamed at his father.

"You may think you have her now, warm in your bed, but when I break free..." Basil felt the hot air as it washed over him. "I will make her mine."

He woke in a cold sweat and felt little comfort at seeing Trinity asleep at his side.

She wasn't safe with him. But there was someone who could see that she would be.

Leaving her to sleep, Basil dressed, then sent himself to the one person he hoped could help him.

He knew coming here was dangerous, but he was willing to risk it all to protect the one he loved.

"Why have you come to me tonight?"

Her voice was like seductive thunder and vibrated throughout him. Though he couldn't remember what his mother looked like, his father had told him she was a magnificent beauty with long, flowing white hair and eyes as blue as the sky. He wished he could see her now and not the white mist she surrounded him with. "I come to beg a favor."

"Yet I don't see you on your knees, vampire prince?"

Knowing what had to be done, he bowed his head. "Your forgiveness, my lady."

"What will you beg for today?" the voice chanted in a soft, echoing vibration.

"Protect the love I hold dearest to my heart." He felt the hand as it slid under his chin to lift his face. He couldn't see her, but he could feel her and it left a warm sensation deep inside his body. What would his life have been like if he'd been raised by his mother?

"You think her weak, but she is not."

"He's threatened her. He's come to me in my sleep and threatened to take her from me. Help me protect her."

"Stop the ritual."

"I'm trying, but I'm getting nowhere."

"I cannot help you. This is for you to do, my son."

He fell to his knees, feeling the world around him collapse. "I can't lose her, mother. I can't live without her." He felt her arms as they surrounded him and a vague memory stirred at the back of his mind. She'd held him once, against her breast and cradled him to sleep.

"This fate, my son, rests in your hands."

He felt her release him and his heart yearned for more. But as she vanished, as he was transported back to his realm he knew, there was

only one thing left to do.

End it all before it began.



Trinity woke to a steady beeping on her bedside table. Feeling incredibly relaxed, she rolled over, fully expecting to feel Basil beside her. When all she felt was a cold, empty bed, she opened her eyes and sighed. Her chest ached.

He'd left her, without a word. Well, what did she expect? He was a betrayer after all. Had she really thought he'd stay the entire day with her, lounging in bed, possibly making love over and over? Yes. And she was a fool for falling for him all over again.

Angry, Trinity slipped from her bed, and dressed in the jeans and shirt she'd been wearing the night before. The knock on the door only added to her anger and she decided just to ignore it. When it persisted, she gave in and answered it.

She was in the mood for a kill anyway.

"What?" she barked the instant she opened the door.

"Morning to you, too. I wasn't sure you would be up during the day, but...well, looks like you are," Dante said as he sauntered into her apartment. "Doesn't your kind sleep during the day?"

"Why are you here, Dante?" Though it might be nice to take a chomp out of him, she held to her promise not to eat humans. He was damn lucky.

"To talk. Got any coffee?" he asked, making himself comfortable on her sofa.

"No. What do you want to talk about? And make it fast."

"Grouchy in the mornings. Okay...I'll get to the point. My brother was killed twenty years ago when we were thirteen. I witnessed it, and I watched as the animal dragged him off. Or should I say, vampire."

"And you have this weird notion that it was me who did it?" She hadn't even been a vampire twenty years ago.

"No, but you might know who did, or...lead me to someone who might."

"Is that why you followed me last night?" Because she was feeling the blood lust nagging at her, she decided to help herself to a cup of blood. He already knew what she was so why hide it.

He joined her in the kitchen. "I followed you because I was curious where you were going."

"I have no idea who could have killed your brother."

His face sunk. "Why did you go to that club?"

"I wanted answers. Do you have any idea how dangerous that place is?" She pulled the cup from the microwave, tested it with her pinky before deciding it was good enough to drink.

He shrugged. "I managed to live to tell the tale. By the way, that guy last night, what is he?"

"A vampire," she said simply, then drank from her cup.

"Yet he can manipulate his form."

"Yep, he can," she added nonchalantly, shifting her position as she leaned against the wall. She saw the way he was looking at her while she drank. If you don't like it buddy, take a hike.

"How is that possible?"

"How much do you know about vampires?"

"They're bloodthirsty animals, present company excluded...I hope."

Her eyes narrowed. "I don't feed off of humans, but you're making me reconsider that. Okay, long story short. Basil is the direct descendant of the two original vampires. His parents are known as the king and queen and most every vampire worships them."

"Most?"

"Does everyone worship the same god?" When he shook his head, she continued. "They are every demon, every creature, not only just vampires. Shape shifters, werewolves, vampires, they all came from the original two. But with each kill, the royal blood is diluted. That's why modern vampires can't materialize or change shape."

"I had no idea. Wow, that's fascinating."

"Now you have it in a nutshell. What do you expect from me?" Trinity asked point blank. She wasn't in a jolly mood and had no tolerance for anyone today.

"You could ask around, maybe see if anyone remembers that day. If anyone knows who took my brother."

"I don't have time to be your mole. I have better things to do with my time." She took a sip from her cup, well aware that he was eyeballing her.

"Like designing websites?"

Her eyes narrowed. "I do design websites, among other things computer wise."

"Right, okay. So what else do you do? Besides suck blood?"

"I don't suck blood," she said evenly. He was really pissing her off

now.

"No, then what's in the cup?" He got to his feet.

"You need to leave now, Dante," she growled, setting her cup on the counter.

"Why won't you help me?"

"Because, I have more important things to deal with."

"Like what?"

He was a persistent ass. "Like finding out why someone wants to make the sun disappear. Now, get out." She walked to the door and thrust it open.

"What? Someone wants to make the sun disappear? You can't just throw that at a person then expect them to leave it alone."

Trinity huffed, ran her fingers through her messy hair and screamed. "Fine, here's a quick synopsis. Those girls that have gone missing are a link to a nasty vamp who wants to raise the vampire king and blot out the sun."

"Because vampires can't go out in the sun."

"We can, but with nasty consequences. Blisters and boils are not fun and neither is the sickness that goes with it. Now you know as much as I do. Get out." She jerked her hand to the open door.

Snarling, Dante moved to the door. "I had a feeling this wasn't an ordinary missing girl case. I want more info."

"Not now. Bye, Dante." With a sturdy hand, she grabbed his shirt sleeve and tossed him out the door.

"I thought he would never leave."

Trinity turned to see Basil standing behind her, a smug look on his face. She promptly curled her fingers into a fist and rammed it into his face.

Stumbling backwards from the blow, grabbing his nose, Basil glared at Trinity. "What the hell was that for?" He wiped the blood from his nose.

"For being an ass and for making me fall for you all over again," she spat at him.

"Care to elaborate on that?" He wiggled his nose, gave it a sniff.

"No." She wasn't in the mood to talk to him.

"Oh, that's nice. Pop a guy in the nose and don't even give him a reason why."

"I gave you a reason," she grabbed her cup from the counter and gulped down half.

"I recall you calling me an ass and admitting that you're still in

love with me, but I don't recall an explanation." He wiggled his nose with his fingers. "You could have broken my nose."

"Good! I should have known better, but no, I left my heart open and what happened? It got trampled on, once again." She set her cup down on the table, furious. "I wake up, feeling soft, happy, and rolling over what do I find? Nothing! And why? Because you left, without a word. Left me after an intimate night together. Why I expected you to actually be there when I woke is beyond me. And now I have this hole in my heart—Just get out. Leave me alone," she said deflated.

"Trinity, let me explain."

"I don't want to hear anything you have to say."

"I left you this morning to see my mother. My father came to me again in my dream."

That froze her to her spot. She stared at him a good long time, his words doing an endless loop in her brain. "And?" she finally managed.

"He won't be happy unless I'm suffering and to make me suffer the most would be to take you from me. I went to my mother to ask her to protect you from him."

"Oh, Basil." She stepped towards him, but when he backed away it left her completely baffled.

"There is only one way to stop him from hurting you, from taking you from me. And until I can accomplish that..." He let out a long suffering breath. "We can't be together."

"Don't—"

He took her hands in his, pressed them to his cheek. "I love you. It's killing me not to have you completely, but I would much rather my heart be broken and know you're safe, than have him take you from me." He kissed her hands then took a step back.

"Basil." He vanished before she could tell him what she'd wanted to say. "I love you, too," she murmured, dropping her head in her hands.



Time was growing short. They had three days before the total eclipse, three days before the ritual would be used to raise the king.

His men had better follow through this time.

The young ladies in captivity were becoming restless and irritable. They'd been drugged most of the time, but they couldn't have

them too drugged up. Never knew when one of them might succumb to the drugs. Humans...their bodies were so fragile.

Chaos watched as the women paced about the room, itchy, tired, and desperate to be released. Little did they know they would never see freedom again.

"Sir."

Chaos turned and acknowledged the man behind him. "Tell me you have one?"

"We do." Magnus turned and held his hand out to the men behind him.

Chaos watched as a young woman was dragged into the room. She had hair the color of gold, long and tied back from a pretty and very young face. "How old?"

"Fourteen."

"Perfect. And you are sure this time no one has sampled her?"

"Perfectly. She is fresh." Magnus smiled smugly.

"Wonderful." Leaning down, he ran a finger along the delicate child's face. "In no time we will rule the world."



Trinity was in a miserable mood and anyone that dared to step into her path was going to feel it. Clomping down the dark alley, her head down, she sulked. Yes, vampires sulk. And she was doing a bang up job of it. Why did life have to be so cruel? She was in love and because Chaos wanted to rule the world and raise the king, she couldn't be with the man she loved.

She'd been eighteen when Basil had found her, alone and lonely. Her parents and sister had been killed in a car accident while traveling to their vacation at a ski lodge when their car had skidded into oncoming traffic. The semi hadn't had a chance to swerve or slow down and slammed right into their car. All three had been killed instantly.

She'd been at home, studying.

It had been her choice not to go with them. Her choice to stay behind. She'd only been in university for three months and loving it, but the assignments were plenty. Trinity had known that if she had gone along on the trip, she never would have gotten any work done. Who would, with all that snow begging to be used? So she'd opted to stay behind and get her work done.

The police had shown up at just past six in the evening and had changed her life forever.

She'd been devastated, to say the least, and lost. The responsibili-

ties had piled up on her—funeral arrangements, bills, the burials, and she had done it all on her own. Her parents had both been only children so she hadn't had aunts and uncles to rely on, and both sets of grandparents were dead. Her parents had friends, but none that could take on the responsibilities of their deaths and burials.

So it had been her and her alone.

Basil had come to her one night when she'd been sitting in her back yard, crying. He'd been so kind, so understanding, and listened while she told her story. He hadn't left her side and rocked her to sleep while she cried. She'd had no idea what he was, only that he was kind, handsome, and always there when she needed him. After several months together, he finally showed her his true form, and she hadn't been even the slightest bit afraid.

