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SHIELA STEWART

Embracing
THE
DARKNESS

BOOK 3 IN THE DARKNESS SERIES

Embracing the Darkness

by Shiela Stewart

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Embracing the Darkness
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To Nancy,

You opened my eyes to all sorts of possibilities when you lent me your V.C. Andrews and Stephen King books. Not to mention taking me to see Cujo and giving me the scare of my life!

Thanks for showing me what could be, sis.

CHAPTER ONE

Jacob's Cove 2025 Two weeks since the darkness began

Jonah woke to complete silence, the darkness surrounding him. His life seemed to be consumed by the darkness now. His brain was foggy and he knew if he were to give in and close his eyes he would drift right back to sleep. He didn't want to sleep because in sleep he dreamt and in his dreams she called to him.

So forcing his eyes open he tried to sit up, and found himself tied to the bed. Shaking his head clear, he tugged at his arms and felt the restraints around his wrists dig into his skin. Looking down, he saw the band securing his left arm to the side of the bed and an IV attached to his hand.

What the hell?

"You're awake."

He heard a rustling sound and as he turned he saw a woman standing at the foot of the bed. Her hair was jet black, cut in a sharp bob that ended at chin level. Her eyes were a soft blue and her face was delicate yet firm. And he had a vague memory of her holding him. Her name was Raven and she had helped him.

"I was hoping you'd sleep a little longer, but three hours is good. How do you feel?"

He blinked rapidly as she turned the light on. It stung his eyes and he wished she'd left it off. "Why am I tied to the bed, Raven?"

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"It's a safely mechanism, for your own good. Are you hungry? Thirsty?"

She was always trying to feed him. When would she get it through her head that he didn't want to be fed? He didn't want to be alive. She'd been so gentle with him when he'd been chained up in Chaos' basement, treating his wounds, then breaking him free. He'd told her then, and still meant it now, that he didn't want to be saved. Yet here he was, tied to a bed with Raven once again trying to keep him alive.

What did he have to live for anyway? His wife and unborn child were dead and he'd been made into a vampire. He didn't have anything left to live for.

"You drugged me?" He remembered the stab to his arm right before he'd been about to...end his life. And now he was awake, and tied to the bed.

That pissed him off.

"Yeah. I had to. It was a mild sedative but I'd hoped because of your injuries you would sleep longer. I also washed you down and dressed you. I have a cup of O-negative here for you. The blood bank is fully stocked."

They were in the hospital. She'd rescued him from Chaos' place and had taken him to the hospital. It was all coming back to him now. She'd left him to make his phone call to Trinity and he'd seized the moment to end his miserable life.

Only she'd stopped him. Once again, she was trying to save him.

He clamped his lips shut when she put the cup to his mouth. He'd rather starve to death than drink someone's blood.

"Being stubborn won't deter me, Jonah. I've been a nurse for nearly ten years and I've done my fare share of intubations and IVs, not to mention feeding tubes. If need be, I will shove a tube down your throat to your stomach to get you to eat. Or...you could stop being a spineless wimp and drink what's in the cup. You decide."

He clenched his jaw and glared up at her.

"Fine, have it your way, but let me tell you, it won't be a pleasant experience." She turned away and began to walk to the door.

"Why do you care if I live or die?" he blurted out. She stopped, then casually turned to him, her face softening as she responded.

"I care because I'm a compassionate person who thinks all life is precious."

"Even the bastard that turned me into a blood sucking animal?"

"Chaos will get his comeuppance eventually, and you're not an animal. Do you want to try this again and take the drink or do I go in search of a tube?"

"What I would like is for you to untie me."

She took another step towards him and he thought she would actually do as he asked. Then she stopped short of the bed and folded her arms across her chest. "Exactly how stupid do I look? I know without a shadow of a doubt that the instant I release you you'll try to take your life again. Not going to happen, buddy. Drink?"

"No!" She was going to find out just how stubborn Jonah Moore could be.

"Have it your way." She spun around and marched from the room.

He tugged on the restraints and felt the fabric give way with his strength. He was strong. Well, stronger than he'd been before. Encouraged by that, he tugged a little more. When the fabric tore open, he gave a silent cheer. Then he tried to move his legs, and couldn't. What the hell? Then it came rushing back at him. The accident that had killed his wife and unborn child had also paralyzed him.

Stubbornness taking over, he grabbed his legs, annoyed when the IV got in his way and ripped it from his hand, then pulled his legs over the side of the bed. Using his arm strength, he pushed himself from the bed until his feet touched the floor. Then giving a silent prayer, stood.

He tumbled down onto the floor like a sack of potatoes.

"What the hell are you doing?" Raven rushed into the room, dropping the bags she'd been carrying, onto the floor as she crouched down beside him.

"Doing the belly flop," he snapped at her, slapping her hands away when she tried to help him up. "I can do it."

"You need help. Do you have any idea what sort of damage you could have just caused yourself?"

Jonah squirmed, trying to prevent her from touching him, then she hooked her arms under his and hoisted him up. He felt like a useless rag doll as she dragged him back to the bed. He felt her crawl up onto the bed, then pull him up with her. Because he wasn't a complete invalid, he placed one hand on the bed to brace himself and used the other to pry her hands away from around his chest. "I got this now," Jonah snapped.

"I should have known the restraints wouldn't hold you. It was worth a try though." She shifted his upper body in place then pulled his legs up and rested them on the bed. "Idiot!"

His upper lip peeled back in a snarl. She hopped off the bed and hurried to the pick up what she'd dropped when she'd come into the room. One of them was indeed a tube. Damn woman was serious. She really was going to shove a feeding tube down his throat. "Come near me with that thing and I'll rip your arm off."

"Oh, put your fangs back."

It was then that he realized his teeth were longer. He hadn't even felt them growing. How was it possible to have them growing longer and he not feel them? How odd was that. "I mean it, Raven. Get that thing away from me!"

"If you refuse to eat, then I'm using it. But for now I have something else planned."

"What are you going to do with that?" he asked when she pulled a syringe from its plastic seal.

"I want to see how much feeling you have in your lower extremities." She undid the snaps at the side of his pants then laid the syringe on his bare thigh. "Tell me when you feel it."

He watched as she slid the tip along his leg from thigh down to his knee and over. He gritted his teeth but felt nothing. Then she slid it along the bottom of his foot. He felt a slight tingle but nothing like he should be feeling, considering he was terribly ticklish.

"Anything?"

He shook his head, then closed his eyes. Add being a paraplegic to the list of reasons why he had no reason to live. "Ouch." His eyes flew open. "I felt that. What did you do?"

"I poked the underside of your foot. Do you feel this?" She jabbed him again.

He nodded and felt a hint of optimism. "Yes, yes I felt that."

"That's good." Raven smiled as she moved to the next foot. "Tell me if you feel this."

He jumped when she jabbed him and laughed. "I can feel that too. How come I can feel that but I couldn't feel it on my legs?"

"I only ran the tip over your leg. Let's try poking them." She went back to the leg that was bare and began from the top of his foot. "Feel that?"

"Yes."

She moved up to the ankle. "Now?"

"Yes." He'd never felt anything as wonderful before in his life. As she moved up to his thigh he felt every prick of the needle. When she moved to the other leg, he felt it there as well. "Does that mean I'm not paralyzed?"

"You have some paralysis, but I would say your chances of being a complete paraplegic are slim. You can use your hands and you can sit, so I would deduce that you

probably injured the lower lumbar or sacral vertebrae."

"Huh?" That had gone completely over his head.

She laughed as she snapped his pants back up. "Sorry, that's the nurse in me coming out. Your lower spinal column. I'm not a thoracic specialist but that would be my guess. I think keeping ice on your back is the best way to go. Tell me if you feel this."

He grabbed her hand when she slid the waistband on his pajamas down. "What are you doing?"

"I was going to check how much feeling you have in your—"

"Not going to happen."

"Abdomen," she finished, keeping her eyes steady on his.

"Oh. Okay." He released her hand and felt more than a little embarrassed at what he'd thought.

"I'll trust you to test that organ for sensation. Can you feel this?" She poked his belly and he flinched. "I take that as a yes."

"I felt that." Was she implying that he might not have feeling in his... dick?

"That's a really good sign. Do you think if I gave you a jug you could try to urinate for me?"

He blinked at her response. "Come again?"

"I need to know if you have control of your bodily functions. I'll get the jug and you can try."

She scurried from the room, leaving him lay on the bed with the thought of not having feeling in his genitals or control of his bodily functions. And just when it seemed things were looking up. He flinched when she burst back into the room.

"Here we go."

She handed him a long horn shaped plastic jug and he was absolutely baffled by it. "What's this?"

"It's a urinary can. You hold it to your—"

"I get the idea now." He didn't need that in-depth of an explanation. "Uh, a little privacy would be nice."

"Oh, sure. I'll just wait by the window."

"I can't pee with you in the room, Raven." That was one thing he considered private.

"Well, I can't leave the room. What if you need my help?"

"I've been urinating on my own for some time now. I think I can manage it on my own."

"All right. But I'll be right outside the door if you need me."

"I'll be fine." He waited until she left the room, closing the door behind her before he lifted the jug. He stared at it for a few moments, then glanced down at his member hiding beneath the pale blue hospital pajamas. He wasn't afraid, he consoled himself.

Just get it over with.

He slid the waist band below his hips and looked down. It was limp, curled up and resting comfortably against his pubic hair. He hesitated before taking it in his hand.

"How's it going?"

"Fine," he said quickly, startled by her voice. He drew in a deep breath and continued. He could feel it in his hand, but felt nothing from his touch. Closing his eyes, he drew in a deep breath then placed the jug to his groin. He couldn't even feel the cool plastic against his flesh. He may have feeling in his feet and legs, but not in his dick.

The urine trickled from the tip to slide down into the can. He felt at least relieved by that. When it stopped, he took hold of his member and pulled the can away. He held himself in his hand for another moment, just staring at it. Then he gave it a squeeze.

"Okay, I waited long enough but I'm worried."

He released himself and quickly yanked his pajama bottoms back up when she burst into the room. "I managed just fine. You could warn a guy before bursting into the room while he's—Here." He thrust the jug at her, angry at everything and her.

She took the jug, glanced inside and pursed her lips. "Not much. Did it hurt?"

"No." He crossed his arms over his chest and laid back down on the pillow.

"Well, that's a bonus. I'll go empty this and get you another ice pack for your back. Can I trust that you won't do anything stupid in the two minutes I'll be gone or do I tie you up again?"

"Yeah, because those held so well before. I'll be a good boy and just lay here like a useless lump. You can go." He turned his head away in humiliation.

He wasn't even a man anymore.



What good were all these powers if she couldn't use them to find her closest friend? Trinity paced the sitting room floor, wanting to rip her hair out. Jonah's phone call had been so short, so

abrupt, so...final. She didn't like how he had sounded. She'd been racked with both guilt and frustration since the accident that had killed Ariel, resulting in Jonah being taken hostage by Chaos. If she'd only stopped them before going out he would still be here and Ariel would still be alive. She was frustrated with the fact that even with the queen's help, she'd been too late to find him. With all her new abilities, she still wasn't able to find him. That infuriated her.

Nothing had gone right in weeks. She'd been too late to save five innocent young girls from losing their lives to aid in raising the king. Sure, she'd taken out the king, but had failed at bringing the sunlight back. Chaos was constantly eluding her and now he had one of her—no, not one—he had her closest friend, the man she thought of as a brother. And she was helpless to do anything about it.

She'd given her life to save her lover and had been rewarded by the queen granting her a new start fresh with powers that included being able to transport herself anywhere she liked, freeze people to their spot, keener senses, and for some reason she was able to glow. Trinity wasn't sure the purpose of that ability yet. But with all she had now, all she could do, the one thing Trinity wanted more than life itself she couldn't accomplish.

Finding Jonah.

"You'll wear a hole in the carpet, dear."

She waved Basil's words away with a careless sweep of her hand. She loved him dearly but he wasn't helping her right now. The instant Dante and Gypsy came into the room, she pounced. "Jonah called. He's alive!"

"What?" Dante ran to her, taking her arms in his hands, his eyes meeting hers. "When? What did he say?"

She hadn't known Dante long but he had come to be as close a friend to her as any she'd ever had. Gypsy, well, Trinity was still getting used to her. It wasn't the green hair, Trinity could handle that being that she chose to dye her own hair a blood red, but it was her youth. The girl was barely in her twenties and very much a care-free soul. Trinity worried she wasn't taking their situation seriously enough. Though, she was handling being a vampire with no problem, so that was a bonus. "He said he was all right, said he had to do this, then told me he loved me and hung up."

"What the hell does that mean? What does he have to do?" Dante inquired.

"Beats the hell out of me. Do you know how to trace a phone call?"

Dante scratched his head, messing up his dark hair. "Um, you need to have the equipment to be able to do so, and no, I don't have that sort of stuff. Too sophisticated for my income. You think he'll call again?"

"I don't know, but it would be nice to be able to know where he's calling from. Why would he do that? Why would he call me and not tell me where he was? It pisses me off."

"At least you know he's safe," Gypsy piped in from her spot on the sofa.

"Do I? Or did Chaos force him make the call. It was too cryptic and not like Jonah at all. If he was truly safe he would have told me where he was. I'm betting Chaos made him call to get us to back off finding him. Well, that is not going to happen." She was not going to give up looking for her best friend.

"What do you propose we do then?" Dante asked, lacing his fingers with Gypsy's.

"I don't know. I don't fucking know! I could try going to the queen again. Maybe she'll be there this time." Trinity still didn't understand it. Why hadn't Rajana been in the room when Trinity had gone to see her the second time? And why hadn't she come when Trinity called?

"I thought you were the queen?" Gypsy asked.

"She is, but there is a higher queen, one all the vampires worship. Rajana is Basil's mother and the first of all vampires. She reigns from the Realm of Mystics and gave Trinity special powers to help defeat Chaos and the king," Dante explained.

"I'm more lost now that I was before I asked."

Dante kissed the top of Gypsy's head, smiling. "I'll fill you in on all the details later."

Standing, Basil took Trinity's hands in his. "I'll try this time, my love. Perhaps she'll see me."

"I can't just sit here knowing Jonah's in Chaos' hands. I need to do something. What good are these fucking powers if I can't use them to help us, to find Jonah?" She let out a long breath when Basil wrapped his arms around her and pulled her against his chest.

"We'll find him." Basil kissed her head. "I'll go see my mother now." He left her with another kiss before vanishing.

"I wish I could do that." Gypsy sighed. "How come all vampires can't vanish or turn into things like Basil and Trinity?"

"Only the purest vampires have special abilities, sweetie. That's just the way it is." Dante stroked a hand over her short green hair.

"What if we let one of the prisoners out and follow him? He's bound to head to Chaos," Trinity blurted out.

Dante scratched his chin. "We could try it but I'm not sure if it'll work. You guys have keener senses. He'd know we were following him."

"He wouldn't know I was following him," Trinity added. "I can cloak myself and become invisible. Why didn't I think of this sooner?" Her head had been muddled with worry is why. "Your brother would be our best candidate."

"No!" Dante stated emphatically.

"Why the hell not?" Trinity demanded, her hair flipping around as she spun to face Dante.

"Because I don't want him returning to Chaos."

"You think you can save him? That you can change him? It's not going to happen." He was naive to think so.

"How do you know that? I have to try. I lost him for twenty years and now that I finally have him back I am not letting him go."

"And you think keeping him a prisoner is going to sway him to your side?" Trinity snorted.

Dante's eyes narrowed. "Use someone else."

"Fine. Tell Basil what I'm doing when he gets back so he doesn't worry."

Dante laughed with a shake of his head. "Oh sure, telling him you've gone invisible and decided to follow one of our prisoners in hopes of finding Chaos won't worry him in the least."

"Just do it!" she demanded as she left the room. She knew perfectly well Basil would worry about her, but she'd be fine. She had her new found powers to protect her in any case.

She pushed through the steel doors that led to the dungeon and tipped her head at the guard. "Got a minute, Barry?"

"Sure thing."

She waited until the door was securely shut before speaking. "I need you to do me a favor. I want one of the prisoners released but I want it to look like an error. Anyone but Danny. Take them some blood and food and when you close the door on the big guy's cage, don't latch it all the way and make it obvious so he sees it's not locked. I want you to leave the room and not come back for ten minutes."

"Why? What do you have planned?"

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“I want to follow him in hopes he’ll lead me to Chaos.”

“What if he released all the vamps before he leaves?”

“I’ll be in the room, invisible. If he does that, then I’ll put a stop to it. But I’m betting he won’t. He might try the other doors but when he finds them locked he’ll high tail it out of here. Leave this door slightly ajar so he has a way out.”

“I’m not sure this will work.”

“It’s worth a try.” She had to at least try.



Never, in all his long life, had he ever come to this room to find it empty. Standing in the center of the dark, abandoned storage room, Basil scratched his chin. He’d called out to his mother several times, with his voice and with his mind, only to receive nothing in return. Why wasn’t she responding to him? Why was this room devoid of her, of everything that embodied her? The mystical room had always been her temple, and yet now, she was nowhere to be seen.

“Mother, I beg of you to see me. It is of vital urgency that I speak with you.” His voice echoed in the empty room. Letting out a long breath, he took a seat on the floor and decided to wait. Not only did he want to ask her to help them find Jonah, but he wanted to know what the deal was that she’d made with Trinity. He didn’t like it, not one bit. And though Trinity insisted she only signed away her powers, Basil was skeptical of it.

That was too easy of a gift for his mother to accept.

CHAPTER TWO

“I thought we would try this again.”

Startled out of his sleep, Jonah glanced towards the door as Raven entered. He’d been peaceful in his sleep, lying in the arms of his wife and stroking her swelling belly. And now that he was awake, he was reminded that it had just been a dream and the cruelty of reality was that he would only have her in his dreams from now on.

“Since my threat of shoving a feeding tube down your throat didn’t come to fruition, I thought I would try to persuade you to eat and drink something. Again.” She set a tray with a sandwich and a cup on the table beside his bed.

He glanced at it half heartedly then turned away. “I’m not hungry.”

“We could go with that feeding tube then. Here, I brought you more ice.” She held up the bag as she walked around his bed and lifted the covers. “Can you roll onto your side, or do I need to help you?”

“I can manage.” He hoped. Grabbing the side rails, Jonah pulled himself over, shifting until he lay on his right side. He held onto the rail while she slipped the previous pack away and replaced it with a fresh one.

“There you go.”

He flinched when her hand touched his arm as he rolled himself back. "I can do it." Jonah insisted and pulled the covers up to his chin.

"You're a contradiction, Jonah. You don't want me to help you, insisting you can do it on your own, yet you refuse to eat or drink in hopes of...what? Starving yourself to death? Seems like a cruel way to die."

"Why would I deserve an easy death?" he muttered, folding his arms across his chest. The head of the bed rose, startling him. He needed to calm his nerves and be less jittery.

She held the button until he was sitting upright, then released it to grab the tray. "I don't know why you want death in the first place. Here, drink."

He glanced into the cup and saw the blood. Though his mouth watered and his body alerted him to the need for it, he rejected it with a turn of his head. "What do I have to live for?"

"You're like a child, turning your head away from the food like it'll deter me from forcing it into your mouth. I will, you know, because even though you think you have nothing to live for, I believe differently. Now drink." She shoved the cup to his lips.

He slapped it away, knocking the cup onto his lap, spilling blood all over his bedding and himself.

"Now look what you've done. You're worse than a child. I swear." Shaking her head, she marched from the room.

He could literally feel his body begging for the blood that was soaking into his bedding and his clothes. It wasn't a hungry sensation, but a need so great that it called to his blood, to his body to take. Slowly, he slid his finger along the blood soaking into the fabric, pooling some onto his finger. Lifting it, his heart sped up and his pulse quickened and before he registered what he was doing, his finger was in his mouth.

"Thank God there are plenty of fresh linens. I'd hate having to go down into the basement alone to wash some."

Pulling his finger from his mouth quickly, he tried to look nonchalant as she walked towards him.

She dragged the wheelchair to the bed after setting the fresh linens on his bed tray then began gathering the soiled bedding. "I saw you pull your finger from your mouth. Did you enjoy the taste?"

He refused to acknowledge her comment and decided instead to stare blankly at the ceiling.

"Have it your way."

His eyes jerked down when he felt her hands on the front of his nightshirt. "What are you doing?"

"Removing the soiled shirt. I have a fresh pair of pajamas here for you."

He slapped her hands away again and unbuttoned it himself. "I can manage it."

"Suit yourself." She stepped back and folded her arms across her chest, waiting. "What was your wife's name?"

That caused him to pause, then he swallowed the misery he felt and continued. "Ariel."

"That's a pretty name. How long were the two of you married?"

He had the buttons open and began pulling his arms free. "Four years."

"Still fresh. I'll take that." She took the shirt before he could drop it on the floor. "You'll need to remove the bottoms as well."

"Excuse me?"

"They're soiled." She pointed to his crotch and the huge blood spot soaking into the material. "You'll probably need help removing them."

"I can do it myself," he insisted, refusing to allow her to undress him. He wasn't a complete invalid. "Just give me a fresh shirt."

Shrugging, she handed one to him in a pasty green.

He slipped his arms, one at a time, into the sleeves then quickly buttoned them. "I'm not taking the bottoms off with you watching me."

"Do I need to remind you that I have seen you naked already?"

He clenched his jaw. So she had. He'd been stripped naked when he'd been chained to Chaos' wall. Still... "Just turn around."

"Whatever you say." She turned her back to him, her arms once again folded across her chest.

He lowered the waistband, but sliding them down his hips was a little more difficult. He had some mobility in his waist and hips, enough that he could swivel back and forth to wiggle the waistband down, but when he tried to slide them down his legs, he came up against an obstacle. His legs wouldn't bend on his command, which made it harder to slide the pants all the way down. And when he tried kicking them to shake the pants down, that too failed. "Damn it!"

"Need a hand?"

He didn't like the smugness in her voice. "No." Yet here he sat, pants tangled at his knees, naked, exposed, and not able to get them all the way off. "Yes," he finally said, deflated. "But close your eyes."

"I can't help you with my eyes closed, Jonah."

He cupped himself as she turned around. She shook her head and rolled her eyes then grabbed a fresh pair of bottoms. Setting them on the foot of the bed, she grabbed the soiled ones and slid them free of his legs. "I should have thought to bring in a bowl of warm water. I'll be right back."

And there he was, sitting in a hospital bed, naked from the waist down and unable to do anything about it. He hated what his life had become.

"Here we go." She set the bowl on the tray, then took the cloth from the water and squeezed out the excess before laying it on his thigh. "Since the blood stain was mostly over your crotch, I'm going to have to wash that as well."

"I don't think so. I'll do it." He took the cloth from her then waved his hand indicating he wanted her to turn around.

"You're being ridiculous."

"It's called dignity." He waited until she'd turned to wash himself off. Holding his limp member, not being able to feel his palm against the flesh was an ugly revelation he was having a hard time dealing with. He was even discouraged when he washed it off and couldn't feel the warm water. "Done." He set the cloth in the water while cupping himself with his other hand.

She turned around and pulling the cloth out of the water, proceeded to wash his legs and waist. "You have nice muscles in your legs. Do you work out?"

"No."

"Hm, what do you do for a living?" She washed down his leg, bending it at the knee and moving it up and down.

"I work with computers. What are you doing?" He shifted one hand to cover his now exposed balls.

"Flexing your muscles, keeping them limber. I'll need to do this several times a day so they don't stiffen up. What sort of computer work do you do?"

"Everything from computer repair to debugging or reconstruction." He wished he felt at least something when she moved his legs up and down.

"Sounds fascinating. My guess is that it's mostly desk work. Sitting for long periods?" She moved to the next leg.

"More or less." Couldn't she do this when he had the pants on?

"Yet you stay fit. And without exercise. Interesting."

"I walk. Well...I did at least." That was another thing he'd never do again. He'd loved walking once. Long walks with Ariel on warm summer evenings. He'd never have that with her again.

"Well, if you eat and drink it'll help strengthen your body, which will enable it to heal faster."

"Nice try."

She looked up at him as she flexed his other leg. "If you're comfortable being a lump for the rest of your very long life, so be it. Do you know what happens to a vampire if they don't feed regularly?"

"Yes." He knew it all, well most of it, given the fact his best friend was a vampire. He missed Trinity and he hoped she had listened to him and stopped looking for him. He didn't want anyone else harmed because of him.

"How do you know?" she inquired.

"My best friend and colleague is a vampire." That had her pausing. "You might have heard of her. Trinity Ford?"

Her eyes went so wide that the whites nearly took over the rest. "Get out. The queen of all vampires is your friend? The one Chaos is after?"

"Yeah. Do you think we could get me into some pants now?" He felt more than a little awkward having a conversation with her while he was partially nude.

"If you know her, why the hell aren't you calling her to come get you?" She lifted his left leg and slipped his foot through the pant leg.

"Because I don't want her to come for me."

"Why not?" She slipped the other foot through then slid them up his legs.

"Because I don't. I can manage it from here." He pushed her hands away, then waited until she turned around before he pulled his pants all the way up.

"That's a stupid reason. Because. What is it with men when they're sick or injured that they revert back to being children?"

"I'm done," he grumbled and that was the only response he was giving her.

Turning back to him, she pulled the wheelchair closer to the bed then reached over him, pulling his legs to the side of the bed. "You know, you're actually very solid for a slender man."

"Men don't like being called slender." And they didn't like being rag dolls incapable of moving themselves. Yet here he was, unable to even slip off the bed and into a wheelchair.

She slid her arms under his, wrapping them around his chest, her face a breath's touch away from him. "Men are too self-conscious as far as I'm concerned." She grunted as she lifted him off the bed, then shifting, set him in the wheelchair. "Comfortable?"

"Hunky dory."

She chuckled as she removed the soiled bedding. "I haven't heard that one in a long time. So that's why Chaos had you."

"What?" She confused him, jumping from one thought to the next.

"You're a friend of the queen's. That's why he wanted you. He knew if he held you hostage, she'd do anything to get you back. Very smart."

He'd completely forgotten she was one of Chaos' minions. "So why are you doing this? Why did you take me out of there and bring me here if you're working with Chaos?"

"I'm not working with Chaos."

"Yet you were there, with him the whole time I was there." She wasn't a vampire, he could sense that, so it baffled him why she had been with Chaos.

She started putting the fresh linens on as she spoke. "I'm not working with him. I was working for him. I was his blood slave. I'll just take these to the laundry chute. I'll be right back."

She left him with her shocking words and no chance to comment.



It was still something she was getting used to. It wasn't every day that a person could will their body to become invisible. Standing near the back wall, Trinity watched Barry as he fed the prisoners. He did as she'd suggested, leaving one cell unlocked and she was pleased at how casually he did it without making it look obvious. He was good.

Trinity stood watch as Barry left the room, once again, leaving the main door slightly jar. And she saw as the big guy noticed his cell was unlocked. What a look on his face. It was of shock and skepticism. He inched forward, his eyes held vigilantly on the main door, watchful for it to open. His big hands gripped the bars, then slowly he pushed it open. His eyes were still on the main doors.

"You gotta let us outta here, Troy," one of the other vamps called out to him.

"I don't got the keys. You guys are on your own."

And just as she'd predicted, he headed for the main doors without freeing the others. She followed him as he headed down the corridor

and could smell the nerves as they came off of him in waves. His head swiveled left and right as he hurried down the hall in search for an exit. When he spotted it, he ran for the door, and throwing it open, stepped out into the tunnels that led to the outdoors.

She kept on him as he ran for his freedom.

Now all she could hope for was that he would lead her to Chaos.

CHAPTER THREE

Raven dumped the soiled linens down the laundry chute, then took a moment to herself. She couldn't remember the last time she'd been completely alone. It had have been months, at least. Since she'd been taken by Chaos' men she hadn't had more than five minutes to herself without someone watching her. Even while she'd showered she'd been watched. Sure, everyone knew she belonged to Chaos and was therefore untouchable, but that didn't stop the men from ogling her while she stood naked under the sprays of water washing herself. The first time they'd done so, she'd been so devastated that all she'd done was stand under the water and cried. They'd laughed at her, made rude comments about her body, describing what they would like to do to her. And she'd been helpless to their verbal abuse.

But she'd endured it, all of it. She had welcomed it after all.

Visions of Ricky laying lifeless in her arms came swarming back into her brain, making her eyes well up with tears and her heart ache. She missed him dearly and though it had been months since she'd lost him, the pain was no less devastating.

She knew how Jonah felt with his loss, because she was feeling her own. And she too had given up on her life, had been determined she didn't deserve to have a life. Until Jonah had entered it.

There was something about him, something that made her want to protect, want to heal, want to convince that life was worth living even when you had nothing left to live for.

He had, after all, given that to her.

Now if only she could figure out a way to get him to eat and drink.

