

BP

SHIELA STEWART

Consuming

THE

DARKNESS

BOOK 7 IN THE DARKNESS SERIES

Consuming the Darkness

by Shiela Stewart

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Consuming the Darkness
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To Nikki B

*Without you, this book would not
have been written. Who would have
thought a mislabeled title could turn
into a full blown story.
Thanks a bunch, lady!*

PROLOGUE

Damn it was hot today.

Wiping the sweat from his brow, Nathan spotted his partner as he pulled up in his beat up Mustang. The guy really needed to come into the future and drive something a little more modern. But every time Nate had suggested it to Leo, he got the same rant. *"They don't make cars like this anymore and until they do, I'm driving my 'Stang."*

The guy did have a point but Nate sure as hell wasn't going to admit that to him. He enjoyed ribbing him far too much to let it go.

"Took you long enough. Car break down on you on the way here?"

Lifting his middle finger, Leo scratched his cheek. "Merry hey hey to you to, fucker."

Laughing, Nate slugged his friend's shoulder for good measure. "So you ready to do this?"

"As I'll ever be. What makes you think he'll show? Much less in broad daylight?"

"He won't be able to resist." Nate was betting The Heartless Killer, as the press had dubbed him, wouldn't be able to resist the invitation. "Besides, he loves playing with me."

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"Sick fuck if you ask me. Who in their right mind would want to play with you?" Darting out of reach before Nate's fist could connect with his arm, Leo laughed. "Okay, so what's the plan?"

"You hide and I'll stand around looking bored."

"Typical day at the office then. Gotcha. Your radio on?"

Nate held his two-way up, showing the green light indicating it was on. "You?"

"Never leave home without it." Waving his in the air, Leo headed down the alley.

Damn it was hot!

The black T-shirt he wore clung to his chest showing off a patch of dampness down his chest and under each arm. And he'd put on extra deodorant before he'd left. Little good it did under these conditions. Nate made a mental note to buy something stronger next time.

"Can you believe how fucking hot it is today?"

Clicking respond, Nate replied, "Hadn't noticed." He was so full of shit.

The sound of a twig snapping behind him had Nate spinning around, hand ready on his weapon, only to find a scrawny cat looking for food. "Shit!" Relaxing his hand, he drew in a deep breath and tried to relax.

Maybe this had been a bad idea but even bad ideas were useful sometimes and if it meant getting a peak at the low life who seemed to enjoy killing his victims by removing their hearts, then it was well worth it.

A car sped past the alley, revving its engine and putting Nate on high alert. Damn, he was too tense.

"Where the hell are you?" he muttered to himself.

He was sure the guy would come. The killer seemed to enjoy playing with him and making sure all of his messages went to Nate first and foremost. He had no idea why the guy was so fascinated with him but hell, if it got him caught, then more power to him.

"Shoulda brought water," Leo said softly through the two-way.

"Just drink your own sweat."

"I will if you do."

Smiling, Nate tucked the two-way back in his belt loop and once again, waited. He checked his watch, saw that it had been nearly forty minutes since they started and was thinking if the killer didn't make a show in the next hour they were calling it quits. He hated admitting defeat but he sure as hell wasn't going to wait around all day in this heat.

Deciding what he needed was to walk around to keep from passing out in the heat, Nate headed away from where Leo was hiding and to the end of the alley. His eyes glanced about as he walked, making note of his surroundings. He'd picked this area for a reason. For the most part, it was filled with abandoned warehouses, a junk yard and repo site. There wasn't a lot of activity, which made it perfect for meeting with a killer who didn't want to be seen.

He checked his watch, again, and noticed he'd burnt a whole three minutes. *My how time flies when you're having fun.*

His two-way clicked on and he was sure Leo was going to bitch to him about waiting.

"Hello, Nathaniel."

Yanking the two-way from his belt, he replied, "Stop fucking around, Leo." If he kept up the chatter Nate was sure the killer was going to hear it.

"Sorry to disappoint you, but this isn't Leo. He's a little...indisposed at the moment."

Spinning around, Nate narrowed his eyes to the sun as he looked down the alley to the dumpster Leo was hiding behind. He couldn't see him which only made his blood run colder. "We agreed to meet. You and I. So why don't you step out of the shadows and show yourself." He kept his voice calm as he started off toward the dumpster.

"How foolish do you think I am?"

He quickened his pace, his eyes darting around in search of the madman who was taunting him right now. "You showed up, didn't you?"

"Did I? You really shouldn't have turned your back on your partner, Nathaniel."

Not only did his blood run cold but his heart began to pound in his chest. In a dead run, Nate headed to his partner. The instant he approached the dumpster, his heart stopped.

"Jesus, Leo, no!" Falling to his knees, Nate grabbed hold of his friend, knowing full well there was no hope in finding a pulse, but checked anyway.

"Fuck! Leo!" Right over the area where his heart should be was a hole. Straight through to his back. "Jesus, Leo. I am so sorry," he cried as he held his partner and best friend, blood soaking into his already damp chest.

"You'll never win, Nathaniel."

Spinning around, his eyes went wide as he glared up at the... thing before him. He saw his hand come up a split second before the rock connected with his head.

Stars exploded before his eyes and as the bright sunlight began to fade, he heard the eerie laughter trailing off behind him.



He felt a hand on his arm and jerking awake, came up defensively, thinking it was the killer. The bastard was going to pay for what he did to Leo.

“Take it easy, now. We came to help.”

Seeing the officer looming in front of him, he blinked rapidly to clear his vision. The ringing in his ears and the loud tribal drum beat in his head made it hard to hear what he was saying.

“We need an ambulance here. This one’s alive,” the officer shouted out while he pressed a hand to Nathan’s head.

What did he mean “this one’s alive”?

“You got a name, buddy?”

“Nathan, Detective Powers. Shit, we have to get him, he could still be here.” Bolting up, the scene around him spinning, Nathan turned to his friend. The blank dead-eyed stare looked back at him but his friend wasn’t in there.

“You need to stay down, Detective. You’ve got a nasty head wound here.”

Nathan shook the officer off and stayed sitting. He noticed the police cars with their bright lights flashing and all the cops milling about. “We need to find the fucker who did this to Leo. Now!” Pushing himself up, determined to hunt the bastard down, Nate felt the ground beneath him move.

“You’re not going anywhere, Detective.”

“I have to find him. Let me go!” But as he tugged free and tried to run, his legs turned to jelly and the scene around him spun some more. He saw the ground as he went down, then it all turned black.

CHAPTER ONE

Jacob's Cove, 2026
After the Darkness

Lieutenant Sienna Storm's first day in Jacob's Cove was proving to be a bitch. It was only just past one in the morning, five hours since she'd arrived without any of her furniture or belongings yet. What the fuck?

God damn movers had decided to take a break for the night instead of following through with their promise to deliver her stuff immediately. They informed her that she would have her stuff late the next day. She really should have packed an overnight bag but, no—she'd believed the company when they said, *Speedy same day delivery even out of town*. Yeah, right.