He'd asked her if she wanted to be free of her torment, of the pain of her loss and all her responsibilities, and she'd eagerly said yes. Then he'd asked her if she wanted to be free of her burden, would she allow him to take her virginity and be his for all time, and once again she had said yes. Basil had given her the most glorious first time, complete with candlelight, wine, and romantic music. And she had fallen into his arms willingly. When his teeth had sunk into her neck, she had a moment, just one split second to wonder if what she was doing was right. Then she felt her heart slow and the pain slip away, and she knew without a doubt, this was what she truly wanted.

She had been eighteen years old.

That was just over seven years ago and though the pain of losing her family was gone, the pain of not being able to have the man she loved so dearly, was not. She had no idea how to get rid of that pain and wished there was an easy fix.

Then it came to her.

She had to see the queen.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

She'd never done this before, and she hoped she was going in the right direction. She'd only heard about the location from other vampires, but she'd never been to the actual facility. Taking the underground tunnels, she followed the path that she hoped led her to the right place. The Mystics' realm was a temporal portal to the queen and the equivalent of a church, for vampires. They came to the queen to ask for advice, to ask for help, and to simply worship.

This was her first time here.

She'd had no reason to see the queen before now.

Humans didn't know of this area, and even if one might accidentally stumble upon the doorway, they wouldn't be able to open it, simply because you had to have the right code.

You had to be a blood sucker.

Spotting it, the last door on the right before the fork, she pressed her palm to the metal and felt the heat slide into her as she was scanned. Hoping she would be allowed in, Trinity waited. When the door began to slide open, she let out a silent cheer.

Now what?

It surprised her just how bright the room was, and as she stepped through the doorway, instinct kicked in and she began to shield herself to prevent being scorched.

"You will not burn here, child."

Trinity lifted her head and looked around. The shimmering voice seemed to come from all around her, but she saw no one. "Um...hi."

"Have you brought an offering?"

"An offering? Oh...like a gift? Um..." Think Trinity, think. "Oh, how about this?" She held up the pendant she wore around her neck. It was a small, diamond-shaped star that she'd found on a victim of another vampire a long time ago.

"The Star of Desire. It will do."

Trinity felt the pendant lift from her neck and over her head. The Star of Desire, what the hell was that?

"What is the reason for your visit?"

"Basil's father. I want to find out how I can stop him from coming back." She felt silly talking to a light.

"Stop the ritual."

"Sure, great, fine. Where will it take place?"

"I cannot help you with that."

"Why, why not?" She felt a cool misty sensation wash over her.

"If it were so easy as me revealing it I would have done so to my son."

"Okay, sure. I get that. So now what? I'm still at square one." She let out a long breath before she spoke again. "Is there any way or anyone I can see that can help me? There has to be a way. Please, I beg of you. I love him," she said softly, lowering her head. The sudden warmth she felt had her lifting her head. Before her stood a vision like no other. Beauty was her name and she was light.

"You are his betrothed?"

"He created me, if that's what you mean."

The beauty smiled warmly. "There is more than just creation when one is taken upon virginity. You have become his only, his one. Does he know you are here for him?"

"I'm not here for him. I'm here for me." How selfish did that sound? "What I mean is—"

"Love is the key, my child." She shimmered before Trinity.

"I do love him." With all her body, mind, and soul.

"Then use the key."

"I don't get it. Are you telling me that all I have to do is profess my love to Basil and nothing bad will happen to either of us? That my love for him will stop the ritual?" That was easy.

"No. There is so much more." She swooped down in front of Trinity, taking her chin in hand. "The love has to be strong enough to withstand all. The love has to be strong enough to sacrifice."

"Sacrifice? I don't understand. No, no wait." But it was too late, she felt the presence disappear, and the door opened behind her. "Great. I hate cryptic riddles." Trinity left feeling worse than she had when she'd entered.



Basil was on the prowl. What he needed was a kill, and desperately. There were plenty of vampires out here for the taking, and all he needed was one. It wasn't the blood he was craving, just the kill. He had so much frustration inside of him, and he needed a release.

Then Basil spotted him.

"It's awfully late for a human to be out." Basil took great pleasure in seeing Dante jolt.

"I'm prepared. Out for a late night snack?" The comment was released with a great deal of sarcasm.

"As it so happens. Care to offer yourself up?" He didn't like the guy one bit, and maybe if he snuffed out his life, he'd leave Trinity alone.

"I'll pass, thanks."

"Then I suggest you leave me, fool, while you still have blood in your veins."

Dante remained. "So, you turned Trinity into a vampire."

It would serve the guy right if Basil took his life right now. "Do you have a death wish?"

"I came prepared, as I said." He pulled out the cross he wore around his neck.

Basil's eyes narrowed, but he remained in his spot defiantly. "That won't help you." Calmly, Basil gripped the cross in his hand and sneered at the man before him.

Dante swallowed hard. "It'll give me enough time to use this" He pulled out the stake from his back pocket. "So if you made her into a vampire, does that mean the two of you were—"

"She is mine," Basil stated sharply, his voice cut with an edge. He wasn't afraid of this pathetic excuse for a human being. He'd vanish before the thought to lift the stake entered the man's mind

"I got the impression from her she didn't agree."

"Then your impression is incorrect. She won't have you, human, so you might as well give up." Basil flicked a hand at him dismissively.

"I'm a determined man." Dante kept his eyes level with Basil's.

Oh, the man definitely had a death wish. "And if you value your life, you'll back off." Then he spotted her, in the distance, and his heart

yearned to have her. She looked like a warrior the way she moved. Always ready, ever vigilant.

"I think she's a big girl, and she can choose who she'd rather be with."

Basil's lips lifted in a sly smile that would put a chill in any man. "I agree. And since having spent the night and day making love to her in her bed, I believe she's chosen me." He felt smug and rightfully so. Leaving the pathetic human being to himself, Basil walked towards Trinity. Then he saw the vampire step out of the shadows, and was ready to leap to his love's defense. In a move he always found arousing, Trinity spun on one leg, lifting the other, and slammed her raised foot into the vampire's face. The woman stumbled back and Trinity was right on her.

"Think she needs our help?"

Basil let out a long breath. Didn't the guy know when to leave well enough alone? "Never has." He lit a cigarette and watched his girl work. He so enjoyed watching her fight. It truly was a sight. "Why are you still here?"

"Thought I would hang around for a while. Why are you still here?" Dante returned.

"I'm a creature of the night." Basil flicked his ashes while Trinity beat the woman to a bloody pulp. "Darling, might I suggest something?"

"Bite me," Trinity spat as she lifted the vampire up and over her head to slam her on the ground.

"That's why I love her. Darling, might I suggest asking what she is doing out here?"

"Why? I know what she's doing out here," Trinity said breathlessly.

"Yes, that might be true, but I also think that maybe she might come in handy, in other aspects." He appeared before her as Trinity slammed her foot down onto the woman's face, holding her down on the ground. "She's one of Chaos'."

Trinity lifted her head to him without so much as a pause in what she was doing. "How do you know that?"

He knelt down, lifted the hair from the side of the young vampire's neck to show off the diamond shaped C burnt in her flesh. "He brands all of his people with his ring."

"Oh." Trinity looked down at the young vampire's neck.

"Mind if I step in for a moment?" Still kneeling, Basil leaned into the woman's face. "Hello there. I imagine that can't be too comfort-

able."

"Fuck you," the vampire grunted, struggling to break free.

"I'll pass. Tell me what I want to know, or she'll get nasty. And if you think this is as nasty as she gets, you are in for a world of surprise. She loves to fight and can go for hours." His eyes met Trinity's with a sultry smirk. "She has incredible stamina, but I digress." He turned back to the woman; Trinity's boot was marking her face quite nicely, and he couldn't be more proud of his girl. "Where is Chaos keeping the five women he captured?"

"Five?" Trinity asked, pressing her foot down just a bit harder.

"One more was taken last night," Basil informed Trinity without looking up at her.

"I'm not telling you shit," the young woman spat at him venomously, thrashing her arms out uselessly.

"She looks like she might enjoy a bit of your torture, my love. And I wouldn't mind watching it." He stood up and smiled deviously.

Trinity yanked the woman up and slammed her against the building then pulled out her pocket knife. "It's been a while, so I might be rusty.

"No, don't. Wait! Stop! Please," she begged, then in a quick move, yanked the spike from Trinity's belt and sent it deep into her own chest.

"Damn it. I was just getting into it."

"We'll find you another plaything, my dear."

She sneered at Basil. "It wasn't just that. She could have helped us find the girls. I should have been smarter. I let my guard down when she was pleading. Damn it!" She knelt down and retrieved the spike the vampire had left in her suicide.

"I doubt she would have given you anything," Basil laid his hand on her shoulder for support.

"Now what do we do? We're running out of time."

"I might be able to help you there."

Both Trinity and Basil turned to Dante. "What the hell are you doing here?" Trinity snapped.

"Patrolling." Dante beamed.

"We ran into each other," Basil informed her. "How is it you think you can help us?" he growled at Dante. The human really was pathetic, thinking he could be of any use to them.

"Well, I am an investigator after all."

"You're also human," Trinity reminded him.

"I told you, I can protect myself. You won't talk me out of it, Trin-

ity. I'm in this now, and I mean to get revenge." Dante rammed his stake into his belt loop, his eyes level with hers.

"For what?" Trinity stuck her spike in her jacket pocket.

"Killing my brother."

"I told you, I didn't do it."

"No," Dante said, stepping out of the shadows. "But Chaos did."



For Dante's safety they all decided to move to Trinity's place, which was closest, to talk. She got everyone a beer then made herself comfortable on the sofa. She'd explained it all to Basil as they'd walked, though he didn't seem to give a damn. He'd been too busy giving Dante the evil eye.

"You don't even know who Chaos is. Why do you think he killed your brother?" Trinity stretched her feet out onto her coffee table.

Making himself comfortable in the easy chair, Dante rested his beer on his knee and began. "The tattoo. After that monster attacked my brother, I saw him heat his ring with a lighter, then press it to my brother's neck."

"How old was your brother?" Basil asked, lighting up a cigarette.

"Thirteen."

"Ah, some time ago then."

"Not so long that I've forgotten that night or who took him. Chaos dragged my brother off and no one has seen him since."

"How was it you saw all this and yet you came out of it with your life?" Basil asked with a great deal of snap to his voice.

Dante narrowed his eyes as he responded. "We were twins in every way, shape, and form, but Danny was more rebellious. He liked to sneak out of the house at night and hang with his friends. He'd already been grounded for sneaking out the night before, so when he crawled out of our bedroom window, I ran after him. I was too late. But I did see his attacker, and I saw that ring when the brute lit it and stuck to my brother's neck. I've never had a name of his attacker, until now."

"Whoa there, buddy," Trinity warned him. "If you've got any thoughts in that pea brain of yours of going after Chaos, think again. You don't want to mess with him."

"Then help me."

She waved him off with the can in her hand. "I have other fish to fry, pal, like stopping the world from ending."

"It's not ending," Dante snorted, then gulped down some of his beer.

"It will if the king is raised and darkness prevails," Basil added, blowing smoke rings into the air.

"There are still more humans than vampires."