If she knew vampires, and she liked to think she'd become accustomed with the race, she knew he was going to need to feed soon. In the months since she'd been taken by the vampires she'd learned a great deal about them and found similarities in them and drug addicts. When a vampire didn't feed, it seemed to have the same symptoms a person in withdrawal would endure. And she feared that Jonah would be feeling those withdrawal symptoms soon. Raven just hoped she could control him when he did.

She didn't like to leave him for long periods of time simply because she didn't trust that he wouldn't attempt to take his life again.

Using a pen. Honestly. That was the lamest attempt at suicide that she'd ever seen, and she'd seen her share as a nurse. The moment she'd entered the room and saw him holding the ball point pen to his heart, she nearly laughed. The seriousness in his face had warned her of danger. She never thought a human being would resort to using a pen to end their life, she knew differently now.

Raven let out a loud screech when the lights went out, then thanked the hospital for their backup generators when the emergency lights came on. It was just another sign that the city was being abandoned. Practically no one lived in Jacob's Cove anymore. Those that did had hid when the evacuations had begun. The city really was being run by vampires now.

Though she couldn't understand why they would even stay. There was no food for them left here now. Only themselves to drink from and she knew that wouldn't sustain them for long. Soon enough, she feared, they would leave too and go out looking for fresh blood.

Might not be a bad thing, having them leave, but she didn't wish those blood thirsty fiends on anyone.

She headed back to Jonah's room, by way of the blood bank in hopes he would give in and drink already. When she found him asleep in his bed, she blew out a breath of relief.

He was such a cutie. His face was gentle and she knew if she told him that he'd scowl at her. He kind of reminded her of Brad Pitt, complete with fangs and all. He was like a lost puppy that she wanted to take home and care for. He had one of those boy next door faces that every girl swooned over. And with those long sandy lashes fanning

his eyes, he definitely made her heart go pitter pat. It had been a long time since she'd had that feeling for a man.

A long time since she'd allowed herself to feel anything for a man.

Setting the blood packet on the bed table, she grabbed the spare blanket from the foot of his bed and sat down in the high back chair by the window that was anything but comfortable, and waited for him to wake.



She was there, in his arms, the woman he loved more than life itself. She felt so real, so warm, so alive. Her lips were soft and giving when he kissed her and he wanted to drink her in.

Then his teeth grazed her bottom lip and he tasted her blood. Something inside of him rumbled, telling him to take more. Take it all.

And lifting his head, he looked deep into his wife's eyes, then plunged his teeth into her neck.

Jonah woke with a start, his heart pounding, his chest burning with pain. The room was dark all but for the dim light over his bed. He swallowed the lump in his throat and looked around. Raven was there, asleep in a chair, blanket wrapped around her body. He knew so little about her, and he should probably be wary about her, yet he wasn't. Sure, she'd been with Chaos and the last words she'd spoken to him earlier still whispered in his mind, but he didn't fear her.

What had Raven meant when she's said she had been Chaos' blood slave?

He knew quite a bit about the vampire race and he knew that some vampires chose one person as the one they fed from. Often they kept them as humans not wanting to turn them because doing so would put an impurity into their blood. Vampires craved the pureness of human blood. Trinity had said to him once: "If you were given the choice of filet mignon or ground beef, wouldn't you go for the good stuff?"

He supposed he would go for the good stuff.

He saw the packet of blood on the table and realized quite painfully that he too would now crave blood. He tried not to think about what he'd become, but it was always there to remind him. Just staring at the blood made his mouth water. He wanted it in the worst way and that repulsed him.

Turning away from the packet, he saw Raven stirring in her sleep. What was her story? She was a baffling woman. Why had she saved him and why was she still trying to save him? He wished she would just leave him alone to die.

His dream bothered him. He'd bitten Ariel's neck, and though it had only been a dream, it still bothered him. Would he, if she were still alive, want to drink from her? Never!

Would he drink from Raven if the thirst got to be too much for him?

Absolutely not!

Shaking it off, he shifted in his bed, trying to find a comfortable spot and made the bed creak, waking her out of her sleep.

"Are you okay? Do you need help?" she asked in a sleepy voice as she jumped from her chair.

"I'm fine. Go back to sleep."

"I'm awake now." She stood and stretched, lifting her arms high above her head. "Did you notice the power's out?"

He looked around, shrugged. "Day, night, I see the same." Now at least. That hadn't always been the case.

"I suppose. I figure they cut the power since no one is around anymore. You're fidgeting. Are you okay?"

"My butt is a little sore so I thought I would shift positions."

You can feel your butt?" she asked with genuine surprise.

He gave it some thought and nodded. "It tingles, like when it's asleep. That's a good sign, right?" He had to believe that.

"I think so, yes. Do you want to get out of bed for a while? I could get you a walker and you could try to stand?"

The idea of being on his feet was a heavenly one. But... "What good will it do me if I can't walk?"

"You could try. Who knows, maybe you can now. Vampires heal easily. I'll go get one and we can try."

She hurried from the room without letting him speak. It was something she did often. He didn't want to try to stand because he was only going to be disappointed when he fell flat on his face. And when she raced back into the room with a metal walker he readied himself to tell her as much.

"I think this will be great. I'd like to document your progress. I'm kinda fascinated by the whole vampire healing abilities. Here we go."

"Look, Raven—"

"I'll be right here to help you so don't worry if you can't hold yourself up. But I think we have to try at least."

She whipped the blankets off his legs. "Raven, I don't—"

"Let's put you in a sitting position first." She pressed the buttons on the side, raising the upper part of the bed.

"I don't want to—"

"Here we go, legs first." She grabbed his feet and swung his legs off the bed.

"Raven, stop!"

"No!" she stated abruptly, looking him square in the eyes. "I know you don't want to do this but I don't give a damn."

"Well, you can't make me do something I don't want to do."

"Feel free to stop me." Hooking her arms around his chest, she pulled him off the bed.

"Damn it, Raven! Why can't you just leave me alone?" He was helpless to stop her. Sure he had his arms and hands, but what good did they do when he couldn't stand on his own two legs.

"Because I refuse to let you give up on yourself. Now put your hands on the bars and hold on."

"You're pissing me off, woman."

"Yeah, nice to know. Grab hold of the bars or I let you drop."

Her face was a breath away from his and he could see every speckle in her eyes as she glared at him. For a brief moment, his heart sped up.

"I know you're afraid, Jonah," she said softly, drawing him back. "But you need to at least try."

"I don't have to try anything." And he was determined not to.

"What would your wife think if she saw you now, acting like this."

He narrowed his eyes, gritting his teeth. "Don't bring her into this."

"Why not? She seems to be the reason you want to give up. Would she want you to give up or would she want you to fight?"

He knew she was antagonizing him but he fell for it anyway. With a heated stare, he grabbed the bars. "Let me go," he demanded.

With a smile on her face, she slowly released him.

His arms wobbled as he held himself up. He felt the cold tile beneath his bare feet, a welcomed sensation, and the pain in his back. But he held on, held strong.

"You're doing good. If you need to rest, just let me know."

"I can feel the floor beneath me." He lifted his gaze to her, smiling. "I can actually feel it."

"That's good! That's terrific! What else do you feel?"

"Pain, but it feels good. It's an odd feeling, knowing I'm standing but I can't feel my legs holding me up. Why can I feel the tile beneath my feet but not my legs?"

"It'll all come, eventually. I think. This is a good start. You're standing." She laughed as she looked into his eyes.

"I'm standing." He laughed back. Once, it wouldn't have been such a big deal, but now, now was different. And with that joy, came the guilt...and the pain. "That's enough. I want to lay back down."

"Okay."

Her arms wrapped around his chest again and he could smell the strong floral scent he associated with her. It tingled something deep inside of him and only made the pain he was feeling stronger. "Let me go! I can do it!" he demanded, pushing at her.

"If I let you go you'll drop. I've almost got you in the bed!"

"I can do it," he insisted, gripping the bed behind him to help himself onto it. He didn't want her help and he didn't want her so close to him that he could feel her heart beating against his chest. "Damn it, Raven, just leave me be."

She set him on the bed and cocked her head to the side, obviously baffled by his aggression. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Just leave me alone." Sitting on the bed, he tried to lift his legs and not being able to only made him feel worse. "Fuck!"

"Let me help."

"NO!" he shouted making her jump. "I'm sorry. Damn it, I'm sorry. I'm...I...damn it all to hell!" He lowered his head and the tears began to fall.

"It's all right. Shh now, it will be all right in no time."

He felt her arms go around him, then one hand press against the back of his head. He leaned into her, resting his head on her shoulder and let himself go.

"It's okay now," she whispered, stroking his head with her hand. "Just let it out. That's it, let it go."

Her voice was so soothing and it felt so good to be held. Jonah closed his eyes and for the moment, just let himself feel.

He had no right to be happy when he'd done nothing to protect the woman he loved.

Sniffing back his tears, he lifted his head, wiping his cheek with the back of his hand. "I want to lay down now."

"Sure." She released him and took a step back just looking at him. "I understand how you feel," she murmured, then knelt down to grab his feet. "With the loss."

"How could you possibly know how I feel?" He didn't want her help but he knew he needed it.

She settled his legs on the bed and drew the covers up to his waist. "Because I lost someone I loved dearly not that long ago. Get some rest. I'm going to go find myself something to eat."

Once again she left him with a devastating statement and no explanation.

Closing his eyes, Jonah pictured the woman he loved and wished desperately he could hold her in his arms.



Chaos breathed in the fresh air as he stood outside his new home. Fritz had done him well so far and he was more than pleased with the new accommodations. The police station would serve him well, especially since a majority of the weapons were left behind in their hurried attempt to evacuate the city. That pissed him off. He hadn't planned on the city being evacuated. Now all that was left in the city were vampires. No fresh blood, no vulnerable humans for the taking. He hadn't thought his plan out well enough. What he should have done when he'd gone to the Dark Mystics with help to bring the king back was have them evoke a barrier that would prevent anyone from leaving the city. Why he hadn't thought about that sooner annoyed him. Usually he was so careful in his plans to make sure he had everything worked out. He supposed he'd been awestruck by the fact that the king would be returning.

That had been a major mistake on his part.

Now, not only was he without the king, he had to hide away to prevent Trinity and her band of misfits from taking him out and bringing back the sun. Not to mention, he had no humans to control.

Well, soon enough he was going to remedy one of his problems.

"I figured no one would think to look for you in here."

Chaos turned to Fritz and gave a slight nod. "You chose well, Fritz. Are the rest of the men here already?"

"Yes, sir."

"Perfect. I'm going to need to feed. Send a few men to the blood bank in the hospital for a supply."

"I'll get right on it, sir." Fritz bowed his head reverently.

"Have you acquired the material needed to take out Basil's fortress?"

Fritz held the front door for Chaos as he entered. "There's been a bit of a glitch, sir."

Chaos stopped as the door swung shut behind him and gave Fritz a narrowed look. "What sort of glitch?"

"My men are having some trouble acquiring enough munitions to do enough damage to Basil's home. I've sent them to Hadiville to gather more, but it'll take a few more days than expected."

"How many more days?"

"Two," Fritz admitted with a cringe.

"Two." Chaos huffed, then stalked off to pace. "What about this place? Aren't there explosives here? I'm sure the officers would have a supply on hand should they have the need to use them?"

"Yes, sir, but all they have is teargas. We've searched," he added when Chaos turned to him with a tilt of his head.

"I'm growing tired of these obstacles."

"I know, sir. I'm sorry."

Chaos waved it off then turned his back on Fritz and stalked off. "Get me my blood and make sure that doesn't take two days." He was growing very tired of not having his way.

CHAPTER FOUR

Maybe she should have stopped Troy when he'd hotwired Dante's car, but that would have ruined her plan. And besides, Trinity decided, the instant the fool left the vehicle she'd drive it back home. No harm no foul.

She sat beside him in the passenger's seat as he sped along the highway towards Jacob's Cove. He had to lead her to Chaos. If he didn't...well, she wasn't going to allow herself such negative thoughts.

They entered the city and Trinity wished the brute would turn his country music down. She wasn't a fan of the music, not that it was bad, it just wasn't her type of music. Especially when it was so loud it made the windows rattle. If she knew she wouldn't jeopardize her cover, she might very well use her powers to turn it down. Instead, she suffered through it as he drove them through the streets. When they came to a stop on Burton Street, she thought she might actually hit pay dirt. He climbed out, she followed. As he walked down the street, she kept behind him. This area of the city was mostly businesses and warehouses, a perfect spot for Chaos to hide out. But when Troy headed out to the middle of the road and stopped, she was more than a little baffled.

Then he knelt down and popped up the manhole cover.

He shimmied his large frame into the hole and she followed. Where the hell was he going? She slipped in behind him and continued to follow him down the sewer. To say it smelled bad was an understatement, not to mention the rats and mice and creepy crawly things scurrying along the walls. She'd always hated bugs.

His feet sloshed in the stagnant water as he hurried through the tunnels. Where the hell was he going?

He entered through a door and she was grateful when they walked through it that there was no stench of water or rats scurrying about. She'd never been here before, hadn't even known it existed.

The guy sure liked to mutter to himself. It had been amusing in the car but now it was getting on her nerves. She wished he would just shut up already.

He came to an abrupt halt by another door, then lifting his fist, pounded on it. "It's me, Troy. Open up."

She waited, like he, for someone to open the door. When no one did after a few seconds, he pounded again.

"Come on, open up." He grabbed the doorknob and turned it, pushing the door open. "Fuck!"

There was a cot against one wall and a single chair. Someone was staying here and if it had been Chaos, she'd eat her shoes. This place was beneath Chaos.

"Shit, now I gotta sit here and wait. Well, I'm taking a nap in your bed, Chaos. Like it or lump it."

Again he spoke to himself. She wondered if the guy had some sort of mental problem. She stood by the door as he settled himself on the bed and closed his eyes.

Guess she was eating her shoes after all.



To his calculations, Raven had been gone for approximately fifteen minutes. But without a clock in the room, he couldn't be sure. Sitting in his bed, his arms crossed over his chest, Jonah wished she'd hurry back already. He wanted to find out what she meant by having lost someone. The woman was an enigma.

The sharp cramping pain in his left thigh caught him by surprise. "Jesus!" Grabbing it, he tried to massage the pain. He could feel that. And lord did it hurt. Then the right leg began twitching. "What the hell?"

He was attempting to rub both legs when she walked into the room.

"What's the matter?" She set the tray in her hands onto the table then hurried to his side.

"Cramp. And this leg keeps twitching. It really isn't a good feeling." And he wasn't having any success with the cramp at all.

"Let me help." Climbing onto the bed, Raven took over rubbing the cramp. "This is a good sign."

"A painful one for sure. That feels better." He wasn't sure what she was doing differently than what he'd done but the cramp was subsiding.

"I think your body is beginning to heal and with the daily exercises your muscles should stay limber and not stiffen up. How's that?" She stroked his thigh in a slow even motion.

"Much better. Now if only this one would stop twitching."

"Let me try." Leaving his left leg, she moved to the right and replaced his hands with hers. "With the power out, the food in the vending machines won't last long. I put some stuff in ice to keep it longer, but the sandwiches won't last more than a day. I'm going to have to venture down to the cafeteria. When I gather up my bravery, that is. Any better?"

She had small hands but none the less efficient, managing to ease the twitching which was of tremendous relief to him. "Much. Are you afraid of the dark?"

"I wouldn't say I'm afraid of it, uneasy is more like it. Basements are the worst."

"And that's where the cafeteria is. I could go down there with you."

Her eyes lifted to his and he was suddenly struck by just how blue they were. "That would be a good idea. Get you out of this room for a while. See the sights, go for a stroll. Maybe after we get your legs limbered up." Grabbing his foot, she placed one hand under his knee then helped him to bend it. Then she pushed it to his chest and held it in place for the count of five.

"What are you doing?"

"Stretching your muscles. Tell me if it hurts?"

It didn't hurt, but it did feel odd. "I can feel the pull. That's a good thing, right? Means I'm getting feeling back."

"I think so. We'll do ten of these on each leg, then let you rest before we go for our stroll."

"Works for me." He watched as she repeated the motions with his leg, noticing how silky her black hair looked when the light caught it. "What did you mean when you said you were Chaos' blood slave?"

"Just that. I was captured and held for the sole purpose of feeding Chaos. Still feeling okay?"

He nodded and she continued. "So he kept you for food?"

"And other things."

He stopped her by placing a hand on hers. "What other things?" He was afraid of the answer.

"Not sex." She reassured him. "Chaos has no interest in that, at least not that I ever saw. I was his maid, I cleaned up after him, washed him, tended to whatever he needed."

He felt a little better knowing she hadn't been violated, still... "How long did he have you?"

"Three months." She laid his leg back onto the bed, then began rubbing the muscles from toe to thigh.

"Did you ever try to get away?"

She shook her head. "I had no reason to. Does this feel all right?"

It felt great. He nodded. "What do you mean you had no reason to?"

She switched to the next leg and began stretching it like the other. But when she bent it to touch his chest she lost her grip and fell right between his legs and onto his chest. Her face bumped into his, her mouth skimming his cheek.

Neither moved but stared into each others eyes.

Hers were a lot bluer close up, Jonah thought, and felt something stirring inside of him.

They both jumped at the crashing sound in the hall outside his room.

"What the hell was that?"

"I'd better go check." Pushing herself off of Jonah, Raven climbed off the bed and hurried to the door. Slowly, she inched it open then closed it just as quickly. She threw the lock then hurried to the bed.

"What's going on?"

"Shh." She reached over him, clicking the light off over his bed then climbed back onto the bed beside him and whispered in his ear. "There are two vampires in the hallway."

"We need weapons," he whispered back, scanning the room for anything that could be used as one. Thank God he could see in the dark.

"I locked the door. Let's hope they don't try to come in here." But just as she said it, the doorknob began to wiggle. "Shit!" she hissed.

"We need to find a weapon," Jonah stated, then spotted the knife on the tray Raven had brought in with her food. "The knife." He

pointed to the tray and she crawled over him to grab it. "Give it to me."

"I can do this." She curled up beside him holding the knife up, ready to protect.

"I may not be able to walk but I can at least try to protect us. Give me the knife." He hated feeling useless and be damned if he was going to sit back while a woman protected him.

"You're being stupid, but fine." She handed him the knife, still clinging to him.

Gripping it firmly in his hand, he held it up, his eyes glued to the door.

"This room's locked," a male voice barked out from the other side of the door.

"Leave it. I doubt there's blood in there," another voice shouted.

"They're looking for blood," she murmured in his ear.

He shivered. The sensation of her breath on his ear did more than tickle. And feeling her body pressed tightly to his felt more than good.

"I think they gave up."

"What?" He drew in a deep breath, calming himself.

"I think they're leaving." She slipped off the bed and inched towards the door.

"Wait." He sat up and tried to swing his legs over the edge of the bed. "Don't go out there."

"I'm just going to peek outside and see if they left."

She unlocked the door and opened it before he could stop her. Not that he could even if he tried. His legs were still useless lumps attached to his body.

"All clear." Turning around, she gasped. "What are you doing?" She was beside him faster than he could say boo, grabbing him around the waist to hold him up.

"I was trying to get out of bed to stop you. What kind of fool are you? They could have been waiting outside the door and burst in the second you unlocked it."

"Lucky for me they didn't, and you could have hurt yourself." She hoisted him back onto the bed.

"I can manage this. Go back and lock the door. We have no idea where they went. Go," he insisted, giving her a push with his hand.

Shaking her head, she rushed to the door and locked it. When she turned back, he was sitting up in the bed, his legs stretched out in front of him. "You were trying to protect me." She smiled.

"Well, duh. Idiot!" He shifted his butt, trying to get comfortable.

"My hero." Still smiling, she climbed up onto the bed.

"What are you doing?"

"I never got to finish working out your legs. If they came for blood, they might take it all."

"Let them have it." He watched as once again she lifted his leg, placing one hand under his knee, then bent it to his chest. She had a delicate face with a thin nose and a cupid's bow mouth. There was a mole at the corner of her left eye that was as black as her hair. She didn't have a stitch of make up on yet she was as pretty as a picture.

And what the hell was he doing thinking of another woman as attractive.

Shaking his thoughts away, he decided to carry on where they'd left off. "Why didn't you try to get away from Chaos?" He wondered if she planned on turning the light on anytime soon.

"I had no reason to."

"So you said before we were interrupted. Why?"

She paused mid stretch then continued with a deep intake of breath. "I lost my son, Ricky, four months ago."

"I'm sorry. How old was he?" His heart broke for her.

"Three."

"Still a baby." Now he got what she'd meant when she said she'd lost someone recently.

"Yeah. My only baby. I rarely had time to spend with him, real time at least. I worked such crazy hours that usually when I got home, he'd be asleep or if he was awake, I'd be too beat to stay up long enough to play with him. He spent most of his time with the sitter."

"Single mom?"

She nodded and continued stretching his leg. "I came home from a really tough night shift to find him crying like he was dying. The instant he saw me, he raced towards me and clung like his life depended on it. All he kept saying was 'Mommy, stay. Mommy, stay.'" She took a deep breath and continued. "When I finally got him to calm down, he pleaded with me to let him stay home. When I worked nights, Emily, the sitter, usually took him to her place so I could sleep. I guess this day he didn't want to go and I didn't have the heart to send him away, so I told him he could stay. To calm him down, I decided to take him to the park a few blocks down the street. I was beat but I thought the fresh air would wake me up. I should have sent him away."

"Raven—"

"I sat down on the bench while he played in the sand with a few other kids," she continued. "They started tossing a ball back and forth

and I...I dosed off. I woke to a loud screeching sound and people screaming. When I didn't see Ricky anywhere, I began to panic. Then I saw the car stopped on the road, and all the people standing around and I knew. I just knew."

He could see the tears glistening in her eyes even in the dark and his heart threatened to break for her. But he let her continue.

"Someone said he ran out for the ball and the car hit him. I don't blame the driver, I blame myself. If I hadn't fallen asleep, he might still be alive."

"Raven—"

She shook her head and let his leg down onto the bed. "He was gone even before I got to him. My baby died on the road all alone, without his mother. But that was his life. Alone, without his mother. I need to go."

Before he could stop her, she vanished into the washroom adjacent to his room. He knew she was crying and he felt helpless. Closing his eyes, he thought of the child he'd lost and would never see grow.

CHAPTER FIVE

Trinity had waited in the small dingy sewer room for three hours while Troy, the big brute, had snored loud enough to wake the dead. When he'd finally woken—okay, she'd woken him with a sharp electrical zap—he'd stumbled out of the room, once again grumbling to himself.

She'd given up on thinking he could leave her to Chaos when he broke out of the sewer and invaded the first home he saw and, once again, took a nap. He wasn't going to lead her to Chaos and that only enraged her more.

She sent herself back to her home and into her bedroom where she found Basil sitting on their bed, looking less than amused.

"Where the hell have you been?"

"Didn't Dante tell you what I was doing?"

"Yes," he snapped as he stood. "And do you have any idea how worried I've been? You've been gone for hours."

"I know." She stripped from her jacket and tossed it over a chair, then proceeded to do the same with her shirt.

"You could have called to let me know you were okay," he continued shouting at her.

"You're right. I should have." She slipped out of her jeans and boots and tossed them aside, then casually walked to the washroom. Basil burst in right after her.

"That's all you're going to say?"

She shrugged shoulders that seemed much heavier now than ever before. Stepping into the shower she started the water running. She didn't jump when he grabbed her and spun her around to face him. She'd expected it.

"What is wrong with you?"

She stared at him a moment, then the tears began to fall. She couldn't help it, or stop them, and just gave in to them.

"Oh, baby, I'm sorry I yelled at you. Shh..." He stepped into the shower with her, fully dressed and wrapped his arms around her.

"I didn't find him, Basil. I don't know where Chaos has him."

"Do you think that there's a possibility that Jonah isn't with Chaos?"

"You were there when Gypsy told us Chaos' men took him."

"Yes, I know. What I meant was, what if he got away?"

"Then why isn't he here, why didn't he come home? He would come home to me if he could. Damn it Basil, Jonah is in trouble and it's all my fault."

Basil released her to cup her face in his hands. "Why do you think this is your fault?"

"I didn't protect him. I should have protected him, both of them. Jonah's being held by Chaos and Ariel is dead and it's all my fault."

"No, baby, it's not your fault. Shh now." He wiped her tears away, then kissed her lips once before holding her face in his hands. "We did the best we could to keep everyone safe. None of us could have predicted what happened."

"But it wasn't enough and now Jonah's in trouble and I still can't help him. What good are these damn powers? I don't want them anymore. Why hasn't she taken them from me yet?"

Basil stroked the tears from her face as the water soaked his clothing. "I'm really concerned about this deal you made with her. My mother is a ruthless person when she wants to be. If she meant to take your powers back, she would have by now. She wants something else from you."

"Jonah? You don't think she took Jonah?"

He shook his head then grabbed the soap. "He's small potatoes. I think it's something more. But we won't worry about that right now. Let's get you calmed down before you short circuit something." He smiled at her and it was all she needed to feel better.

"I love you."

Still smiling, he kissed her once, then began rubbing soap over her damp body. "And I love you. Now tell me what you were up to while I was waiting at home, worrying."

"I followed Troy, the big guy in our cells, but it led me nowhere. What an annoying person." She shook her head and that was when she noticed he was still wearing his clothes. "Why are you still dressed?"

"I was taking care of you and not worrying about myself."

She pursed her lips, grabbed the hem of his shirt, and slid the damp fabric up his body and over his head. "Silly."

"You were telling me about Troy being annoying," he continued as she undid his pants.

"The guy mumbles to himself all the time." She tossed the damp shirt aside. "But that's not the point. I followed him through the sewers to this cell of a room. Chaos used to stay there. Can you believe it, in the sewer? Step out." She urged him as she yanked his pants down to his feet.

"While you're down there..." He grinned as he stepped from his damp pants.

Smiling, she tossed his damp pants out of the tub, then decided to oblige him. Curling her fingers around his shaft, she took him into her mouth.

"Now we're talking."

She laughed and had to be careful not to bite him. She felt the water on her back as his hands rested on her head.

He gently coaxed her to go deeper and so she did.

"Sweet mother!"

She loved hearing him enjoy what she did to him. And doing him always made her feel better. But when he pulled her up, she was a little confused. "I wasn't finished."

"Yes, you were. My turn to make you feel better. Turn around."

Knowing what he had in mind, she turned around and braced her hands on the back of the shower and spread her legs. What he did next shocked her.

He lathered her back with soap and began giving her a slow massage. Maybe this was just a prelude to what he had planned. She could be patient, and the massage did feel nice. So why not enjoy it? "Where could Chaos be hiding?"

"Just relax now, love, and enjoy the massage."

It was nice, yet... "I have to find Jonah, Basil."

"I know, and we will. But for now you need to relax."

She wished she could but the tension was like a rock inside of her refusing to break free. And to top it off, she was feeling aroused. Especially with the way he was rubbing his hands up and down her body, over her ass, and down her legs. The guy had marvelous hands. And when he skimmed them up the insides of her thighs, his fingers brushed ever so slightly against her lips. She spread her legs in hopes he would indulge her need to feel him inside of her.

Yet he didn't.

"Basil..."

"Yes, love?" he asked softly, running his hands along her sides, caressing the swell of her breasts with his fingertips as he moved to her shoulders.

"Are you enjoying yourself?"

"Immensely."

"Well, I would like a little more enjoyment myself. Think you could oblige?"

He slid her damp tail of hair to the side and kissed her neck. "You're not enjoying my massage?"

"Very much. But I'd like more."

"More? How much more?"

"Now you're just teasing me."

He laughed as he nuzzled her neck then slid his hand down to her butt. "Tell me how much more you want?"

"You know perfectly well what I want, now give it to me." She yelped when he smacked her butt. "What was that for?"

"Isn't that what you wanted?"

"No." She turned around to face him and took his dick in his hands. "And you know perfectly well what I want."

"Do I really?"

"Don't play coy. The massage was nice but I need something else to relieve my frustrations." With a wave of her hand she shut the water off and stepped out of the shower, still holding onto him. She left him no choice but to follow her to their room where she proceeded to push him onto the bed and climb on top.

"I love a forceful woman. Do me, baby." He laughed, taking hold of her hips as she straddled him.

More than happy to oblige, she gripped a hold of him, then lowered herself down. The instant she felt him slide inside she felt her tension subside. This was just what she'd needed. Sitting over top of him, she rode him with a wild abandonment as every ounce of her tension washed away. And when he sat up and bore his fangs, she

more than willingly gave him what he wanted. And took what she needed.

As one they clamped onto each other's necks and drew blood as their bodies catapulted over the edge and beyond.

She collapsed over top of him and for the first time in weeks, slept soundly.



There was blood, all around him, pools of it, teasing him, calling to him, and all he wanted was to drink it. Yet the closer he got to it, the further it was away. The scent of it, like strong copper, filled his nostrils and tantalized his tastebuds.

He wanted it more than life itself.