When she got the call to arrive at a murder scene, she'd been gung-ho to get started. Except, her damn car decided to break down halfway to the scene. But no, that wasn't bad enough. The damn cab driver she'd flagged down got lost. And he tried to charge her twice what the fare was worth. Well, she'd shown him, hadn't she, shoving her badge in his face and threatening to haul his lumpy ass into a cell for trying to con her. He'd apologized profusely and had even given her the ride for free.

Damn straight.

Hurrying down the dark alley, unfamiliar with the terrain, she hoped her first case would be a smooth one.

Spotting the scene up ahead and the officer standing with his hands in his pockets, she took a deep breath and got into cop mode.

“Lieutenant Storm.” Sienna held her badge up, giving the officer a quick glance. “What have we got?” she asked as she approached the body. The instant she caught sight of the victim she knew it wasn’t going to be a typical case.

The body of a young woman, approximately mid-twenties, lay face up on the ground, with a fist-sized hole in her chest where her heart had once beat. She had long, brown hair with blond highlights and a slim build. The jeans she wore looked designer, as did the purse tossed a few inches from her body, still intact.

What the hell had she been doing alone in an alley this late at night?

“Officer Barlow,” the tall, sturdy-looking man with a very ordinary face introduced himself. “This is Sally Grand, according to her ID, twenty-three, five-seven, one ten,” the officer explained. “She was found by a woman taking out her trash. At least she had the sense to puke away from the body. No witnesses so far but we’re still early. Same MO as two other murders. Heart missing, hole through the chest and back. This is some sick shit, if you ask me.”

She hadn’t but everyone was entitled to their opinions. Sienna had to agree, though. She’d never seen anything like it before and she’d seen some disgusting stuff in her career. “Crime scene been here yet?”

The cop chuckled, which didn’t amuse Sienna much. “Lieutenant, we only just got started working the town three months ago. Our CSU consists of one guy who also happens to be the ME, and two green eyed wannabes.”

Perfect. Well, she had been warned, hadn’t she. “Where is he?”

“On another call.”

Great! “Who’s collecting the evidence?”

“Well, looks like that’ll be you, me, and Officer Dickie over there taking the witness’ statement.” He held his hand out to the officer behind him.

Why had she come to Jacob’s Cove again? Oh yeah, to help rebuild the city after the darkness lifted. Right. Still...

“Okay, Officer Barlow. What I need is for everyone to stay back from the body. I also need someone to drive me to my car which is... fuck...probably in the shop by now. Damn it!” Yeah, her day really wasn’t starting out well.

"I need a crime scene kit. I don't suppose you boys would have one in your car?"

"Of course. Dickie already took fingernail scrapings and footprint impressions. A full-body exam will be done when she gets to the morgue. We do know what we're doing, Lieutenant, even though we're shorthanded at the moment."

She took his attitude in stride. "I hope so, because this isn't going to be an easy one. From the looks of it, it might be Jacob's Cove's first serial murder case since the sun returned."

Sienna examined the area where the body had been left. It was your typical dark alley complete with stinking garbage, knee high weeds and graffiti. She knew enough of Jacob's Cove to know it had been through hell and back in the past year and a half, so she cut the disaster some slack. Some big evil vampire dude named Chaos had gripped the city in darkness for his own gain and after a year had finally been taken down by a band of warriors determined to save the town and its inhabitants. Sunlight filled Jacob's Cove once more and now it was slowly beginning to come back to life, thanks to the city's mayor, Trinity Hawthorn, and the chief of police, Basil Hawthorn, who both happened to be vampires.

Yet that was nothing strange for Sienna, given the fact that she had grown up with such things. Her father, having come from a race of powerful Tejakka demons, had owned a spiritual store back home in Kansas that had catered to all sorts of creatures, including vampires. It was through him that she had learned of Jacob's Cove and through him she'd been appointed the city's first and only lieutenant of homicide.

She'd heard all about the decay of the city, the ruin of some of the areas, but hearing about it was nothing compared to seeing it in living—or dead—color. It amazed her that a city could be so badly destroyed in the course of a year. They should use Jacob's Cove as the poster child for Global Warming. This is what can happen if we don't treat the planet better.

Well, this was her city now and it was her job to bring the bastard down for killing three innocent people.

She heard the crunch of tires and, swiveling back, saw a long, black car come to a stop at the end of the alley. She assumed it was the ME, but she wouldn't be a smart cop if she went on assumptions. The driver's door opened and a tall gentleman dressed in all black stepped out.

"CSU's here," Barlow announced, confirming her assumption.

He looked like he was in his mid-forties with chestnut-brown hair perfectly coiffed, dressed in a dark suit that looked as if it had been handmade for him. As he drew closer she saw the tell-tale yellow vampire eyes as they connected with hers.

"Lieutenant Storm," she introduced, flipping out her badge.

"Doctor Cooper Hawthorn. Good to have you onboard, Lieutenant." He looked down at the body and the sorrow came into his eyes. "Another one," he said on a long sigh as he gloved up and put on his sterile gown and cap.

"This one's younger than the last," Barlow added with a heavy sigh of his own.

Clicking his tongue, the doc knelt down beside the body. Sienna stood watch as Officer Barlow filled him in on what he and officer Dickie had taken from the body. There was compassion in the way the doc examined the body of the young woman, the way he delicately took each hand in his, gently taking her head in his hands. Sienna was moved by the emotion on his face. The doc seemed to really care.

"When did you arrive in town, Lieutenant?"

Startled back to reality by his question, she responded, "A few hours ago. Do you have a spare set of gloves, cap and gown for me?"

Reaching in his bag, the doc pulled out two sealed packages and handed them to her. "How are you finding the city so far?"

Sienna was fascinated by the way he examined the body. He took such care with her as if she were still alive. She slipped the sterile plastic cap over her hair, pulled the gown over her head, slipped her hands through the sleeves, and pulled on the gloves. "The movers decided to take a break and sleep instead of delivering my belongings. My apartment won't be ready until tomorrow morning. The hotel I found at the last minute claimed to be a five-star, though I'd give it a negative score. The lock on the room I was given didn't work and when I went to the next room, I found a couple engaging in some serious S and M. Then, my car conked out on me halfway here and the cabbie tried to double charge me. So far, it's been a shitty start."

Cooper looked up at her with a glimmer in his eyes. "Yet you arrive looking as fresh as the day's rain and as lovely as the stars above."

The guy was a smooth talker and he left her speechless.

"The diameter of the hole in her chest is six inches wide and five inches deep. Consistent with the other two victims."

Back to business.

"Has anyone taken photos of this poor girl and the crime scene?"

"Dickie did," Barlow informed him. "He'll get the camera to you when we transport the vic. How's the wife?"

"She is doing well, thank you for asking, Donald. How are your wife and children doing? Has Tommy cut that tooth yet?"

Barlow pulled his cap off to scratch his head of dusty grey hair. "The wife's threatening to run off to the Bahamas, which tells you no, Tommy has not cut that tooth yet."

Cooper clicked his tongue as he got to his feet. "Have your wife brew up a strong pot of chamomile tea, then freeze some of it in popsicle form. In the meantime while you're waiting, soak a cloth in the tea, then place it in the freezer for twenty minutes. Let Tommy suck on it until the popsicle's ready. This should calm the poor dear. And the child as well," Cooper added with a wink.