Basil laughed so boldly it made Dante do a double take. "If darkness prevails, how long do you think it will take for that number to diminish? Even if, let's say, there are only a hundred vampires in our city—which, believe me is far off from the actual amount—but we'll go with a hundred. They take one human each—and that's doubtful as they like to take several at a time—that's a hundred less humans and a hundred more vampires. In one day. Think about how long it would take for them to rule the world."

"Fuck!"

"Exactly. And those humans that aren't turned will be held as blood and sex slaves. We need to stop it, now." Lifting his own beer, Basil leaned back beside Trinity.

"But how?" Dante took another gulp of his beer.

"That is the question of the day, now isn't it." Basil stood to find an ashtray.

"Left-hand cupboard, bottom right side," Trinity offered, pursing her lips. "What we need is to grab one of his men, hold him, and pry some answers out of him. Someone close to Chaos."

"I see you haven't quenched that thirst for torture yet." Basil smiled as he came back into the room and took a seat beside her. "I could find my way into his home base and nab someone."

"Sure, just like that." She snapped her fingers.

"And what do you suggest?" Basil inquired with a bite of sarcasm, tapping out his cigarette.

"Kids, kids." Dante stopped them with his stern voice. "Investigator here, used to sneaking around and getting things."

"Might I add one more time, you're human," Trinity emphasized.

"I could create a diversion. Show up at their door," he continued.

Trinity snorted. "Yeah, that's a good one. You'd make a nice light snack for them." One look at his pulsing neck veins and he'd be swarmed by hungry vamps like ants at a picnic.

"His place is secured, in any case," Basil interrupted. "You can't just walk into it. You'd need to know the codes, or know how to break the codes."

"Oh. Well, isn't it handy then that we have a computer wiz amongst us?" Dante turned his attention to Trinity.

"I know computers, but I don't know how to break into them. But I do know someone who does." She snatched up her telephone and pressed Jonah's number in the speed dial. When he answered in a gravelly growl, she checked her watch and cringed. It was three in the morning. "Sorry, forgot the time. I need you."

"I have been waiting all my life to hear that."

Her lips pursed. "Dream on. I need your computer skills."

"Sure thing, first light. Now let me get some more sleep."

"No, I need you now. It's a matter of life and death, Jonah. Yours." Maybe that would kick him into action.

"Please, how stupid do you think I am? Like I'm going to believe that line, Trin."

"Okay, not just yours but the human race. Seriously Jonah, would I call you this late if it wasn't important?"

There was a momentary pause before he responded. "I'll be there in ten."

"We got the computer geek," she stated, setting the phone down.

"Is he one of you?" Dante asked curiously.

"He's human." She turned to Basil now. "Okay, how do you plan on doing this?"

"Well, if Mr. Pasty here can create a diversion and Jonah can fiddle with the alarms, I can get inside, perhaps appear as a—"

"Can you change into anything or anyone?" Dante interrupted.

"I can't transform into you or any other human, if that's what you are asking. I can change into any other creature," Basil recited with a snap of impatience.

"How did you get into the cellar when they had me? You didn't set off the alarms," Trinity inquired.

"I came in as a bat, through the tunnels." His smile widened. "I could do that again."

"And hopefully, by that time, Jonah will have messed with the alarms and you can nab and run."

"And while you're doing that, Trinity and I will cause a diversion, long enough for you to get in, find someone and get out."

"Perfect. When?"

"It has to be tonight," Basil said, getting to his feet. "We only have a little over twenty-four hours until the eclipse. I'll get the dungeon set up and ready for our prisoner."

Dante's jaw dropped. "You actually have a dungeon?"

"Sure. What is a castle without a dungeon?"

"Got me there. Okay, I need to get some sleep or I won't be any

good tonight. What time should we meet and where?" Dante stood, setting his beer can on the coffee table.

"Midnight," Trinity informed him. She couldn't wait. It was about time they took some action.

"Why so late? Shouldn't we get started sooner?"

"We don't have our tech man and by the time he gets here it'll be daylight. We'll do no one any good frying ourselves trying to save these girls. It has to be dark for us to do this."

"Okay." Dante pursed his lips. "So where are we doing this?"

"My place would be the best. Head out on Highway One for ten miles, turn left on Valley Road, and head out another ten. It's the tall, castle-like building on the hill," Basil explained, complete with hand gestures.

"That's yours?" Dante whistled. "Always admired it. I'll be there." He rubbed his hands together with excitement. "It's been a while since I was into something juicy."

"Do you think he can handle this?" Basil asked the moment the door closed after Dante had left.

"I hope so." She stepped towards him, ready to take him into her arms. When he pulled away, she frowned. "What?"

"I had better go, get things prepared."

"I thought maybe we might have time for a bit of hanky panky." She sauntered a little closer, licking her lips as she unbuttoned her shirt.

"We don't have much time." He cupped her hands together, stopping her.

"We have lots of time. Stop doing that," she demanded when he backed off a little more.

"You need more than I can give you, Trinity."

"No, I need only what you can give me."

His eyes shifted over her shoulder. "Jonah's here."

She turned to the doorway and saw him standing behind her, his mouth in a frown. "Damn, you are fast."

"Not fast enough, I see. Weasel—I mean Basil."

"Jack-ass. See you at midnight, Trinity." With that Basil vanished.

"Great." She huffed. Now she was all keyed up and no one to release it for her. "Forget to knock?"

"Nope. You said it was urgent, so here I am. Why was he here?"

"I love him, Jonah, and if I have my way, he'll be in my life again, so get used to it." She put her hands on her hips. "Here's what I need

you to do.”

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Jacob's Cove, 2025
Eight hours until total eclipse

He hadn't slept a wink since he'd left Trinity. It hadn't been easy leaving her, especially when she was so willing to give herself to him. Though he had made up his mind and he knew it was best to turn her away, it was killing him. But until he was sure his father would not be breaking free, he had to keep her safe. Which meant, driving her away.

Again.

Stepping from the shower, a towel wrapped around his midsection, Basil entered his room.

And found Trinity lying naked on his bed.

It took him several moments to gather his courage before he spoke. It wasn't just seeing her naked on his bed that stirred him up, it was seeing her on his bed, again. He wished with all his heart he could have her there on a more permanent basis. But... "You're about an hour too early." Despite his need, he had to keep away.

"Looks like I'm right on time."

"I don't know how Jonah will feel about seeing you in this condition. I'd consider putting some clothing on before our guests arrive."

He turned his back to her, and began pulling clothes from his drawer. She was killing him.

"I'll put some on when we're done." He flinched when she touched his shoulder. He hadn't even heard her moving towards him. "Man, I love your muscles."

He shook her off and walked to his closet. That one simple touch was enough to make him want to crumble. "Is that how you plan on distracting the enemy?" he asked, then tossed her one of his shirts.

"Why are you avoiding me?" She caught it but didn't put it on.

"We have work to do, and we're running out of time."

"That's why I came by early." She dropped the shirt and sauntered towards him.

"Stop, please, you're killing me." His body was screaming to take her, his mind was telling him to back away.

"Then let me touch you and stop the pain." She ran her short nails over his chest, toying with the dark hair that covered most of it.

He grabbed her wrists and held her off. Inside he was aching to have her. "Trinity, I can't."

"Why not? You look more than ready to me." Her eyes flickered to his hard-on then back up to him with a seductive smile.

"You're not safe when you're with me." He gave her a shove then pulled out a pair of black slacks.

"Like I've stated more times than I can count, I can protect myself."

"You think you can, my love, but you won't be able to and neither will I. My father doesn't just want to hurt me, he wants to make me suffer, and he plans on using you to do it."

"Basil—"

"Don't argue with me on this, Trinity." The knock on the door was just the interruption he needed. "Please," he pleaded with her as he answered the door. "Yes, Cooper?"

"You have a guest. Mr. Jonah Moore."

"Thank you, Cooper." He shut the door and turned to Trinity. "I think you should dress before coming down." Letting out a deep breath, Basil slipped into his pants, then his shirt, before heading downstairs. He found Jonah standing in his living room, staring up at the painting of the mountains with the sky the color of blood. "You're early."

Jonah turned to Basil, scowling. "I believe in being early. Besides, I wanted to talk to you before everyone else shows up. I like this painting," he said in a tone that was more relaxed than his previous statements and left Basil a little befuddled.

He certainly wasn't about to tell him that Trinity was already here.

"As do I. Talk about what?" He moved into the room in his usual slow grace.

"Is Trinity in danger?"

He certainly hadn't expected that. It was no secret that Jonah hated him since Basil had betrayed Trinity in the worst way. "If she stays with me, and my father breaks free, yes."

"Then keep away from her."

Basil turned to Jonah with a faint smile. "You might want to tell her that. I'm trying to do what's best for her. I've tried to protect her, but she's a determined woman. She won't listen to reason, from me at least, but maybe she'll listen to you."

Jonah's brow lifted in surprise. "You know, she told me what you did, by cheating on her and how your father wants to take her out because she's with you. But part of me was skeptical. You cheated on her, Basil, and that pissed me off. And now you're standing here asking me to help you keep her away from you and...well, damn it, you're making me actually like you."

"I could find another reason for you to dislike me." Basil smiled slyly.

"We'll discuss it. Okay. What do you want me to do?"

"Convince her to leave me alone." His eyes flickered to the stairs as Trinity descended. "Now would be a good time."

"She was here with you?" Jonah said under his breath.

"Convince her," he reiterated under his breath and turned away when she entered the room.

"Why are you here so early, Jonah?" Trinity hissed.

"I believe in being prompt," Jonah said simply. "Let's get this show on the road."

"Dante isn't here yet, and I need breakfast first." Basil hoped Jonah had more success in convincing Trinity she was better off without him than he did.

"Who's Dante?" Jonah slipped his hands in his pants' pockets and waited for a reply.

"An investigator. He'll be working with us to stop the ritual. Couldn't you have, just this once, been late?" Trinity slammed her fist into Jonah's arm hard enough to make him yelp. "I mean it."

"I thought you told me you were in danger being with Basil?" Jonah grumbled, rubbing his arm.

"I can handle myself."

"Against the most evil creature known to man. You called him

that, remember. You may be tough, Trinity, but you're not impervious. Step away from him, before it's too late."

"Back off Jonah," she warned him with eyes narrowed.

"Anyone want coffee?" Basil asked, hopping to end what could possibly be a fist fight between the two. "Or a shot of whiskey, as I'm having."

"I'm fine." Jonah sneered at Trinity.

"Suit yourself." Downing the glassful he'd poured himself, Basil hoped it dulled the ache he was feeling deep in his heart.



After Dante showed up and everyone was acquainted, they took to Basil's sitting room, while Jonah tapped on the keys of his laptop in search of Chaos' compound. Thanks to technology, he was able to type in the compound's address in the maps section of his explorer and was given a bird's eye view of the property and building. And that was why he was the best man for this job. Though it had taken him over an hour to get to it, he knew just what to do.

"It looks like a normal church," Dante stated, hovering over Jonah's shoulder, looking at the screen.

"To the average eye, yeah, but it's not. I guarantee that," Basil added, pulling out a cigarette and lighting it.