Bolting awake, Jonah stared wide eyed into the room. Every part of him hurt.

"Jonah? Are you okay?"

He could smell her as if she were beside him. Her scent, her blood, called to him. "Stay away from me!" He felt his teeth ache and the urge to take grew tenfold.

"What's the matter? Do you have another cramp?"

"No! Please, stay away from me." Then she stepped up beside him and all he could think was take. He could hear her blood rushing through her veins, her heart as it pounded in her chest. With each whoosh his body responded. "Please, just stay away from me."

She clicked the light on over his bed and it was all he could do not to lunge at her and bite that supple vein at the side of her neck. "For God's sake, Raven. Get lost!"

She stopped, tilted her head, then laid her hand on his head. "You need to feed."

"Just leave me alone. Please. I beg of you." If he could run away from her right now, he would.

"This won't get any better unless you give your body what it wants. Here, drink." She thrust her wrist out to him.

He slapped it away. "No!"

"What you're feeling right now will only become more intense the longer you wait. Just take my vein and drink. I'll be fine. I've done this before."

He pushed her aside, then rolled himself off the bed. He fell with a thud onto the cold tiled floor but the pain was nothing compared to what he felt inside. It was more intense than anything he'd ever felt

before. It felt like fire ants were clawing through his veins, his mouth was so dry his lips stuck to his teeth and his head...all he heard in his head was the whooshing of her blood pumping through her veins.

It was going to drive him insane.

"Take it, Jonah," she demanded, falling down beside him on the floor.

"I won't drink from you." He'd rather die.

"If you don't drink now, Jonah, you'll go insane and I refuse to let that happen." She jumped up onto the bed and when she came back down, she had the knife in her hands. "Now, drink." She slid it across her arm by her elbow then thrust it out at him.

"Stop it! What have you done?" But the blood, so red, so thick, so...juicy, called to him.

"I can stitch myself up after. Just drink."

"Please don't make me do this," he pleaded.

"I have to." She grabbed his head and thrust her arm to his mouth.

The instant the blood touched his lips he was compelled to take it in. He couldn't help himself. She was delicious, so smooth, so gloriously sweet that he wanted to drink her up. And as he sucked on her arm, drawing in her blood, the ache began to subside.

"Good, that's it, drink from me."

Her voice was soft and soothing, so similar to her blood. She was nectar and he was parched. Then he felt her go limp and when he looked up, he saw her beginning to sway. Jonah pulled his mouth from her arm and captured her before she fell backwards onto the floor. "Damn it! What did I do?" Laying her on the floor, the first thing he did was check for a pulse. "Oh, thank God! Raven, Raven, talk to me. Say something."

"Tired..."

"Don't go to sleep. Shoot. Sorry...yeah, that's nice Jonah, apologize for drinking her dry. What do I do, what do I do?"

"Juice..." she mumbled. "I need juice, sugar."

"Right...right." Okay, think Jonah. He'd have to go out in the hall to get her some. He just hoped the vamps were gone. The scent of her blood drew his attention and he saw she was still bleeding from the wound on her arm. Instinctually, he pulled off his pajama shirt and tied it around her arm to stop the bleeding. "I'm just going to leave you for a minute to get you something sweet to drink. Okay?"

"Vampires..."

"I'll be careful." He rested her gently on the floor, then grabbed the blanket from his bed and yanked it down. He wished his damn

legs worked properly. "I'll be right back," he promised after tucking the blankets around her.

With nothing else to do but crawl, he pulled himself to the wheelchair and began the arduous task of pulling himself up and into it. The sweat built on his body, beading over his top lip as he struggled to get himself into the chair. He seriously needed to think about working with some weights to strengthen his arm muscles. Finally into it, he let out a long breath, then grabbed the wheels and hoped he could figure out how to work it. He glanced one last time at Raven lying on the floor before wheeling himself to the door.

He needed a weapon.

Wheeling himself back to Raven, he leaned over the side of his chair to grab the knife. It wasn't as easy as it looked and his fingers continuously slipped off the knife before he managed to grab it. Laying it on his lap, he turned back to the door and took a huge breath before opening it.

It was dark, all but for the emergency lights along the walls. Fortunately he didn't need light to see. His vision was perfect now. His senses were more acute as well he'd noticed. Taking in a deep sniff, he couldn't smell anyone near. Grateful for that, he pushed forward. When he saw the vending machine, he wheeled himself forward, then realized it wasn't working. With the power out, it was locked down and even if he had change, which he didn't, he wouldn't be able to get into it.

"Damn it!" He pounded his fist on the glass and was shocked when it cracked. "Hm..." With a wry smile on his lips, he lifted his fist and pounded it again. Glass splintered and crashed, raining down onto his legs and feet. He slipped his hand through the opening and grabbed a can of cola. It was sweet, plenty of sugar in it so it should help. Now all he needed was some food. Then he remembered the tray of food she'd brought in for herself earlier.

Laying the can of cola on his lap along with the knife, he pushed himself quickly back to his room. She was still laying on the floor in the exact position he'd left her in and his heart tripped with the thought that she looked much too still to be alive.

But then he sensed her breathing, shallow as it was, and the pumping of her heart.

She was still alive. Thank you, God!

Grabbing the tray of her food, he rested it on the arms of the chair and hurried to her side. Now what? How the hell was he going to do

this without being able to stand up? Tapping his head, the thought finally came to him. He grabbed the tray and set it on the bed, along with the can and knife. Then he searched for the lever to lock the wheels of his chair in place. Now all he had to do was pull himself out of it and back onto the floor.

Yeah, easier said than done.

And while he was sitting here debating how to get out of his chair, Raven was possibly dying. To hell with it. Using the strength of his arms, hoisted himself up, then pushed himself forward. He slid from the chair seat to land on the foot pedals and rolled to the side until he flopped onto the ground beside her.

Perfect.

"Are you still with me, Raven?" Jonah asked as he scooted over to the bed for the tray. He was never going to look at a wheelchair bound person the same again. He had new respect for them and their courage to try to be as normal as they could. Holding the tray in one hand, he inched it off the bed, then set it on the floor. He pushed it forward, then dragged himself closer.

"I have a cola for you, and some food. Looks like a...ham and cheese sandwich. Yummy." Though it looked less than appetizing, he ripped the package open and set it back on the tray. "Come on, Raven, talk to me." Before opening the can of cola, he pressed it to her face. It wasn't ice cold, but cool enough that he hoped it would wake her.

Which it did. Her blue eyes opened and he was struck by their beauty, "Good, good. Talk to me, stay with me now." He popped the top then lifted her head and pressed the can to her lips. "Drink a little now, okay."

She sputtered when the cola hit her mouth and her eyes went wide.

"That's a girl, stay with me. Come on, open your mouth and take a sip." When her lips parted, he slowly dribbled the cola into her mouth. She swallowed and her nose wrinkled up. "Yeah, not orange juice but its all I could find. Just drink a little more." She took a few more sips before he pulled the can away. "Now some food."

"I hate pop," she stated, her eyes drooping as they looked up at him.

"No kidding? I can't live without the stuff. Here, bite." He held the sandwich to her mouth and watched as she bit into it. "Look, about what I did."

"You needed to feed," she said between bites.

"But not on you. Never again, okay." He shoved the sandwich between her lips before she could protest. "I don't think the vamps are still here. I couldn't sense anyone."

She swallowed before replying. "Good. Hopefully they took what they needed and won't be back."

"I'm doubtful of that. We'll need to keep a watchful eye. How you feeling?"

"I'm still a little weak but getting better. Thank you."

"Don't thank me. I'm the one who put you in this position. You can take the bed and rest. Think you can manage to get up and walk to it?"

"I think so." She lifted her arm and tilted her head at the shirt tied to it. "You used your shirt on my cut?"

"I had to tie it off to stop the bleeding. I should check it to make sure it's okay." He could smell the difference in it and knew it had stopped bleeding, still...

"Just leave it. If you take it off now you'll only open the wound. Let it heal

"Okay. It was a spur of the moment thought. Do you need help to stand?" Not that he was much help.

"I think I can do it, but thanks for the offer."

He watched her carefully as she pulled herself to a sitting position and teeter a little before crawling her way to the bed.

"Room's a little fuzzy." She pulled herself up then plopped face first down onto the bed.

"Raven?"

"I'm good, just waiting out the dizziness." Then she crawled all the way onto the bed. "Do you need help up?"

"Up where?"

"On the bed, silly."

"You need the bed more than I do."

"We can both fit in here. You need your rest, Jonah. You just put your body through a lot getting me what I needed to gain strength. Your body needs the rest. Come on, I won't bite," she teased.

Yeah, but he might. "The only woman I have ever slept beside has been my wife." He found himself saying.

"It's just rest, Jonah. Nothing more." She patted the bed beside her.

Drawing in a deep breath, he gave in and pulled himself into his wheelchair then wheeled himself to the bed. It wasn't going to be easy

Embracing the Darkness

pulling himself onto the bed, but he had to try. Once again, the workout caused sweat to form on his body as he pulled himself up with his arms.

“Let me help.”

Before he could say no, she’d wrapped her arms around his upper body and was pulling him up. They landed on the bed, he on top, pinning her to the bed. Once again their eyes met and once again his heart sped up just a little more.

“Which do you prefer?”

“Huh?”

“Left or right side of the bed?”

“Left,” he blurted out then pulled himself off of her and rolled to the left. What was wrong with him? How the hell could he be attracted to another woman when his wife was barely dead?

He rolled over onto his side, and tried not to think of the woman directly behind him.

Or his growing attraction to her.

CHAPTER SIX

It was Dante's turn to sit in the dungeon and watch over the prisoners. Since Trinity's attempt to follow one of the vamps after releasing them had failed, debate had gone on about the reason for keeping them locked up. He was the fence about it. Though they only had six of Chaos' men, one being Dante's brother, Danny, it was still six vamps Chaos didn't have. Sure, it wasn't a strong number, and Chaos probably wasn't hurting any without them, but it was the principle of it. They had six of Chaos' men.

And it was likely Chaos had one of theirs.

It didn't matter how many times Gypsy or the others told him it wasn't his fault that Ariel had been killed and Jonah taken, Dante still felt responsible. And he always would. He'd been the one driving the car, and he'd been the one to decide not to turn the car around when they'd been struck and head back home to safety.

Something he would forever have to live with.

He just hoped Jonah would be able to find it in his to someday forgive him.

Dante excused the guard on duty, taking the chair near the back wall and looked out at the row of cells before him. Danny was in the middle one, and the instant he spotted Dante, his eyes narrowed.

Though Danny had the youthful look of a seventeen year old rather than the thirty-three he actually was, they were still twins. And Dante knew Danny held the mentality of a seventeen year old as well. All cocky attitude.

“What do you want?”

“I’m only here to watch over you all,” Dante supplied and stretched his legs out in front of him, trying to look casual. Truth was, seeing his brother behind bars, knowing he wanted nothing to do with him, stung.

“Yeah, see, I don’t get that.” Danny lifted himself off the cot to walk lazily towards the bars. “Why exactly do we need to be watched when we’re locked up. If we could break out, don’t you think we would have done it by now?”

He had a point, still...

“Maybe they enjoy watching us, hoping that they’ll catch us stroking the blue eyed monster,” one of the other vamps stated with a chuckle, grabbing hold of his crotch.

“I think you might be right, Bud,” another quipped and he too grabbed his crotch.

Dante simply crossed his arms over his chest and continued to stare blankly. They weren’t going to get a rise out of him.

“You think by keeping me in here I’ll eventually break and give up my rowdy ways, bro?”

Dante’s eyes flicked to his brother but he chose not to acknowledge the question. “You still call me bro.”

“Old habits die hard.”

“Isn’t that a fact? Like for instance, I notice you still chew your nails when you’re nervous.”

Danny lowered his hand to his side. “I’m not nervous, just bored. So, how’s your sweetie treating you? Has she sucked on you yet?”

Dante crossed his feet at the ankles and ignored that question as well. It didn’t bother him as much now, knowing Danny had been the one to sire Gypsy. “Do you remember when we were ten and we convinced Dad to build us a tree house in the back yard and you decided while everyone was asleep to start the job because you couldn’t wait until the morning for Dad to get started.”

“Still bored.” Danny yawned.

“Remember how you nailed your hand to the wooden board with the nail gun? I still remember how much you screamed. Woke us all up and scared the living shit out of Mom. She still has that nail.”

"That's pretty disgusting," one of the vamps added.

Dante shrugged and continued. "She has a lot of your stuff still, like your running shoes and your toothbrush, just to mention a few. She kept them all and tucked everything she could of yours into one cabinet and every year on the anniversary of your disappearance she'd sit out there after everyone went to bed and go through your things."

"Aw, now that's a touching story."

Dante ignored the vamp beside his brother's cage and continued. "She blames herself for your disappearance. It would ease her conscience to know you're still alive."

"Have you told her I'm alive yet? Didn't think so," Danny replied when Dante didn't answer. "And why? Because you don't want Mommy dearest to find out her baby son turned into a vampire. So save the sob story and leave me the hell alone." Turning his back, Danny returned to his cot.

It was the truth that he hadn't told anyone in his family that Danny was alive, but not for the reason Danny thought. Dante didn't want to get their hopes up by telling them, thinking that Danny would actually care to see them when he knew he wouldn't. "What are you going to do, Danny, when we finally take Chaos out?"

Danny lifted his head from his lying position on the cot, and shrugged. "I think the better question would be: What will you do when Chaos rules the world?"

"It's a big world. He's having enough trouble ruling one small city. I'm not too worried."

"You should be. Catch you later, bro." Putting his head back down, Danny pulled the pillow over his head and ended their conversation.

Dante sat there for the three hours he was on duty and simply watched his brother sleep.



Raven woke to the gentle sounds of snoring in her ear, and an arm across her chest. She didn't bother to move it, simply because she liked having it there. As a matter of fact, she liked lying next to Jonah, period. Even in his sleep he was beautiful. She wanted so desperately to touch him, to caress him, to kiss him. But she knew better than to push him. He had, after all, just lost his wife.

But it had been so long since she'd lain next to a man that she found herself snuggling even closer to him. He stirred, pulling her closer, and nuzzled her neck. God, how she wished he could be hers.

The sting in her arm reminded her of the bond she'd shared with him. He'd drank from her, taken her blood into his system. So even if she couldn't have him, at least she would be a part of him. And that really sounded desperate and sad.

She was a sad person.

His hair brushed her cheek when he shifted his head and it felt as soft as satin. She loved the way it fell across his brow and she wanted to brush it back but knew it would most likely wake him. So instead she lay there watching him sleep.

"Oh Ariel," he whispered in a sleepy voice.

She closed her eyes and willed away the hurt. He thought he was holding his wife. Would it be so bad of her to make him believe she was his late wife? She could kiss him then and he'd think he was kissing his wife.

Then he'd wake up and realize she wasn't the woman he loved.

With a heavy sigh, she gave up on that thought and just listened to him breathe. But when his hand slid up to cup her breast she found it very difficult to let that one go.

"Mm, nice."

Raven felt herself moisten when he squeezed her boob. She wanted more than anything for him to slide his hand down between her legs and soothe the ache he was beginning to produce.

"I want you to kiss me, Jonah," she murmured, turning her head to face him. And when his hand cupped her chin, she closed her eyes and let him take.

His lips were soft, warm, sweet, and he kissed like a dream. She never wanted it to stop.

She turned on her side, angling her head to allow him to take the kiss deeper, and when his hand slid to her waist, then under her shirt, everything inside of her came alive. It had been so long since she'd felt alive.

"I love you," he proclaimed against her lips, then cupped her breast in his hand again.

"Oh, Jonah. I only wish."

His eyes opened and the instant he saw who she wasn't, he yanked his hand away and pushed himself back. "Raven?"

"I wish you hadn't stopped." But she knew now as she had all along, it wasn't her he'd been with.

"Oh man, oh...boy. I...uh, I..."

"You don't need to say anything. I understand. You thought I was your wife." She sat up, pushing the blankets aside, her heart breaking. And that was when she noticed it. "You have a hard-on."

"What? Oh my God, I do," he gasped, glancing down at the tent in his pajama pants, then quickly grabbed the blanket in an attempt to cover himself.

"Don't. It's good. You can get it up. That really means your body is coming back to life. Can you feel it throbbing?"

"Jesus, Raven!" He shifted himself.

"I know how that sounded, but it was a clinical question. If you can feel it, then your sensory nerves are beginning to regenerate. This is wonderful progress!"

"More like an extremely awkward moment. I'm sorry if I did anything—did I do anything to you?"

She shrugged. "Nothing too severe. I enjoyed it, I'll tell you that, and don't be embarrassed by it. I'm not."

"Oh man." He ran a hand across his face.

"I want to check you out."

"What?" his hand came down fast and his eyes went wide.

"See what other feeling you have. Where did I leave that needle?" She hopped off the bed to scan the room for the pin.

"Raven—"

"Ah, there it is." She grabbed it off the night stand to the right of his bed then yanked the covers away from his legs.

"What the hell are you doing?"

"Tell me if you feel this?" He yelped when she pricked his left heel. "Good. Great. Now this one." She did the same on the right and once again he yelped but this time, he also flinched. "Wonderful. How about your legs?"

"Yes, I can feel that. I can feel that," he exclaimed joyfully as she pricked his ankle.

With a smile on her face she continued up his leg. "This."

"Yes."

"How about here?" She poked just above his knee.

"Yes."

"And here?" She tried the other leg.

"Yes. I can feel it, I can actually feel it."

"I think all you needed, all your body needed, was to feed. To draw strength. You need to feed again."

"Not from you." He held his hand up.

"Fine. I'll see if they left us anything. I'll be right back. This is so exciting." She hurried from the room, as excited as if it were her own legs she were just beginning to feel.

He'd felt the needles pricking his skin. What a wonderful feeling. Jonah found the smile on his face didn't seem to want to leave. Then he noticed the bulge in his pants and he was reminded of why it was there. He'd gotten hard thinking he was touching his wife when in reality he'd been touching someone else.

How could he have done that? How could he have not known, even in his sleep, that the woman he was touching was not his own. There were distinct differences between Raven and Ariel. Raven was more petite where Ariel was— had been bulkier. Her breasts had been full, filling her C cups completely. Where Raven's were more of a B. And what the hell was he doing comparing his deceased wife's breasts to Raven's?

He was appalled with himself and apparently, so was his dick. It was as limp as a noodle now. But it had been hard, and that meant the world to him.

He jumped when the door flew open then drew in a deep breath when Raven rushed into the room.

"They didn't take it all." She held the plasma bag up, laughing.

He noticed his shirt was missing from her arm and in its place was a huge white bandage. "How is your arm?"

"This?" She held it up, gave it a shake. "As good as new. How do you want to take this? In a cup or right from the bag?"

"Cup." He was not going to resort to sucking blood from a bag. The fact that he was sucking blood in the first place was bad enough. But life had dealt him that nasty card and he had no choice but to play it. "Is it healing up then?"

"I dabbed some glue on it to seal it up. It'll be fine in no time. Here you go." She handed him the cup of blood she'd just poured. "Drink up."

He took the cup reluctantly and glanced inside. He hadn't hesitated when she'd held her arm to his mouth, yet taking it from the cup he was having a hard time doing.

"Would you rather drink from me?"

"No!" He put the cup to his lips, closed his eyes tight and drank. And before he knew it, the cup was empty.

"Not so bad after all, huh? Let me fill it up with more."

He gladly gave her the cup. It had gone down like water. Which utterly surprised him and when she handed him the second cupful, he downed that one as well.

"That's great. You'll be back to your old self in no time. I just know it."

He pulled the cup from his lips, empty and set it down on the pullout table beside his bed. "Only being my old self didn't include drinking blood."

"True, still... It could be worse. You want to try eating something now?"

How much worse could it get? "I suppose." Truth was, he was starved.

"Goodie. You are really getting better. Still want to take that stroll down to the cafeteria? Maybe there's something down there I could cook up for us."

"Sure, why not." It might be nice to get out of the room he was cocooning himself in.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“How long do you plan to keep your brother locked up?”

Dante glanced up at Trinity who was standing in the doorway to the stairwell leading up. “I didn’t realize we’d decided to let any of them go yet.”

She stepped aside to let him pass then followed behind him. “We hadn’t, but every time the discussion does come up, you insist your brother be left where he is. What do you think you’ll accomplish by keeping him locked up? He’d not going to come around as long as you keep him locked in a cell.”

“I think you should mind your own business.” He pushed through the door with a great deal of gusto.

Undaunted, Trinity continued after him. “You can’t make a person feel something they don’t feel.”

“You’re pissing me of, Trinity.”

Taking his arm, she stopped him in his tracks and ignored the snarl on his lips when he turned. “You’re only hurting yourself by hoping he’ll come around.”

“Are you telling me to give up on him? Are you willing to give up on Jonah?” Trinity’s eyes narrowed. “Didn’t think so. Now back off.”

She let him go deciding it wasn’t worth the fight. She had more important things to deal with. Like finding Jonah. Not knowing where

he was being held or how he was holding up was killing her. Stalking off to the kitchen, she decided to drown her frustrations in food. Thank God Cooper had a fully stocked pantry and freezer, but still, with the power out in the city, getting food from the closed down grocery store was going to pose a problem. She was thankful Basil had an emergency back-up generator that was powering the house. At least the food was going to keep in the coolers.

She grabbed the leftover fried chicken she hadn't wanted for dinner the night before, and the block of cheese from the fridge. Setting them on the table, she searched the cupboards for crackers and came across a delectable chocolate cake that Cooper had apparently made earlier. Might as well have some of that as well. Carrying it, along with the crackers, she set them on the table, then grabbed a plate. She broke off a hunk of cheese, piled some crackers on her plate then grabbed a drumstick and sat down to eat. Maybe she shouldn't have skipped dinner and breakfast after all. She found she was rather ravenous now.

Twenty minutes later when Basil walked into the kitchen, she'd polished off most of the chicken, all of the cheese and half the cake. She was leaning back in her chair, one hand on her overfilled belly, feeling more than stuffed.

One dark eyebrow lifted as Basil examined the table. "Hungry were we?"

"Partially. I was also drowning my frustrations with food. I feel sick."

"Was that a full cake when you began?" he asked, sliding one long finger over the rich dark chocolate icing on what was left of the cake.

"Yeah," she moaned. "And at least six pieces of chicken and half a block of cheese."

He simply shook his head as he walked to her. "There are other... healthier ways of relieving frustration, my love."

He kissed her head, then rested his cheek on the top.

"I didn't feel like having sex." He gasped and she laughed. "I think I might go crazy. I want to do a door to door search."

Basil took a chair beside her then took her hands in his. "We don't have the man power to search door to door."

"I could do it on my own. With my abilities, I could zap in and out just like this." She snapped her fingers.

"And be a sitting duck for Chaos or his men to take you out. It's just not logical, love."

"Well, what else can I do? Sitting here doing nothing isn't bringing Jonah back." She scooped a handful of cake but Basil grabbed her wrist before she could put it to her mouth.

"You'll thank me later when you're not throwing it up." He ate it from her palm then handed her a napkin to wipe the remainder from her hand. "I'm as frustrated as you are by this. I feel useless sitting here doing nothing, but I don't know what else to do to find him, or Chaos."

"What if he's turned him..." Trinity sighed. "We both know it's a possibility. Or worse, using him as a blood slave. I hate knowing he's being held by Chaos and not knowing what's happening to him. Damn it, I wish we knew where he was!" She slammed her fist on the table hard enough to rattle the dishes.

"I know, love. I know." He took her in his arms and kissed her forehead. "Dante and I will set out in a bit and do a patrol. Maybe we'll get lucky and find someone who knows where Chaos is staying. But you have to promise me something."

She pursed her lips. "What?"

"No more stuffing your face. This sickly green is not a good color for you." He touched her cheek and made her smile.

"I don't think my belly could handle anything more."

"Good. Now come on. I'll run you a hot bath and you can ease your sore belly and your tense muscles in some lavender bath bubbles." He always knew just what she needed.



Cooking had never been her strong suit. Then again, as a nurse, she really hadn't had time to do much cooking with her hours being so long and screwy. And really, what was the point to cooking a big meal for herself? Ricky certainly hadn't cared less. He was happy with hotdogs, macaroni, or spaghetti.

The back-up generator in the cafeteria were keeping the coolers cold enough to protect the food from spoiling. That was a good thing because who knew when the lights were going to come back on.

"What do you feel like having?" she asked, perusing through the coolers.

"They got any steak in there?"

She laughed as she poked her head out the cooler door. "In a hospital? Not likely. I did find a huge can of pre-made stew. How's that sound to you?"

"Not as good as the steak but it'll do."

"It's pre-made and all it needs it to be reheated so that makes me happy. You would have been screwed with the steak even if there had been some. I'm a terrible cook."

"I love to cook. I usually did the cooking in our house. Ariel used to say—" He stopped cold and became very still.

"What did she say?" Raven coaxed him on. It was good to talk about her.

He drew in a breath before continuing. "She used to say my hands were multi-talented. I could manipulate any electronic object to my desire, cook like a gourmet chef and please her with the gentlest touch."

"You love her very much."

"I do, and thank you for not making that past tense. My love for her didn't die when she did." He let out a long sigh before continuing. "What can I do to help you?"

It wasn't easy for him to talk about his late wife, but at least he was talking. "Do you want potatoes or a salad with it?"

"I could go for potatoes."

"Then I'll see if I can find some. What was she like? Your wife," Raven prompted as she searched the huge kitchen. A person could get lost in this room.

"Ariel was a kind woman, but if you pissed her off, she let you know it. She was meticulous. Nothing was ever out of place in our house. She liked order, hated when things were in chaos. She hated being at Basil's place but she was a trooper and stuck by me. I should have sent her to stay with her parents in Minnesota."

Raven set a bowl with four potatoes in front of him on the table. "Why did she hate this Basil person's place?"

"She said it was too cold, too ancient, too big. He lives in a castle."

She stopped abruptly in her search for a knife. "A castle? As in the one just outside the city?" There was only one castle like house near Jacob's Cove.

"Yeah, that's the one. You've seen it?"

"Hell yeah! I used to drive by it just to admire it. Man, you know the queen and the guy who lives in that gorgeous castle. I feel like I'm in the presence of royalty."

"I'm nothing special. Trust me. How do you want the potatoes?"

"Cooked." She shrugged. "I'm not fussy, really. So how come if you know the queen and this guy who lives in the castle you don't want to contact them and let them know where you are."

"I contacted Trinity and reassured her I was okay. She has her hands full right now, trying to bring Chaos down. She doesn't need to worry about me."

"But I bet she is anyway. I would be. You should call her again." She scooped some frozen stew into a pot and turned on the burner to heat it up. "How far along was your wife?"

"Just barely. What's with the questions, Raven?"

She shrugged, looking over her shoulder at him. "Just making conversation. I want to get to know you better."

"You already know more about me than I do about you."

"Okay. I can go both ways. Let's see, we'll start with the basics. I'm thirty-three. Became a nurse because I love helping people. My parents live in California in a nice retirement home. I have one sister who is an actress, mostly Broadway. I got pregnant after a one-night stand when I was thirty. Never got the guy's number, no loss, I decided to keep the baby and did my best to raise him alone. When I was captured by Chaos' men three months ago, I was about to throw myself into the river and kill myself. I had no reason to live after losing Ricky and decided my best punishment was to become some blood thirsty creatures snack. What else do you want to know?" she asked, turning to him.

He stared at her with his jaw dropped.

"I thought I would just throw it all out there. Which part are you the most stunned about?"

"All of it, but mostly the killing yourself."

"Why would that part stun you? Isn't that just what you wanted to do after losing your wife and unborn child?"

"Well, yes, but...you seem so...stable."

She laughed a little too loudly, startling him. "I am anything but stable. I don't think I know one person who could qualify for being stable. We all have darker moments in our lives. Some people can brush it aside, but there are others that step into it. I was ready to leap. I felt lost. I couldn't find a reason to live. I'd lost the only thing that truly mattered to me."

"So you decided to punish yourself by letting Chaos suck you dry?" He shook his head. "Your son's death wasn't your fault and you have no reason to punish yourself."

"And you have no reason to punish yourself. Your wife's death wasn't your fault."

"How do you know that?" he asked abruptly, setting the potato down that he'd been peeling.

"You weren't the one driving. I overheard Benny telling Chaos what happened. He was the one driving the car that ran you guys off the road. You were in the back seat with your wife. Her death is not your fault."

"I never should have let her come out with me. I should have insisted she stay home."

"If you were psychic and foresaw her death and chose to let her go with you in any case, then you would be at fault. Are you psychic, Jonah?"

His eyes narrowed. "No."

"Then it wasn't your fault."

"Are you psychic, Raven?"

"No, but—"

"Then how could you have known taking your son to the park would cause his death. Pot calling the kettle black here, Raven. We both feel blame and yes, there was nothing either of us could have done to prevent the deaths of the ones we loved, but it doesn't make either of us feel any better. Are there any spices in the cupboards?"