"Thanks, Doc, I'll pass that along."

Sienna stood in wonderment as the two discussed everyday activities like they were having coffee rather than standing over a gruesomely mutilated body. She had an odd feeling about the ME.

"Please tell me you're not also a general practitioner or OBGYN?"
That would just be...icky.

"Oh, heavens no. I deal with the dead, mostly. They don't complain when you look after them."

He smiled and she actually felt her cheeks flush. He was definitely a charmer.

Thank God. "Okay, now what?" She thumbed toward the young woman on the ground.

"I take her to the morgue, check her out thoroughly, and conclude what the manner of death was. Though, I think we can all guess."

"The fist-sized hole in her chest is a dead giveaway."

He nodded at Sienna's response. "But it has to be done. I'll do a toxicology screen to see if she was drugged beforehand. If she follows in the footsteps of the other victims, the tox'll come back negative."

Sienna couldn't imagine what those poor victims had gone through before their deaths. What had they felt? Had the shock numbed the pain or had they felt everything before death took them? Did they know their killer? Had he approached them in a casual manner before taking their lives? Or had he jumped them and ripped their chests open without so much as a hello?

"Notify me when the tests come back. Here's my pager number." She handed Cooper her card, then turned to the alley behind her. "I'm going to do a walk-through and check out the layout. Officer Barlow,

when your guy's done interviewing the witness, I would like the report."

"Will do, Lieutenant." He held out his hand. "Welcome to the job."

She took his hand, which was firm, and gave it a squeeze. "Thanks."

She began to walk, passing the witness who was blubbering into Officer Dickie's shoulder. How he was able to understand what she was saying was beyond her, but she gave him kudos for not being a jerk and shaking the woman off. Problem was, being too soft wasn't always good on the job.

It could kill you.



Nathan slammed the door to his apartment with an earsplitting bang which of course, made him cringe. Damn headache. He was in a foul mood and didn't give a damn if the neighbors bitched about him this time. He tossed his keys and mail on the coffee table cluttered with papers and cups, then headed to the kitchen for a beer.

Medical stress leave! He'd been put on medical stress leave. What the fuck for? He was perfectly fine. It had been a week since he'd been knocked unconscious. His head wound was healing up perfectly fine. He could see all of the five fingers the doc had held up and he knew his damn name and address and the headaches were getting better. He certainly wasn't suffering Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Yeah, he'd lost his partner, his best friend, but he was still more than capable of doing his fucking job.

Popping the top of his can of beer, Nathan chugged back nearly half before heading to the sofa. It wasn't like he was going wig out on someone and start firing off his weapon. He had more sense than that. And he was *not* obsessed with the Heartless Killer. No matter what the shrink and his boss said. He was determined, that was all. If determination was a flaw, he was guilty, but he sure as hell had no intention of giving up or stopping the search for the guy simply because his boss and the department shrink told him to. What they didn't know wouldn't hurt them.

Grabbing the TV remote, Nathan flipped through the channels, not at all impressed with what was on. Even the porno channel was boring. Same old same old. Guy meets girl, lures her to his bedroom, they fuck like rabbits in heat, girl invites a few friends, and the fuck-fest turns into an orgy.

Nathan clicked the TV off, set the remote on the coffee table, and polished off his beer. Maybe that was what he needed. A good lay. It

had been weeks since he'd gotten any and thinking about that only made him angrier. Molly Hedland, two-timing, cheating bitch. If he never saw her face again, it would be too soon. Still...she had been a superb lay.

He pulled himself from the sofa, tossed his empty can in the overflowing trash can on his way to grab another beer. His kitchen was a mess of dirty dishes piled high in his sink, scattered over the countertop and table, along with yesterday's breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The floor looked like it could use a good wash and he was pretty sure beneath the dingy gray was some sort of cream tile. When was the last time he'd washed it? It was better not to think about it.

Opening the fridge to grab a second beer, he decided to add some food to his belly. What did he have to eat? Dried-out sandwich meat. Moldy cheese. No eggs left in the carton—why the hell he hadn't thrown it out when he'd used them up was anyone's guess. How old was that leftover pizza? Opening the box told him everything.

He really was a slob.

Beer in hand, he slammed the fridge closed and headed back to the living room. Maybe he'd order some Chinese. Nah, he'd had Chinese last week. Or was it the week before? He'd lost track. Chicken. Maybe he'd order some spicy wings to go with the beer.

Now where was that phone book?

He pushed some papers aside to set his beer on the messy coffee table—he'd get right on cleaning that as soon as he was done cleaning the kitchen. Not finding it on the table he began searching elsewhere for it. He found it in the washroom, of all places. As he plopped back down on the sofa, Nathan realized he had no idea where the telephone was.

Man, he really did need to clean up the place. Though, in his defense, he had spent two days in the hospital and when he'd returned home he hadn't felt much like cleaning.

With a careless toss, the phone book landed on the coffee table and knocked over his beer. "Fuck!" Scooping it up, he set it on the floor, then hurried to the messy kitchen for a rag to mop it up. "I have got to clean this place," he muttered as he wiped up the spilled beer.

It was then he noticed the letter.

He shook the splashed beer from the envelope. On the front in big, bold, red letters was his name and address. Ripping it open, he gave it a shake before reading.

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Hello, Nathan old boy. I hear you've been put on leave. What a shame. I so enjoyed our chase. Oh well, I suppose I messed you up pretty bad by killing your best bud. But you'll be happy to know he served me well. Still does. Maybe it's best you're on leave. Gives you plenty of free time and maybe...time to play. Wanna play a game, Nathan? Sure you do. How about...catch me if you can? Since I so enjoyed our chase, I thought I would invite you to join me. See, I grew tired of Boston and decided I needed a change of scenery. I'm sure you'll figure out where I've gone. You're a bright cop.

See you soon,

Nathan picked up the envelope, turned it over to read the return address. "Jacob's Cove. Where the hell is that?" Running to the kitchen and scrambling through the drawers, Nathan found the map. He swiped his arm across the table, clearing it, sending dirty dishes and moldy food falling onto the floor, then set the map out. It took him several minutes before he found the city. Grabbing the map, not bothering to fold it up, he snatched his keys and the envelope from the coffee table as he ran for the door. Killer wanted to play? Then he would damn well get a game. Only this time, Nathan was determined to win.

CHAPTER TWO

Standing in the doorway, Sienna was in awe. She had an office. Her very own office. Sure, she'd had her own space back home in Kansas, if you could call a cubicle an office. This room was big enough to fit the wide steel desk, two steel filing cabinets, two chairs, and enough room left over to do the cha cha . Sienna was in awe. She really had her own office and she had to double check just to make sure. Glancing at the name plate on the door made her giddy. Yep, there it was, her name—Lieutenant Sienna Storm. Hot damn!

Closing the door, she scooted to her desk and plopped down in the high-backed office chair that felt as if it had been designed for her ass. Throwing her arms in the air, she did a little ditty, cheering. And jumped at the knock on the door. Yanking her arms down, she cleared her throat, and gave her copper blazer a tug before responding. "Enter."