"I thought vampires couldn't go into churches." Dante stood, gave his back a stretch before leaning back over Trinity's shoulder.

"It's all mind over matter," Basil explained, flicking ashes into a glass ashtray on the bar. "If the vampire was raised a Catholic, raised to believe in heaven and hell, taught to believe evil couldn't surface on religious ground, then they wouldn't be able to enter the church. But there really isn't any harm in entering one. Most people still think of churches as sacred grounds, and so they believe themselves to be safe once inside. And that's why Chaos has his campground in a church."

"People wouldn't suspect it of anything but a church," Trinity deduced. "And the instant they're inside, bam! He snaps them up and makes them one if us."

Basil nodded. "Or uses them for food or toys for his people. The perfect place to hide and feed."

"Scary." Dante shuddered.

"And that's why I told you not to go after him alone." Trinity aimed stern eyes at Dante.

"So you two are enemies, you and this Chaos character. But if you're the prince, why don't you just take him out?"

"As long as he behaves, so to speak, I don't have a problem with him."

"I would have to say trying to raise an evil dude would not be behaving. So he uses a church to lure people in and create more vamps. What do you do to increase your numbers?"

"I wait for stupid people like you to open their mouths."

"Basil doesn't recruit that way." Trinity interrupted, knowing it would only end in a testosterone induced fight. "He only takes people that have nothing left to live for."

"How noble." Dante sneered.

"If you knew tomorrow you only had a week to live, would you go willingly, or take an opportunity to continue living, illness free?" Basil asked snidely.

"So how do you find these desperate people?"

"Can you detect what sort of alarm system he's using, Jonah?" Trinity cut in, hoping to remind the two why they were here.

"I can, but it'll take some time."

"We need to do this now," Basil insisted. "We're running out of time."

"Hold onto your fangs, walking dead. I can deactivate it from here as soon as this baby detects it." Jonah patted his keyboard. "It has a built in alarm detection scanner that will give off a ping the instant it's near any sort of security system."

Basil's eyebrows lifted. "And why, pray tell, do you have need for that sort of device?"

"That's my little secret," Jonah said with a proud smile.

"He breaks into official computer records like the cop house and—

"Not so much a secret now." Jonah jabbed Trinity in the side. "I can do it, don't worry," he informed Basil.

"You'd better."

"Have a little faith."

They watched as Jonah tapped his fingers on the keys, cursing when he'd hit one firewall after another, then clicked on the keys once more. It seemed to take forever, and Trinity could feel the nervousness emanating off of Basil as he prowled the room.

"I got it!" Jonah proclaimed.

"About time," Basil snapped at Jonah's back.

"You think this is easy?"

"Boys," Trinity interjected, knowing they would get nowhere if the two of them started sniping at each other. "What do you have, Jonah?"

Jonah began explaining as he turned the laptop for everyone to

view. "It's state of the art, motion censored, but it also works on body temperature."

"I thought vampires didn't register body temperature because, well...they're dead." Dante shrugged as he looked at Trinity then Basil.

"We're not dead, just not fully alive so our core temperature is lower than humans," Trinity informed. "But this sort of detection devise isn't used for vamps. I'm betting it's to detect humans. Am I right?" Basil nodded to her statement.

"So a human walks by and bam, vampires jump out of their hiding spot and have themselves a nice little snack," Jonah stated with a clap of his hands.

"Okay, so what about inside?" Dante asked with a shudder.

"It's a different setup. More sophisticated." Jonah tapped a few more keys on the keyboard. "I have all the schematics right here. One simple command and it's offline."

"But how will they not know it's gone offline?" Dante leaned closer to the screen.

"Because I am going to trick the system into thinking it's still operating normally." Jonah smiled proudly and clicked the mouse, executing the program. "Voila."

"That's it?" Dante stood, stretching his back again.

"That's it, my boy."

"Man, it looks so simple."

"It is, if you know what you're doing. And I do." Jonah gave himself a pat on the back.

"I think I could get into this computer stuff. It might be fun trying at least," Dante decided.

"Okay, so now all we have to do is get in." Trinity turned to Basil, took a deep breath. "You ready to change?"

"I'm set." Basil rolled his neck, cracked his knuckles.

"Does it feel weird when you change?" Dante wanted to know.

"No, it's still me. All I'm doing is persuading your mind that I've changed."

"Get out! Mind control?"

"Not so tough if you have the ability." Basil turned to Trinity. "You will be careful."

"I always am."

"Yes, that's how you ended up with a bullet in you not so long ago." He kissed her nose making her frown, then vanished. "I'll see you later." His voice trailed behind him.

"I am a genius." Jonah turned the monitor for them to see. "I just

hooked my computer into their central unit, so I can watch everything you guys do.

"Well, I guess that means we get rolling." Cracking her neck, Trinity prepared herself for a possible fight. Good, she was itching for one. "Ready?"

"You bet." Dante nodded. "How long have you and Basil known each other?" He followed Trinity to her car.

"Over seven years."

"Wow. So why'd you break up?" He climbed into the passenger's side of her car.

She stared the engine and got them rolling. "It's complicated."

"I see. He cheated on you."

She turned to him with surprise. "How did you figure that out?"

"That's usually what breaks people up after being together for so long. You figure out what we're going to do for a distraction?"

"I'm going to use you as bait."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Jacob's Cove, 2025 Five hours to eclipse

Trinity pulled to a stop near a deserted path off the road that led to Chaos's compound. She hadn't said a word to Dante; even when he'd pursued her about using him as bait. It was better to keep him in the dark. Edgy. The vampires would scent him better if he was nervous.

"Look, I know I seemed enthusiastic about the whole changing into things deal. But that didn't mean I wanted to become one of you." Dante's voice quivered as he climbed from the car.

She took his arm, just to be sure he wouldn't bolt, and walked towards the compound. "It won't get that far. Trust me," Trinity reassured him, then shoved him in the path of the censor.

"I hope you're right. Aw fuck, Trinity." He backed away as two burly looking men headed towards them.

"Look's like we got us some fresh meat for dinner tonight," the vampire said.

"Hi boys." Trinity stepped out of the shadows, primed for the fight. With one quick maneuver, she roundhouse kicked the one to her left, knocking him into the other. She enjoyed the fight, always had, and valued a good opponent. The one with the shaved head was definitely good at what he did. He gave as good as he got. Slipping her stake from her jacket pocket, she tossed it at Dante. "Go for the heart, Dante."

He caught the stake easily. "I know; I've watched enough movies to know how to kill one of them." With his hands shaking more than a little bit, he held it up, ready to kill.

"Dante?"

He stopped short, his head tilting to the side "Do we know each other, pal?"

The young man stepped out of the shadows, his wide smile showing off his sharp teeth. "I should think so. We shared a womb for nine months."

Dante froze, his hand held in mid air while he looked down at the young man. "Danny?"

"Dante, kill him!" Trinity shouted as three more vampires came out of the shadows. She had her hands full while he was socializing.

"No!" he shouted at Trinity. "Danny? Oh my god, Danny, it's really you."

With a flick of her wrist, Trinity stabbed the stake into her vampire's chest and watched him go poof. "Then I will." She jumped up, ready for the kill.

"No!" Dante stepped in front of the young man just as Trinity thrust her hand out to stake him. The tip of the spike caught him in the shoulder, tearing through his shirt and scraping a good deal of skin off as it sliced into his shoulder. "Fuck." His hand came up to his shoulder. "Don't kill him, Trinity, he's my brother."

"And now he's gone. Shit!" The kid was fast, too.

Dante spun around just as the young boy leapt over the fence. "Danny, wait!"

"What the hell are you doing?" She grabbed him as he tried to run after his brother.

"Let me go!"

"The hell I will. Shit, we have company, and you're in no condition to fight. Come on." Flipping him over her shoulder, Trinity took off in a full run.

"Put me down."

"Not until we're safely in the car. Damn it, why the hell did you step in front of me when I was ready to stake him?" She shoved him into the passenger's side seat and pulled out her cell. "Jonah, code red. Idiot!" she said to Dante as she started the engine and sped off.

"That was my brother." His arm was bleeding something fierce.

"That was a vamp, and he nearly had you for lunch."

"He wouldn't have... How come he grew? I don't get it. He was thirteen when he was taken. How come he's an adult now?"

"Vamps age. Impure vamps rather, age one year for every five human years." She slammed the car into gear and sped around the corner. She hoped they weren't being followed.

"Then that would make him...seventeen. I need to go back; I need to find him."

"You need to sit your ass down there and put pressure on that wound before you black out. Dumb fucker. I could have killed you." Shaking her head, she sped off to Basil's home. She hoped Basil would be able to handle it from here on his own.



The air around him smelled rancid and clogged his lungs as he walked through the back entrance. Basil had never been awfully fond of Jonah, but right now, he could actually hug the guy. The alarms were off and everything was a go. Now all he had to do was find his man.

Closing his eyes, Basil kept the illusion of him as a rat while he scanned the minds for the one he looked for. Being a rat was easier to manifest into someone's minds than a bat. Rats were more common, so seeing one wouldn't put a person—or vampire in this case—at unease.

He sniffed the air, smelling the familiar scent of human blood, but kept going. It wasn't a human he was after at the moment, and even if he had been, the ones he smelled were well past dead. And they weren't the young women. There was nothing pure about this blood. There was nothing alive in this compound, which saddened him a great deal. It would make things so much easier if he could just find the young women and take them to safety.

He saw his prey in his head, sitting at a desk, reading something on the computer before him. And he was alone. Perfect.

Basil scurried along the floor. He passed several vampires, some of which he recognized as once being on his team. Traitors. And if he had time, he'd send them to their eternal life of torture for betraying him.

Taking a left at the end of the corridor, Basil hurried to the door. Using his mind, he opened the door, then entered quietly. The tapping on the keyboard disguised any noise Basil's tiny clawed feet might have made. He approached the desk, then appeared as himself.

It wasn't Chaos, but he would do just as well.

"Hello, Magnus."

He turned in his seat, his eyes narrowed as he looked up at Basil. His hand shifted to the control panel to his left, and Basil stopped it before he could press the alert button.

"We need to talk." Clamping a hand on Magnus's shoulder, Basil sunk into the vampire's mind and knocked him out cold. Magnus slumped over and Basil caught him before he hit the desk. "You always were easy." Lifting the guy to his feet, Basil grunted as he shifted him into position, then carried him to the door.

He heard the commotion and smiled. That was his girl. Sending a mental thank you to Trinity for working her magic, Basil carried Magnus down the corridor and right out the back door.

Damn, that was too easy.



"What the hell happened?" Jonah helped Dante to the sofa while Trinity ran for some cloths.

"Stupid idiot stepped in front of me as I was about to stake someone," she yelled as she ran to the kitchen. The guy was damn lucky she'd pivoted at the last second or he would have more than a flesh wound. Damn idiot.

"He was my brother," Dante said weakly, his hand clutching the wound on his shoulder.

"The vamp was your brother? Shit, that's rough." Jonah grabbed the cloth from Trinity and applied it to Dante's arm, pressing down hard.