He had her there. Pursing her lips, she reached into the cupboard beside her and held her hand out to the array of spices. "What are you looking for?"

"Oregano, garlic, and pepper to start with. Why don't they invent a wheelchair with lifts?"

"You just moved your foot."

"What?"

"You moved your right foot and you just did it again." She'd thought she'd been seeing things until he'd moved it the second time. "Try moving it." She watched his face become very concentrated as he stared down at his right foot. Then she saw it move. "Oh my God! You did it, you moved your foot!" Throwing her arms around him, she gave him a huge hug. "We need to celebrate."

"I actually could feel my foot moving!"

"Try it again!" This time she wanted a close up view of it and knelt at his feet. When he did it again, she clapped her hands and felt like a kid at Christmas. "This is incredible. Try the left foot."

"I have been. It's not moving," he said disappointedly.

"It'll come. This is progress. Wow, vampires really do heal fast. I wish we had some wine to celebrate."

"I'm more of a beer guy in any case. Okay, back to the spices. Just grab a bunch of bottles and I'll pick the ones I want to use."

"Do you know how long it's been since I've laughed or felt happy enough to laugh?" She set bottles of spices on the cupboards for him. "Thank you."

"Why are you thanking me?" He sifted through the bottles, choosing the ones he wanted to use and putting them on his lap.

"Not only did you give me a reason to fight back, but you're making me laugh for the first time in months. I could kiss you."

He spun his wheelchair around and hurried to the table. "I'm going to need a bowl and a pan to fry these in."

She sighed, disappointed that he would turn away from her so quickly. Sure, she knew he was still mourning his wife; still, it hurt to have him turn away. "I'll get the bowl and pan."

"How's the stew coming along?"

"Slow. It's frozen. But it should be ready in half an hour I think. Like I said, I'm not a cook."

"Just heat it on low until it unthaws and then turn it up to medium until it bubbles," he explained as he took the bowl she held out to him. "So what did you eat if you didn't cook?"

"Take-out or microwavable stuff. Anything that was quick essentially."

"It shocks me that you manage to stay so thin. Trinity is like that. She can pack it away but never gains an ounce. Could be that she works out though. I never thought to ask her what kind of metabolism vampires have. Might be something I need to know now."

"There were quite a few heavy vamps working for Chaos, so I would think they gain weight just like humans."

"True." He dumped the potatoes into the bowl, sliced up into cubes then added the seasonings. "You said your sister is an actress. Would I have seen anything she was in?"

"She's done some made for TV movies, but like I said, she mostly does Broadway. Do you watch Harlequin Romance movies?"

"Not if I can help it."

She smiled as she stirred the pot. "Then you wouldn't have seen her."

They worked together to make their meal, and for the first time in a very long time, she enjoyed eating.



If there was anything Chaos hated it was waiting. He was never a patient man, and being cooped up with nothing to do but stare at the

clock only made it worse. Not to mention his men acting like imbecilic children racing along the corridors in the wheeled office chairs. But he let them have their fun. They were cooped up as well. Everyone was developing a little cabin fever. But soon enough they'd be able to venture out again and when that time came, he was going to rule.

And Trinity and Basil would be history.

There was a crash in the corridor and Chaos stood and closed the door of the office he was hiding out in. The power was out and though they didn't need light to see, the men had found some high powered flashlights they were using to light the corridors and rooms. He wondered what they were going to do when the batteries wore down.

Chaos sat in his office, in the high back leather chair aimed at the large window at his side. It was a little eerie to look outside and see no street lamps on, no people mulling about, no houses with lights on. He really missed the activity in the city. This was not how he had planned things to be.

He swiveled in his chair at the knock on the door, then waved Fritz into the room. By the smile on his face, Chaos deduced that he had good news. He sure hoped so.

"I am about to make your day," Fritz chimed as he closed the door behind him.

Chaos steepled his fingers, resting his elbows on the arms of the chair and leaned forward. "Is that so? Do tell?"

"The men are back with the explosives."

Dropping his hands, Chaos stood. "This is wonderful! How did they manage to get them here so soon?" A full day ahead of schedule.

"They drove non-stop, not breaking for the day but instead covered the windows to shield the sun."

"Brilliant. I must commend them." He rubbed his hands together, smiling. "Let's get this ball rolling."

CHAPTER EIGHT

His belly was full—a little achy—but it felt good. And once he was able to shower, Jonah was sure he would feel even better. He was, however, more than a little uncomfortable showering knowing Raven was standing only a few feet away, separated by a wall, sure, but close enough to just pop in if she felt uneasy about leaving him to shower alone.

He was more than capable of washing himself, even if his legs didn't move on their own. He'd managed to undress himself, hadn't he? Sure, it had been hard, but he'd managed it.

Looking down at his now bare feet, Jonah wiggled the toes on his right foot. It felt incredible to be able to do that. Now if only he could get his left one to cooperate.

"How are you doing?"

"I'm fine, Raven," Jonah reassured her, then turned the dial to start the water. He felt weird sitting in his wheelchair while he showered.

"Hey, do you think it would be okay if I took a shower too? I'll be in the stall beside you if you need me for anything."

In the stall beside him? He wasn't too sure he liked that. But he couldn't deny her the shower. "Sure. But I'll be fine so don't worry

about me." He certainly didn't want her running in, stark naked while he was stark naked. Sure, she'd seen him naked, still...

"Okay. Thanks. I really need a shower." She laughed and her voice was a lot closer to him now.

Jonah tried not to think of her next to him, and washed himself off.

"This feels so good. This showerhead is actually pretty decent. It has a massage function. Oh, my muscles needed that."

He could actually see her standing with her back to the spray letting the water massage her neck and back. Stark naked. Then turning and letting the water slide over her breasts and down her—He jerked his thoughts back, appalled with himself for thinking of her body. Grabbing the soap, he noticed he had a boner. And he was even more appalled with himself now.

"How's it going in there?"

"Fine!" he blurted out, then willed his penis to shrink.

"I'll be done soon, if you need help—"

"I can manage this on my own, Raven." He knew he sounded gruff and he was sorry for it but if a man couldn't take care of himself in a shower he was useless.

"I'm just trying to help."

He'd hurt her feelings. "I know. I'm sorry I jumped on you—jumped down your throat," he amended, feeling like a complete idiot. He was sure she caught the sexual connotation in his statement.

"I understand, Jonah. I really do." She shut the water off.

How could she when he was having trouble understanding himself? Especially thinking of another woman sexually. Ariel had been the only woman he had ever been with, ever planned on being with, and now she was gone.

Still...how could he be thinking of another woman?

"I'm going to look for some scrubs to wear. My clothes are beginning to smell rank. I shouldn't be long."

"I'll be okay, Raven," he reassured once more as he shut off the water. He wheeled himself to the rack where she'd left two towels hanging for him. He wrapped one around his neck and the other...hm, how was he going to wrap it around his waist?

He looked down at his right foot, chewing on the inside of his cheek. Should he try? The towel rack was there for him to hold himself up if need be. He had to at least try.

Taking hold of his legs, Jonah lifted each one and set his feet on the floor before grabbing the armrests on his chair. With his breath held, he pushed himself up. Pulling one hand away, he quickly grabbed the

towel rack and nearly did a face plant on the wall when it gave. He plopped back down into the chair, hitting his elbow on the arm rest.

"Damn it!"

"What? Are you okay?"

He managed to throw the towel over his lap before Raven raced into the room. "I'm fine." He shifted it to make sure he was completely covered.

"What happened to the towel rack?" she asked, bending down to pick it up off the floor.

"I pulled it out of the wall. I forgot vampire's strength is more powerful than a human's." He never would have accomplished that before he'd been turned.

"You just pulled it out of the wall when you grabbed the towel?" She questioned him, running her hand over the holes in the wall where the rack had once been connected. "That's pretty frickin' impressive."

He could hear the disbelief in her voice but it wasn't until she met his gaze that he saw it on her face. "Okay, fine, I was trying to stand up and thought using the towel rack would help. How was I supposed to know I'd yank it from the wall?"

"Why were you trying to stand on your own? You could have fallen and seriously hurt yourself."

"Well, lucky for me I'm a vampire and I heal quickly." The comment was laced with sarcasm. "Mind leaving me to get dressed now?"

"Do you need help?"

He tilted his head to the side and narrowed his eyes. It was the only response he was giving.

"Fine. But if you need anything—"

"I know the routine, Raven. Thanks." Then he waved his hand at her to leave.

She turned her back to him, her black hair still wet from her shower flipped to the side as she walked off.

He really shouldn't be so rude to her when she offered her help. Yet it grated on him that she would think he needed the help. It annoyed him that he did need her help. If only his stupid legs would hurry up and heal so he could get back onto his own two feet.

He wheeled over to where he'd set his clothes and saw a new pair of pajamas taking place of his old ones. Not only was she helpful to him, she thought of things he wouldn't have. She really was an extraordinary woman. She'd dragged him on her back, out of his dungeon and away from his captor. That took a lot considering the

woman couldn't weigh more than one ten. She was a strong woman. Sure she'd struggled after the loss of her son, but who wouldn't have? He was right now, fighting to keep above water over his losses. She was doing remarkably well for someone who only months ago had wanted to give up.

She was an example to him that he too could keep his head above water and move on. Even though right now the pain of losing Ariel was so great it threatened to take him down, he knew he would hold on and he knew he would get past it. No, he would never forget Ariel, and yes, he would always love her. And he knew what Raven said was true. Ariel would give him a royal tongue lashing for even thinking about ending his life. And that was what kept him going.

He didn't want to disappoint the only woman he'd ever loved.

Jonah pulled the first pant leg over his foot and tried with all his might to will his leg to lift. When it did— however brief it was—he gave out a silent cheer. Slipping his other foot into the pant leg, he was disappointed when it wouldn't lift. Then he saw his toes wiggle.

"Yes!" he shouted, throwing his arms in the air.

"What?" Raven came racing into the room.

"I can move the toes on my left foot!" he laughed, looking down at his foot and moving the toes again.

"You moved your toes. You really did it? Oh, Jonah, this is incredible."

Leaning down, she threw her arms around his neck and gave him a huge hug.

"Um...naked here," he added, suddenly realizing he'd set the towel that had been around his waist on the floor beside him when he'd grabbed the pants.

"You have got to stop being so bashful." She pulled away keeping her eyes on his. "You've been more naked to me than clothed in any case. Can you move your legs?"

He supposed she was right, still...he grabbed the towel and draped it over his exposed genitals. "The right one lifts a little, but not the left. Why would that be?"

"It's just a matter of time and healing. Your body is fighting to regenerate itself, that's not an easy achievement. We need to do more exercises with your legs. Hurry and get dressed and we can get to it." She leaned down and kissed his head. "I'm so happy for you."

She left the room and Jonah sat there a moment just staring. His body was feeling warm all over from the kiss. It was a nice feeling after being so cold.



Basil shut the car door as he exited and the sound echoed a little too long in the still darkness. Was it day, or night? Even he'd lost track. He'd have to figure it out before he took Chaos down. He didn't want to risk the chance of taking him out in broad daylight. The last thing he wanted was third degree burns on his body. He'd suffered that before when his father had been in an angry mood because Basil had refused to obey him. He'd hung him by chains on the posts by the front door and stood in the shadows while the sun rose and scorched his body blood red.

That had been the last time his father had tortured him, thanks to Cooper. He'd saved his life that day, and for that Basil was eternally grateful.

"I hate how quiet it is," Dante spoke up, breaking the silence. Even his voice sounded hollow in the air. "I miss the cars, the people, the daily grind."

"I once thought how annoying people were with their busy behavior and rush to get from one place to the next. But I have to admit, I too miss it a little. How's the knee? Are you sure it's up to this?"

"It's a little sore but manageable. Cooper is a wonder with his hands. He put this liniment stuff on it and it takes the ache away just like that." He snapped his fingers and the sound reverberated around them.

"Yeah, he's the best. But you let me know if it starts bugging you and you can take the car home and I'll keep patrolling."

"Yeah, sure, whatever."

Basil knew the guy well enough to know he had no intention of telling him. So he'd watch him for any signs of being in pain. "So how is it going with Gypsy? Aside from the sex that the two of you seem to have on an hourly basis."

"It's not hourly, and it's going good. I think I have her convinced to come work for me when all this is over. It'll be good for Lexi. She won't have to deal with me seven days a week now. She'll have her hands full anyway, cleaning up the bar."

A lot of people were going to have their hands full when they returned. Plenty of shops had been vandalized since the cloak had been projected over the city. And it wasn't just the vampires who'd done it. Several non-vampires had gone on a rampage right after the sun had been blocked, looting what they could from defenseless shop owners.

The bad guys weren't always the one you most expected.

"What are the odds, you think, that Jonah is still alive? It had to be addressed," Dante added when Basil gave him a sideways glance.

He was right, and it was a thought that ran through Basil's mind more than once. "With Chaos? Who knows. The guy is as flakey as they come. He could very well be keeping Jonah alive to feed from him, knowing keeping him would be driving Trinity crazy."

"Which it is."

Basil nodded. Trinity was really worrying him. Her emotions were all over the place with Jonah being gone and Ariel having been killed. The sooner Jonah was found the better. "Yeah. Then again, he could have drank him dry just to get even with Trinity."

"Either scenario sickens me. I was really growing to like the guy."

Basil kicked a rock in his path and watched it skip along the road. In the distance a rat scurried away. They'd be next on the list to be taken for food, Basil thought, now that the humans were gone. "He has that effect on people."

"Why don't the two of you get along?"

"I cheated on Trinity. He's like her protective older brother and when he found out what I'd done, he came over and ripped into me. I let him have his say mainly because he was right, but if you ever tell him that I'll rip your eyes out and shove them up your ass."

"Ouch! Don't worry, I won't say a word. He's cool with you now knowing why you did it right?"

"I think he's still on guard with me, not trusting me entirely."

"But you did it to save Trinity."

"Yeah, but...I cheated." And it still pained him to know how much that had hurt Trinity. Even if it had been for her own safety.

"I guess so. What are we doing out here? No one's out so how are we going to grab someone and beat some answers out of him?"

Basil was thinking the same thing, still... "Someone might come out, and we're not just looking for someone, we're looking for some place. Wherever Chaos is hiding there will be activity. They'll be restless and a restless vampire is not a quiet one."

"I guess all we can do then is keep our eyes open. But couldn't we just as easily do that from the car?"

"Knee hurting you already?"

"No, but we can cover more ground in a car than on foot."

"You take the car, I'll stay on foot." And with that said, Basil transformed into a dog and scampered off.



Feeling refreshed from his shower, Jonah wheeled himself back to his room and found Raven changing the bedding. He also noticed she'd found a cot and had placed it near the window, shoving the chair into the corner. The cot was a mere foot and a half from his bed, leaving no room on that side of the room to move around in.

He wondered if she wouldn't be more comfortable in a real bed in her own room. But he knew suggesting it would only bring out a protest in her claiming that being near him was for the best in case he needed her for anything.

So he kept his thoughts to himself.

As he approached his bed, he saw the packet of blood on the table. He didn't feel the need to drink it, still feeling full from his earlier meal. Bypassing it, he wheeled right up to the bed. "I don't know about you, but I feel ten times better after that shower."

She turned to him her hair sweeping over her face as she smiled. "I know what you mean. You even have more color in your face." She stood up and rubbed her hands together. "Ready for some exercises?"

He was but he wanted something else first. "I'd like to try standing up again before we get to the exercises."

"I don't know that you're ready for that yet," she said, moving towards him.

"We won't know unless I try. I have to try, Raven. I'm done sitting on my ass and I'm done feeling sorry for myself."

Her face lit with excitement. "That was a really fantastic shower. Welcome back to the world of the living, Jonah. Okay, let's give standing a try."

He felt giddy inside and scared to death as he set his feet on the floor. But he was determined to do this. No matter what. But just as he was about to grab the bedrails, she took his arm and swung it around her neck. "What are you doing?"

"Helping you to stand."

"I was going to just pull myself up by the bed."

She shook her head and held on to his arm. "And have a repeat of the shower rack? We'll try it this way first. Put your weight on me."

"I'll break your back."

"I've lifted heavier people than you, Jonah, and besides, I've carried you before. Put your weight on me." She nudged him with her head.

Giving in with a heavy sigh Jonah did as she asked. As she pulled him up, he grabbed the bedrail to steady himself. He felt the cool tile beneath his bare feet, felt the pressure in his hips and in his back as he straightened up..

"Go slow," she warned him, holding him up with one arm around his waist, the other hand holding the arm around he had around her neck.

He didn't want to go slow. He wanted to stand like he had for the majority of his life. But he knew if she let him go now, he would drop like a wet sack to the floor. He didn't have enough strength in his back, hips, or legs to hold himself up. Defeat was a harsh bitch and she was laughing at him now. "I can't do it..."

"Yet..." she finished for him then shifted his weight. "We'll get those legs into shape and then you'll be as good as new."

He really hoped that was true. With her help, he maneuvered himself into the bed. The instant he was lying down, she climbed onto the bed near his feet. Grabbing hold of his left ankle, she placed her other hand beneath his knee and bent his leg. As she leaned forward, bringing it to his chest, she pressed hers to his leg. He felt the swell of her breast beneath the deep blue nurse's shirt she wore and that she wasn't wearing a bra.

He actually felt her nipple against his knee.

He felt it!

But he wasn't about to tell her that and kept it to himself.

"Do you feel anything?"

His eyes darted up to her a little quickly for his liking until he realized she couldn't read his thoughts. "Like what?"

"Your muscles stretching?"

"Yes," he said simply with a nod of his head. When she straightened his leg, then repeated her earlier motion, he felt her breast again. And it went straight to his loins.

"So what made you change your mind? What's with the sudden change of heart?"

He shook his thoughts aside, trying not to focus on how soft her breast felt against his leg. "It was you, what you said about my wife. She wouldn't want me to give up. She'd kick my ass actually, and tell me to stop being a baby and do something about my situation. She was a strong woman, and you remind me of her for your strength."

"Carrying you isn't so tough," she admitted, turning to the right leg.

He had more feeling in this leg and the touch of her hand on his ankle combined with the press of her breast against his knee was a driving force for the boner he was beginning to get. "Not physical strength, Raven. You're strong inside. You lost a child and you kept on going."

"Only because I was kidnapped and held against my will. I'm not so strong, Jonah. I did let a monster drink from me, remember?"

He remembered and thought of himself sucking on her vein to draw her blood into his body. "And you could have found a way to end your life while being held against your will, but you didn't, so that tells me you really didn't want to end your life. You are strong, Raven, and you made me see just how weak I was being. So thanks."

"Anytime. Can I ask you something?"

He shrugged. "Sure."

"Why is me exercising your legs giving you a hard-on?"

He was sure his face went beet red. He'd hoped she hadn't noticed but as he looked down, he saw clearly the large tent in his pajama bottoms. "Jeez."

"It's good...I mean, that you can get it up."

"Don't go any further, okay. I can feel your breasts against my leg when you press it to my chest."

"Oh...oh," she said with a smile on her face. "And you can tell I'm not wearing a bra."

"Yeah." Was there a rock he could hide under now?

"I wanted to wash my underwear," she explained, releasing his leg.

Great, now he knew she wasn't wearing panties either. "Do you think we could resume this later?" When his mind wasn't focused on her body.

"Sure, I guess. I'll just go see if my underwear is dry yet and when I get back we can continue." She hopped off the bed, and her face softened with a smile. "I'm flattered. Do you want me to get you something to jack off in?"

"What?" he gasped.

"Maybe the urine jug?"

"No! I wasn't...I didn't...that's not why I asked to stop." She thought he wanted to get himself off.

"It wasn't?"

"No," he chortled. "I just wanted some time to cool down."

"It's okay, you know, if you want to. Might be a good idea to make sure it still works properly—"

"Raven..." He took a deep breath before continuing. "Just let it go."

"Okay. I'll be back in a bit."

He slapped a hand over his face as she exited the room. Dear God! Then he lowered his hand to look down at his crotch. It wasn't completely deflated but it was getting there. He felt like he was betraying his vows by lusting after another woman.

He saw the blood packet on the table and turned away from it. He was still having trouble accepting that part of his new life. Seeing the telephone on the bedside table, he decided to give Trinity a call. He really should let her know he was okay. He could do that without telling her where he was.

That part of his life he wasn't ready to go back to just yet.

Too many memories.

But Raven was right about that as well. He should at least let Trinity know he was okay. So he picked up the phone, grateful that it still worked, and dialed. When she answered her voice warmed his heart. "Hey, Trin."

"Jonah? Is this really you? Where are you? Where does Chaos have you?"

"It's me and slow down with the twenty questions. I'm okay. I'm safe and not with Chaos. I got away."

"Oh thank God! Where are you? I'll come get you. Do you know how worried I've been about you?"

He closed his eyes. "I'm sorry I worried you. That's why I'm calling now. To let you know I'm okay."

"Great! Where are you?"

"I can't tell you that. Not yet at least."

"What the hell do you mean you can—What?" she shouted and nearly deafened him. "Shit!"

"What's up, Trin?" The sound of worry in her voice bothered him. "What's going on?"

"Someone's approaching the house."

"Is the alarm system running?"

"Yes—what the hell are they doing out there? You're kidding me?" She spoke to someone, leaving Jonah confused.

Raven entered the room and saw that he was on the phone and made herself busy by her cot. "Trin, what the hell is going on over there?"

"I don't know. There are some vamps on the front yard and it looks like...no fucking way."

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“What? What the hell is going on?” He heard the loud crash, then screams right before the phone went dead. “Trinity!”

CHAPTER NINE

"What's going on?" Raven wanted to know.

"I don't know but I have to get to her. Forgetting he didn't have two strong legs to stand on, he tried to move off the bed and couldn't. "Damn it!"

"Let me help you and you can explain what the hell is going on. Who were you talking to?"

It pissed him off that he needed her help now. "Trinity, my friend. She said there were some vampires on the front lawn, then there was a huge bang and a crash and some screaming before the phone went dead. I have to go to her, now."

"Okay, I'll take you. Just tell me where to go." Slipping her arm around his waist, she helped him out of bed and shifting him, set him in the chair.

"To the castle. What are you doing? We have to hurry." She was slipping those ugly ass hospital slippers over his bare feet.

"You need to protect yourself and it's a little chilly out there." Then she wrapped a blanket around his shoulders.

"I don't give a damn about me right now. We have to hurry," he growled.

"Oh, put your fangs away. I'll get you there." She grabbed the keys from the bedside table then pushed him out the door.

If anything happened to Trinity...



Raven had driven like a maniac only because Jonah had continually told her to speed up. It wasn't often that he was in the passenger's side of any car, preferring to drive, and the memory of his last car ride came barreling back at him like a sledge hammer to the gut. Would anything have been different if he'd been in the driver's seat? No one would ever know that. Did he blame Dante for the accident? No! He'd done the best he could under the extreme circumstances they'd been under. He hoped to God that Dante and Gypsy were okay.

The bright orange and yellow flames licking the dark sky up ahead caught his attention and nearly stopped his heart. "No!"

"What the hell happened?" Raven pulled into the long driveway behind a shit load of vehicles. "This doesn't look good."

She was right about that. Not only was the front of the huge ass castle Basil and Trinity called home up in flames, but there were at least ten vampires hanging out front. Waiting.

"I'm turning around."

"No!" he shouted, grabbing the steering wheel. "I am not leaving her to deal with this."

"And going into it is suicide, Jonah. We can't fend them all off alone."

A car sped past them and Jonah recognized it as Basil's. "We're not alone. We have help." He pointed to the car as it came to an abrupt halt only feet from the vampires.

"What makes you think they're here to help and not more vampires?"

"Because that's my friend's car. Pull in behind him."

"I don't like this, Jonah." But she did as he asked.

Jonah saw Dante climb out of the driver's side of the car but no Basil. Dante was a sitting duck alone. "Shit. I have to get out there."

"And do what? They'll attack you the instant they see you."

"I have to do something. I can't just sit here—" He stopped, his own words like daggers to his heart. All he could do is sit. He wasn't capable of fighting anyone off from his wheelchair. "Run them down."

"What?"

"Run the bastards down with the car. Floor it, Raven."

"You want me to run them down?"

"Either that or we all become food. Your choice, but we're running out of time. Here they come."

She gunned the engine and pressed her foot on the gas.

He gripped the door handle and held on. As they barreled towards the crowd of vampires waiting for the flames to dissipate, she began to squeal. When they hit the first vamp she screamed but kept on plowing through. The sound of bodies hitting the car was not one he would soon forget and he had to remind himself that they were vampires and that they were the bad guys.

Wasn't he a vampire now too?

He wasn't one of them.

Raven came to a halt so abruptly that if he hadn't put his hands out, his face would have slammed into the dashboard. Even with the seat belt in place.

"I can't do that again." Her voice was more than a little shaky.

He hoped they didn't have to either. Then he saw Dante race towards them and he rolled his window down. "D," he called out to him.

"Jonah? Holy fuck! Is that really you?" Dante yanked the door open, his face lit with a smile.

"It's me. Thought we'd give you a hand. What the hell is going on?"

"Just got here myself. I gotta check this out. Better call Basil first." He grabbed the cell phone from his pocket and dialed. "Jesus, man, we thought Chaos had you. Basil...we got trouble. Vamps bombed the house." He pulled the phone from his ear when Basil appeared beside him. "Jesus, man," he gasped.

Jonah didn't have a chance to say anything to Basil before he vanished again. "Vamps to your right," he warned Dante and tried to pull his legs from the car.

"You're not going out there, Jonah." Raven pulled forward and his door swung towards him. It was a good thing he was fast or his foot might have been caught in the door. "Jesus, woman."

"Tell your friend to jump in."

Shaking his head, he called out to Dante. "Get in." She came up beside him, slowing enough for him to grab the door handle and yank the door open. Dante jumped in, breathing heavy.

"Is there another entrance?"

"Yeah, around back," Jonah informed her, then held on as she swerved to their left and sped off. "Jesus, Raven, you're a maniac."

"I'm saving our asses." She made a sharp right around the house then came to an abrupt halt right by the back door.

"Don't know who you are but thank you," Dante said, then rushed from the car and yanked Jonah's door open. "Come on, man."

"Um..." This was a delicate situation he wasn't sure how to address.

"I've got you," Raven said, stepping beside Dante, moving in towards Jonah.

"You're not carrying me. Get the chair," Jonah insisted when she reached out to him.

"We don't have time." And ignoring his protests, she hooked her hands under his knees and pulled him from the car. Then she bent down and grabbed hold of his waist and pushed him over her shoulder.

"What the hell are you doing?" Dante wanted to know.

"I can't walk," Jonah admitted as Raven grunted, struggling to stand with him over her shoulder. "Stop it, Raven, before you hurt yourself."

"Seriously, Jonah? You can't walk?"

"Seriously. Stop her before she hurts herself."

"I've got him." Dante stepped in and grabbed Jonah under the arms. He pressed him to the car, then scooped a hand under his legs and carried him to the door. "Jesus, man. Was it the accident?"

"Now isn't the time," Jonah said, not wanting to get into this discussion right now. Hooking his arms around Dante's neck, he was more than a little embarrassed at having to be carried by his friend. The instant they entered the house he could smell and see the smoke. He heard sobbing and didn't recognize the voice to be Trinity's.

"Basil," Dante yelled as he hurried through the house.

There was debris everywhere, plaster, furniture, glass, and the alarm system Jonah had worked on before he'd been kidnapped was ringing loud and clear.

"I've got the chair," Raven announced, racing in behind them. "Jesus," she gasped.

"Gypsy!"

"Put me in the chair, Dante." He knew the guy wanted to go to his woman who was running towards him now. And when Raven nudged him, Dante didn't waste time putting him down. There wasn't room for him to wheel around, but at least he wasn't being carried.

"What happened? Are you okay?" Dante asked, taking Gypsy into his arms and checking her out.

"I saw these cars pull up and then a bunch of vamps came out.

They started piling something near the front steps. I called Trinity to come look. She was near the door when it blew in. They must have had explosives or something. She's not responding to Basil. She can't be dead. Jonah?"

He nodded. "Yeah, it's me. Where is she?"

"Back there. We have to help her. She's bleeding. Cooper's checking her out. You're a vampire?" she said to Jonah.

"Go, I'll figure out a way to get there." He waved them on, then turned to Raven. He felt no need to acknowledge Gypsy's comment. "Think we could get me through all this crap?"

"I'll move stuff out of the way as best I can. Explosives? The vampires used explosives? Why would they do that?" Raven asked as she began moving debris out of his way.

"To kill Trinity and Basil." He wheeled himself forward while she cleared a path. And then he saw them. Basil was crouched over her, Dante and Gypsy standing beside her, and Cooper was near her head.

Was she alive?

"We can't stay here, Basil. They'll be coming in here any moment now." Dante coughed from the heavy smoke in the room.