In walked a tall, dark, handsome man who was definitely drool worthy, even if he was a vampire.

"Detective Dante Vega at your service, Lieutenant."

Oh, and he had a voice to match the appearance. Like dark chocolate. Giving herself a mental slap, Sienna reminded herself dating a colleague only led to trouble.

"Detective Vega, pleasure to meet you." Standing, Sienna held her hand out to the babe. When he clasped his fingers around her hand she felt the gentleness of his palm against her own.

"I thought I would bring in the reports from the previous victims of our serial killer for you to go over." He dropped a folder on her desk then took a seat in the chair in front of her desk.

Get your head in the game, Storm. Taking her seat, Sienna picked up the file and flipped it open.

"Your first day started off with a bang," Dante spoke as Sienna looked over the file.

Flicking her eyes up, she saw the smile on his face and her heart did a little dance. Damn ethics. "Nothing like a serial murder case to say welcome."

"I contemplated whether or not to have them call you in, then decided if you're going to do this job, might as well start it off right."

"I appreciate the call. Looks like you've done a thorough job, Detective, but I already have this information. It was sent to me before I came here." She closed up the file. "How long have you been on the force?"

"Technically, I'm not. I'm a private investigator, but I was on the force some time back for about six years. I'm doing double duty for my pal, Trinity."

"Mayor Hawthorn?"

"One and the same. We go way back. She needed someone to come in and get things started, show the new guys the ropes and I said sure. My PI business is kinda slow these days."

She imagined it would be given the fact that the city was still being rebuilt and the population was down from its original thirty-four thousand plus to the ten thousand that occupied it now. "Tell me what your thoughts are on this case."

"He or she—I'm betting it's a he— isn't human. No incisions were made, no evidence of an instrument. The flesh around the hole is ragged, torn. It almost seems like the heart was ripped from their chests. To do that, the person would have to have incredible strength."

"But you're not thinking vampire?"

Dante shook his head. "What does a vampire want with a heart and aside from that, no teeth marks and the blood isn't drained from the body except from the gaping hole in the chest. Just not sure what kind of demon would do such a thing."

Neither was she. Truth was she wasn't overly educated in the races of demons, despite being one herself. She yanked the phone up seconds before it rang. "Lieutenant Storm."

"Hello, Lieutenant. This is Mayor Hawthorn. I hope I'm not getting you at a bad time?"

"Not at all, Madam Mayor." She looked up at Dante with a wide-eyed, nervous look.

"Perfect. If you have a minute, could you come up to the chief's office? We're on the second floor, big office to your left and down the hall."

"Of course. I'll be there in fifteen." She set the phone down and saw Dante gaping.

"I know. I was thinking the same thing. The Mayor just called me like...we were buds." She'd never spoken to the mayor back home, not even once.

He snorted, waving a hand at her.

"I talk to Trinity all the time. How'd you know the phone was going to ring before it rang?"

"Instincts. I'm a Tejjakan."

"Ah...full blooded?"

"Half breed. I have to meet the chief and the mayor in fifteen. I'm going to go over the reports again when I get back, then I want to talk to the neighbors in the areas where the bodies were found. I like to work alone," she told him point blank. If he couldn't handle it, well, that was his problem.

"Not a prob, I tend to prefer working alone when I'm on a case as well, which is why I decided to open my own PI office. You need anything from me you know how to find me. Great to have you on board, Lieutenant."

"Thanks, Detective." She walked him out, then decided to take a tour of the place she was now calling home before she headed to her meeting. It was a fairly large precinct but Sienna imagined once all the jobs were filled the place wouldn't seem so large. Not with dozens of officers chatting or phones ringing, not to mention interrogations. But for now she'd take advantage of the quiet. She introduced herself to the officers writing up reports, and to the dispatcher. When she checked her watch Sienna noticed she was hitting it close to being late.

Picking up her pace, she headed to the second floor and to the chief's office. There was no administrator by the desk and Sienna wondered if the woman was on a break, or if the chief didn't have one. Drawing in a deep breath and telling herself to stay calm, Sienna rapped her knuckles on the door.

"Come in."

Taking one more deep breath and releasing it, Sienna pushed through the door. The windows in the room were shaded, as she would expect for an office of a vampire. Then she nearly swallowed her tongue when her eyes focused on the dark and dangerous hunk behind the desk with eyes an interesting icy blue. What was it with Jacob's Cove and hunky men? Then the woman sitting on his desk turned, stood, and smiled. She had long, blood red hair tied at the base of her neck and blue green eyes similar to the chief's. Sienna had spoken to both on the telephone, but seeing them in person was a whole different matter.

She hoped her nervousness didn't show.

"Lieutenant Storm, it's a pleasure to finally meet you."

The chief stood and held his hand out to her as she approached his desk. She took it and felt the power in his grip. "Likewise, Chief Hawthorn."

"Welcome to the family."

Taking the mayor's hand, Sienna noticed the power in her grip as well. She had a feeling this was not a woman who took much lightly. "Thank you, Madam Mayor."

"Please, call me Trinity. It's just a title, not a name. Sit." She held a hand out to the chair in front of the desk and as she sat on the corner of the chief's desk, Sienna took the chair.

Right, like she could call the woman by her first name.

"I understand you came into your first case with a bang?" Trinity grinned as the chief took his seat. "I spoke with Cooper, our ME," she explained at Sienna's look of confusion.

Sienna shrugged, reminding herself they were just people and that she should stop being so nervous. Then the name hit her. "Hawthorn. Are the two of you related?"

"Not by blood, *per se*, but Cooper and I have known each other since I was a boy. He's been like a father to me, so I decided to take his name. But that's a whole other story. The wife and I just wanted to welcome you to the city and to your new life."

"I thought we agreed when we were on the job we wouldn't refer to each other as spouses."

"Right, I forgot. We're still newlyweds," the chief explained. "Sometimes my pride just flows out."

"Congratulations."

"Thank you. I've read over your file, Lieutenant, and I must say it's quite impressive," Trinity began. "But I'm surprised to see the absence of your true lineage in your work record."

“Not every city is like Jacob’s Cove, Madam Mayor.” Demons, vampires, and werewolves lived as freely here as humans. It was one of the reasons she’d wanted to come here to work.

“You’re so right and I recall asking you to call me by my first name. I hate titles.”

Then why would you want to take up the position of mayor?

“Yes, ma’am—Trinity.” It just felt so weird to call someone in authority by their first name. “I chose not to disclose my heredity simply because most people tend to think a person who claims they can see moments into the future or have the abilities of a cat as mentally unbalanced.”

Chief Hawthorn’s face lit up with his smile as he leaned back in his chair. “Well, you won’t have to worry about that here. Anyone who comes to live in Jacob’s Cove is different in some way, shape, or form.” He got to his feet, holding his hand out to her. “We’re overjoyed that you decided to join us.”

Standing she took his hand, giving it a firm shake. “I’m happy to be here.”

Sienna decided to take a detour to the ME’s office before heading out, only to find that the doc was out on a medical run. When Sienna inquired of her tox reports, the assistant ME laughed boldly at her, which Sienna did not find impressive.