"That stings," he hissed.

"No doubt. It'll need stitches." Jonah dabbed away the blood to get a closer look. "Only a few though. Could have been worse."

"No shit. What about Basil? Any word?" She felt the pangs of hunger stirring as the scent of human blood permeated the air.

"Did I hear my name being spoken?" Basil stepped out of the shadows, a smile wide on his handsome face. "I smell fresh blood. Oh, goodie, a snack." He bore his fangs as he stepped towards Dante.

"Behave." Because she wasn't entirely sure Basil was joking, Trinity decided it might be best to keep the two separated.

"I prefer my blood a little more refined in any case."

"I think I should get him to a doctor," Jonah advised as he washed up the wound with the water Trinity had brought him.

"Good idea. Call me and let me know how it goes."

Jonah nodded at Trinity. "Come on, D, let's get you patched up." Jonah helped Dante to his feet.

"Well?" Trinity finally asked after Dante and Jonah left. She wasn't overly worried about Dante. A few stitches and he'd be fine. "Did it work? Did you catch him?"

"I have him locked up in the cage," Basil informed Trinity.

"Chaos?"

"He wasn't on the compound. I got Magnus."

"Good. Let's go have a talk with him."



"How you doing there, D?" Jonah inquired as he pulled out of Basil's long driveway. They had at least a twenty minute drive to get back to the cove, then find a clinic that was open in the middle of the night. Though Dante's wound wasn't life threatening, he was losing some blood and the wound needed to be closed to prevent infection.

"I'm hanging."

"Still bleeding up a storm?"

Dante pulled the cloth from his wound and shrugged. "It's not gushing. I don't really think I need stitches."

Jonah grunted. "Don't tell me you have a fear of needles?"

"I was shot in my first year as a cop. Caught me in the left side. Trust me, after that, I don't fear much."

"I suppose not. So...your brother's a vampire?" There was just no easy way to ask such a question.

"Yeah."

"That's tough. Did you know he was a vamp?"

"I suspected, still..."

"It's tough to grasp." Jonah signaled and pulled out of Basil's driveway and headed out on the highway.

"I have to find him. I have so many questions."

"I'm sure as soon as this business with Basil's father is dealt with, Trinity will be more than happy to help you look for him."

"Maybe." He shifted in his seat to look at Jonah. "How long have you known her?"

"Six years. You can't do any better than Trinity."

"And this Basil guy?"

"Before today I would have said he was a blight on humanity, but...he's proven his worth, so I'm cutting him some slack. He's pretty powerful, though."

"Maybe he's the one I should enlist to find my brother. He has all those freaky powers and stuff. He might be more helpful than Trinity."

Jonah slowed his speed as they took the turn to Jacob's Cove's city limits. "Like I said, you can't go wrong with Trinity. But it can't hurt to have them both on your side. How's the arm?"

Dante removed the cloth. "It stopped bleeding."

"You're still getting it stitched, my friend."



Trinity followed Basil down to the cellar and through the corridor that led to the dungeon. They didn't have much time to waste and they'd both decided a little mind invasion was their best bet in getting the information about where the girls were being kept.

"You know, in all the years I lived here, I think I've only been down here once."

"I remember that time fondly. I so enjoyed being your prisoner." He winked as he held the door for her.

She remembered it fondly as well and decided as soon as they found the girls and made sure Basil's father was safely locked up, she was going to enjoy making him her prisoner again. "You sure you can do this?"

"It's been a while since I stepped into someone's mind, but I'm sure I remember how it's done. Just like riding a bike."

Sure, she knew he could do it, but she also remembered him telling her the reason why he hated doing it was because it felt like slamming his head through a brick wall to get to the other side. "If at any time you feel it's getting to be too much—"

"This has to be done, Trinity." And having said that, he headed for the cell where Magnus was being held and stepped through the bars. "I'm giving you one chance to tell me where the young girls are being held."

"I will not betray my master," Magnus stated with a firm chin jutting out.

"So be it." In a flash he pinned Magnus to the wall with one hand to his neck. Trinity felt goosebumps just watching him as he transformed into his alter persona. "Let's see what your mind has to say."

She watched as Basil held Magnus to the wall and wished she could see what he was seeing. What would it feel like to walk into someone else's mind? Then Magnus began to shake, his knees quivered, and she could see the power in Basil's arms as he held the man to the wall.

"Don't try to resist me, Magnus. It will only cause you more pain."

"I...will...not...betray."

Trinity jumped when his body began to convulse. Then Basil let him drop to the floor and staggered back several steps.

"Basil?" She was right at the door, ready to come to his aid when he turned to her. His eyes were white.

"Do you have your cell phone?" he mumbled, lifting a hand to his temples.

"Yes, why?"

"I'll call if I find them."

He vanished before she could say another word. It infuriated her that he'd left without her. They were supposed to do this together.

The sound of Magnus' chirpy laughter caught her attention, and turning to him, saw him crawl up on his knees. "What's so damn funny?"

"You'll never find them?"

"Where did you send him?" If Basil was in trouble, she was going to take great pride in tearing Magnus limb from limb. Then in a whoosh of wind, Basil reappeared before her.

"I'm in no mood to play games, Magnus." Slashing out his hand, he cracked it against Magnus's cheek. "Where are they?" he demanded.

"Where did he send you?"

"A run down mill on the outskirts of town." Grabbing hold of the front of Magnus' shirt, Basil hoisted him to his feet. "You will tell me now, where they are or this time I won't be so easy on you."

Magnus spat at Basil, the wad landing right on his left cheek.

Lifting him off his feet, Basil sent him flying across the cell. Magnus hit the wall with a sickening thud before sliding down to the floor. "Let's try this again." Grabbing Magnus by the throat, He dug his nails into the flesh as he glared into Magnus' eyes.

This time Magnus didn't just shake, he twitched like he'd sucked on a live electrical wire. And once again, Basil dropped him and vanished. She wished just once he would tell her where he was going.

"You're looking a little worse for wear there, Magnus. You better hope this time you gave him the right directions."

"I...will...not...betray."

She was knocked back from the force of Basil's entry and watched as he tore into Magnus in a blind rage.

"This will stop now!" His voice rattled the bars of the cells. "No more games. I will beat it out of you if I have to."

"Can I help?" She was dying to get into the action.

"Where are the girls being kept?" Basil shouted at Magnus then tossed him across the room.

"I...will—" His words were cut off as Basil lunged at him, lifting him off the ground.

"Where are they being held?"

She stood outside the bars, watching as Basil pummeled Magnus with fists, tossing him around the room, demanding answers. She knew time was ticking and she hoped Magnus gave up soon.

"Now, you will tell me." Basil crouched down over Magnus as he lay slumped on the floor and clutched onto the vampire's head.

Once again, Magnus convulsed and this time, so did

Basil. She tore the doors open and ran to Basil's side. "Enough!"

He fell back onto her, panting, his hands clutching his head. His face was sweaty and pale and his body shook in her arms. She felt something stinging the back of her neck but was distracted when Magnus began to laugh.

"Can I have a go at him now?"

"You're too late." Magnus laughed and as Trinity turned she saw the sunlight through the small cell window to her right..

In a flash of a second, Magnus lunged at her, grabbing the spike she always carried in her belt and sent it home in his chest.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Jacob's Cove, 2025 Eclipse

The wind was as still as death. It was like the world knew and was prepared for what was to come. Chaos stood in the center of the Pentagram, a virginal girl at each point, a man at each side. Knives were ready; the kills were imminent.

All five lay chained to the ground, whimpering. Naked, they shivered in the early morning air. Each one would die nobly and help to finally raise the king.

The day had finally come.

Chaos stood tall, dressed from head to toe in black, not a sliver of flesh exposed to the torturous sun above. Soon he would have what he wanted the most. The light was beginning to dim and the time had finally come.

"On this day, as the fire dies, I offer to you, Dark Mystics, the blood of five that have been deemed sacred." His left hand shot out to the man at the left point, indicating the first kill to be made. He reveled in the scream as the girl was sacrificed, as the knife plunged into her chest, as blood drained into the ground.

One by one, their blood was spilled, and one by one the young girls lay dying. It was indeed a good day to die.

The light dimmed, and Chaos lifted his head and cried, "I give to

you, Dark Mystics, my offering. Grant me my wish; release the king. Let him rise once more."



"No!" Trinity screamed as she lunged towards Magnus. But she was too late. He crumbled to the floor in a pile of dust, and all they had worked for was gone.

"I've failed," Basil whimpered as he lay on the cold cement floor.

She hurried to his side, and lifting his head, she stroked his damp brow. "You didn't fail. There's still time. You need to rest." If anyone failed it was her. How stupid of her to not be on guard.

"There's no time to rest." He pulled himself to his knees, then finally to his feet. "I need to find Chaos. We need to stop the ritual." He stumbled, and she grabbed hold of him before he fell over.

"And how are you going to do that when you can barely stand?"

"I have to stop this before—" His voice froze as he turned to the window. "No, no no no!"

It was then that she saw how dim the light from outside the window had become. And as they raced to the window, they both saw the sun as it was engulfed in darkness.



Chaos stood on the ground as it rumbled and quaked. He chanted above the noise that had erupted. And as the sunlight went completely dim, he fell to his knees. He felt the air grow hot, felt the electrical charge right before it went off. And in a flash of blinding light, the king was set down before him.

"Thank you, Dark Mystics, thank you."

Completely bare, Avadur lay on the cold ground curled in a ball. He quivered and moaned, and Chaos worried that something had gone wrong. "My lord!" He ran to Avadur, falling at his side.

"Where...am I?" the king croaked.

"You are back, where you belong."

"Take me home."



Any other time, Trinity might have thought the eclipse was a beautiful thing. But now, knowing five young girls' lives were being sacrificed to raise something so evil that it could blot out the sun, it sickened her. And as the daylight faded she knew in her heart they were too late.

"You have to leave me," Basil stated, grabbing a hold of her by the arms. "Run, drive, fly, I don't care, just leave and don't look back."

"Don't be stupid, Basil."

He gave her a sturdy shake, his blue eyes wide as he spoke. "You're not safe here, not near me. Go, Trinity. If you love me, leave me now."

She caught him as his knees gave out. "I'm not going anywhere without you. Jesus, Basil, you can't even hold yourself up."

"I'll be fine. I don't want to lose you, Trinity. Please, just leave me."

She'd never seen him cry and seeing his blue eyes shimmering with tears now made her chest ache. She wiped a hand across his face, then leaned in and took his lips. She silenced him with a slow, simmering kiss, just drinking him in and needing only to feel him. And when she released him she held her chin firm. "You won't lose me, Basil. No more pushing me away to save me. Let me take care of myself, and you." She kissed him again. "We need a plan."

"He'll come looking for me and if he finds you with me, he'll..."

She kissed him again, then cupped his face in her hands. "He won't find me. He doesn't know where I live, so that's where we'll go." Hoisting him up, she hooked her arm around his waist. "I'm not leaving you this time, Basil. No matter what."