"She needs medical aid of which I don't have."

"Let me look at her." Raven stated as she hurried to Trinity's side.

"Who the hell are you?" Basil snapped, leaning protectively over Trinity.

"She's with me," Jonah piped in and all heads turned his way. "Raven's a nurse, she can help." Basil eased back to allow her in. "Dante's right. We can't stay here for much longer. Those vamps are going to be coming in here momentarily. We could go to the hospital. That's where we've been staying."

"She needs medical aid," Cooper said again and received a nod from Raven.

"Okay." Basil gave in and taking hold of Trinity, vanished.

"What the hell...." Raven gasped, falling forwards.

"Basil and Trinity have special abilities. I'll explain it all later but right now we have to boogie." The flames were dying down which only meant the vamps would be entering soon. If they hadn't figure out how to come in the back way first. "We can all fit in Raven's car." He spun his chair around and saw the first vamp coming towards them. "Shit!"

"We got this cased," Gypsy said, grabbing a hunk of wood on the floor and racing towards the vamp. Dante followed grabbing his own weapon from his weapons belt.

They took out the vamp with no problem, then led the way to the back entrance where they were confronted by another two vamps. Gypsy took one and Dante the other while Raven pushed him to the car.

"You know a lot of vampires," Raven stated in a hurried breath as she pushed his wheelchair out the door. Cooper raced ahead of her and opened the passenger side door.

"Yeah," Jonah said as Cooper helped him into the car. And now he was one too.



They managed to get to the hospital without being followed. He'd explained why Basil and Trinity had special abilities, going over how she'd attained them without going into all the details. She'd taken it in like a trooper, only asking a few questions even though he knew she'd had more. Dante and Gypsy had had their own questions, but he'd only given them the bare minimum.

Yes, he'd been injured in the accident and therefore couldn't walk. Yet. Yes, Chaos had held him, and yes, Chaos had turned him and Raven had saved him. But that was as far as he wanted to go.

They'd left the wheelchair behind, so when they arrived at the hospital, Raven had to run and get another one. The instant they entered the hospital, Basil was waiting for them.

"About time you got here."

"We don't have your abilities, sir," Cooper reminded him, rushing to Trinity's aid. "Your assistance, ma'am?" he asked of Raven.

"You got it. Let's get her into a room. This way." She held her hand out to the triage rooms and Basil followed with Trinity in his arms.

Jonah held back with Gypsy and Dante while the other three took care of Trinity. "I can't lose her again."

Dante laid a hand on his shoulder, gave it a squeeze. "I know."



While Basil laid Trinity on the bed, Raven got the supplies together that they would need. Trinity had contusions and would most likely need some stitches. Self dissolving would be best given the fact that she was a vampire and healed quicker.

"Are you a doctor? I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name."

"Cooper, and I was in the medical field a long time ago. I have plenty of medical knowledge, not to worry. I'm going to check her

for internal injuries," he informed Basil who was hovering right by her side.

"Okay." But he didn't let go of her hand.

Raven could see the love in this gorgeous dark haired blue eyed man and envied it just a little. "We'll take excellent care of her," she reassured him.

Cooper began the exam by placing his hands on her rib cage then slowly feeling his way down. "She might have some cracked ribs but I can't be sure without an X-ray."

"Do you know how to run one?" Raven asked as she dabbed at the cuts on Trinity's face.

"No, but I'm sure I could figure it out." Cooper grabbed the stethoscope Raven had placed on the tray table along with her swabs and antiseptic. As he put them to his ears, he listened to her heart, frowning a little as he moved it down to her chest, then to her belly. His head tilted then he shifted it a little and continued to listen.

"What?" Basil wanted to know.

"Does she have internal bleeding?" Raven asked.

Cooper pulled the stethoscope away and swung it around his neck. "I'd like to perform a sonogram."

That she knew how to run. "We have a portable in the back. I'll get it." She hurried from the room, stopping briefly to give everyone a brief rundown of what was going on before hurrying to get the machine. When she came back, Basil was holding Cooper by the shirt-front and looking extremely dangerous. His teeth were bared and if she wasn't mistaken, his blue eyes were glowing.

"I just need to check her internal organs, Basil. Just to be sure." Cooper clamped onto Basil's hands and pried them from his shirt. Giving it a stiff yank, he turned to Raven. "Can you work this?"

She set the hand held machine on the bed. "You bet. I do it all the time." And she got busy setting it up while Cooper prepared Trinity's belly. She placed the transducer on Trinity's belly then looked at the screen.

"Scan the uterus."

She looked up at Cooper, then did as he asked. She shifted the device then heard it before it came to view. "That's a heartbeat."

"As I suspected."

"She's pregnant!" Raven said as she leaned in closer to the screen to get a better look. There it was, a tiny little peanut with tiny arms, legs, a head complete with eyes and ears. The heart was pattering be-

neath its chest in its quick flutter. From what she could tell, the fetus was approximately seven to eight weeks old.

“What?” Basil turned to Cooper. “She’s pregnant?”

“Yes. And from the looks of it, she’s several weeks along,” Cooper informed him.

“I’d say about eight weeks. Congratulations.” Raven smiled up at Basil.

“Eight weeks? She was pregnant when she died? How is that possible?”

Cooper turned to him, placing one hand on Basil’s arm.

“Vampire gestation isn’t the same as a human’s, remember. Just as we don’t age as humans do. It’s possible she got pregnant right after she returned.”

“She’s pregnant,” Basil said again, then leaned down to kiss her head. “Did you hear that, love? You’re pregnant.”

Her eyes fluttered open, closed then fluttered open again. “Basil?”

“Yes my love, I’m here.” He stroked her face lovingly.

“Is everyone okay?”

He laughed and kissed her cheek. “Everyone is fine. How do you feel?”

“Sore. What did you say about being pregnant?”

“You’re with child, my love. We’re going to have a baby.”

“Okay.” Then she drifted off to sleep.

“Trinity!”

“She just needs rest, Basil. She’s fine. No internal injuries aside from a few bruised ribs. She’ll be fine,” Cooper reassured with a hand on Basil’s shoulder.

Raven left them to fill the others in on Trinity’s progress. She envied the love between Basil, Trinity, and Cooper. That was a family, and she so missed having her own.

“How is she?” Jonah asked the instant she came into the waiting room.

“She’s doing fine. No major injuries aside from a few contusions and possibly a few cracked ribs. Cooper is still assessing her but I thought I would come in and let you know that she’s okay. She’s pregnant,” she added lastly and watched Jonah’s eyes widen. She’d been worried about telling him considering...

“Seriously?”

She nodded. “Yeah. About eight weeks though Cooper says a vampire’s gestation period is different than a normal woman’s. She’s asleep right now but I’m sure Basil wouldn’t mind if you went in to

see her. I know how worried you are for her.”

He closed his eyes, hung his head as he replied. “Just knowing she’s good is all I need.” Then he gave his chair a turn and wheeled off.

She let him go, knowing he needed some time alone.



With men all around him, Chaos walked up to the ruins of what had once been the front entrance to Basil’s home. A home that had belonged to the king. The rubble was still smoldering in some places, but Chaos paid no never mind to it as he stepped over it to get inside. The high pitched alarm that rang out was enough to drive a sane person over the edge. Chaos did his best to ignore it. “Can that be shut off?” he asked simply, scanning the ruins. The explosives had done a number on what had once been a fabulous home.

“No one’s found the source yet.” Fritz advised him.

Chaos simply nodded. “I take it Trinity and her misfits have escaped?”

“Yes, sir.”

Chaos’ hands clenched at his sides. “And I suppose no one saw where they headed?”

“No one saw, sir.”

Was it too much to ask to have competent help? “Was the purpose to this tactic not to take Trinity and Basil out?”

“Yes, sir.” Fritz lowered his head.

“And yet it failed. And to top it off, my idiot men let them waltz right out of here.” Grabbing the first thing in his sights, a chair, Chaos uplifted it and sent it flying across the room. “I want them found. NOW!” he bellowed, making his men cringe.

“Yes, sir.” Fritz quivered.

Chaos turned around to the sound of footsteps and saw several of the men who had been captured by Basil and Trinity coming his way. And in that crowd, he saw Daniel.

“I found them in the dungeon, locked up.” Seamus, one of his men explained enthusiastically.

“I want a full scale search of the city. No one rests until Trinity and Basil are found.” Having said that, Chaos stepped over the rubble and walked out. His guards still surrounding him. He had nothing to say to the captured men, including Daniel.

“Chaos, sir, wait up,” Daniel called as he hurried to catch up.

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“I have nothing to say to you, Daniel.”

“Sir...”

Chaos stopped and turned on Daniel, narrowing his eyes. “You chose your fate when you went to your brother, after I expressed that you steer clear of him. You went behind my back and met with him and in turn, you were captured. I want nothing to do with you now, Daniel.” Lifting his head, Chaos marched off, leaving Daniel standing gaping in his wake.

No one disobeyed Chaos.

CHAPTER TEN

In his room, Jonah sat in his chair looking out the window from across the cot that was in his way. There were no street lights on, no lights in any of the houses, and no one moving about. He didn't even know if it was supposed to be day or night.

Seeing Trinity lying on the floor, bleeding, had brought back the memories of seeing Ariel on the floor of the car, bleeding, fresh into his mind. He was glad Trinity was safe and feared that if she hadn't been, he might just have gone completely over the edge. He was grateful she was alive and doing well.

Jonah wasn't sure how he felt about her being pregnant.

If Ariel had survived, their children would have been born close together. Would seeing Trinity's child always remind him of what he'd lost? He worried it would.

He heard the door open but didn't turn. He didn't have to for him to know who had entered. He knew it was Raven the instant she entered simply from her scent.

"Are you okay?"

"Is everyone staying here tonight or going back to the Castle?" He didn't want to reply because truly, he didn't feel all right.

"They've decided it's best to stay here." She turned him around and knelt down at his feet. "I knew when you found out your friend

was pregnant that it would hurt. I'm sorry."

She was always so kind, so sympathetic and right now he was feeling really vulnerable. "Am I a bad friend if I just can't find it in me to be happy for her right now?"

She took his hands in hers and shook her head. "You're still grieving for something you will never have and knowing your friend will, hurts. It's understandable."

"We'd been trying for so long to get pregnant, and when we finally succeeded, it was taken away in a snap. I am so damn angry about it." He couldn't hold it in any longer and let the sorrow flow. His eyes burnt with the tears and all he wanted to do was curl up in a ball and will himself away.

When Raven climbed onto his lap, he instantly went into her arms and leaned his cheek on her breast while she stroked his hair. He held onto her letting the tears flow, as the pain he felt inside came crashing down. She placed her cheek on his head and simply let him cry. He felt safe, warm, and comforted. And it helped having her there to lean on.

She kissed his head then looked down at him, wiping his face dry. "Feel better?"

He sniffled, nodding. "What would I do without you?" He smiled in weak attempt at humor.

Smiling, she lifted his face then leaned down and kissed him right on the lips.

He was too shocked to do anything but reciprocate. It was only a light and very brief kiss, but he felt it deep within his core. And when she pulled away all he could do was smile back.

Then the door flew open and Dante stood in the doorway with a shocked look on his face. "Oh, sorry. I...I'll come back later."

"No, wait," Raven called to him as she climbed off of Jonah's lap. "Was there something you needed?"

Clearing his throat, Dante stepped further into the room. "I...uh just was looking for Jonah. I thought maybe we could talk but if you're—"

"We weren't...it's okay, D. Come in," Jonah stammered not knowing exactly what to say to what Dante had walked in on.

"I think I'll go check on Trinity. Give you boys a bit of time alone." With a smile for Jonah, she left them alone.

Feeling very awkward, Jonah tapped his fingers on the arm of his chair. "You doing okay?" It was all he could think to say.

Dante took a seat on the bed. "I'm doing great. How are you doing?"

Jonah shrugged one shoulder. "Managing. Have you been in to see Trinity yet?"

"Yeah, she's asleep. I have to talk to you, Jonah."

"We are talking." But he knew or thought he knew what Dante wanted to discuss.

"I'm sorry."

"Don't." He couldn't hear it, not now when he was still feeling so raw.

"I should have turned us around the very first time we were hit."

"Dante—"

"I go over that night in my mind all the time, changing this and that and saving both you and Ariel. But the fact remains that nothing has changed, I didn't turn us around and you were taken by Chaos' men and Ariel...well." He cleared his throat and continued. "And I know an apology can't make up for your loss, for what happened to you, but it's a start."

"It's not your fault, D. I've gone over that night too, but like you said, it always comes back to the present and nothing has changed. I never should have let Ariel come with us. If I hadn't needed that damn scope things would have been different. But what happened, happened, and beating ourselves up over it won't bring her back."

"Or change the fact that you can't walk and became a vampire. Jesus man!" Dante lifted his hands, then let them fall. "It was bad enough thinking you were Chaos' food, but knowing he turned you, and that you can't walk...man, I just can't forgive myself."

Jonah wheeled himself closer to Dante. "Do you know whose fault it is that I can't walk? My own. I took my seat belt off to turn around to see the car that was after us. If I'd left it on...well, all the ifs in the world won't change the facts. So stop beating yourself up because I don't blame you. Okay?"

Dante nodded, a faint lift of his lips showed a grin. "We took care of her. Well, Basil and Trinity did. She's buried on his lot near the back by the woods."

"Thanks." He'd been so worried that the vamps had taken Ariel and dumped her somewhere. But knowing she had been put to rest eased his mind. "What about you and Gypsy? You guys made it out of the accident all right?"

Dante picked at his pants as he replied. "I got banged up, my knees' still sore, and I got a knock on the noggin, but Gypsy came out

of it with nothing. Trinity has been going nuts looking for you. She even went to the queen for help."

"She did?"

"Yeah. The queen told her where you were but you were gone by the time she got there. The farm was in flames."

"Raven got me out. She drugged Chaos and his guard and hauled me out of there. She's been a godsend to me."

"So I see." Dante grinned slyly.

"It's not what it looks like. She was comforting me."

Dante nodded, still grinning.

"I'm mourning my wife, Dante."

"And easing your sorrow in the arms of another woman is just fine." When the door opened both Dante and Jonah looked up as Basil entered the room.

"Raven told me where to find you. Can we have a minute, Dante?"

Slipping off the bed, Dante held his hand out to Jonah. "Great to have you back, my man."

Jonah took his hand and gave it a sturdy shake. "Glad to be back."

Basil waited until Dante had left before he spoke. "She wants to see you."

Jonah chewed his lip. "She's awake?"

Basil nodded, his eyes scanning over Jonah's body. "But before you go in to see her, I need to know some things. Was it Chaos that sired you?"

"Yes."

"Was it he that put you in that chair?"

"No. The accident did."

Basil rubbed his chin. "Do you know where he is, can you find him?"

"No. After he turned me, Raven drugged him and took me out of there. If I knew where he was I would tell you."

Basil nodded, still rubbing his chin. "Why didn't you let us know you were all right? Trinity thought it was a ploy on Chaos' behalf when you called."

Jonah let out a deep sigh. He was never going to tell Trinity or any one for that matter what he'd been about to do that day he'd called her. "I know. I'm sorry. I was dealing with...things, but I should have reassured her."

"Well, you can apologize to her now." He opened the door and waited. "And Jonah..."

"Yeah."

Basil smiled as he spoke. "It's great to have you back."

That was one thing he hadn't expected. The smile. "Thanks."



If he'd been able to go by himself he most likely would have either sat at the door forever, or simply chickened out and left. But since Basil was with him, and had already opened the door to Trinity's room, he had no choice but to wheel his ass into the room.

Jonah couldn't remember a time when he'd ever been hesitant at seeing Trinity.

He was more than hesitant now for so many reasons.

The chair he sat in was one. Being a vampire was another. But her condition was the topper.

"Guess who I have?" Basil chimed in as he entered her room.

Jonah wheeled himself inside, glancing briefly at the bed she was laying in. "Hey."

"Jonah! You have no idea how glad I am to see you."

"Stay in the bed," Basil warned when she tried climbing off.

"I'm fine."

He heard her slip from the bed and kept his head down. "I know you were worried. I'm sorry. That's why I called earlier. To let you know I was okay."

"Why won't you look at me? Look at me, Jonah," she insisted but he still kept his head down. "Damn it, look at me!"

He lifted his head and though he'd expected her to show some sign of surprise, she gave him nothing. He held his chin firm and refused to show the pain he was feeling inside.

"The yellow goes with your hair in a way. Makes you look even cuter." The left side of her mouth lifted in a faint grin. She had bruises on her face, on her forehead, over her left eye and on her chin. Several tiny cuts splashed over her face in a bizarre puzzle shape.

He didn't respond, not with words or facial expressions.

"Basil told me what happened to you. About being injured, about being turned." She knelt down at his feet and took his hands in hers much in the same way Raven had earlier. "I'm so sorry."

"Please don't." He looked away and caught his breath. When her finger touched his chin and forced him to face her, his resolve began to waver. "I never wanted you to see me like this." He ran a hand from head to toe. "I didn't want you to see how weak I was."

"Weak?" She held his chin up when he tried to lower it. "You think you're weak because of what happened to you?"

"Because I didn't do more to save Ariel, to stop Chaos from turning me. I should have fought harder, instead I gave up and let him beat me and turn me. I wanted him to kill me. I was going to end it when I called you. So, yes, I'm weak and I didn't want you to see me like that."

She stood up and crossed her arms over her chest and glared down at him. It was a look he was very familiar with which meant she was pissed.

"You're an ass."

"Trinity—"

She cut Basil off with a raised hand. "How dare you think so little of me. I have never ever thought of you as a weak person and now is no different. You were in pain, you'd just lost your wife and was being held hostage. Any sane person would want it all to end. The fact that you didn't puts you one up on so many who don't fight back."

"Raven stopped me," he blurted out then swallowed hard.

She nodded. "Okay, so she stopped you. But you're still here which tells me you've come to your senses. The Jonah I know wouldn't give up so easily. It's nice to see he's still inside of you."

Her smile brought out his own.

"I hear you came to my rescue. Which also shows just how strong you are. Now I'm going to say something to you that I've never said to you but should have."

He was expecting a thank you.

"I love you."

That he was not expecting. Or the hug when she knelt down and wrapped her arms around his neck. "You idiot!"

Now that was his Trinity.

He laughed and hugged her back. "I love you back."

"I'm getting all choked up here." Basil sniffled. His voice was rich with sarcasm.

She released him and promptly gave Basil the finger, then sat down on the bed. "It's only your lower half that's affected?"

He nodded, placing his hands on the wheels. They were beginning to feel much too comfortable there. "Yeah, but I'm starting to get some motion and feeling back. Raven's been working on keeping my legs in shape."

"Seems like she's been a great help to you."

Jonah nodded at Basil's comment. "I don't know what I would have done without her."

"I'm glad you had her. Did she tell you that I'm pregnant?"

Jonah nodded and lowered his eyes. "Yeah, but I'd rather not talk about it right now." He looked up at her now. "I'm just not ready for that yet and I know that's prickish of me—"

"I understand," she reassured him. "I just had to know. Can you talk about being held by Chaos?"

He could, but he didn't like to. "Not much to tell, really. He chained me to a wall, whipped me, and..." He couldn't tell her she was the reason he'd been turned. "Decided I'd make a nice snack."

"He did it to get even with me. You don't have to say it, I know. It would be something he would do. I wish I could turn you back."

"Don't." He wheeled himself closer, touching her hands with his. "If I've learned anything this past week is that you can't go back. What's done is done and nothing can change it. We move on." He squeezed her hands and smiled. "Okay?"

She nodded, squeezed his hands back.

"I'm glad we're back to normal. Now all we need to do is catch Chaos and get our lives back to where they should be," Basil retorted from his spot across the room where he'd been standing since he and Jonah had entered.

His life would never be back the way it should be because so much had been lost. But Jonah wanted more than anything to start over. And to do that, he wanted Chaos caught.

Maybe then he could move forward.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Feeling better after talking with Trinity, Jonah wheeled himself to his room. He figured Dante and Gypsy had taken a room for themselves and Cooper was probably in his glory over looking at all the medical equipment. It was like it almost possessed him. Then again, Jonah thought, when he was knee deep in computers or programs, he felt a little possessed himself.

He missed his computers.

Pushing the door to his room open, Jonah noticed the light over his bed was out. And as she scanned the room, he saw Raven asleep on her cot. She was curled on her side, facing his bed, a thin blanket drawn over her body all the way up to her chin. He smiled, thinking he liked to sleep the same way. Even when it was hotter than hell outside, he liked to curl up in the blankets.

Not wanting to disturb her, he moved as quietly as he could. The wheels on his chair squeaked, causing her to stir, and Jonah held his breath. When she let out a long sigh and continued to sleep soundly, he inched a little closer. He'd need to look for something to grease the wheels.

Finally close enough to the bed, Jonah put the brakes on then pushed himself to the edge of his seat. Using all his energy, he lifted

his right foot off the pedal and gave a silent cheer when he set it on the floor. Now that was progress. Unfortunately the left wasn't as cooperative. So he gave it a hand by lifting it up and setting it beside its twin. Then he grabbed the bedrail and hoisted himself up.

He put the pressure of his weight on his right side and with his arms stabilizing him, he stood. "Yes!" he cheered in a hushed voice.

"What?" Raven sat up and clicked on a flashlight she'd obviously had beside her in her bed. "What are you doing?"

"Standing. I didn't mean to wake you." But hell, he really was standing.

"Oh my God! You are standing." She pushed from her bed in a rush and ran to his side. "You're standing!"

"Yeah." He laughed, his arms beginning to wobble a little with his weight. "Damn, it feels good." Then he buckled and she was right there to catch him. "And down I go. Damn it!"

With a bit of huffing and a great deal of effort, Raven lifted him back up, supporting him, and helped him onto the bed. "Small steps, Jonah. But this was fabulous. I'm glad I woke up to see it. You have an incredibly sexy smile." She grunted as she hoisted him into a flat position on the bed. "Sexy dimples. It's nice to see. Even in the dim light."

He wondered if his cheeks were as red as they felt. The only woman who ever called him sexy had been his...wife. Then she clicked the light on over his bed and he hoped his face had calmed down.

"You're blushing. That's adorable."

Apparently not. "Can you stop now?"

"Why? I love your smile. You need to smile more often."

So should she. Her face glowed with the smile and her eyes sparkled with glee, the light making them twinkle like stars. They were such a deep blue and they reminded him of warm water baked by the sun.

"Are you comfortable?"

"Huh?" He'd been so lost in her eyes that he hadn't comprehended what she'd just said to him.

"Comfortable?"

"Yeah." He let it flow out like a breath. Her eyes really were getting to him and he had to force himself to look elsewhere. "I'm not really that tired. I should have gone for a stroll and left you to sleep."

She pulled his blankets up tucking them around his chest. "I'm glad you did. I got to see you upright and smiling." Then she leaned down and kissed his forehead.

He wasn't sure what possessed him to do it, but he just did it. Taking her head in his hands he brought her down to his face and captured her mouth with his. Her lips were warm, soft, and delicious. And he just couldn't help himself but to take more.

He feathered his fingers through her hair and kept her tight to him as he explored her lips more thoroughly. He found himself using his other hand to grip her arm to keep her in place. She kissed him back with as much need as he kissed her. With his eyes closed, he could still see her eyes inside his mind.

He sunk into the calm blue waters and let himself go.

Her hand came to rest on his chest and his heart began to speed up. He felt the energy soaring inside and felt himself grow hard. He pulled away, catching his breath and saw her looking at him with a smile on her face and her blue eyes gleaming.

He felt himself slipping.

"I feel like I'm cheating," he whispered, glancing at her swollen pink lips.

"Then we'll take it slow until you feel differently." She stroked his face with her hand and kissed him one last time before standing up. "Try and get some sleep."



Sleep? How was he supposed to sleep when he was feeling incredibly keyed up and utterly guilty?

"How the hell are we supposed to sleep on this thing?" Dante gave the hospital bed a punch with his fist, snarling at it. "These things are as uncomfortable as they come. Sleeping on a bed of nails would be more comfortable."

"Ever had sex on one?"

Dante spared Gypsy a sideways glance while snorting. "The last thing on anyone's mind when sleeping on one of these torture devices is sex."

"I take that as a no." She began undressing, tossing her shirt on the chair beside the bed. "But it sounds like you've spent some time in one."

"I was shot in my cadet days on the force. Spent five agonizing days on my back in one of these bitches." He gave it another slug. Maybe he should sleep on the floor. It would probably be more comfortable.

When she stepped up behind him and wrapped her arms around his chest he felt the distinct press of her naked breasts through his shirt. He instantly had a hard-on.

"I'm betting I can make you forget all about this lousy bed in no time." She slithered around to face him and he had the pleasure of gazing upon her very naked body.

He never got tired of looking at her body.

"Yeah? You think so? That's a pretty tough order to fill sweetheart." He teased her, sweeping a finger from her forehead down her nose.

"I think I can manage it. Hop up," she said, patting the bed.

Happy to oblige, he did so but first removed his jeans. He'd become partial to not wearing underwear.

She smiled deviously at him, then bent at the waist and took him into her mouth.

He closed his eyes and moaned. Now this was more like it.

The sound of her wet mouth sliding up and down his shaft made his balls grow harder, and opening his eyes, he watched as she bobbed up and down over him. He placed his hand on her head of short green hair and guided her to go deeper. She was a master at deep-throating and she didn't disappoint one bit when she took him all the way in.

"Lord, Gypsy. Your mouth is so fucking hot." Then she did the one thing he loved beyond life. She began to hum, deep in her throat as she kept him in her throat. The sensation vibrated along his shaft and right down to his balls. It was beyond fucking phenomenal.

"Fuck. Yes, yes. God, baby, I love that!"

Then she slid her hand to his balls and further back to his hole. She'd done this to him one other time and had him exploding with a mind blowing orgasm that had left him gasping for air.

And when her finger slipped inside, he clutched hold of the bedding and let the wave of heat scorch his body. "Yeah, oh yeah!" He spread his legs allowing her in just a bit deeper and when she pushed her finger further inside and curled it up the orgasm speared into him like lightning.

"Fuck it, fuck it!" He urged her on as he shot himself deep into her throat. She drank him down, every last drop, then slowly slid her finger free and pulled him from her mouth. She licked her lips and smiled.

"Feel good?"

"Beyond fucking good," he laughed, then dropped back onto the bed and tried to catch his breath. He completely expected it when she straddled him.

"Ready for some more?"

"Bring it on, baby." He nodded, gripping her hips with his hands. She lowered down onto him, the tip of his dick splitting her lips open

before piercing the hole. She moaned as he entered her. Then she began bucking like a wild woman.

The bed rocked back and forth, the wheels creaking with the motion. He held onto her hips and urged her down so he could suckle on her breasts. She moaned and when he suckled one hard nipple into his mouth she arched. He flicked it with his tongue, teasing the tip then gently grazed his teeth over the ripe pink taut bud. She gasped and pumped her hips even harder.

He knew how much she enjoyed the pain.

So he gave her more. Gripping both her butt cheeks, he took her breast into his mouth and suckled. Then not so gently, gave her backside a smack. She squealed and her vaginal walls contracted around him.

She liked it.

So he did it again. He suckled on her breast, nipping the tip with his teeth and spanking her ass while she pumped him hard.

"Yes, yes, yes!" she chanted, then put her mouth to his shoulder.

He knew what came next and it was enough to bring him to the verge of coming again. When her teeth sunk into his flesh he slapped her ass one more time, the snap ringing out in the silence. She cried out as the orgasm shook her body.

He felt his blood slide down his back as she convulsed over him.

When she collapsed against him, breathless, he smiled.

He was a damn lucky man.



Basil's head rested on Trinity's bare belly and had been in that position for the past ten minutes. His black hair fell like waves over her pink flesh and felt like satin as she stroked it. If they never left this spot she would be happy.

"I can hear the heart beating," he murmured softly, placing his hand on her belly.

Trinity smiled and continued stroking his hair.

"I've never listened to a child's heart before. I had no idea they beat so quickly." He kissed her belly, then placed his head back down. "I will protect you with my life, little one."

Her eyes teared up but she fought them away. "Do you want it to be a boy?"

He lifted his head to look at her and there was so much love in his eyes that it overwhelmed her. "I want whatever we're granted. As

long as the baby is healthy, I'm happy."

That was how she felt too. "This was so not in my plan."

He lifted his head to look at her. A frown creasing his forehead. "Are you upset about being pregnant?"

"No, though it's maybe a little inconvenient right now, I'm not upset about it. I guess it was to be expected considering we've been going at it like rabbits since I returned."

His lips curved up in a sultry smile. "I never once changed into a rabbit," he teased.

. She only shook her head at his comment. "What sort of abilities do you think it will have?"

"I don't like referring to our child as it." He frowned as he replied. "I'm suspecting both of our abilities. Though yours were given as a gift and not by birth, I still think some of it will transfer to the child."