“You’ll have to be patient in Jacob’s Cove,” the woman had said, settling her laugh. “Until we fill more positions, the toxicology reports are sent to the nearest city available. We should have it back in a week.”

A week?

Sienna grumbled as she left the office. How the hell was she supposed to catch a killer if she didn’t know what he did to the body before or after taking the life? Things didn’t get any better for Sienna when she realized her ride was still in the shop. Signing out a patrol car, she headed to the scene of the first murder.

Was this day over yet?



His eyes were drooping, so Nathan pulled over at the next rest stop and got out of his car. Considering the sign that said there were vacancies, he decided all he needed was a strong cup of coffee and a walk to wake him up. He’d take the walk first and drink the coffee while he drove. He didn’t want to waste time sleeping. All he wanted

to do was get to Jacob's Cove. The sooner he did, the better. Someone's life depended on it.

Nathan wondered how many victims the Heartless Killer had left in his wake since leaving Boston. Rubbing a hand across his face, giving his beard a scratch, Nathan told himself to not think about it too hard. It would only start his head throbbing, as always.

He scooped his cell phone from his pocket when it rang.

"Ya got me. What d'ya want?"

"Is that any way to speak to your mother, especially when she's worried sick about her one and only son?"

Nathan cringed. He hated guilt. Guilt was like a leech slowly sucking the life out of you.

"Sorry, Mom. What's up?"

"That's what I want to know. What do you mean by leaving a message on our answering service saying you're going out of town for a few weeks? You couldn't remember either your father's or my cell numbers?"

There was that leech, draining him. "I didn't want to disturb you or dad at work."

"Don't you think I know my son better than to know a lie when it's thrown at me? Try again."

He kicked a rather large rock in his path, hating the damn guilt-sucking leech. "Fine. I thought maybe the doc was right and I needed to get away for a bit." Nathan checked the sky to make sure there were no storm clouds nearby that might contain enough electricity to strike him down for lying. "I just didn't want to worry both of you. I'm fine, really, but some time away might make me even better. I'm sorry I didn't tell you directly. Am I forgiven?" *That's right, suck up.*

"The jury's still out on that. You were only released from the hospital a few days ago. Do you think it's such a good idea to be off on your own?"

"I'm a grown man, Mom. I know how to take care of myself."

"I am well aware of how old you are having given birth to you myself thirty four years ago. I want you to check in at least once a day. Make me a promise, Nathaniel, that you'll call once a day."

Even though he'd been on his own for more years than he could remember his mother still treated him like a boy. "I promise." What was a man to do? "Hugs and kisses."

"Right back at you. Now take care of my baby."

He disconnected and let out a long heavy sigh. He hated lying to his mother. Even over the phone he could see her big brown eyes glaring at him in that way she had that always made him cave.

But he hadn't, not this time. Chalk one up for him. He had a backbone after all.

Heading back to the coffee shop, Nathan decided he needed to come up with a legitimate lie, one his mother would believe so that she didn't worry so much about him.

Because the last thing he wanted her to find out was that he was after a killer with revenge on his mind.

CHAPTER THREE

Home sweet home.

Standing in the doorway to her brand new home, Sienna breathed in the scent of freshly cleaned carpets and stale cardboard. If only she could move around the place.

Sienna maneuvered her way through her apartment to find her faithful companion, Daisy, had chewed several holes in the unpacked boxes. The instant the dog noticed her master was home, she sat up, tilted her head to the left, and gave her ever-popular *I'm cute, pet me* look.

Being such a sucker for that sappy puppy look, Sienna crouched down to scratch the dog's head. "You may be cute, Daisy, but you're a pain in my ass. Who's going to clean this up?"

The dog's response was to fall over onto her back and curl her legs up. Sienna shook her head. "Oh, and now you want me to rub your tummy. Nice. You're a suck up."

Standing, Sienna took one look at her messy apartment with boxes piled high and furniture placed haphazardly in the room, and had a fleeting thought to turn around and leave. Then Daisy began chewing on another box, and Sienna knew what she had to do.

"Do you think Detective Cutie Vega would mind helping me unpack? Probably not a good idea to call and ask him anyway, given my track record with cops. Guess it's just you and me, Daisy."

In response the dog scurried off to the bedroom. "Thanks for the help."

What did she expect? That her belongings would have been unpacked and her furniture placed in the room with some order? She hadn't paid the movers to do more than deliver her stuff and that they had. She'd given her landlord permission to allow them in while she was gone only because she knew she probably wouldn't be able to be here herself. Now she regretted that. It might have been a better idea to move a few days before her first week of work. Though rightfully, she wasn't due to check in at the precinct for another two days.

But murder didn't have a time clock and neither did she.

Staring at the mess she was now calling home, Sienna released a heavy sigh. Where to start?

"Stop chewing up the boxes, Daisy," Sienna hollered. Having keen hearing had its advantages. So when her landlord showed up at her door, she opened it a split second before he could knock.

"Oh...hey. I...uh, saw you pull up, so I thought I'd come up and make sure you have everything."

Miles Hadley was a creepy-looking fellow with big, bulging eyes in a hollow face; a tall, thin body that looked like he hadn't eaten in months; and the nerves of a junkie. But Sienna was polite to him despite her uneasiness.

"Everything's fine. I was just about to start unpacking some of my stuff."

"Oh, great. You need some help? I don't mind."

"I'm fine, but thank you." It was a nice gesture...if she didn't suspect the guy was hitting on her.

"Okay, but if you change your mind, you know where to find me."

"You bet." Closing the door, she shuddered, then saw Daisy sitting in the bedroom doorway with one of Sienna's socks in her mouth. "Where did you get that?" When Sienna entered the bedroom she saw the boxes she'd marked as clothing had been opened, the tape she'd sealed them with torn. If that wasn't bad enough, she saw that her clothing had been rifled through, namely her undergarments. "Oh, ick. They went through my stuff." Then it occurred to her that it might not have been the movers but creepy Mr. Hadley instead. "Oh double ick." She closed the box and set it at the back of the room with a mental note to go shopping the first chance she got.

So far, her first day in Jacob's Cove wasn't proving to be a great one.



As Nathan pulled into Jacob's Cove, his jaw dropped and his eyes widened. Most of the trees were barren and looked dead. Those that had life in them looked pathetically sparse. The grass was brown in more patches than green, and that was the highlight of the city as he came to learn. As he drove along the city streets, he saw house after house either destroyed or burned up. Shops were boarded up and some of them looked as if a strong wind could topple them over.

What the hell had happened here? It looked like a bomb had gone off. As he drove along the city streets looking for a hotel, Nathan wondered if he'd been hasty in traveling for miles to a place he'd never been to much less heard of on the assumption that the Heartless Killer was here. What had he been thinking? He'd thrown some clothes in a bag and flown out of his apartment in a matter of minutes after reading the note from the killer. Now he was in a town that looked as if it was deserted without a clue as to what to do next. How the hell was the killer going to know he was even here?