His weight was solid on her but she managed to help him through the tunnels and out to her car. And as they stepped out into what should have been early morning, the darkness surrounded them.

"No one will be safe now."

She tucked him into the passenger's side seat and quickly hurried to the drivers side. "I guess our job just got a little bit harder." She yanked out her cell phone and dialed Jonah's number. "Where are you?"

"Just getting out of the ER. Jesus, Trin, it's pitch black out here."

"We weren't successful. Grab Ariel and head to the shop. I'm taking Basil there now, and Jonah...do whatever you have to do to protect yourself." She hung up and tucked the phone back in her shirt pocket, and as she glanced over at Basil, she saw he was out like a light.

He was being so brave, wanting to protect her and save her from his evil father, but she wasn't the only one that needed protecting.

Putting the car in gear, she sped off towards her home.



Chaos helped Avadur from the car and to the front entrance of what had once been his home. He so hoped Basil would be here so he

could watch the king take out his revenge. The front door was unlocked, and Chaos entered as if he'd done so dozens of times before.

"I need to feed," Avadur mumbled.

Chaos carried him to the living room and set him on the sofa. Then he simply stood back and admired the king. It had been too long since he'd laid eyes on his master, and Avadur was just as fearsome as he remembered. His muscles bunched beneath a wide frame. He was an imposing creature and one everyone would soon come to fear. It was a joyous time in Chaos' life. Soon, his master would reign once more and his plan for world dominance would soon become reality.

"I had no idea you would be this weak when you arrived," Chaos said finally. When Avadur's head snapped up, Chaos took a step back. The glare from his crystalline blue eyes froze him to his spot. "I shouldn't have—what I meant was—I thought you would be at your full strength when you arrived." And again the glare chilled him. "I'll get you food."

Grabbing a blanket from the sofa, Chaos draped it around Avadur before he pulled out his cell phone and called Magnus. After ten rings and getting no response, he hung up and dialed another of his men and instructed him on what to bring. He tucked the phone away, drawing in a deep breath before speaking. "Is there anything else I can get for you, my lord?"

"Basil," he grumbled, pulling the blanket tighter to his body.

"I'll see if he's here—"

"He's gone." Avadur looked at Chaos. "Find him."



It was eerie to see the daylight turned to darkness. But what was even worse, was seeing the people breaking into stores and dragging the employees outside. And those were the humans. They had no idea they were in danger of becoming someone's blood or sex slave, or worse.

Trinity pulled into her parking spot at the back of the Digital Domain just as Jonah pulled into his.

"It's a fucking madhouse out there," he exclaimed as he climbed from his vehicle, Ariel and Dante following.

"And it's only going to get worse. Give me a hand with Basil."

"What happened to him?" Jonah asked as he helped Trinity slide Basil's unconscious body out of the car.

"He overtaxed his body by going into Magnus's mind." She hoisted him up and as she took his right side, Jonah took his left. "How's the shoulder?" she asked Dante.

"Stitched up and good to go. What's going to happen now?"

Ariel got the door for them while Trinity and Jonah carried Basil inside and up the stairs. "Mayhem. I need to feed him and get his strength back. In the meantime, you all should lock yourselves up in the apartment across from me, and when Basil's up to it, we'll come get you." She stopped at her door. "Whatever you do, don't go outside."

"No shit!" Dante said sarcastically.

"I've got him from here." Opening her door, she dragged Basil over the threshold while the other three headed across the hall. She closed the door and carried him to her bed. Letting him fall, she lifted his legs and positioned him on the bed, before she sat down beside him. She'd never seen him this weak before.

She pulled her shirt over her head, grabbed a letter opener beside the bed, and sliced the vein at the side of her neck. Taking his head in her hands, she pressed his mouth to the blood. "Drink," she ordered, holding him in place.

It didn't take long for him to latch on and as he pulled the blood from her veins, she stroked his hair. She didn't know what was going to happen now, but she knew there was no way in hell she was ever leaving him again. She held him against her as he drank from her, replenishing himself and draining her. She would give him everything she had to just to keep him safe.

"There you go. That's good, drink as much as you need." His hands touched her face now, as he pulled at her vein, and she felt a closeness to him she hadn't felt in a very long time. And when he released his grasp of her vein and lifted his head to meet her eyes, she felt herself drowning in his eyes.

"You gave to me, now let me give to you."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Her body longed for his touch, and as he laid her down on the bed, she gave to him willingly.

"We may only have this time. I want to give you everything before all of it is lost."

His lips were gentle as they caressed her skin with tiny kisses. His hands touched her not with an urgency but a need to fulfill. She knew it was stupid for them to take this moment to pleasure themselves, but she needed the warmth he gave her to fill the coldness in her heart at having failed five innocent girls.

She surrendered as he stripped her clothes away.

His mouth covered her breast, and with a slow, meticulous swirl of his tongue around the tip, making it harden and swell. He tickled her skin with his fingertips as he slid them along the center of her body only to stop at the apex between her legs. She spread for him in anticipation, and when he touched her, she quivered.

Again, there was no urgency here, only a soft, circular motion caressing the soft moist flesh between her legs. It was a meticulous seduction that filled her completely.

"Give to me, my love, this one last time."

"It's not the last, Basil, but only the beginning." She didn't know when he'd undressed, but as he positioned himself over her, she felt

the heavy weight of his hard-on press to the heat.

He held her eyes in his as he pressed inside. Bracing himself up on one hand, he feathered the fingers on his other along her face before touching his lips to hers. As his mouth seduced, he moved fluidly inside of her. She'd never felt this much sensuality from him, and something inside of her told her she would never feel it again.

"Don't, Basil." She held his face in her hands, her eyes burning hot with tears. "Don't make this goodbye."

He silenced her with his mouth and quickened his pace. She felt the rise of the wave as it built inside of her, and though she wanted it to never end, it crashed through her.

She bowed her back as he drove her higher, taking her over that final crest.

"Remember that I will always love you."

"Basil, no!" But her cries went unheard as he vanished.



I think I might know where Basil would be, my lord." Chaos watched as his master sucked the life from the male his men had brought to him. It was the third one Avadur had devoured and Chaos hoped he got his full strength back soon. They'd managed to find him some clothing, though they didn't fit well, at least he was clothed now.

Avadur let the lifeless man drop to the floor, then stretched his back and licked his lips. "Where?"

"He'll be with Trinity, his love. I could have my men go to her apartment and see if they're there—" His words were cut off as Basil appeared before them.

"Hello, Father."

Avadur stood and glared at his son. He had the dark hair as Basil did, and the blue eyes, but the resemblance between the two ended there. "Have you come to make your plea for life?"

Basil walked up to his father, holding his chin strong.

"No, I came to surrender myself to you."

Avadur laughed and the sound vibrated in the room. "Have you now? Well, how generous of you. And here I was hoping for a fight."

"You won't get one from me."

Avadur tilted his head and examined his son. "You come to me smelling like your woman and expect me to have my revenge on you by ending your life?" He smiled and his mouth widened, showing off his fanged teeth. "Now why would I want to end your suffering so quickly when I could prolong it indefinitely?"

"Leave Trinity out of this. It's me you want, not her."

"No," Avadur smiled a little wider. "I think she is just the one I want." Still smiling, he vanished.



"I'm going to kill him." Grabbing her jeans and shirt, Trinity threw them on in haste, then stormed from her apartment. She hammered her fist on the door across the hall before entering.

"Someone's on the warpath. What did Basil do now?" Jonah asked from his spot at the table where he was enjoying a steaming cup of coffee.

"He just left me. Gave me the best moment of my life and vanished. I'm going to strangle him the first chance I get."

"Good." When Trinity shot her eyes to him he continued. "That he left you. You're not safe as long as you're near him, especially not with his father free."

"I don't want to get into this now. I need to head out and work the streets. Someone needs to protect the stupid humans out there looting. I just wanted to let you know I was leaving."

"Not alone, you're not." Jonah stood, his back stiff.

"I can handle myself just fine, Jonah, so save the hero routine. Where are Ariel and Dante?" she asked, scanning the apartment.

"Ariel's in the bedroom calling her parents to let them know we're okay and Dante had to take a leak. You're not going out alone, Trin, I mean it."

She planted her fists on her hips and glared at him. "Like you could stop me."

"Maybe not alone," Dante said from behind her. "But I could help. Have you looked outside recently?"

"You think I don't know what's going on out there?" she snapped at Dante. "Everyone with a pulse is fresh pickings. And that is why I have to get out there."

"Then I'll go with you."

She chortled at Dante. "Yeah, you showed how well you can handle yourself out there. All you'll do is slow me down. You stay put here, got it?" She jabbed a finger at his chest.

He swiped it away. "Last time I looked, I was my own boss."

"You have no idea the danger that lurks out there. They'll smell your blood and be on you faster than you can blink those dark eyes."

"And they'll be a pile of dust in a flash," he informed her ada-

mantly.

"What the hell is with men thinking they're gods? Let me tell you this, vampires are ten times faster than you." And with lightening speed, she had him in a chokehold. "Not to mention, stronger. You think you can handle them when you didn't even see me coming." She let out a sputtered cough when his elbow connected with her ribs.

"I think I can handle them just fine." He spun her, pinning her to the wall beside them.

Rolling her eyes, she threw her head back and slammed it into his face. She spun on him as he went down on all fours. "Oh yeah, you can handle yourself just fine."

"Why are you so pigheaded?"

She whirled on Jonah standing behind her. "I'm not pigheaded, I'm realistic, and the two of you would only end up food.

The sound of glass shattering downstairs got everyone's attention.

"Aw, Jesus. They're looting the shop," Jonah groaned.

"Take Ariel and Dante to the cellar, Jonah. It's secured."

"We are not leaving you alone to deal with this. You wanna waste time arguing with me on this or shut up and let us help you?"

She bared her fangs at Jonah before huffing and giving in. "Fine, but stay behind me."

"Ariel, we gotta run now," Jonah called out and when his wife came out of the bedroom he took her hand in his. "Stay behind me. Got it?"

She nodded, clutching hold of his hand.

Trinity opened the door cautiously, scanning the hall before allowing anyone out after her. She led the way, Dante behind her, followed by Jonah and Ariel. The security alarm was ringing loud and irritatingly, but instead of shutting it off, Trinity walked through the door and readied herself for a fight. Stepping into the front lobby area of the computer shop, she came to a complete halt as she gazed at a brute of a man. She didn't have to be told who he was; she could deduce it for herself.

"Get out of here," she hissed to Jonah as she stood in front of them in protection.

"We're not leaving you," he insisted.

"Do you have any idea who this is? This is the friggin' evil bastard we've been warning you about. Now get the hell out of here."

"Leaving will do none of you any good," Avadur spoke as he made his way towards them.

Inside, her body was quivering up a storm. This was the man that had tortured his only son and had the world in fear, and she had no

idea how she was going to keep her friends safe from him.

"You can't keep them safe," Avadur stated, smiling wickedly. "And there's really no need to speak when I can read your minds. Fear is such an intoxicating scent." He sniffed the air, his eyes closed as he drew in the aroma. "There really is nothing else like it."