"Could be scary. What if it—the child," she amended when he narrowed his eyes at her, "sneezes and causes the crib to fly across the room."

"Hm, you're right. I hadn't thought about that. We'll deal with it. Cooper can watch over the child when we're not there to make sure that doesn't happen."

"I'm sure he'll be thrilled with that job. We have to find Chaos," she said on a long sigh.

"We will." He kissed her belly, then placed his head back down to listen to the heart. "But you'll stay here. I don't want you going out after him in your condition. Ouch!" he yelped and lifted his head when she snapped a finger against his head.

"Don't be a sexist pig, Basil. I'm not a delicate flower you need to protect."

He climbed up to rest beside her. "Flower doesn't suit you. China maybe—I'm joking." He chuckled when she lifted her hand to smack him. "What do you think will happen if he finds out you're with child? He'll spare no lengths to get to you or the child. I want you both safe and you know as well as I that being out there right now isn't safe for either of you." He placed his hand on her belly.

She hated that he was right. It was risky for her to be out there in her...damn it, in her condition. "Fine, but don't ever say 'condition' again. You make it sound like I have some disease."

"Nix the 'condition'." He smiled then kissed her softly. "Despite the bruising and cuts, you have more color in your face. I think it has to do with seeing Jonah."

He was right, she was glad knowing he was alive and safe. "When he called me before the explosion, I thought I might jump out of my skin. I was so glad to hear his voice. Then the house exploded and I was knocked back, losing him. I thought I would never see him again. I thought I was a goner. Again," she amended. "Then I heard his voice and I clung to it. But seeing him was all I needed. I just wish...well, you know, that things had worked out differently for him."

"We all do. But he seems to be faring well, especially with Raven at his side."

"Remind me to thank her for saving him."

"I will. But for now, you should sleep. The more you sleep the faster you'll heal." He tilted her to face him and kissed her softly.

Resting her head on his chest she closed her eyes and relaxed her body.

She drifted off feeling everything would be right in the world very soon.



Chaos paced the main lobby of the precinct as he impatiently waited for word from his men. It was only him and Fritz who had remained behind while everyone else went out in search of Trinity. She had to be somewhere.

Yes, it was a relatively large city and his men had a fair amount of ground to search, but he didn't care. He was tired of sitting around and doing nothing.

"Perhaps it's time we moved to another city, sir," Fritz chimed in while sitting on one of the chairs in the lobby.

Chaos stopped abruptly and faced Fritz with a heated glare. "Are you telling me to give up?"

Fritz cleared his throat, fiddled with his tie. "No, sir. It's just that the blood supply here is diminishing and with no humans returning I don't see us getting anything fresh for a while."

"There's still blood at the bank. More than enough to sustain us for a few more weeks. But the sooner Trinity and Basil are found and taken care of, the sooner we can move on. I do not intend to walk away until they pay for destroying my plans."

"I'm curious, sir, just what your plan was in bringing the king back. With the city encased in darkness, wouldn't the town have been evacuated anyway?"

"Avadur had great powers. The plan was for him to induce a mass hypnosis over the city and put them into a deep sleep. With the hu-

mans asleep, he would be able to take as many as he liked and turn them, creating a super race of vampires." His lips peeled back. "But thanks to Trinity, that will not be happening."

"Then our plan after she and Basil have been taken care of is what exactly?"

Chaos didn't like being questioned and he showed his distaste for it as he approached Fritz. In lightening fast motion he grabbed Fritz by the throat and lifted him off the ground. "If you do not like my leadership I can make it so you won't be bothered by me any longer."

"I was just curious, sir," Fritz croaked out.

Chaos dropped him and turned his back as he walked away. "Curiosity did not only kill the cat, Fritz." Grabbing one of the daggers that had been left behind by his men, he spun around flinging the dagger towards Fritz. The knife caught him in the left shoulder as it had been intended to, with enough force to have Fritz stumble back into the chairs.

Chaos stared blankly at him as he spoke. "Next time, I won't miss."

CHAPTER TWELVE

Jonah learned that since becoming a vampire, sleep was not a necessity for him. Lying on his uncomfortable hospital bed, the lights out, he'd done everything in his power to ignore the sexy dark haired beauty lying only a few feet away from him. He could still taste her on his lips, still feel the softness of her skin, and still see her cerulean eyes sparkling down on him.

He wanted more.

Rolling onto his side, trying to be as quiet as possible so not to wake her, he watched her sleep. She had such delicate skin, so soft and pale. Normally someone with such dark hair and pale complex would look ghostly. But Raven didn't. If anything, she was glowing. And the way her dark lashes fanned over those big blue eyes of hers was enough to make any man melt.

Her body was pretty damn hot too.

He shouldn't be thinking of her in a sexual way. He felt like he was betraying his wife, his vows. But even as he chastised himself for it, he grew hard.

Throwing the covers off, he sat up, then as silently as he'd possible, pulled himself from the bed. The wheelchair sat near the head of the bed, close enough for him to slip into. With more than a little fear, he slid his legs off the bed, holding onto the side rail that had been

lowered, and willed himself to stand. When he did, albeit wobbly, he gave a silent cheer, then shifted himself into the chair. Once in it, he disengaged the brake and pushed himself back. He glanced at Raven, still asleep, then wheeled himself out of the room.

The only form of light came from the emergency lights on the walls. He didn't need light though, as he wheeled himself down the hall. What he needed right now was a place to go to think and to talk to Ariel.

The chapel was the perfect place. He was damn glad it was on the main floor. He wasn't too eager to go wheeling around in the basement or anywhere else for that fact. The closer the better. Following the directions on the walls, he headed for the chapel.

He wasn't a religious man by any means, but this just seemed like the right place to go to do what he needed to do.

Entering the tiny room, four pews lined up on either side of the isle and an alter at the front, he felt a little uneasy. He knew that it was only a myth that vampires couldn't enter churches, yet part of him was on guard just the same. But as he wheeled himself down the center aisle, he felt nothing out of the ordinary.

Stopping at the front, he took a deep breath before beginning.

"This is the best I could do, Ariel." He looked around, his hands nervously fiddling on his lap. "I was told they'd laid you to rest on Basil's property and I'm sorry I wasn't able to go talk to you there. I guess it's not really you there anyway, right? You're here." He placed a hand over his heart.

"I miss you." His voice wavered. He cleared it. "I wish things had turned out differently. I wish so many things, like seeing you grow large with our child. Watching you give birth and hearing you swear at me for making you endure it." He smiled now then continued. "And seeing our child grow. I thought we would grow old together." His voice cracked. He closed his eyes and drew in a deep breath before continuing. "You've only been gone a short time, though at times it feels like forever. You were my life for so long, and now you're gone. Oh, honey, I am having such a hard time here. I don't even know what to say to you and that scares me because I never had trouble telling you everything. I guess I just need to come out with it. I'm attracted to another woman. Whoa." He let out a long breath.

"I feel like I'm betraying you. I kissed her, really kissed her, and I wanted to keep kissing her. But...I thought of you and I felt like I was cheating. You know I never cheated on you when we were together, right? I never even thought about other women sexually. You were

my everything. Were..." He drew in a deep breath then let it out. "I never thought I would ever say that. I love you, I think I will always love you, but...I have to move on. Don't I? Oh Ariel! This is so damn hard! I don't know what to do."

"She would want you to be happy."

He spun around to see Trinity standing by the door, dressed in hospital pajamas and robe, her long, red hair hanging free to her waist. If it had been anyone else he might have been angry that they interrupted him. But not her. He didn't respond to her as she walked his way but waited until she stopped before him. "You should be resting."

She shrugged, then sat down on the pew to her right. "Better?"

"Not what I meant."

"I know." She smiled, then let out a long breath. "Ariel would want you to be happy, Jonah," she repeated.

"So soon?"

"Do you love her any less?"

"No." If anything, his love for Ariel was as strong as ever. "Still..."

"The heart is a wonderful thing. It can hold more things than any other organ. It has a never ending well for love. Just ask any mother of multiple children. You can still love Ariel, in one part of your heart, and she will always remain there. But I know she wouldn't want you to grieve forever. Are you in love with Raven?"

He shook his head maybe a little quickly. "No!"

"There's nothing wrong with a physical attraction. You're not betraying Ariel if you want to be with another woman. She's gone, Jonah, but you're not."

Wasn't he? Part of him was. He wasn't the same person he had been two weeks ago. He was a vampire. And he was paralyzed. "I don't even know if I can...you know, have sex."

"You won't know until you try. Have you tried?"

He shook his head again. "No, but I know I can get it up. And I think that is the end of this conversation." He laughed making her laugh and it was an incredible sound. "How are you doing?"

She shrugged again, gave her dingy green robe a tug. "I'd be better in my own clothes. Aside from that...a little achy in places, mostly my head."

"And the pregnancy? Everything okay with that?" He felt awkward talking about it only because it was a touchy subject with him.

She patted her flat belly. "We're good. I'm sorry about your baby." She looked him in the eyes and the sympathy he saw in them nearly did him in.

He nodded, picked at his pants. "It's not that I'm not happy for you. I am." He looked up at her. "But it's just hard to think our kids would have grown up together."

"I know."

"I mean, I would've had to teach mine to be careful with yours. No biting would have taken on a whole new meaning," he added humorously.

"Of course." Her lips curved up slightly.

"I'll come around, Trin. I promise," he sighed.

She stood and kneeling down at his feet, took his hands in hers. "I know. But just so you know, I want you to be the baby's godfather."

His jaw dropped. She couldn't have said anything more shocking. "You're joking, right?"

"Why would I joke about that? You're the closest thing I have to family. I love you, Jonah, like a brother, and I want my child to know her Uncle Jonah is there for him or her if anything were ever to happen to either Basil or me. You're my one and only choice so you'd better come around." She smiled.

"Don't give a guy a choice." But he didn't mind it that much. "Okay, I'll be the godfather." He rolled his eyes, smiling.

"At least you haven't lost your crappy sense of humor."

"Hey! My sense of humor isn't crappy."

"You keep believing that." She laughed as she stood, then walked behind him and took hold of his chair.

"Be nice. I'm fragile right now."

She stopped them and kissed his head. "Better?"

He smiled but she couldn't see it. "If that's the best you can do I suppose I'll have to settle." She gave his head a shove, then moved them forward. "Why were you coming to the chapel anyway?"

"To see you. I heard your chair squeaking and decided to follow you. I couldn't sleep."

"Where's Basil?"

"Asleep. I think I scared the life out of him and it exhausted him."

"He's not the only one you scared. Chaos should feel lucky you're alive. He would have had both Basil and I ripping him apart."

"My heroes. Here you go." She stopped by his door, then moved around to face him. "If I could change what happened—"

"Don't." He stopped her. "Life is what we're given. What we do with it is up to us. I've stopped feeling sorry for myself and decided it's time to move on."

She leaned down and kissed his cheek. "That's the Jonah I know and love."

"Wow, first on the head now on the cheek. Think next time you could hit my lips?"

"Only in your dreams." She planted a palm in his face and gave him a shove.

"Oh, I dream about it all the time." He joked then backed his way into his room.

"Where have you been? I've been so worried about you."

He spun around to find Raven standing at the foot of his bed, hands fisted on her hips and her eyes wide. He really was a sucker for her eyes.

"I went for a stroll. You don't have to worry about me, Raven. I am a big boy and I can take care of myself."

"I know that..." She expelled a long breath. "It's just...well...I was concerned." She turned around quickly and began tidying her cot.

"You were asleep and I was restless so I decided to take a stroll. I wound up at the chapel. I had to get some things off my chest," he explained while she kept busy tidying a bed that was already neat.

"Okay...good." She jumped when he touched her arm.

"I wasn't angry at you, Raven. It's nice to have someone worry over me, but you don't have to be scared I'm not coming back. I'm not going anywhere anytime soon."

She turned with a smile and it simply lit her face.

"I didn't mean to jump you the instant you came into the room. Sometimes I act without thinking."

He really wished he was at eye level with her. He would love to touch her face right now. "That happens to the best of us. What do you say to a little workout session with my legs? I'm kinda eager to get up on my feet again."

"Sure. I rather liked seeing you smile. Want help up onto the bed?"

"I think I can manage." Pushing himself to the side of the bed, he grabbed hold of the side bars, slid forward in his seat, then pulled himself up. He felt the pressure in his back and down his legs as he stood. But damn it felt good. Leaning his upper torso onto the bed, he slithered into it and rolled onto his back. "Piece of cake."

"You're getting pretty damn good at that. And cocky," she added with a smile as she climbed up onto the bed.

"Me, cocky? Never." He grinned.

She took hold of his left foot, placing one hand under his knee and began the exercise. "Did you have a nice talk with Trinity?"

"How do you know I talked with Trinity?"

"I heard her at the door and put two and two together." She pushed his leg forward, stretching it.

He could actually feel the muscles burning. Damn, it was a nice feeling. "We did have a nice talk. We worked some things out and she helped me work some of my own stuff out."

"Must have been a hell of a talk. You've got more color in your face."

Did he really? Hm...

"So...did the two of you date?"

"Trin and I? No. We've always been friends. She's like a sister to me."

"Yet you wanted her to kiss you."

She really had been listening. "I joke with her about that all the time...and now that I really think about it, that's kinda gross if I think of her like a sister." He shuddered. Maybe it was time to quit with the sexual jokes.

Laughing as she continued to exercise his legs, Raven spoke, "Did you go to the chapel to talk to your wife?" He tilted his head. "I do that sometimes. Talk to Ricky," she explained and switched to the next leg.

"I did. I went to talk to her about you." When her eyes met his, he continued. "I'm attracted to you, Raven. I just had some conflicts as to what to do about it."

"Had?" She pushed his leg forward, pressing his knee to his chest.

Now he could touch her face. Sliding his fingers along her cheek he watched the emotions swirl in her eyes. "Had, have, probably will for a while, but it doesn't negate the fact that I want to be with you. To kiss you, touch you." He sat up, and with her chin in his hand, he drew her closer. He watched her lashes flutter over her eyes before shutting and as he touched his lips to hers, he heard a tiny moan escape her mouth.

Her hands slid from his leg to rest on his chest as he deepened the kiss. His leg slid down as she came to rest between them. He felt her body pressing against his groin and the sensation instantly made him ache.

He wanted more but he was afraid.

So he settled for what he could have. Cupping her face in his hands, he tilted her head and took the kiss further. She had soft lips, sensual and warm and utterly giving. He felt her tongue skim his lips and played along. When his touched the tip of hers, he felt the heat scorch him.

And he moaned in response.

But when her hand slid down his chest to his crotch, he stopped her.

"Too fast?" She murmured against his mouth, her eyes dreamy as she looked down at him.

"What if I can't?"

She kissed him softly and smiled. "I'm betting you can. Let me give this to you, Jonah."

He released her hand, feeling knotted up inside from lust and fear. And guilt. Only one woman had ever touched him there. Would he think of Ariel as Raven touched him? It wouldn't be fair to Raven if he did. "I—"

"Shh," she whispered against his mouth then slid her hand beneath the waistband of his pajamas.

His entire body tensed up until she wrapped her fingers around his shaft and the nervous tension turned to need. Her hand was warm and firm. He felt it all. And as she started sliding it up and down, the familiar ache was a welcomed one. She slid one leg over his left, placing her heat against his thigh. He felt that too, and that she wore no underwear. She began to grind her pelvis against his thigh as her hand worked over him in long quick strokes.

He devoured her mouth in a ravenous kiss as his hand sought her breast.

The moisture seeped through her pants to dampen his leg. It was warm, wet and made him want her even more. Then she pulled her hand free, brought it to her mouth as she released him and got it wet with her saliva. She kept her eyes on his as she wrapped her damp hand around his cock.

Warm and wet, she moved her hand in a rapid motion while grinding her pelvis into his leg. He tried to move his hips but couldn't. The disappointment was clouded in the urge to release.

Slipping his hand beneath her shirt, he massaged her nipple as she worked him into a frenzy. "I'm going to come!"

"Let yourself go, Jonah." She pumped him even harder.

It came out of him in a mad rush. His balls tightened and he let himself go. "Oh...yes..." he grunted as he spilled into her hand. His penis twitched several times before the orgasm stilled.

It was the most glorious feeling he'd ever had.

She kissed his lips once then twice. "I'd have to deduce that your penis works just fine."

He opened his eyes, saw her smiling, and the laughter bubbled out of him. "Thank God for that."

"I'll get you a change of clothing and a basin to wash you up." She pulled her hand free.

"What about you? You need to release."

She kissed him once more then shoved off the bed. "I can wait."

As she walked into the washroom, he closed his eyes and let out a long breath.

Ariel hadn't once entered his thoughts. He wasn't sure if he should be happy or sad about that fact.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Jonah had opted for a shower rather than just washing up. Though he felt relieved that all his parts were working, he didn't feel right that Raven hadn't had her release. He'd always been a giving man, rather than a selfish one, and he believed in pleasuring the woman before receiving it himself. He was going to have to make it up to Raven, somehow. Since he'd failed at trying to move his hips when she'd been working him, he figured intercourse was going to be out. At least until his lower extremities started working again.

Shutting the shower off, he grabbed his wheelchair then slid from the shower chair. He plopped his wet butt down into his wheelchair, then with an eye on his legs, willed them to move. When the right lifted a few inches off the floor, he let out a whoop. Straining, he moved it and set it down on the foot pedal. Now the left. This one was being stubborn and didn't want to cooperate like the right. But he managed to get it to lift an inch off the floor at least before it plopped back down. Giving in, he picked it up and set it beside its brother then wheeled himself out of the shower. He laid one towel over his crotch and grabbed another for his hair. He was toweling it off when Dante walked into the room.

"Hey. Raven said I would find you here, so I thought I'd kill two birds with one stone. Have a shower and tell you we're all meeting in Trinity's room in half an hour."

"Group meeting, huh? Any guesses as to why?" Like he didn't know.

"Chaos. Sunlight. Eliminate the first and bring back the second."

"That would be my guess." Jonah tossed the towel he'd used on his hair into the overburdened clothes hamper to his left. With all the staff gone, there was no one to do laundry. And if they had to stick it out here any longer one of them was going to have to take care of it.

He hoped it wasn't him. He hated doing the laundry.

"So how do you feel about bringing the sunlight back now that you're...you know..."

"A vampire? You can say it. I'm fine with it coming back. Looking forward to it as a matter of fact." He missed the way it streamed through the windows leaving golden trails on the floor...and he supposed now that would be the only way he would be able to enjoy it without turning into a blister covered freak.

Dante stripped out of his shirt then tossed it over a chair to the back of the room. "I have to ask, man. How do manage to do shit like this alone?"

"Shower? I sit and wash as best I can." Though it wasn't easy, especially washing his ass, but he managed.

"Do you miss...that's a stupid question. Ignore me." Dante drew the zipper down on his jeans with a shake of his head.

"Don't pussy foot around me, D. If you want to ask me something, just do it. If I don't want to answer, I won't." This was what he'd feared. That everyone would treat him differently now that he was wheelchair bound.

"Okay." Dante pulled up a chair and went for it. "What's it like? You pissed about losing your walking abilities? And don't pussy foot around me about it. Just give it to me straight. Okay?"

Jonah nodded. They were friends and friends were supposed to be honest with one another. "I hate it. I feel useless, especially the first while when Raven had to help me into bed, help me dress, and wash. But now I can do most everything myself. And...I'm getting some mobility back." He lifted his right leg to indicate what he meant.

"Wow, Jonah! That's fucking fabulous!"

"I think so too. Plus, I can get it up, so things aren't too bad."

"Bonus!" Dante gave him a high five. "You try it out yourself or have your new lady friend test drive it?"

"A real gentleman doesn't tell tales of his conquests."

"Bullshit!"

Smiling, Jonah wheeled himself to the fresh clothes he'd set out on one of the chairs. "Do I look like I'm capable of having sex?"

"Well, if you can get it up, my man, you can fuck. But if you want to keep it to yourself, that's cool too." Standing, Dante kicked out of his jeans and boxers, then headed for the showers. "So, have you gotten used to being a vamp yet?"

Jonah dried off then tossed the damp towel along with the others. "I can drink blood without vomiting. Actually, it's not so bad." And his thoughts turned to drinking from Raven's vein. "You ever let Gypsy drink from you?"

"You bet, and what a rush it is for me I'll tell you. Never thought I would say that."

He had to talk above the running water and decided to wheel a little closer so as not to have to shout. "You let her bite you?" he asked while sliding into his pajama pants.

"Sure. It's very erotic."

Thinking back now, Jonah remembered feeling excited when he was sucking on Raven's arm.

"Basil tells me it's a normal thing as long as the vamp doesn't get carried away. But if there's love there, if the vamp feels a bond between him/her and the companion, then the risks are pretty low that he/she will go too far. Gypsy always knows her limits. You should try it. She says she has her best orgasms when she bites me."

"You sure that's not just because she was sired by your brother?"

"We've established that there is no connection between the two."

He drew the pajama shirt over his head. "How are things going between you and Danny?" The water shut off and Jonah wheeled towards the last towel folded on the wrack and winced. He really didn't want to do laundry. Spinning around, he tossed Dante the towel.

"Not great. He really doesn't want anything to do with me and it's killing me."

"You ever let him go?"

Dante shook his head and droplets of water shot out with the motion. "I didn't want to let him out until—and this sounds incredibly insensitive of me—but I didn't want to let him out until he came around."

"Not good, D."

"I know." He hung his head down.

"So then he's still locked up at Basil's?"

"No, Basil went back to check out the damages and no one was in the cells. Chaos' men probably freed them."

"Sorry, D. I know how long you've been searching for him. To have him turn you away must suck."

"More than. But I'm not giving up on him yet."

"That's the spirit. Well, I'm going to head to Trinity's. See you there." Dante waved at him as Jonah left the communal showers. He was half way down the corridor when he saw Raven walking towards him. Most people didn't look attractive in hospital clothing, yet he found it suited Raven perfectly. The deep blue matched her eyes and even though the material was quite sturdy he could still see she wore no underwear beneath it. Or maybe it was his keen vampire eyesight. And if he didn't stop looking at her that way he was going to embarrass himself.

"Hi."

"Hi." She smiled as she came to a stop. "I was just coming to see how you were doing and if you needed any help."

"Dante came in and I got him to wash my back and ass." When her mouth dropped open he laughed. "I'm joking. I have a warped sense of humor. I can handle washing myself," he added lastly.

"I know you can. Did he tell you that Trinity wants you to go to her room for a meeting?"

She walked beside him and he thought it was quite an accomplishment that she didn't push his chair instead. "Yep. I was heading to our room to get you before I went to the meeting."

"Me? Why?"

"You're part of the group now, Raven."

"No, I'm not. But thank you for thinking of me as one."

He stopped and took her hand. "You have insight on Chaos that none of us do. You could tell us something we haven't figured out. You could be helpful in catching him, Raven. And mostly, I want you there with me. Okay?"

She nodded, then leaned down and nipped his lips with a tiny kiss.

"Get a room," Dante joked, then grabbed hold of the handles at the back of Jonah's chair. "Wanna see how fast this baby can go?"

"Not really." But his protest went on deaf ears. Before he'd finished the last syllable, Dante was shoving him forward in a dead run. And laughing his head off. It was infectious and soon enough Jonah was laughing with him.

When Dante came to an abrupt halt by Trinity's door, Jonah was breathless with laughter. "Stupid fool."

"Gotta live life in the fast lane, my friend. Ladies first." Dante stepped aside as he opened the door for Raven.

Smiling, she stepped inside.

"The gang's all here. Where are the strippers?" Jonah joked.

"I could—"

"He was joking, honey," Dante advised Gypsy before she could accommodate.

"You're looking better since I saw you last," Trinity surmised. "Took my advice?"

"Maybe. So what's the skinny?" Jonah wheeled himself into the room near the window and took Raven's hand in his. He knew she felt out of place and he wanted her to know she was as welcome as he was.

"The front entrance to my house was blown open. So it'll be hard to return there without being sitting ducks," Basil informed them while pulling out a cigarette.

"No smoking around the mamma to be," Cooper chastised Basil, snatching the cigarette from his mouth. "And this might be the perfect time for you to quit."

Scowling, Basil sat down on the bed.

"Okay. Then we stay here," Dante piped in.

"Right now, that's the plan. Jonah and Raven, how much blood is in the bank here?"

Jonah turned the question over to Raven.

"Some of Chaos' men came in and grabbed several bags last week but there's still plenty. Providing they don't return."

"We'll have to keep an eye out for any intruders," Basil suggested receiving a nod from everyone.

"Guess we're back to watch schedules. And speaking of which. How many of your guys are coming over here to stay?" Dante inquired of Basil.

"Only a few. I want some of them to stay at the house to monitor it. Since Chaos showed up there right after we left, I want someone there on the look out in case he comes back."

"Why didn't they take him out?" Jonah wanted to know.

Basil moved his hands restlessly until Trinity took them in hers to still them. "They took off when we left and came back after. They watched the surveillance feed and saw that he'd been there. By the

way, the alarm system worked like a charm," Basil informed, turning to Jonah.

"Glad to hear it. Raven might be able to help us in the Chaos department."

"Oh, how so?" Trinity inquired, turning her attention Raven's way.

"She was his blood slave," Jonah blurted out then gave her hand a squeeze for support.

All eyes turned her way.

"How long?" Basil demanded.

"Um...a few months."

"Do you have any idea where he is now?" Trinity piped in.

She turned to Trinity and shook her head. "I'm sorry, no."

"But you know where he'd hid out before, right?"

She shrugged. "The compound and the farm for certain. I was blindfolded when I was taken to him after it went dark, but if I had to guess, he was hiding in the sewers. It smelled really bad."

Jonah pulled her down onto his lap and stroked her back to help her relax.

"Yeah, I followed one of his men down there. Blew me away that Chaos would actually hide out down there."

"I do know one thing though," Raven added. "He is determined to take out you, Trinity, at any cost. It's his main goal."

"I figured as much. I didn't think he'd be too pleased with me after sending Avadar to the queen. Do you have any idea what else he has planned for me?"

Raven shook her head. "I didn't even know about the bomb so that must have come about after I took Jonah out of there."

"Bet he wasn't too happy with that either." Trinity looked at Jonah. "I bet he was hoping you would turn me over to gain your freedom."

"He wanted me to tell him how to get through the alarm. That really pissed him off," Jonah admitted.

"Well he got through it all right. By blasting his way in." Basil shook his head. "It actually surprises me that he would think of bombing us. It means he's willing to go to any lengths." His eyes shifted to Raven. "Even have someone planted amongst us."

"Raven is not working with Chaos," Jonah piped in defensively, baring his fangs.

"Calm down everyone. Man, you look lethal in your vamp mode," Dante said to Jonah.

"It's okay." Raven stepped in, her eyes squarely set on Basil. "It's understandable that you would think that, but let me reassure you, I am not working with Chaos. I was taken by him in one of my darkest moments and made to supply Chaos with nourishment. He never relied on me for anything but blood and housekeeping. But even if he had I wouldn't even consider working with him to bring you all down. He took a defenseless man and chained him up and beat him before turning him into a vampire. For that alone I would do anything to have him taken out. But if I have to prove myself to all of you, I will."

"No, you won't," Jonah blurted out as he stood. "And I won't allow you to condemn or question her so back the hell off." He speared Basil with a heated look.

"Jonah!"

He turned that look to Trinity. "I mean it, Trin, not even from you. She helped me when I didn't even want help. She saved my life and she didn't do it to help Chaos."

"Jonah!" Trinity said again.

"What?" he blurted out.

"You're standing," Trinity gasped.

"What?" And that was when he noticed he was eye level with everyone else. "Well, damn, I guess I am." And just like that, his legs gave out and he toppled into the chair. "Fuck!"

"Are you okay?" Raven was on him faster than he could blink. "Did you hurt yourself? Is your back sore? Do you feel pain anywhere?"

"I'm fine. Okay, sure, my back is a little sore, but I'm fine. I meant what I said." He poked a finger at both Trinity and Basil.

"I think we got it. You stood! On your own!" Trinity gaped.

"He does that from time to time. I think the swelling is finally coming down. You'll be back to your old self in no time, Jonah," Raven laughed then plastered a kiss on his lips.

"What did I say before about getting a room?" Dante joked.

"Okay, I think we can all agree that Raven isn't working with Chaos." Trinity glared at Basil.

"It had to be asked."

"You need to rest," Raven advised Jonah. "And I want to check out your back."

"We need a plan to look for Chaos," Basil piped in.

"Half an hour," Raven spouted and pushed Jonah from the room.

"That was pretty bold of you." Jonah smiled up at her as they left the room, then gave her a baffled look when she stopped him and came around to face him. "What?"

"You stood up for me. Literally. No one has ever done that. Thank you."

"There is no need to thank me, Raven. Basil was out of line."

"Still...I appreciate it." Taking his face in her hands she kissed him solidly on the lips.