It came to mind that this was exactly what the doctor had said to him. He hadn't been thinking straight since Leo's murder, going off half cocked. He saw it now as what the doc and everyone else around him had seen. He'd released himself from the hospital and had instantly gone from bar to bar beating anyone up who looked as if they could give him information. He'd gone on stake-outs, searching the city for the killer without a care to what anyone had said to him.

Damn it, the doc and his captain had been right.

What he should do was turn his sorry ass around and go back home. Take the three months off he'd been instructed to take, see the shrink, let his head and heart heal. But damn it, he just couldn't and he knew Leo would understand. He couldn't let his death go unsolved.

Then his cell phone rang. Fully expecting it to be his mother, or perhaps his father this time, he was a little more jovial when he answered. "This is Nathan; how may I help you?"

"Well, you certainly sound enthusiastic. Guess those shrink sessions are paying off."

Nathan slammed on the brakes and at this very moment he was damn glad there was no traffic on the roads. Which—okay—was a little odd. He recognized that whiney-toned voice instantly and pictured his hands around the guy's throat choking the life out of him. "Hello, Killer."

"Now, Nathan, what did we discuss about you calling me that name?"

"And what did we discuss about you calling me on my cell phone?" Damn it! He had no access to a tracker to figure out where the guy was calling from. Not that it mattered; they'd never been able to trace his calls before.

"Maybe that's why we like each other so much. We're so similar."

"I am nothing like you, Killer. Furthermore, I despise you."

"Oh, I think you and I are more alike than you're willing to admit. Don't you get a thrill every time you fire your weapon?"

Nathan's fingers tightened on the phone and the steering wheel. "Where are you, Killer?"

"Didn't you get my letter, Nathaniel?"

Only his mother was allowed to call him Nathaniel but he knew if he made a big deal out of it, Killer would have more to use against him.

"Yeah, I got your letter." And if he'd been thinking in his right mind he would have taken it directly to his captain for analysis. He was such an idiot.

"Then you should know where I am, unless that rap on the head I gave you messed up your brains."

"My head is just fine." Liar. "And, yes, I know you're in a place called Jacob's Cove. Good for you. Hope it works out for you." He kept his fingers crossed that Killer would give himself away.

"You and I both know you're dying to catch me. So what are you waiting for? Come and get me."

Growling when the phone disconnected, Nathan jammed it back in his pocket, then sent the car rolling.

At least he was on the right track.



Standing in her apartment, Sienna decided it was livable. She'd piled the boxes to the back wall, placing her worn-out, tweed sofa beside it. She really needed new furniture. Her twenty-five inch TV—and that was a sorry excuse for the thing—sat on the opposite wall on a small wooden stand. She'd unpack her Blu-Ray some time later on. She really had no idea why she'd bought the damn thing. It wasn't like she was home often enough to watch anything.

In the dining room, her small and in bad need of repair table was placed near the back of the wall with the two chairs on either side. More boxes were piled up on the wall beside it. She'd get to unpack-

ing everything eventually. Her bedroom was somewhat organized so that she didn't stub any toes if she had to get out of bed in the dark. Though she had night vision, in her first moments of awakening at night her eyesight was a little foggy. The box of clothes that had been sifted through by either the movers or her sick landlord sat by the closet, sealed. She refused to use anything inside of it and figured it was best to not even think about it.

Now that her place was somewhat livable, Sienna wanted to fill her belly with something hot and then take a steamy shower before falling face first into bed. Her plan was put on hold when Daisy began scratching at the door and whining.

"Oh, seriously, Daisy. Now?" As if panicked, Daisy began yelping and clawing at the door even more. "Fine, fine, but make it fast. I'm starved."

Grabbing the leash hanging by the door, Sienna clasped it to the dog's bright red collar, then grabbing her keys and cell phone, headed out the door. It occurred to her that she had no idea where the nearest park was.

Taking the stairs down to the main level, Sienna hurried to the door with Daisy on her heels. "You're going to be a little shocked at our surroundings, my girl. The city is in rough shape."

Daisy's response was to yip in what Sienna assumed was excitement as they headed outside. The area she lived in housed one other apartment building and some broken-down houses. A few blocks down was a hotel which didn't look half bad. Taking the alley behind her complex, Sienna and Daisy examined their terrain. It was as worn down as the rest of the city with half dead trees and lawn scattered about. When Daisy sniffed the fence surrounding the trash bin, then turned her nose up, Sienna laughed. "Yeah, well, it was a spur of the moment thought. I needed a place to live and this was the first one in the brochure guide that looked suitable. Not to mention its close proximity to the precinct so that's a plus factor. You'll get used to it," she reassured the dog and continued down the alley. "Just do your duty so we can get back inside and I can order some food."

It was a clear night with a full moon and yet Sienna couldn't help but feel an uneasiness in the air. The vision hit her as if it were happening right before her eyes.

He jumped out of the shadows, his fangs ready, and death in his cold, yellow eyes. She could sense the blood lust in him moments before he attacked.

The vision cleared and she waited, knowing he would jump out at her at any moment. But just as one vision vanished, the second shot into her. He raised his gun to her head and pulled the trigger.

CHAPTER FOUR

Daisy began barking wildly at something behind her and Sienna shook her head to try to clear away the fog from the vision. She heard the sound of footsteps on gravel and, spinning around, saw a man step out of the shadow.

“Behind you! Get down.”

The gun came up in his hand, aimed at her head. She felt the presence of the vampire as he jumped out from behind the dumpster. As she spun around to take him down, the gun fired, hitting the vamp in the right shoulder. He jerked back, screeching like a banshee.

“What the hell are you doing?” she yelled at the man with the gun as she ran to the vamp. “Daisy, stay!” Daisy sat as she’d been instructed while Sienna knelt down beside the screaming vamp. She pressed her knee to the vamp’s bleeding shoulder to ensure that he wouldn’t move. “You are under arrest for breaking the laws of humans and vampires and will be detained in the local jail while awaiting trial.”

“You’re a cop?” the guy behind her responded.

“Yeah, I’m a cop. Oh, stop your screaming already,” she yelled at the vamp, then flipped him onto his belly and pulled his arms to his back, pinning them in one hand while she searched for her handcuffs. “Damn it, why don’t I have my cuffs on me. Wanna tell me why you were about to attack me?”

"I wasn't...honest...I was only...out for a walk. Yeah, I was walking. I'm gonna sue the cops for harassment. I was minding my own—Fuck, my shoulder's killing me. Police brutality!" he screamed good and loud.

"Shut the hell up. No one gives a damn."

"Here."

Sienna glanced up to see a set of shiny silver handcuffs dangling down before her. Glancing up, she took a moment to survey the gentleman and noticed he wasn't bad on the eyes. His dark brown hair was messed up but somehow looked natural. And wow! The guy had a hell of a body. Broad shoulders, wide chest, and narrow waist. His face was pretty decent to look at, even with that thin line of hair over his upper lip that ran down the sides of his mouth to cover his chin. He had nice eyes, dark, round, with long lashes. And...he was human.

"I'd prefer a regulation set rather than your bondage toys."

"These are regulation. I'm a detective. Nathan Powers," he introduced in a deep, throaty voice that sounded as if he'd had one too many cigarettes.