"It's me you want, not them. Let them go." His eyes opened, and Trinity was struck by the emptiness of them.

"Oh, it is you I want, but they'll serve me well to strengthen my body and mind. Come to me pretty one."

She felt the pull even though she tried to resist and was drawn towards the king. He touched her face, and the iciness she felt from him chilled her right to the bone.

"Is it any wonder he is so taken with you? You are a mighty one, aren't you? I think I will enjoy having you as my own."

"Leave her alone."

From the corner of her eye she saw Basil appear.

"Keep away from him," she warned, primed to fight for her love.

The king's laughter rumbled in the room like thunder, vibrating deep within her body. "Oh, that is rich. My boy now needs aid from a lowly female."

"Leave her alone." Basil stepped forward.

"Watch who you call lowly," Trinity growled deep within her throat. She didn't give a damn who he was; she didn't appreciate being called lowly.

"And gutsy as well. Mind who you speak to, woman."

She narrowed her eyes and straightened her shoulders, showing him she was not one to mess with either.

"Trinity, stop!" Basil stepped between them shoving her away. "I can handle this." He turned back to his father, took a step towards him and spoke in a dark tone. "It's me you want, not her."

"I tire of you."

Trinity felt the air snap with electricity, and as she saw the king raise his hands and his eyes glow an eerie blue, she knew just what he was about to do. She would not allow him to kill the only man she would ever love.

She would give herself to save his life.

"Basil, move," she cried out, lunging forward, stepping in front of Basil. She felt the charge hit her chest and a blinding white light spear through her as she flew through the air. She landed with a thud against the broken window and felt the pain shoot from her back into her chest. As she looked down, she saw the broken shard of glass stab-

bing through her chest.

"Trinity!" Basil cried out, running towards her.

She lifted her head and smiled. "I love you, Basil." She closed her eyes, and everything just faded away.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

"Trinity, no!" He reached out to her just as she crumbled. Her essence left her, and what remained floated over his hands to land on the floor at his feet.

She was gone.

His head whipped up and he glared at his father. The growl he emitted shook the foundation. The wind stirred with a mighty force, snapping wood, shattering glass, and sent any object that wasn't secured to the floor spinning around wildly in the vortex he created. Through his fury, he saw his father back away.

"You will pay for that," Basil vowed, his voice like a banshee's scream. When his father vanished, his fury only grew more intense.

Computers shot out like missiles along with all the debris on the floor. And when his anger was spent, he fell to the floor, weeping.

What was left of his love was no more than a tiny scattering of dust. He gathered it up and curled his body around it. She was gone. How could she be gone?

"Basil?"

He whirled around, teeth bared, hissing.

"Calm down. It's just me," Jonah said, hands in the air. "Is she...?"

Basil stood, curling his fingers around the tiny bits of dusty remains and hissed as he spoke. "Yes. She's gone." He vanished, taking the storm with him.



Jonah stood in the destruction around him, stunned. He'd just witnessed his friend, the woman he considered his family, crumble into a pile of dust before him.

"She can't be gone."

He heard his wife sobbing and shook himself clear. Turning to her, he took hold of her arms and simply pulled her against his chest. He held on to her, feeling her sobs as they shook her body.

"She just...disintegrated," Dante murmured.

Jonah closed his eyes on the statement and the horrible event that just occurred came crashing down on him. He held his wife as he let the tears slide down his face.



The windows shattered upon Basil's entry into his home. He scented his father's presence, and tore through the house in search of him. Anyone that got in his way would pay.

He saw the young vampire stalking towards him and, lifting only one hand, sent him flying across the room. He did the same for the three others that dared get in his way. "Where is he?" he demanded, his voice booming.

"You don't have a hope in hell against him," one vampire laughed.

Basil simply picked him up by the throat and dangled him in the air. "And you think you have a hope with me?" He snapped his neck as easily as if it were a twig. He tossed his lifeless body aside knowing full well the vampire wasn't dead. It took more than a snapped neck to kill his kind, but the kid would be paralyzed and that just sucked for a vampire. Especially if no one took care of him and helped him feed.

He walked to the next and, lifting him like he had the other, he growled his request. "Where is he?"

"I'll die for him."

"So be it." In a quick motion, Basil slammed his fist down on the wooden table sitting against the wall in the foyer, then taking a splinter, sent it through the kid's heart.

"Who is next?"

"I don't want to die."

Basil spun on the whimpering woman in the corner, before he stomped towards her. She had curled in a ball in the corner, and he thought how useless that was. He picked her up by her shirt. "Then give me what I want."

"I don't know where he is—no, don't." She cringed when he lifted his hand, the wooden splinter still clutched tightly in his fingers. "But I have an idea where he might go. The girls, he might go to the ritual site for the girls. He'll need their blood to fully recharge."

"Where?"

"The graveyard outside the city."

He dropped her like a rag and vanished. Of course it would have been on a graveyard. They needed hallowed ground to resurrect his father. And he was stupid for not thinking of it sooner. If he had, the girl's lives would not have been sacrificed, and Trinity...would not have been killed.



Chaos hurried through the tunnels of Basil's estate desperate to get to safety. When he'd heard the commotion, he'd gone to see what was happening. It had shocked him to see Basil there and in a rage. He could feel the pain rippling off of Basil, and it pleased him. The king had obviously made good on his word to make Basil suffer.

He wished he could have been there to see it. And whatever the king had done to Basil's precious Trinity, it was enough to put him in a rage. But as long as Basil was on the warpath, no one was safe. Not the king, and not himself. He needed to hide until it was safe. He knew the king could take care of himself. No one, not even Basil, was a match for Avadur.

He ran through the tunnels and burst through the steel door and out into the darkened morning. His plan had gone over flawlessly. It had worried him that Basil or Trinity would interrupt the ritual. Nothing had pleased him more than when the king appeared.

They would be glorious together, just as they had been before. The king was going to create a super race of vampires that would aid in his domination of the world. The humans would be under their control from now on and no one would be able to stop them.

Sure, Chaos wished his master had been the one to sire him instead of his ungrateful son. He would have some of the king's abilities and could aid in his plan even more. But being his right hand man was just as good.

And as soon as the king took care of his son, Chaos was sure to rule.



Basil set himself down in the field and looked around. He would have thought his father would have nourished off the children before now. He couldn't understand why he hadn't. Unless Chaos didn't know the king would need to feed off of them immediately in order to regain his full strength.

All around him was death. He felt the sorrow of his own loss choke his heart in a fierce grip. He had lost the only person that had ever mattered to him. How was he going to live without her? Even when he'd shoved her out of his life for her safety, he knew she would be there anytime he needed to see her. But now...now she was gone, and he didn't know how he could go on.

"Looking for me?"

Basil spun around to see his father standing a mere two inches behind him. The pain of his loss gripping him fuelled the anger inside of him as he charged at his father. At the last second his father vanished which caused Basil to stumble aimlessly forward.

A bold ripple of laughter shot from the king's mouth. "Oh, child, how useless your attempt to avenge is." Basil spun on him as he continued to speak. "It tears you up inside, doesn't it, to have her gone. I can feel your pain, and it is a glorious thing."

Two could play his game. He vanished and reappeared right behind his father. "She was the only good thing in this world, and you will pay for taking her away from me." Basil fell face first onto the ground when his father vanished. Before he could get to his feet he felt the boot on his back pressing him down.

"Do you honestly think you are any match for me? I have ten times your power."

"That may be true," Basil admonished right before disappearing. "But you are also not at your full strength," Basil said as he reappeared behind his father, wrapping an arm around his neck. "You will pay for taking her life."

"I didn't kill her, you did."



She couldn't remember the last time she'd felt such warmth. Not since she'd been human at least. Trinity lavished in it, allowing the

heat to warm her inner soul. She knew she was dead, knew that she had to be in a place meant for the dead, and though her heart ached for what she'd lost, she knew there was no other choice for her.

You couldn't become undead.

She thought of Basil, the way he'd looked at her right before she'd faded into the bright warmth. And she remembered the way he'd touched her that last time they had been together. She was glad now that they'd had one last moment together. It would comfort her in her loneliness.

"He grieves for you as well."

The angelic voice lingered in the air like a soft breeze. Trinity looked around but saw no one. But she knew who it had been that had spoken.

The Queen.

"Will he be safe?" The warmth she felt seemed to stir around her until before her eyes a vision of light set ground. The queen's face was pure, her eyes as crystalline as Basil's, and when she spoke, her fangs gleamed like pearls in the light.

"His fate is out of your hands now, my child."

"I just need to know he'll be safe." Her hand slipped through Trinity's hair, and she felt a motherly love for the first time in too many years.

"Even now in your death you worry for him."

"I'll always worry about him." And she would, even now in whatever realm of death she was in she would worry about him. She loved him and not even death could change that.

The queen's fingers slid through the strands of Trinity's hair as gently as breath. "You gave your life for him."

Trinity felt something wet slide down her cheek and as she wiped it away, Trinity realized it was a tear. "And I would do it again. He's my love, my life."

"Such a noble child. My son was blessed to have had you."

She closed her eyes, remembering Basil's sweet face, the way his hands caressed her body, the sound of his voice. "I'm the one who was blessed." She opened her eyes. "Is he safe? I need to know he's safe."

"You did your best to save him."

"No, no, he can't die. You have to stop it. I'll do anything you ask of me just as long as you keep him safe. Please, he's your son."

The queen floated around until she came to a stop directly in front of Trinity. "Anything?"

"Yes," Trinity said without hesitation.

"So noble. Such a warrior." She touched her hand to Trinity's face, tilting it up. "You do the race proud."

Trinity felt the warmth slide inside of her, enveloping her heart. And as she looked up into the eyes of her race's first creation, she felt something else.

The pain sliced into her like a lightning bolt to the heart. She jerked, gasped, her arms and legs flailing wildly as a flash of white hot light coursed through her veins. Trinity felt the power as it settled. And in a flash of light she was given it all.



Basil stared into his father's eyes with absolutely no fear. The man might have scared him once, but that had been before he'd lost it all.

He welcomed death now.

And his father knew it.

"How does it feel to be the one to end your lover's life? Does your heart burn? Do you feel the guilt of it eating away at your soul like maggots on rotting flesh?"

Basil would not admit to his father that what he said was the truth. He did feel the guilt, and because of it, he was even more enraged. "You should have stayed locked away forever." Gathering all he had, using all his strength, Basil sent his fury at his father. It did nothing to harm him. It wasn't even enough to mess up his hair.

The king laughed boldly, which only infuriated Basil more. "You can't harm me, son."

"No, but I can."

Both men spun around to the blinding light that shot out. Basil shielded his eyes and felt a warm sensation fill his chest. For a brief second he thought he might be dying. Then, before his eyes, Trinity appeared.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Maybe he had died. It was the only explanation as to why he was looking at Trinity right now. And, lord, she was beautiful. There was a shimmer of white light surrounding her body that made her look innocent and so utterly lovely. Her long, red hair floated in a breezeless wind that stirred every strand.