"Do I have to shove the two of you into a room? Sheesh," Dante joked as he exited Trinity's room. "Seriously, though," Dante looked over at Raven, "I know you're on our side even if Basil has his reservations."

"Same here." Gypsy added.

"Thanks." She smiled warmly.

"Night." Dante winked at them as he took Gypsy's hand in his and walked away.

"You'd think the guy wasn't getting enough of his own," Jonah joked while wheeling himself to his room. "Just ignore Basil. The guy can be an ass sometimes." She held the door for him as he wheeled inside.

"He has his concerns. How does your back feel now?"

"Not bad, actually. I don't think you need to check it out."

She patted the bed and smiled. "Nice try."

Smiling, he gripped onto the arms, pushed his feet off the rests then stood. "See, perfectly fine."

"Uh huh. Let me decide that for myself. Face down if you can."

"I hate being on my belly." But he did it anyway, with her help pulling his legs onto the bed. "Be gentle with me."

"Baby." She lifted his shirt and clucked her tongue. "You have some nice coloration back here. Not to mention a nice round ass."

"You're checking my back, remember?"

"I can do both. Tell me when it hurts."

Her hands were warm as they touched his back. He felt her fingers pressing down and winced. "A little tender there."

"I figured as much. Is it as tender all the way down?"

She moved the waistband of his pants as she felt along his back bone. "Yeah. But nothing extreme. Nothing worse than I felt when I slipped on the ice last winter and fell flat on my ass." He was taken by surprise when he felt her lips brush the lower part of his back.

"Better?"

"Um...yeah." No one had ever kissed his...well, ass, before.

“Good. Would you like a painkiller? Maybe some ice?”

“No, I’m good.” He rolled to his side when she lowered his shirt and saw her yawn. “You haven’t been sleeping much. You should take a nap.”

“I’m okay.” Then she yawned again. “Okay, maybe I’m a little tired.”

“Come here.” He held his arm up indicating he wanted her to lay beside him. And when she smiled and settled in beside him, resting her head on his shoulder his heart did a little dance.

He lay there listening to her sleep and thought about what she’d said. No one had ever stood up for her.

Yet he had, without thought.

And he would do it again, in a heartbeat.



Dante didn’t know about anyone else, but he was famished. So while Gypsy took her shower, he decided to scout around the kitchen for some food. Since the elevators weren’t working he took the stairs down. With only the emergency lights on, the stairwell wasn’t lit enough that he felt comfortable walking down alone. So he found a flashlight at the nurse’s station and headed down.

If he was a skittish person he might actually be freaked out right now.

“Lone man walks down dark stairwell and is attacked by some psycho wielding an ax or chainsaw. Classic late night thrillerfest.” But he laughed it off as he pushed through the door at the bottom of the stairs.

And nearly screamed like a girl. Before him, looking as freaked out as Dante was feeling was his brother. “Danny?”

“Fuck.”

“Wait.” He grabbed Danny’s arm before he could bolt. “Don’t run off.”

“Yeah, like I’m going to stay here so you can haul me off to your bosses and lock me up, again. Not going to happen, bro.” He jerked his arm free.

“I’m not going to do that. Just talk to me.” He didn’t want to let him go because he feared if he did he would never see him again.

“What for? Like you gave a shit about me when the house went cablooney? Hell no. You high tailed it out of there without giving me a thought.”

"What was I supposed to do? If I'd stayed I would have been toast. As it was we barely made it out of there."

"Well, you made it out of there just fine and now you're all warm and happy hiding out here. Life is just perfect for you isn't it."

Dante's jaw tightened. "Now what? Are you going to run to Chaos and tell him where we're hiding?"

Danny laughed, shoving his hands in the pockets of his faded denims. "Thanks to you, bro, Chaos wants nothing to do with me. Though...if I were to tell him I knew where you're hiding out he might just change his mind."

"Why would you do that, Danny? We're family."

"Chaos is my family," Danny shouted at him.

"If he's your family then why did he push you away?" Dante countered.

"I guess I have that effect on people around me. Seems no one wants me." He turned and ran off.

"Danny...stop!" But despite his plea, Danny kept on going.

His appetite gone, Dante turned around and headed back up the stairs. He had to warn the others that they might be getting company.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

She was snuggled right against him, her breasts were pressing into his side, her leg was draped over his her crotch was tightly pressed into his thigh. One hand rested on his chest. Her hair smelled like apples.

The scent of her arousal wafted up to draw his attention.

What was she dreaming about?

He stroked her hair, enjoying the softness of it and she snuggled in a bit closer. He felt himself harden instantly when her knee brushed over his cock. She hadn't had a release when he had and that was probably why she was aroused now. The least he could do was give her back what she'd given him.

Placing a finger under her chin, he lifted her face then touched his lips to hers. She reciprocated with a moan as she kissed him back. Sliding his hand down, he cupped her breast in his hand and gently massaged it while it grew hard. She ground her pelvis into his leg then began to gyrate. Her mouth was so hot and with the eagerness that she kissed him he knew she wanted more. So he released her breast and slid his hand down her belly and past her waistband. He'd been correct, she wore nothing beneath.

When her hand slid down to his dick he pulled his mouth away. "This time is for you."

"But I want to feel you. I need to feel you."

"If you do, I may not be able to stop myself."

"Then don't." She slipped her hand beneath his pants and curled her fingers around his base.

His heart began to hammer and he told himself this was for her. But the instant he touched her warmth he knew he wouldn't be able to hold on for long. She was so incredibly hot and wet and touching her was like being in a warm bath. Using the tips of his fingers he twirled her clit and she pumped her hips even more. He stroked her gently, bringing her up and making her gyrate more.

Her hand stroked up and down his shaft and he knew if she continued he was going to lose his control. So he dipped a finger inside. God, she was wet and tight and the feel of her inside was more than he could handle. He wanted desperately to be inside of her.

But until he could move his hips, he knew that wasn't possible.

So he gave her the best he could.

His lips caressed her mouth, his tongue slid inside her mouth and he palmed her clit as he fingered her to her release. When she spread her legs inviting him in deeper, he gave her just what she needed.

"Yes...yes..." she panted, throwing her head back as her pussy clamped down onto his finger. "It feels so good."

He rubbed her faster, his hand working her up until he felt her gush over him. The orgasm slammed into him with a violent force that nearly left him breathless.

He spilled himself into her hand, his dick twitching with each drop released.

They both jumped at the knock on the door.

"Jonah? You awake, man?"

"What?" Jonah called out hoping Dante wouldn't open the door.

"Meeting in Trinity's room. It's urgent."

"We'll be there in a bit."

"K. See you there."

Raven began laughing. "I feel like I'm sixteen and doing it in my bedroom and my dad just called me to dinner."

Jonah looked down at her, baffled. "You had sex in your bedroom during the day with your parents home?"

"No!" she laughed again. "But I did masturbate." She tilted her head up and smiled at him. "That felt nice."

"Yes, it did. And you're right. I feel like a teenager which is a nice feeling considering I haven't been one for more years than I can count. I want to make love to you, Raven."

She sat, her hand still wrapped around his penis. "I'm ready and apparently, so are you." She gave him a squeeze.

He smiled and kissed her. "Not now, we have a meeting to go to remember. But soon, when I can use my lower extremities again."

"Your lower extremities seem to be working just fine to me." She gave him another squeeze.

"That part, yeah." He smiled. "But there's a bit more to having sex than a hard-on. I can't move my hips enough to be able to mount you and give you what you need."

"I'm not sure I like how you put that. Makes me sound like a dog or something and, besides, who says you have to be on top. I rather like being on top."

"It wasn't meant as an insult. Sorry if it came across that way. I'm always on top. it's just the way I prefer it."

She kissed his lips as she pulled her hand free. "Well, Mr. Moore, it's time to experiment. I'll bring you a towel to wash up with." She scooted from the bed and hurried to the washroom.

"We're almost out of towels," he shouted to her over the running water. Experiment? What did she mean by that?

"Then I guess we'll have to check out the other floors for some. Here you go." She set the bowl of warm water, towel and washcloth on his pullout table. "Maybe after the meeting we'll get on it."

"What did you mean by experiment?"

She smiled slyly. "Guess you'll just have to wait to find out."



"I think after we find some towels we should get you to try walking while supported."

Jonah tilted his head back and eyeballed Raven. "Define 'supported'?"

"There's a therapeutic room on the third floor designed for paraplegics. They have a harness that is connected to a pulley system. It supports your body and if your legs give out you won't fall flat on your face."

"Option two?" He didn't like the first one.

"I could be with you and help to hold you up."

He didn't much care for that one either. "Any other options?"

"Nope."

"I'll take option two then." He was not going to be held up by some harness deal.

"Then that's what we'll try. Here we are." She backed them into Trinity's room.

"Took you guys long enough," Dante grumbled. "We have a problem."

"If it's your impatient attitude, I know how we can fix that. It involves tape and restraints," Jonah piped in with a dose of humor. Dante was looking much too sober.

"Ha ha. I just ran into my brother down in the basement."

"And?" Trinity asked. She sat on her bed, legs crossed and looking like she'd just come out of the shower. Her hair was still damp.

"I think he might tell Chaos where we're hiding," Dante supplied.

"Did you try to convince him otherwise?" Basil snarled.

Dante shot him a nasty look. "No, I told him to go right ahead and do it and I'd get the party hats ready. Of course I tried to convince him not to."

"Getting snippy won't help the situation," Gypsy said soothingly while running a hand over Dante's hair.

"We have to get out of here now," Dante emphasized.

"And go where? We can't go back to the house because we'd be sitting ducks. We don't have anywhere else to go," Trinity reminded with more than a little attitude.

"The Digital Domain," Jonah added and had all eyes turn to him. "Sure Basil trashed the front office but there are two apartments upstairs and the place is wired with an alarm. We'd be safe there."

"The nerd has a point," Basil pointed out with a nod.

Jonah flipped him the bird and continued. "Trin's place is a one bedroom but the other suite has two. Dante, Gypsy, Raven, and I could bunk there. There's a cot in my office for you Cooper."

"Much obliged." Cooper nodded.

"The power's out. The alarm won't work," Dante pointed out.

"I have a back up generator in the basement. You think a guy who works on computers and delicate programs would risk losing it all to a power loss." Jonah shook his head. "Please."

"Then let's do it," Trinity agreed, slipping off the bed. "We'll need supplies: blood, food, first aid, flashlights. Basil, take Dante and Gypsy and gather what we'll need for a few weeks. Raven, can you and Cooper gather medical supplies?"

"You bet." Raven nodded then turned to Cooper who gave a nod.

"Hey...not an invalid here. I can do some things," Jonah pointed out snidely. The sooner he got up on his feet the better. He hated being treated delicately.

“Help Raven and Cooper then. They can load you down.”

“Gee, I feel so much better now.” He rolled his eyes.

“We’ll meet back here in half an hour. Let’s get rolling people.”

“Was that a pun in reference to me?” Jonah shot Trinity a wicked grin. She rolled her eyes and shook her head, making him smile. He wheeled himself out of the room, talking to Raven. “Guess getting me to walk is a bust.”

“We can still do it, just in a different way. Hey, guys,” Raven called out to Basil and Dante. “If you find some crutches, grab them okay.”

“You bet.” Dante saluted her as he went off on his way.

“Crutches?” Jonah inquired. Cooper walked beside them in absolute silence. The guy was always so quiet.

“For support. They’ll hold you up while you try to take a few steps.”

“Brilliant idea,” Cooper finally spoke up.

“Thanks. I’ll still be right there behind you in case you fall, but I think it’ll work.”

“I can’t wait.” The sooner he got on his feet the better.



Where did he have to go? Nowhere. And even if he wanted to go to Chaos and tell him where Trinity was hiding out, he couldn’t. He had no fucking idea where Chaos was staying now.

Danny kicked a clump of rocks in his path, sending them skipping along the deserted street. Was it too much to ask that at least one person he loved actually cared for him back. The people he loved always deserted him. His family had been the first, and now Chaos.

Was he not meant to be happy?

Apparently not.

He was pretty damn sure Dante had run right to his precious Trinity with the news that they were in danger. Oh, Dante pretended to care, but where was his loyalty when the house had been bombed? He certainly hadn’t come running to save his twin then had he? No, he’d left him in the cell he’d been locked in. Danny picked up a large rock and sent it hurling towards an abandoned house. Glass shattered, giving him a momentary high that was short lived.

Then he saw a familiar face coming towards him. “Kyle.” He waved in the air, feeling uplifted for the first time in a long time. “Man, am I glad to see you.” Kyle was one of the few friends he’d made that he actually trusted.

“I can’t be seen with you, man.”

Danny frowned. "What? Why not?"

"Chaos would kick my ass."

He hadn't thought he could hurt any more, but he was wrong. "Listen, man, I know where Trinity and her gang are hiding out. I need to tell Chaos. Where's he staying?"

"I can't tell you that." Kyle scratched his head. "But if you tell me I'll relay the message to Chaos."

Danny felt his already crumbling world sink a little further. "They're at the hospital. Can you talk to Chaos, for me? Tell him I—"

"I'll see what I can do. Thanks for the tip, man."

Danny stood in the dark, alone as the one person he'd thought of as his friend hurried away from him.

He really was alone now.



There'd been silence between he and Fritz since the incident with the knife. It suited Chaos perfectly fine. He'd rather not talk to the man as long as he questioned everything Chaos did. Fritz needed to learn his place.

He missed Magnus.

Now there was a loyal subject. Magnus never questioned him and always did as he was told. Damn, he missed Magnus. He could only assume Magnus was dead.

There was no other reason why the man would be absent all this time. And he figured Trinity had been responsible for that as well. He wanted her dead—but suffering first. A nice, slow death for Trinity Ford was just what she deserved.

"Sir."

Chaos looked over his shoulder at Fritz and noticed he'd changed into an officer's police shirt. He supposed it was because of the blood that had spilled on his other one. Hopefully the man had learned his lesson.

He didn't bother to stand from his spot behind the desk when he replied. "Yes, Fritz?"

"One of the men, Kyle, has some valuable information for you."

"Show him in then." He leaned back in his chair as a tall thin man was escorted in. He had such trouble remembering all of his minions' names, but he did recognize the faces. As he did now with this young man. "What do you have for me, Kyle?"

Entering the room nervously, Kyle spoke, "I know where Trinity and Basil are hiding out."

Embracing the Darkness

Chaos sat forward. The boy had his attention now. "Do you intend to tell me or keep it to yourself?"

"They're at the hospital."

"How do you know this?"

"I...uh...saw them there," he said quickly.

"You're sure about this?" Chaos stood.

"Yes, sir." Kyle's head bobbed up and down.

"Did they see you?"

"No, sir."

"Gather the men." Chaos stepped around the desk. "We go in full force."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

That was another thing he missed. Driving. Jonah had sat in the passenger's seat while Dante drove, imagining himself pressing down on the accelerator, shifting gears and applying the brakes. He wished his damn legs would start working properly again.

They arrived at the Digital Domain and Jonah cringed as he was wheeled inside. Basil's tantrum was still evident by the destruction of desks and computers that lay scattered on the ground. The front window was busted open but the door was still locked. That said something.

"You're paying to rebuild this," Jonah informed Basil as he picked up a mangled computer case.

"Yeah, yeah. We have more important things to deal with at the moment." And with only a passing glance at the shambles he'd caused, Basil carried his box of supplies up the back stairs.

"This is your shop?" Raven asked in awe.

"Yeah." Or at least it had been at one time. He really missed working, missed turning a fried computer into something useful. He wondered if his office was still intact. He had a lot of valuable information on it.

"I came in here last summer for a computer," Raven began. "I'd finally decided to join the human race and become computer literate.

This tall woman with brown hair helped me out and showed me what I needed. I ended up buying a notebook. She said it was the best thing to get me started."

Jonah looked to where the front desk had once been and now all that remained was a pile of rubble. "That would have been Ariel." And he could picture her behind that desk. He really did miss her.

Raven laid her hand on his shoulder comfortingly. "She seemed like a nice woman."

"She was." But that was past and this was now. He didn't love Ariel any less, but he couldn't dwell on what had been because it would only bring him down. "We'll need to find something to board up that window."

"We'll get to that after we unload. So how do you want to do this? I could carry you up the stairs."

Jonah shook his head at Raven. "I think not." He was not letting her carry him up the long flight of stairs. That was too hard-on her back. On her in general even if she didn't think so.

"Then we'll get Basil or Dante to do it."

He wasn't too pleased with either of them doing it, but he supposed he needed someone's help. "Dante has a bum knee. Best to get Basil to do it. Guess I need to look into putting in a wheelchair ramp of some sort outside. I never thought about it before. I wonder how many disabled people I pissed off." He'd never questioned the two steps up to his front entrance. But that was before his legs were taken out from under him.

"Most people don't until they need to. I'll get Basil."

He wheeled himself into his office and was grateful that was at least intact. And there on the table by his desk was the scope he'd been so eager to get, the scope that had cost him his wife and child, and his legs. The reason he was now a vampire.

It occurred to him now that he hadn't looked at himself since he'd been turned.

Wheeling to his desk he pushed his rolling chair aside, then stopped in front of his monitor. He tilted the screen until he saw his reflection.

His eyes were yellow.

Opening his mouth, he touched the tip of his index finger to his incisors. He had fangs.

His eyes were yellow and he had fangs. And he looked like hell. How had he not noticed the stubble on his face had turned into a beard? And his hair was way past unruly. It needed a trim but, most-

ly, it needed to be brushed. Why hadn't anyone told him how crappy he looked? And he really didn't like the yellow eyes.

"Raven tells me you need your sorry ass hauled upstairs. Are you working?"

"I look like shit."

Basil sauntered into the room, passing a look at the rows of computer parts on the floor. "What else is new? I've never been back here before. What do you do with all this crap?"

"It's not crap, it's valuable computer parts. I need a shave and something other than these puke green hospital clothes. Any chance we could run by the house and grab some of my stuff?"

"Trinity and I plan on getting some of our stuff later on. We'll just grab your stuff while we're at it. Come on, let's get you upstairs so I can finish hauling in the supplies."

Pushing himself forward, Jonah scowled at Basil. "I want to go along and get my own things."

"It'll go faster without you."

Jonah put up his hand to stop Basil before he could pick him up out of the chair. "So because I'm in a chair and can't walk you're gonna treat me like an invalid? That's just bullshit. I can do things, you know. I'm just as fucking valuable now as I was before."

"Jonah—"

"Fuck off." He pushed himself to the stairs. "I don't need your help." Grabbing hold of the railing along the right side of the wall, he hoisted himself out of the chair. His legs wobbled and when Basil moved towards him all Jonah did was hold up his middle finger. Looking up, the stairs seemed to go on forever. With his chin held high, he fought to control his limbs.

He leaned to his right and dragged his left leg up the first step. Now came the hard part. Putting pressure on his bum leg, Jonah hoped it held him. When the railing snapped, he fell forward and managed to prevent hitting his face on the next step by bracing his fall with his hands.

Basil was right there willing to help him.

"Do not touch me," Jonah growled, baring his fangs. He'd rip the guy's throat out if he tried.

"Keeping my hands to myself." Basil stepped back.

Well, what the fuck was he going to do now? Crawl? Was there any other choice?

On his knees, he took the next step. Not so bad. It could be worse. He could be slithering up the steps. But thank God he didn't have to.

Apparently his knees worked just fine. Great, so he'd crawl from now on. Just fucking dandy!

He took the next step up, then the next, and the next, and before, he knew it he was at the top. Sweat drenched his face and his body but he'd done it himself. Planting himself on his butt, he glared down at Basil with a, "take that, bastard"

"You want to come down and get your chair now?"

"Jonah? What are you doing?" Raven hurried to his side, plopping down beside him. "Are you okay?"

"I'm dandy." He was exhausted but he felt damn good. He'd accomplished something even if it hadn't been walking up the steps.

"The idiot decided he didn't need my help up the stairs." With a passing glance, Basil moved between them both, lifting the wheelchair above their heads as he took the last step up.

"You walked up here by yourself?" Raven gaped.

"He crawled," Basil supplied, then disappeared into the room to the left.

"You crawled? What is wrong with you? I sent Basil to help you. My God, Jonah, you could have—"

"I did just fine and I'm no worse for wear. Now help me to my feet." He was tired and wanted to collapse but it was going to have to wait until he was in the apartment.

"What? You're joking, right?"

"Never mind, I'll do it myself." It wasn't going to be easy but he'd manage. Swiveling his body he got on all fours then crawled to the corner. He figured it would be easier if he had two walls to pull himself up with.

"You are not going to do it yourself. What has gotten into you?" She grabbed his left arm, swung it over her shoulder and helped him to his feet. "Stupid fool."

"I am neither stupid nor a fool and hey, look, I can walk." Hot damn! He could walk. Okay, he could slide his feet while supported but he was on his feet and he was moving.

Raven laughed, shaking her head. "You're crazy. Utterly crazy."

"There are worse things to be. Why didn't you tell me I looked like crap?" They entered the apartment to see Basil standing by the wheelchair, a sly grin on his face. "What is so funny?"

"I'm just reliving you crawling up the stairs. Should have seen it," he said to Raven with a huge grin on his face.

"Get bent! Now get out of my apartment before I off you."

Basil ignored his response. "What I meant when I said it would go faster without you is that Trinity and I plan on using our transportation abilities to get in and get out. It had nothing to do with you being in a chair, but I sure did enjoy watching you crawl up the steps to prove your worth. That'll give me a happy for years to come."

Jonah grabbed the first thing in his sight—a vase with artificial flowers—and hurled it at Basil. Unfortunately, the bastard vanished before it hit him. "Chicken!" he cried out and heard Basil laughing in the hall. "I hate his cocky attitude."

"Black kettle talking." Raven plopped him down into his chair and left the room.

"Are you calling me cocky?"

She came back with a hand towel. "Yes, I am. Here, you might want to mop your face."

He looked up at her and saw the distinct scowl on her face. "Are you angry at me?"

"Yes." She crossed her arms over her chest.

"For what?"

"For being a butthead—a stubborn butthead."

He wiped his face dry, glaring up at her. "How am I stubborn?"

"Instead of letting Basil carry you up the stairs, you had to prove you could do it yourself."

"Well...yeah. Man here, not too eager to have another man carry me up a flight of stairs especially when that man is a cocky bastard."

"Black is not a good color for you, Mr. Kettle."

"Stop that." He tossed the towel aside then spun himself around and wheeled to the washroom.

She followed him. "By pulling such a stupid stunt you could have pushed your recovery back. Did you think of that as you were 'proving' yourself?"

He planted his palms on the vanity then stood. "I seem to be just fine."

"Sit down before you hurt yourself further."

"I'm not going to hurt myself." Holding himself up with one hand, he pushed his wheelchair aside.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm going to take a shower."

She jumped in front of him as he turned to take a step. "I'll help you."

"I can do this on my own."

"Why are you being so stubborn?"

"Because I'm sick of people treating me like an invalid. That is why I didn't want Trinity and the others to know that I was paralyzed," Jonah shouted at her. He wobbled, she grabbed him by the waist but they both lost their footing and fell down onto the floor. Jonah on top.

"Are you okay?"

She blinked rapidly, then nodded. "Yeah. Just knocked the wind out me for a bit. How about you?"

"Jesus, you two. The least you could do is close the door."

They both began to laugh when Dante shut the bathroom door.

"You should lie down for a while. You've had a long day." Raven stroked his face.

"What I need is shower and shave. Then I'll consider lying down." But he couldn't resist kissing her first. "Have I mentioned how attractive your eyes are?"

"I don't believe so."

"They're such a dark blue. It's like sinking into the ocean when I look at you."

"Hm, that's a good thing, right?"

He was never good with the romance. "Yeah, it's a good thing. I need a shave."

"I like your beard. It makes you look tough."

"Yeah? Still...I'd feel better if I could shave. But I'm thinking I might need a chair. I'm not sure how long my legs will hold me."

"I'll grab one for you. Jonah?"

"Yeah?"

"I really like the way you feel on top of me."

Smiling, he leaned down and caressed her lips with his own. "And that is one of the reasons why I'm so eager to get back on my feet." He rolled off of her, then sat up and pushed his way to the tub. Getting up on his knees, he lifted himself up and onto the edge of the tub. "You think you could check if there's a razor in the cabinet?"

She stood and opening the medicine cabinet turned back to him. "No razor."

He should have known better given the fact that no one lived in this apartment. "Damn."

"I'll see if I can find one. I'll be right back."

He watched her leave the room and began undressing. He'd leave his pants for the last. When she came rushing back into the room with a huge smile on her face he felt absolutely struck by her beauty.

"Look what I've got." She set the chair down and held up her hand. "Okay, it's a woman's razor but still, it'll do the trick. Trinity lent me one of her disposable ones."

"God, you're beautiful."

Her head tipped to the side but she didn't say a thing.

"That surprises you?"

"No, well maybe a little but it was just the way you said it. There was a lot of emotion in your voice."

Yeah, there had been and that surprised him as well. "I like the way you smile. It lights up your face." He held his hand out to her. "Can I have the razor?"

"I was thinking I would give you a shave. How are you going to hold yourself up and shave? Might make for a messy outcome and I rather like your face unscathed."

She had a point. "Sure, why the hell not. I've never had a woman shave me before."

"I'm pretty good at it. I've had lots of practice." She took the hem of her shirt and lifted it over her head.

He was momentarily struck dumb as he stared at her naked breasts. They were perfectly round and full and her areola and nipples were a dark rose color. They puckered as the air caught hold of them.

"What are you doing?" he finally managed when she began to undo the drawstring on her pants.

"Getting naked so I can join you in the shower and shave your face."

Before he could utter another word, she slid the pants over her hips and down her legs. She was completely bare all but a tiny V shaped swatch of hair above her pussy. His balls tightened and his dick went instantly hard.

"Need help getting out of your pants?"

He gave his head a shake. "What?"

"Do you want me to help you out of your pants?"

He'd never seen her completely naked before. And now that she stood before him stripped down to nothing, he found he simply couldn't stop staring. She was more than beautiful.

"Cat got your tongue?" she teased him, kneeling down in front of him.

Apparently so. The he felt her hands on the waistband of his pants and he suddenly found his voice. "I'm not so sure this is a good idea."

"I promise I won't knick you. Stand up. Put your hands on my shoulders to help yourself up."

Again, lost for words, he did as she asked. And the instant he did, she drew his pants down and his dick plopped right up to her face.

"Mm," she sighed then skillfully took him in her hand and opened her mouth.

His eyes nearly crossed when she wrapped her lips around his base. "Raven—oh lord," he gasped when she swallowed him whole. Her hands gripped both butt cheeks as she pulled her mouth free then sunk back down all the way. He had never felt anything so incredible before in his life.

She slid her mouth away and held his penis in her hand as she looked up at him. "Nice."

Yes, indeed it was. Ariel had blown him but never like that...and he really shouldn't be thinking of her at a time like this.

"Time for that shave."

Raven set him on the edge of the tub and when she turned to grab the chair he saw the butterfly tattoo on her left buttock. Her skin was so smooth, her buttocks so round, and for some reason he thought the butterfly suited her.

"Here we go." She turned with the chair, then set it in the tub. "I think I should help you get into the tub and before you protest—"

"That's a good idea," he interrupted, ogling her breasts. What was wrong with him? Like he'd never seen tits before.

"Okay. Good. Let me help you up."

She hooked her arms under his and her breasts pressed right into his chest. Sweet heavens she was going to drive him to come.

Stepping into the tub first, she guided him as he stepped in with her and helped him settle down onto the chair. She adjusted the shower head and turned on the water. "Good and hot or just warm?"

"Hot," he managed, still staring at her breast which were now practically in his face. When the water touched his back, he flinched.

"Too hot?"

"That's fine." It had just surprised him. "Do you have any idea what you're doing to me?"

She smiled down at him then kissed his mouth before speaking. "I'm going to shave you." She hopped out of the shower to grab the razor and a bar of soap.

When she sat on his lap, straddling him, his dick twitched. It was pressed against her vaginal lips and he could feel the heat she emitted. "That is not what I meant."

"I know." She grinned slyly then putting the razor between her

teeth, got the soap good and wet. She lathered up his face then took the razor from her teeth and tilted his chin up.

Unable to control himself any longer, he took hold of her face with his hands and plastered his mouth over hers. She wrapped her arms around his neck, pressing both chest and pelvic area tighter to his body. Taking hold of her hips, he pulled her just a little closer.

She moved against him in a hypnotic rhythm, pressing her heat to his hard-on. Her mouth was hot, her pussy scorching. The water splashing onto his back was barely noticed. She rocked against him, and with each stroke he felt himself getting perilously close to ejaculating.

At least they were in the shower this time.

Then she pulled her mouth away and while looking him in the eyes, lifted up, then sunk down onto his shaft.

"Raven..."

"Shh..." She captured his mouth with her, seducing his lips while her hips rocked over him.