The vamp squirming beneath her, she took the cuffs. Before slapping them on the vamp's wrists she made sure they were regulation. Flipping him onto his back, Sienna pinned him with her knee as she had before. "Don't try anything stupid."

"Bitch!" the vamp spat.

"What the hell's with the yellow contacts and fake fangs?"

Sienna glanced over her shoulder as she responded to the detective.

"What? You've never seen a vampire before?"

"A what?"

"A vampire."

"I heard you. I thought I'd seen it all, but I guess not. Now we've got junkies playing vampire," The detective chuckled with a shake of his head.

One look at the guy told her he was serious.

"Oh jeez, he's a virgin," The vampire on the ground said.

She rolled her eyes. "I told you to shut up." She yanked the screaming vamp to his feet. "This is a vampire—not a fake, the real deal and if you plan on being in Jacob's Cove for any amount of time you might want to be on the lookout for them. Some of them refuse to abide by the new laws. Isn't that right, screamer?"

"Fuck you, cop bitch!"

"Seriously though, he's a vampire like the blood-sucking kind?"

"Don't know any other kind." Sienna jerked the vamp back when he tried to bolt. "Do it and die," she warned.

"You can't kill me and we both know it."

The vamp had her there, but that didn't mean she couldn't rough him up a little.

"Shouldn't you like...you know, jam a wooden stake through his heart? I can't believe I just said that." The detective laughed boldly.

Was this guy for real?

"Neither can I. We prefer to rehabilitate them rather than turning them to dust." Holding the vamp in one hand, she pulled her cell phone out with the other and dialed the station. "Lieutenant Storm here. I have a rogue vamp I need brought in."

"I wasn't doing anything, you stupid bitch."

She clamped onto the squirming vamp a little tighter as she gave her location. She slipped her phone back into her shirt pocket when she was through and gave the vamp a hard shove against the dumpster. "Right, you were only skulking in the dark because you needed a smoke, right?"

"It's a free world last time I looked."

"Sure, except when you're attempting to drink someone dry. Save it for the judge; I'm done listening."

"You can't prove anything. I'm innocent," he continued to justify.

"Do you know what I am?" she asked as she leaned in real close. "I'm a Tejakkan which means I have precog abilities. I saw you moments before you jumped out and I saw just what you planned to do, so save your 'I'm innocent' act for someone who gives a damn."

"Bitch!"

"That's right and remember it." She shoved him good and hard against the dumpster.

"You've got a cute dog there, and obedient," Detective Powers remarked as he crouched down to pet Daisy.

"Thanks." And because Daisy was sitting so obediently and waiting for her, Sienna decided she deserved a treat later. "You in town for a job, Detective?"

"No. I'm on vacation."

She laughed, keeping the vamp pinned to the dumpster with no effort whatsoever as she turned to the detective. "Why the hell would you want to vacation in Jacob's Cove?"

"Actually, I'm passing through. What happened to this place?" He scratched Daisy between the ears which of course, the dog was loving.

"A war between the good and the bad, and if you knew nothing of vampires beforehand, me telling you what really went down will blow your mind. But I don't have time to go into it right now." With her free hand, she waved at the patrol car as it inched into the alley.

"You're serious about this vampire thing?"

Still holding the vamp against the dumpster, doing her best to ignore his whining about police brutality, Sienna responded as calmly as possible. "No, I'm pulling your leg."

"I thought so. I mean, shit, vampires," he laughed with a deep hardiness, running a hand across his stubble-lined face. "I knew he had to be some druggo who decided to play vampire or something with the teeth."

If he was a real detective she would eat her badge. "Let me see some ID."

"What for?"

"You're too stupid to be a cop." This time his eyes narrowed. He slid his hand into his jean jacket and she whipped out her stunner. "Keep your hands where I can see them."

"I thought you wanted to see my ID?" he remarked snidely.

Her jaw tightened. "Nice and slow, and trust me, I'll know before you pull something stupid. You'll be lying on the ground writhing in agony before you have a chance to blink. Take him off my hands, Officer," she added to the cop who stepped up, then passed the vamp on to him. She eyeballed the supposed detective while he slid his hand under his jacket. When she didn't get a flash forward of the situation, she deduced he wasn't going to do her harm.

The detective pulled out his wallet and flipped it open to reveal his badge.

"Huh, I'll be damned!" He really was a detective. "You're a long way from home, Detective." In the background she could hear the vamp still screaming about his rights and about police brutality. He could scream all he liked; it would do him no good.

"Like I said, I'm on vacation." He tucked the badge back into his jacket.

"I'd suggest you get yourself on the road and away from here before you get hurt. Come on, Daisy, I've gotta take you back home, then head into the cop shop." She walked off, Daisy on her heels looking back at the detective as they headed home.

He must have passed the detective's exam because of his looks.



“Vampires,” Nathan snorted while watching the hot woman walk off with her dog. “Do I look that gullible?” The cop car pulled out of the alley and as it passed by him, Nathan glanced into the rear seat at the junkie. What some people wouldn’t do to look different.

Wait...had the blood on his shoulder been gray? Nah, must have been the dim light. Shoving his hands into his pockets, Nathan headed in the direction the hot lieutenant had gone. She was something, and those tight leather pants she wore didn’t hide much. Nice ass, long legs, thin waist. He was a leg man and she definitely qualified as having some pretty damn nice legs in those leather pants, but the rest of her hadn’t been all bad either. He especially liked her eyes. He wasn’t sure what shade they were—too hard to tell in the dark, but it was the strength he saw in them that he found particularly appealing.

Yet he couldn’t help but notice the softer side of her when she looked at her dog. And what a cutie she was with fur white as snow and patches black as night. Who could resist big, dark, puppy eyes like the ones the lieutenant’s dog had?

He saw her run out of an apartment building up the block, hop in a police cruiser, and speed off.

It might not be such a bad idea to get to know the law in town. Might be nice to see what they had on the Heartless Killer.

Hands in his pockets, Nathan strolled down the street toward his hotel.

CHAPTER FIVE

There were parts of the city that actually looked as if someone had made an effort to take care of it. Then there was the destruction where houses were charred, cars sat by the curb or in driveways, torn apart, windows boarded up and graffiti scrawled on any open spot available. It looked even worse in the daytime than it had the night before. But the overall look of the city was as if something had come in and killed off all the plant-life. It was weird.

What had the sexy cop said about it? A war between good and bad? What had she meant by that? And why had he even believed her when she'd told him the druggie she'd caught was a vampire? If she didn't want to tell him the truth, then he supposed he would have to find out for himself.

Nathan drove the streets of Jacob's Cove downtown sector and wondered why it was so dead. Where was everyone? Why were the shops closed up? The place was a ghost town. It was ten in the morning and there wasn't a soul to be seen.

He actually jumped when his cell phone rang in his pocket. Laughing at himself, he answered it with a cheery, "You got me. Have your way with me."

"Good lord, son. I really wish you would learn to answer a telephone properly."

Actually, what he needed to do was check the caller ID before answering. "Sorry, Mom. What's up?"

"I'm planning a family dinner for this coming Sunday. Jenny and Paul will be here with the kids and so will Sara and Dell. Dinner will be at six and it would be nice if you brought a girlfriend."