But it was the color of her eyes that drew all of his attention. Normally a bluey green, they now were a translucent blue. And when she lifted them and smiled at him, Basil's heart swelled with love.

"Miss me?" she asked with a cocky smile.

Avadur gaped. "I killed you."

"Yeah, you did, and that pissed me off. I had high hopes of doing you in." Trinity stepped closer, the light following her. "But you threw a wrench into my plans, didn't you?"

"I killed you once; I will kill you again," Avadur said arrogantly.

Lifting her hand, she froze the king to his spot and Basil stood back and watched in awe. He was still trying to grasp what was actually happening.

"Yeah, about that. You might have had the power before, but I have it now." She stepped right up to his face, her lips peeling back in a wicked smile. "Man, the power is a rush. I feel so juiced, so energized,

like every ounce of me is electrified and in tune to everything around me. Ever had that feeling?"

"Trinity?" Basil spoke, though his voice seemed much too hollow.

"Yeah, it's me. I'll explain it all in a minute. First, I have to deal with this."

Basil really wished he knew what was going on, but until then, he was more than happy to stand back and watch the events unfold. Damn she was hot when she was in command mode.

"Release me, you inferior woman," Avadur lashed out with his voice.

Trinity laughed and that, too, Basil thought was different. It floated from her lips to ripple softly in the air. "See, it's that attitude that's not only pissing me off, but your wife as well. She is so not happy with you right now. Not only did you take her only child from her, but you locked her inside her realm, never to be released. She was not pleased at having to watch her child grow up without her, especially with an uncaring bastard that got off on tormenting his child. Payback is a bitch and her name is woman."

Basil laughed; that was so like his Trinity.

"So, now, she wants you back, and if I were you, I would do a hell of a lot of groveling if you don't want to sleep in the doghouse for the next century or two." Claspings her hand around his throat, she lifted him off the ground.

What she did next blew Basil's mind.

She began to glow. A blue light surrounded her, illuminating the area around her, and she looked divine. She took her free hand and placed it directly on the center of the king's chest. Slowly he began to glow. She released him, leaving him hanging in midair. Taking a step back, she tilted her head back and threw her hands out to the sides.

In a blinding flash, the king vanished with a mighty scream.

The glow disappeared, and Trinity collapsed onto the ground.

In a dead run, Basil was beside her and scooping her into his arms. She felt like flesh and bone, and he couldn't be happier.

"Whoa, that takes a lot out of you," she laughed, leaning her head on his shoulder.

"You're alive. Oh precious be, you're alive." He rained kisses all over her face before settling on her lips. And then he went slow. The feel of her lips against his was a pleasure he thought he would never feel again. The taste of her melted inside of him and he sighed as he drank her in.

And when he had finally drunk his fill, he simply held her in his arms, his cheek resting on the top of her head.

"Um, that was nice. But who are you?"

Basil's head snapped up, his eyes went wide and his jaw dropped. Trinity began to howl with laughter.

"I'm kidding. I just wanted to get a reaction out of you. Man, you're handsome."

"And you're alive." He repositioned her so she sat upright on his lap. "How is that possible? I saw you...die."

She touched a hand to his face, angling her head as she spoke. "It's a gift to her only son. Rajana wanted you to be happy, and she knew sending me back to you would do that."

He laughed now, and kissed her deep and hard. "She was so right. What a perfect gift. But how? How is it possible?"

She stroked her fingers along his face while she explained. "Magics. Don't ask; I don't know the logistics. I just know she offered me a second chance as long as I did her a favor."

Basil's throat dried up. "Oh, Trinity. You never get anything for free."

"Hey, alive here. Not looking gift horse in the mouth."

"What was the favor?" he asked cautiously. Yes, he was ecstatic at having her back, but often the price for wanting something big, especially wanting to resurrect a life, was not worth the gift.

"I'm to take over as leader of the vampire race. I'm sorry to tell you, dear Basil, but mommy wants you stripped of your rank. She said it was time a woman took over and got things right."

"I don't care, as long as I have you." He hadn't been any good as a leader anyway. "I love you, Trinity. With all my heart. And I promise I will never make you regret coming back to me."

"Whoa, who said I was coming back to you." His eyes went wide and she smiled. "Just kidding."

"Stop doing that." He smacked her leg good and hard. "I went crazy when you died, literally. I owe Jonah a whole new shop. I kind of destroyed it in my rage." She smiled, and he continued. "All I wanted was revenge. I was going to kill my father for taking you away from me."

"He would have killed you, Basil."

"I didn't care. All I cared about was you and with you gone, well... Oh, I am just so overwhelmed right now. You're back." Because he still didn't believe it, he had to feel her and taste her again to make

sure. He ran his hands over her face as he kissed her, then slid along her arms to link his fingers with hers. He released her lips and simply stared at her. "You are truly back."

She smiled at him, touching her hands to his face. "I really am."

"Don't ever leave me again," he said, giving her a sturdy shake, before enveloping her with his arms.

"I think this might be a full time gig for me now. So you're stuck with me."

He was more than happy to be stuck with her forever. "You were glowing. How was that possible?"

"I don't know. It's all part of my new abilities. She gave me everything she had in its strongest form. She said I would need everything to save the world."

"Shouldn't the sun be coming back?" Basil asked, looking up at the sky. "You sent my father—where did you send him?"

"To your mother. She has plans for him." She frowned, looking up at the sky. "Only one of the players, so to speak, that was involved in the sacrifice has been dealt with. Until they all are, the sun remains out."

"Chaos?"

"Yes."

"Well, then I guess we need to find him." He got to his feet and held his hand out to her. She smiled and that too glowed. "Your, Majesty."

With her lips pursed, she took his hand. "Don't call me that." She squealed when he yanked her into his arms. "Try and stop me."



There was no need for a vehicle when you had the ability to send yourself anywhere in the world, and that was something Trinity was going to have to get used to. It beat the hell out of sitting in traffic, she thought as she touched down in what had once been the Digital Domain.

"You did this?"

"I was grieving," Basil explained with a shrug of his shoulders.

She shook her head, smiling. "I'm sure Jonah's impressed." And when she heard the sound of footsteps, she reacted without thinking. With a wave of her hand, she froze everyone in their spot.

"What did you do?" Basil gasped.

"I don't know." Before her were Jonah, Ariel, and Dante, frozen in their spot as if they were mannequins. "Shit, shit!!" Now how did she

unfreeze them?

"I can't do that. How come you can do that?" He sounded like a whiny little boy.

"It was part of your mother's abilities. Shit! Okay, okay. Release them," she called out and, to her utter joy, saw all three come back to life.

"Holy hell!" Basil exclaimed.

"Trinity?"

"Look, I'm sorry I did that. It...well, just happened. Whoa!" She was completely taken aback when Jonah flew into her arms.

"You're alive. How the hell are you alive?" he asked finally, holding her out at arms length.

"Long story which I will get into shortly. Are you okay?" She looked over his shoulder. "Are you all okay?"

"We're good." Ariel smiled.

"Peachy," Dante stated.

"Better now that you're here." Jonah did something now that he had never done in all the years she had known him. He kissed her on the cheek. "Damn, it's good to have you back."

"It's good to be back. But we have a problem."

"The sun is still out." Dante came up beside her and held out his hand.

She took it and welcomed the firm shake. "Yeah."

"So the king is still out there? Do we need to take cover?" Ariel wanted to know.

"The king is gone," Basil supplied.

Jonah tilted his head. "Then why is the sun still gone?"

"Chaos is still free, and as long as he is, darkness reigns."

"Great. So all we have to do is find Chaos and kill him, and that'll bring the sun back."

She turned to Dante. "If only it was that easy."

"Nothing is ever that easy," Jonah sighed with a roll of his eyes.

"Hey," Basil chimed in, getting everyone's attention. "Let's not forget who we have on our side." He took hold of Trinity's hand and smiled. "We have the all powerful Queen Trinity."

"Huh?" The three said at once.

"Long story. This isn't going to be easy, and we're all going to have to stick together. If anyone isn't ready to take this on, speak now."

Jonah stepped up first and linked his hand with hers. "I'm in."

"You know I'm with him," Ariel stated and took her husband's

hand.

"Like I'm walking away." Dante took Ariel's hand, then held his free one out to Basil.

Stepping up to the four, he joined his hand with Dante's and together they linked the circle.

"Then it's settled." Trinity looked from person to person. "Let's get this bastard and bring back the sun."

EPILOGUE

The king was gone.

Chaos tore apart his room like a child in a temper tantrum. He tossed chairs, threw bedding about, followed by the bed, and smashed the wooden table in a dozen pieces as he threw it across the room. How the hell was he supposed to rule the world without his master to guide him?

Damn Trinity for ruining all of his plans.

He didn't care how powerful she'd become; he was going to make sure she paid for taking his master away.

Finished with his tantrum, he marched out of his room and to the intercom system in the office across the hall. He clicked it on and cleared his throat before beginning.

"Attention, servants. Gather in the auditorium for a meeting, immediately." He clicked it off as he left the room. His steps were sharp as he walked down the long corridor of rooms much like his own. Stopping at room ten, he hammered his fist on the door and waited for it to open.

When it swung open, he didn't waste any time. "I want you to be my next in command, Daniel."

His eyes wide, Danny responded, "Yes, sir. I would be honored to be your next in command."

"You will be in charge of making sure the men are kept in line. They'll want to stray now and go out on their own. It's up to you to make sure they know who their master is."

"Yes, sir. I won't fail you."

"Make sure you don't. We'll need to gather humans and it shouldn't be hard now that the light is out. And we need to be careful. Now that Trinity Ford has come back and has new abilities, she'll be watching us all very carefully. I'll need to stay underground and that will be the first order of business tonight. We need to find a new compound. This one has been identified."

"I'll get right on that, sir."

"You've served me well all these years, Daniel. I value your services." Leaving him, Chaos headed to the auditorium for the meeting. He'd need a secured facility with an underground bunker where he could hide in.

He knew perfectly well that Trinity and Basil would be out to find him, just as he knew that they needed him to bring the sun back.

As long as he was alive, darkness would reign.

Biography

Raised on a rural farm in Saskatchewan, Shiela Stewart relied on her vivid imagination to fill her days. Never did she realize that her need to tell a story would someday lead to becoming a published romance author. In the fall of two thousand and six, Shiela published her very first book and hasn't stopped since.

When not writing, Shiela spends time with the love of her life, William and their three children. She has a strong affection for animals which is evident in the five cats, one dog, three turtles and ten fish she owns. Some of her passions aside from writing are drawing and painting and proudly displays her artwork in murals in her home.

Her favorite time of day is sunset and loves to stargaze.

Other Books by Shiela Stewart

Discovery in Passion: Passion Series Book 1

Escape in Passion: Passion Series Book 2

Mercy in Passion: Passion Series Book 3

Seducing the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 1

Desiring the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 2

Embracing the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 3

Charming the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 4

Tempting the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 5

Penetrating the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 6

Consuming the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 7

Surviving the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 8