She was so tight and so damn wet and the way her vagina clamped down over his made his entire body come to life. He wanted more. Releasing her lips, he took her breasts in his hands, then bent his head and suckled one hard nipple into his mouth. He toyed with it, swirling it with his tongue, scraping it with his teeth and the more he did the more she gyrated. She cupped his head in her hands and held him in place. Grabbing hold of her bottom, he helped her as she bounced over top of him.

Warm wet velvet sliding up then down, then up again before crashing down.

His pointed teeth scraped her breast and he tasted the ambrosia that was her blood. The instant it touched his pallet, the orgasm slammed into him with a lethal force.

He pulled his mouth away and stared at her with fear.

"Take it. Take all of me."

She guided him back to her breast and the sight of her blood so red against such pale skin shot right into him. Taking her breast in his mouth, he drank from her as his body became electric. He twitched inside of her. When she threw her head back and cried out, her felt her convulse around him.

He held her to his mouth and drank her in as his body filled her up.



Chaos sat in the car while several of his men surrounded the hospital's front entrance. He had others waiting at the remaining entrances and would enter the instant they were given the command. Though he wasn't with his men he could at least be a part of it through the walkie talkies they had on them. He could hear them breathing quietly as they stood near the entrance and he knew just how anxious they were to get in and kick some ass.

Lifting his walkie talkie, he gave the okay. "Go in." They entered as quietly as they had waited and when Chaos lost sight of them he turned his attention to the view screen on the Talkie. Though it was small and a little distorted he could make out enough to know where they went.

"We'll get them this time," he muttered to himself, a smile lifting his lips. He turned to Fritz who sat beside him in the driver's seat, a sober look on his face. "You're still not upset with me for the knife incident are you, Fritz?"

"No, sir."

Sure he wasn't. Though he didn't have the ability to read minds, Chaos could tell the man was lying through his pointy pearly whites. "Lessons must be learned even if they are taught with a strong hand."

"Yes, sir," Fritz replied, keeping his eyes out the window.

Maybe it was time to find a new right hand man.

He waited impatiently, tapping his fingers on his legs at first, then the door of the car. He hated waiting, and he hated not knowing. Several minutes passed, then half an hour and he was about to contact his men when someone came on the line.

"They're not here, sir."

Chaos glanced down at the screen as he replied. "What do you mean they're not here? You haven't searched the entire hospital yet."

"They were here, sir. Several rooms look lived in and one of the emergency rooms has bloody cloths in the trash that are only a day old. I think they've left."

"NO!" Chaos shouted and shoved from the car.

"Sir, you need to stay in the car." Fritz was out right after him.

"They have to be there. I cannot lose them again." Ignoring Fritz's warnings, Chaos ran towards the front doors of the hospital. He pushed through the doors and past his men to search for himself.

"Sir, it could be a set up. You need to stay undercover."

He waved a hand at Fritz and kept going. He tore from room to room, searching and growing more and more upset with each vacant room in the emergency department. He could see for himself that

someone had been here recently, still.... "They have to be here. Check the other floors," he demanded.

"We have, sir. There are no signs of them. There are no signs of anyone. Smell for yourself. They've gone."

Chaos did smell it, the lack of blood, the lack of fleshly aroma and that only infuriated him more. "I grow tired of her and her inferior gang of misfits! Trinity will pay for this, pay for all that she has done to me!" he ranted, pacing the floor like a mad man. "I will find her. I don't need any of you. All you've done is disappoint me. It's time I went out there and looked for her myself."

"But you'll get killed if you do that," someone said from within the crowd that had gathered to watch his tirade.

"I haven't lived this long that I don't know a thing or two about being stealthy. I will find her and when I do—" His eyes went wide as the cloth was slapped over his mouth. He struggled, his hands clawing at the hand that clamped over his mouth, at the hand that held him down. Then he felt the drug as it slipped into his nostrils, and into his mouth. It numbed him and though he fought to keep above it, the drug slowly pulled him down.



"What did you do?"

Fritz held onto Chaos, his body slumping in his unconscious state. "I did what I had to do. For all of us. If Chaos had gone out to look for Trinity, he would have been caught and killed. And what do you think would happen then?"

"The sun would come back." Someone announced in the crowd.

"Exactly! We don't want that. I have a plan that will keep us all here, in the safety of the darkness and still live very comfortably. But we have to keep Chaos locked away for that to happen. Anyone who isn't with me, leave now." He waited and when no one walked out, he continued. "Okay. This is my plan. We start scouting the highways for victims, either as hitchhikers or stranded on the side of the road due to car trouble. When the person stops to help, others will jump out of the shadows and take them over. They will be brought back here and be kept for nourishment, others will be turned. That is only the beginning of my plan. Do you want to join me, or not?"

He looked around the room as people discussed it amongst themselves. He shifted Chaos so he held him more comfortably and waited while they came to a decision. When they began to turn back to him, he hoped he had them on his side.

"We like this plan."

"Perfect. Now, it's best that we return to the compound. We can lock Chaos up in one of the cells and if need be, keep him drugged until we have enough blood slaves to impress him."

"Then what? Do we let him out?"

"We'll take it a day at a time." He shifted Chaos again. "One stipulation. We give up on Trinity and Basil. We play nice, act as though we have no reason to want them so as to not draw attention to ourselves. But we'll have to be careful not to let them know what we're doing. Now, someone help me get him to the car. Oh, and grab some sleeping pills to keep him down."

He held Chaos by the arms and another took him by the legs. They carried him out of the hospital and Fritz smiled to himself.

Stab me in the arm, will you?

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Standing in front of the washroom mirror, Raven examined herself. It felt good to wear something other than hospital scrubs, but it would be nice to have her own clothes. Until that happened, she'd have to make due with wearing Trinity's stuff. It was a good thing they had similar body shapes, though the bra was a few sizes too large which wasn't that bad, considering her left breast was more than a little tender. She didn't mind it, really. She felt glorious everywhere else.

She'd stayed on Jonah's lap after they'd come down from their high and as she had originally promised. With smooth even strokes she'd shaved away his beard and found an utterly charming and boyish face beneath the hair. And she decided she rather liked kissing his bare face.

After washing off she'd helped him to their room and tucked him in bed where he fell into a deep sleep almost immediately. He could deny that the day had worn him out but she knew differently. Especially the stunt on the stairs. The guy was stubborn, but apparently that stubbornness was paying off. He was gaining the use of his legs back more and more each day.

And she was falling in love with him more and more each day.

There was no way she could tell him. He'd only lost his wife a few weeks ago and though he was on the road to mending his broken heart,

he was no where near hearing her tell him she loved him. So she'd keep that to herself.

His friends seemed nice. Cooper was a little odd. She'd never known what to make of the strong silent type. He was a nice enough man, and a whiz with the medical jargon, but he was a tad bit too quiet for her liking.

Gypsy, on the other hand, was anything but quiet. She'd found that the woman loved to talk and about anything that came to mind. And she and Dante were head over heels in love with each other. Trinity and Basil she was still trying to deduce. She hadn't spent enough time alone with either to make any real judgments.

One thing she did know. Trinity was one powerful vampire. She had to be to heal a massive head wound like she'd sustained in the blast. Not to mention the bruised and broken ribs. Raven had been skeptical that she would ever wake up, but when she had, Raven had been the first to be surprised by it. And the fact that she hadn't lost her baby was a miracle in itself.

She hadn't even known vampires could conceive. Then again, before six months ago she hadn't even known vampires had existed. My how things had changed.

Giving her hair a little fluff with her fingers, Raven decided she looked better than she had in weeks. Love was putting color in her cheeks that was for certain.

Leaving the washroom, she entered her room as quietly as possible so not to wake Jonah. And found the bed empty. "Jonah?" She left the room in a panic and when she didn't find him, or anyone else for that matter, in the apartment, she hurried across the hall to Trinity's. That was when she heard the commotion. She raced down the stairs to find everyone in the main lobby. Arguing.

"If we put anything on that window they're going to know we're here."

"Yes, they'll suspect someone of being here, but they won't necessarily think it's us," Dante pointed out to Basil.

"I'm with Dante."

Basil turned to Gypsy with a scowl. "You're always with Dante."

"Well...yeah, because I love him and he's smart," she remarked, sliding her arm through his and snuggling into his shoulder.

"I say we leave it as it is. Why draw attention ourselves?"

"Precisely, dear." Basil acknowledged Trinity with a tip of his head.

"But that leaves us as sitting ducks ripe for the plucking," Dante huffed.

"Excuse me," Jonah piped in and Raven noticed he was propped up against the wall with the crutches under his arm. He was standing! "Might I make a suggestion?"

"Let the nerd speak."

Jonah shot Basil the finger, then continued. "We could connect a sensor across the broken window that, should someone step through the window, would set off the alarm."

"Is your alarm as loud here as it was at the house?" Basil inquired.

"You bet." Jonah smiled. "What's the point to having an alarm if it's not loud enough to scare the living shit out of the intruder?"

"Scaring intruders is fine, deafening the rest of us isn't. I don't want to be woken in the dead of sleep to a loud screeching alarm," Dante pointed out.

"It's more of an air-raid sound. It'll wake you but it won't deafen you. Well, unless you're near the horn which happens to be in the basement. But better to be woken to a loud screeching alarm than some vamp using you as a blood bank. All I'd need is some help to set up the sensors, connect it to the alarm system, and engage the two. It'll take at least two hours or more to set up. Who's with me?"

"You should be resting," Raven spoke up as she moved further into the room, giving Jonah a sly look. She loved how authoritative he was. It was sexy. It was nice to see him looking alive after being so down for the past while.

"Rest is for the weak. I'm anything but. See...standing on my own two legs. I'd do a little gig for you but I'm pretty sure I'd fall flat on my face if I tried. You look pretty."

She glanced at the plain yellow shirt she'd borrowed from Trinity and the faded blue jeans and shrugged. "Trinity was kind enough to lend me some of her stuff. How did you get down the stairs?" She added as she made her way towards him.

"I teleported."

Her jaw dropped. "You can do that now?"

He laughed and leaning in, kissed her. "It was a joke to avoid how I really took the stairs."

"Did you crawl again?" The guy really was a stubborn fool.

"Nope." He beamed. "I slid down on my ass, which, by the way, has a great deal of feeling to it now."

She couldn't help but smile. He sounded so chipper, so...different. "And the crutches?"

"They slid down first. They were my look out to make sure it was safe for me to come down. How are you feeling?" he whispered the last.

"Fine. I told you not to worry about what happened," she whispered back. "You didn't drink that much from me." She turned to Trinity now. "How are you feeling?"

"Perfectly fine. Cooper gave me a thorough check up no more than half an hour ago. I am completely healed up."

"And very much knocked up." Basil grinned like a proud father to be, taking hold of Trinity and planting a very loud kiss to her mouth.

"Do you mind if I ask a question of you, Trinity?" Raven asked.

"Sure."

"First, I didn't even know vampires could get pregnant but apparently they can. So how is it you're more than six weeks along when you told us that you couldn't have gotten pregnant before three weeks ago?"

"Three weeks ago I was killed while trying to stop the king from killing Basil. Long story short, I went to the Realm of Mystic—vampire heaven—and was granted a second life, with new powers to help take out the king. I had to have gotten pregnant after I came back," Trinity explained.

"I was so grateful to have her back that I couldn't keep my hands off of her," Basil supplied, beaming at Trinity.

"But how is it then that you're more than eight weeks along?"

"Vampires gestation period is faster than the average human," Cooper piped in from his spot near the corner of the room where he'd been silently standing since Raven had entered the room. "Our metabolism is faster, which enables us to heal quicker and have cells generating faster than the average human. Most vampires carry to a term of twenty-eight weeks but I'm suspecting that with Trinity being enhanced by the queen she might carry less."

"I'm not enhanced," Trinity admonished. "You make me sound like a freak."

"By enhanced I meant stronger than the normal vampire and gifted with special abilities. Look how quickly you recovered from your wounds. It's astonishing."

"Way to suck up, Cooper." Basil shot him a sly grin.

"I think I get it." Though Raven couldn't wait to witness it personally. "It's a good thing Cooper decided to take the portable ultrasound unit. We'll need to monitor this child frequently." And she couldn't wait.

"Okay, so now that we've established that Trinity is a freak, can we get back to hooking up the alarm system?"

"Don't make me pound you, Jonah," Trinity warned him but all he did was smile.

"Can I help?" When all eyes shifted her way, Raven cleared her throat. "With the alarm. I'd love to see how it works. It sounds so fascinating."

"Great, we have another geek. Sure, the more the merrier."

"Stop calling me a geek, Basil, or you'll find yourself waking up on the wrong end of a fist one of these days."

"Look at me quivering in my boots."

"Stop it! Jesus, the two of you are worse than children." Trinity rolled her eyes. "You should go on patrol, Basil. See if you can pick up where Chaos might be hiding and we'll deal with the alarm."

"Yes, dear." He kissed her slyly.

"Oh, can I go along?" Gypsy asked. "I'm clueless when it comes to technical crap and I could use some fresh air."

"The three of us can go," Dante informed her, putting his arms around Gypsy and kissing her head.

"We need you here, Dante. Manpower. She'll be fine with Basil," Trinity justified when Dante pursed his lips.

"Behave yourself," Dante warned with a kiss to Gypsy's lips.

"I always do. Come on Basil. Let's go kick some ass."

Basil gave a pathetic look as he walked out the door, Gypsy at his side.

"Now, let's get this baby running," Jonah said rubbing his hands together.



"Just you and me, sexy, all alone in the dark, hunting down bad guys." Gypsy slipped her arm through Basil's.

He smartly plucked her fingers from his arm and pulled away. She was nice enough but he had no desire to fulfill her fantasy of a threesome. Though she hadn't stated so to him directly, he'd heard her enough times talking to Dante about it. He wondered if Jonah knew she had designs on him as well.

"Let's get something straight, Gypsy. I'm a one woman man."

"That's nice, considering you cheated on Trinity."

Basil stopped short, turning to her with a narrowed look. "And you think that because I cheated—which was for a good reason—that I will succumb to your wiles and have sex with you?"

"Oh, I know you only did it to save Trinity and that's not what I was thinking. I think you're a hunk and I just want to know what it's like to fuck you. But I understand that you don't want to. I can deal with it."

"You're an odd creature, Gypsy Dawn." Shaking his head, he pulled out a cigarette. It wasn't often enough that he was able to enjoy a smoke, now that Trinity was pregnant. He was still reeling by the fact that he was going to be a father. And a damn good father he was going to be at that. Not like the one he'd grown up with. He was going to love his child unconditionally.

"That's what Dante says too. You're telling me in all the centuries you've been around that you never once had a threesome?"

He blew out a long lazy stream of smoke that lingered in the still air. It might be nice to have a breeze now and again. He missed the breeze. And oddly enough, he missed the sun, mostly the sunset. "In my youth," he justified.

"Oh, and now you're all old and grown up," she snorted, picked up a pebble and tossed it in the air, catching it in her palm as she walked beside him. "Whatever."

"Can we stick to the job at hand here?" He'd rather not discuss his sex life with her or hers with him. "What do you think of Raven?"

She tossed the pebble in the air and caught it with her other hand. "She's nice enough. Not very talkative."

Said the woman that rarely was quiet. "Aside from that, what do you make of her?"

"She seems dedicated to Jonah. If you're thinking that she's in cahoots with Chaos, I'd have to say no. If she was, why hasn't Chaos found us yet?"

She had a point; still...he had to ask. A figure up ahead caught his attention and he went into stealth mode. Putting his hand out to silence Gypsy, he pointed up ahead. Then he vanished. He left her standing there and amazingly, she was silent. He set himself down directly behind the vampire. "Boo."

The young woman spun around, her eyes wide with fear.

"So...what brings you to these neck of the woods—no no, don't run." He caught her when she tired to bolt. "I just want to talk."

"I wasn't doing anything wrong. I was just out for a stroll. I haven't been able to get out for weeks. I just wanted some time alone."

"Yeah, and why is that? Why haven't you been out in weeks?"

"Chaos wouldn't let us out. He wanted the women to stay behind to prevent us from being taken. He didn't want to lose his breeding machines."

"Breeding machines?"

"He said if he couldn't make any new vampires himself he could at least have the ones under his power give birth to new ones."

Chaos really was desperate. "So what's changed? Or did you escape?"

"Haven't you heard? Chaos isn't in charge anymore."

Basil tilted his head. From the corner of his eyes he saw Gypsy heading towards him. "What do you mean, Chaos isn't in charge anymore?"

"Fritz drugged him and took him away. No one knows where but he says he plans on keeping him locked up until he can think of something else to do with him. Personally I think spearing him in the chest would be a good idea. Can I go now? I wasn't hurting anyone. All I wanted was to be alone for once."

Basil released her and the woman scurried off into the darkness. Now wasn't this an interesting turn of events.

"You think she was serious?"

"Either that or she was a plant to make us think Chaos is out of our hair. I'll need more proof before I let my guard down. And I need to know who this Fritz guy is. Hopefully, Raven can help with that."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

There was nothing better than standing on your own two feet. Sure, the crutches were helping him, but he was standing, and he could take steps even if his feet slid more than lifted. It was progress. And...he was able to move his hips. He was going to take great pride in showing Raven how much he was able to move them later when they would head to their room. But right now he wanted desperately to get down on his hands and knees and help Dante connect the sensors to the alarm system in the wall. But Jonah knew it involved being able to move around and he just wasn't that mobile yet.

Instead, he took a seat in a chair, plopping the laptop on his lap and prepared to key in the access code to engage the new connection when it was ready. They'd already been at it for two hours and all that was left to do was connect the final wire and code it in.

"You enjoy this shit?" Dante asked drawing Jonah back from his thoughts.

"What's not to enjoy?"

"Where do I begin? Damn it!" Dante shook his hand, blood seeping out of a thin cut on his finger. He held it up, looking from Jonah to Trinity. "Anyone want to suck on this for me?"

"Stop being an ass and finish the job." Trinity booted him with her foot.

"Party poopers." Sticking his finger in his mouth, he sucked on it for a few seconds then went back to work.

"You really love your job."

Jonah looked over at Raven who sat beside him, her face glued to his screen. He wasn't too sure if she was gluing herself to him out of curiosity of what he was doing, or watching him to make sure he wasn't pushing himself too hard. Either way, he didn't mind having her beside him. "I wouldn't want to do anything else."

"It shows. You have a lot of passion for it."

Everyone jumped when a vampire literally flew through the open window. Looking over at Trinity, Jonah saw the concentration on her face. She had the vamp suspended in mid air while she sauntered over to him. She really was scary when she used her new powers.

Dante jumped up and backed away. "Jesus, woman, warn a guy before you do that."

"What were you doing outside?" Trinity blasted the vamp.

"I was walking. Jesus, how the hell am I hanging in mid air?" the vamp barked.

"How is she doing that?" Raven whispered to Jonah.

"Trinity has phenomenal powers. She can also freeze people in their spot. Not a good feeling, trust me on that," Jonah advised.

"You were just walking?" Trinity asked the vamp skeptically.

"Yeah, and last time I looked it wasn't against the law."

"He's one of Chaos' men," Raven supplied.

"Was, one of Chaos' men," the vamp corrected.

"What do you mean was? You out on your own now?"

He glared at Trinity as he spoke. "Chaos isn't in charge anymore. We have a new leader and he's gonna change everything."

"Is that so? And why is it Chaos isn't in charge anymore," Trinity inquired.

"Fritz has him locked up and drugged. And before you ask me where, I don't know. He didn't tell any of us. Can you let me down now? This is really freaking me out."

She set him down with a thud and he tumbled down onto his butt. He instantly ran for the window and jumping through it, ran off into the dark.

"So...what about that?" Dante asked cautiously inching his way back to the window. He did a quick glance outside, then jumped and screamed when Basil appeared before him. "Christ!" He clutched his chest, panting. "I don't live forever like you vampires do. Shit,

my heart is pounding. Oh, hi, babe." He beamed at Gypsy when she stepped through the window.

"Aw, poor baby. Want me to kiss it better?" Gypsy purred in a seductive voice as she cuddled up against him.

"I see you had company." Basil jerked a thumb out the window.

"With some interesting information," Jonah piped in, staring at his computer screen. "You gonna finish connecting that, Dante?" He waved a hand at the window.

"As soon as my heart settles down." Crouching back down on the floor, Dante continued what he'd been doing before they'd been interrupted.

"What sort of information?" Basil turned to Trinity for answers.

"Apparently Chaos isn't in charge anymore and some guy named Fritz is and he has Chaos locked up somewhere. Not sure how much I believe the guy though."

"Our vamp said the same thing," Gypsy supplied from her position on the floor beside Dante.

"Your vamp?" Trinity turned to Basil.

"We met up with a female who has apparently been kept locked up while in Chaos' control. He has this bright idea of having the females pump out the future race of vampires. In any case, she told us essentially the same thing. Chaos is gone and some guy named Fritz has taken over." He turned to Raven now. "Ever heard of this guy?"

"Yeah. He was at the farm house doing guard duty."

"For Chaos?"

"And me. They didn't want to have me running off on them, not that I would have but that's neither here nor there. When Daniel was captured by you all, he made Fritz his second in charge."

"You knew my brother?" Dante inquired and when Raven tilted her head he expounded. "Danny is my brother."

"Oh...well, yeah, I knew him but not well," she explained and Dante went back to his job of connecting the wire.

"The question is, why would this Fritz guy want to take Chaos out?"

Basil shrugged to Trinity's question. "The better question is...are we being handed a line?"

"Huh?" Dante grunted. "Got it!" he exclaimed, bouncing up from his spot on the floor.

"Perfect. I'll activate it and then we can give it a test run." With his face glued to his laptop screen, Jonah halfheartedly listened to the conversation around him while he worked.

“What if Chaos is planting people out there to tell us he’s been captured in hopes we’ll lower our guard?” Basil wondered.

“And if our guard is lowered, he can sneak in and kill me.” Trinity added.

“Not on my watch.” Basil comforted Trinity by pulling her into his arms and placing one hand on her belly.

“Then its business as usual. And we’re live,” Jonah announced lifting his head to everyone in the room. “Who wants to test it out?”

“You want one of us to test it?” Dante asked skeptically.

“I won’t know if everything is calibrated properly until someone walks through the window.” Jonah explained.

Dante shook his head. “I was the guinea pig last time.”

“This alarm isn’t like the one at Basil’s. You won’t be jolted. All that will happen in you’ll trip the sensor and set off the alarm.”

“Still ain’t happening, man. Find a different guinea pig.”

“Oh, for pity’s sake. I’ll do it.” With a shake of his head, Cooper headed out the door. He stood before the window, then stepped inside. Everyone including Jonah jumped when the alarm rang out loud enough to rattle bones.

“That is fucking loud,” Trinity yelled with her hands over her ears. “It works, now stop it.”

Jonah clicked a few keys and the alarm shut off.

“Thank you.” Trinity lowered her hands. “Okay, so that should work. I need to eat. Let’s meet up at my place in four hours and we’ll decide what to do next.”

“Works for me.” Taking Gypsy’s hand in his, Dante sauntered off.

“Thank you, Cooper,” Jonah called out and received a nod as Cooper headed upstairs with Trinity and Basil.”

“Is there anything else you need to do?” Raven inquired still looking at the laptop.

There was something he needed to do, but it wasn’t on the computer. “Everything is connected and ready to go. Care to join me upstairs?”

“Will you rest for a while before we have to meet at Trinity’s?”

He set his laptop on the mangled desk beside him then grabbed his crutches and stood. “As a matter of fact, I was just thinking of lying down for a while. Care to join me?”

“I could use a few hours sleep. How are we going to do this?” she asked, pointing to the stairs.

“I’ll figure it out when I get there. Can you grab my laptop please?”

She scooped it up and followed him to the stairs.

He turned around, leaned one crutch against the wall, then lowered himself to the bottom step. "My goal is to be able to take these steps normally by next week." He bummed his way up the steps.

She took his crutches a long with his laptop and inched up the stairs with him. "That's a pretty big goal."

It was, but he was determined. "Everyone needs a goal." He made it to the top then held his hand out for the crutches. She leaned them on the wall as he grabbed the stair rail and pulled himself up enough to grab a crutch. His legs didn't wobble as much as they had the day before and he thought that was pretty damn good progress.

Raven opened the door and held it while Jonah stepped through, then closed it behind her and locked it. "Do you want me to massage your legs and back?"

"I was thinking of having you massage something." He turned only his head and winked at her. The sound of heavy panting coming from Dante and Gypsy's room drew both their attention. "Hm, not very soundproof."

"Not at all."

"That going to be a problem for you?"

She smiled as she walked to their bedroom door and opened it. "Nope. You?"

"I'm used to hearing them go at it. I'll warn you though, Gypsy is a screamer."

Laughing, Raven closed their bedroom door behind him. "Thanks for the warning." She pulled off her shirt and tossed it on the chair in the corner.

Hobbling on his crutches, he leaned towards her and touched his lips to her in a soft, gentle kiss.

"What was that about?"

He shrugged. "I've never kissed you while we're standing."

She smiled then leaned in and kissed him with a great deal more vigor. "I like it too."

Smiling, he hobbled to the bed then sitting down, leaned the crutches against the wall. He could hear Raven disrobing behind him and it instantly got him hard. He pulled his shirt off first, then undid his pants but before he could lie down to take them off, Raven wrapped her arms around his chest and hugged his back. "I'd be more than happy to help you out of those pants," she whispered against his ear.

Her breath caressed his ear and it shot right into him. "Would you, now?"

She slithered off the bed then knelt down between his legs. Her eyes met his as she removed his socks. "Lay back."

Lying down flat, he watched as she stood up and took hold of the waist band of his pants and underwear. Her eyes stayed on his as she slid them down past his hips, then down his legs. Then she slid her hands along the inside of his thighs as she moved up his body. When she stopped at his dick, his blood began to pump just a bit harder.

Then she took him into her mouth.

Her mouth was so hot, and she knew just what to do with it. She swirled her tongue around his shaft as she slid her mouth up and down then she'd pause at the tip, and scrape her teeth over it. His eyes crossed and knew if she kept it up, he was going to lose it. He sat up and the sight of her bobbing up and down on him was something he would never forget. But he took her chin in his hand and lifted her off of him.

"What?"

"I want to make you feel the way you make me feel. Hop up onto the bed." He patted the spot beside him and waited while she climbed on. He helped his legs up onto the bed, then positioned himself over top of her.

"What are you doing? You'll hurt yourself."

He kissed her silent then slid down her body. He nibbled on her breasts through the silk of her bra, the tips already hard and waiting for his mouth. He didn't disappoint. Slipping the undergarment aside, he took one ripe bud into his mouth and swirled it with his tongue. She arched her back and moaned as he suckled her. Then he moved to the next. He stopped when he saw the bruising from his teeth the last time they'd made love. He didn't suckle this time, but instead, cupped the breast in his palm and gently kissed the bruise better.

Then he slid his way down her belly.

The muscles in her stomach quivered with the touch of his lips. Slowly he slid her panties down her hips and her breathing sped up. He kissed his way down as he lowered them past her hips and down her legs. She lifted one leg and he slipped the panties away. Then he sampled the ripe juices before him.

Touching his mouth to her labia, he felt her quiver. Then he slid his tongue out and swirled her clit in the same manner she had with his penis. She began to writhe beneath him and so he quickened the pace. She tasted like honey and the more he massaged her the sweeter her taste became. But he wanted her to finish with him while he was pressed inside of her. So he slid back up until he met her eyes. They

were glazed over from desire and he felt himself drowning in the serenity of them.

He took her lips as he positioned himself against her labia. She spread her legs wider and he felt himself being drawn inside to where it was hot and wet and welcoming.

"If you get tired, let me know."

He kissed her again then pressed himself all the way inside in one slow motion. Her eyes closed on a moan, then she began to gyrate against him. He didn't want to disappoint her, and started moving his hips in time with her rhythm. Capturing her mouth with his, he kissed her with a slow passion while his hips aroused. He slid in and out slowly, not only stimulating her but himself as well. They moved together as their mouth tantalized and their tongues probed and searched. Then her tongue scrapped his incisors and he felt the sensation shoot right to his groin. He pressed himself deeper and she wrapped her legs around his waist and took him in all the way.

She swallowed him whole as her body began to convulse around him. Their eyes opened as they both came.

He collapsed over her, feeling absolutely spent but loving it.

"Okay, having you on top is pretty damn great."

He laughed, then lifted himself up with his hands and kissed her swollen lips. "You ain't seen nothing yet sweetheart."

"Ooh, I can't wait." She stroked the hair from his face. "I think your teeth are an erogenous zone."

"I think you're correct." He kissed her again, then simply stared down at her.

"What? Am I a mess? Is my make up smudged?"

He shook his head with a smile. "I never thought I would ever love again after Ariel's death. You make me think otherwise."

"Oh, Jonah."

He took her mouth and as he kissed her softly, he knew that no matter what was thrown at him now, he had the strength to face it.

As long as Raven was at his side.

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