His mother was forever on his case about bringing his girlfriends home. But it was his belief that the only time a guy brought a girl home to meet his family was if he planned to marry her. Nathan had no plans of marriage any time soon.

"I won't be able to make it, Mom." He cringed, waiting for the rebuttal. He could actually picture the disappointment on his mother's face.

"Nathaniel."

Here it comes...

"Your mother invites you to dinner with the rest of your family only twice a month. Is it so difficult for you to try to make at least one?"

Nathan cringed again. This guilt trip was not going to be a smooth one.

"I'm sorry, Mom, but I won't be back by then. But I promise, I'll make it to the next one." Why did he say that? Now he'd have to keep the promise and if he hadn't caught the Heartless Killer by then, he wouldn't be able to make it back.

"I'm going to hold you to it, Nathaniel. Kisses."

"Back at you." He blew her a kiss through the phone before disconnecting. "Damn it!" Him and his big mouth.

Spotting the police station up ahead to his left, Nathan pulled up in front. He clicked the remote security locks on his car, then pulled out some change from his pocket to plug the meter. Nathan took a look around at the vacant streets, and decided not to even bother. Who was going to ticket him anyway?

The sign on the front door read, *Office hours, nine to noon, one to five. After hours, call Detective Dante Vega, Lieutenant Storm, or Police Chief Basil Hawthorn, along with their numbers.* How on earth was this city run when the cop house shut down at five?

Pushing through the front door, Nathan spotted the receptionist behind her steel desk busy clicking away on the keyboard in front of her. She was a pretty thing, with dark hair and dark eyes and a slender build. When she spoke, Nathan knew she was a woman who preferred to get right to the point.

"Welcome to Jacob's Cove Police Department. How may I help you today?"

Narrowing in on the name plate over her left breast, he responded, "Hello, Lexi. My name is Detective Nathan Powers. I was wondering if I could speak to the person in charge of homicide."

"Lieutenant Storm isn't available at this time, but I could take a message for her."

"What about a detective in homicide?"

"May I inquire as to why you need to see a detective in homicide?"

She was a thorough one. "I would like to discuss a case. I may have some information that the homicide department might find valuable."

"One minute, I'll check and see if he's in."

Nate examined the lobby area while she punched in a number. It looked clean, in pretty decent shape, but like the streets, it was vacant. Seemed the crime rate in Jacob's Cove was pretty low.

"Someone here to talk to you, says he might have some information you might need. Of course I asked his name. I'm not a moron, Dante, and just remember I'm only doing this job as a favor. Detective Powers. Get your butt out here and see for yourself." She slammed the phone down with a snap. "Detective Vega will be with you shortly," she stated with a fake smile.

Nathan had a fleeting thought to turn around and leave. Apparently the woman was in a bad mood. He wandered the lobby while he waited.

"Detective Powers?"

Nathan gave his attention to the gentleman who approached him with his hand held out. He had the same dark hair as the woman behind the desk, same facial structure as well. "Yes?"

"Detective Dante Vega. How may I help you?"

Same yellow eyes as the perp in the alley. How weird. "Is there somewhere we could talk?" He eyeballed the woman behind the desk with an eager-to-listen look on her face.

"Don't mind my sister. She's harmless...at a distance. We can use my office. Right this way."

Nathan followed him, glancing back at the woman, understanding the similarities now. "It's pretty quiet here today."

"It is on most days. It's the nights that get crazy."

They entered an office of substantial size and Nathan couldn't help but feel a little jealous over it. Back home his office consisted of a

cubical seven feet wide and eight feet long. No door, not even a window. Detective Vega's office had it all, including a sofa.

The detective held his hand out to a chair at the front of the steel desk. "So what do you have for me, Detective?"

Nathan sat down while the detective took his chair behind the desk. "Have you had any strange murders in the past few weeks involving victims with their heart ripped out of their chest?"

Detective Vega sat forward, resting his arms on his desk. "He's done this somewhere else then?"

"Boston. He killed five and before that it was three in Denver."

"The boy gets around."

Nathan nodded. "He was my case in Boston and I'd like to find out any information you have on him now—his victims' reports and so forth so I can take him down."

"Well..." Detective Vega said in a slow easy tone as he leaned back in his chair. "You'll have to take that up with Lieutenant Storm. She's in charge of the case and she's out at the moment."

"So I was told. I thought while I waited for her I could go over the files you have on the Heartless Killer."

Detective Vega's dark eyebrows shot up. "Is that what you're calling him?"

"It's the name the media gave him, but we can both agree it's appropriate." For a guy who ripped the hearts out of his victims while they still breathed.

"Gotta love the media. I can't give you access to those files until the lieutenant comes back in. You're welcome to wait in the lobby, if you like."

That wasn't the response he was hoping for. "I'll come back later. Thanks for your time, Detective." Nathan stood, holding his hand out and hoping his disappointment didn't show too much. *

"Hey, you got me away from paperwork for which I am eternally grateful. When you've discussed it with the lieutenant, let me know if you need anything from me. I'd be happy to assist."

"Will do. Mind if I ask about the eyes? It's not a common shade."

"It is around these parts. I'll let the lieutenant know you were in."

Nathan left the office, baffled by the detective's statement in regards to his eye color. Jacob's Cove was proving to be an interesting city.

Since he hadn't had breakfast yet, Nathan decided to look for the closest coffee shop. Several blocks down he found a quaint-looking spot that boasted the city's best coffee. Willing to give it a try, Nathan

took a seat at a booth and opened the menu on the table. He thought it was a little odd that all the shades in the place were drawn on such a sunny day.

"My name is Gypsy Dawn and I'll be your waitress this morning. Coffee?"

He looked up, did a double-take at the woman standing by the table wearing the same yellow contacts as the detective and the junkie in the alley and sporting an interesting hair color of lime green.

"Am I breathing?" He shoved his coffee cup toward the woman. "Interesting eyes. Where'd you get them?"

Her brow curled as she filled his cup. "That's an interesting way of putting it. They're courtesy of my brother-in-law who wasn't my brother-in-law at the time but actually a bad guy. Would you like a few more moments before ordering?"

Nathan blinked at her rapid fire chatter, amused by it. He had no idea what she was talking about. "No, I'm ready. I'll have the special, eggs over easy, bacon crisp, and white toast."

"It'll be about ten minutes."

As she walked off he noticed it wasn't just her hair that was an odd shade. Her clothes were rather odd as well. The jeans she wore were definitely tight and accented her nice ass, but dyed in several vibrant shades of red, yellow, and green. The black leather boots she wore came to her knees, Apparently it was a fad in Jacob's Cove to wear yellow contacts.

As Nathan glanced around the coffee shop, he wondered why the place was so dead. That seemed to be a running theme here and he couldn't help but wonder why. When the funky green-haired, yellow-eyed waitress brought him his food, he thanked her with a smile, then dug into his breakfast.

This was the strangest city he'd ever been in. But they sure knew how to make great coffee and eggs.

CHAPTER SIX

The day had worn on her, and Sienna realized that if she was going to do her job properly, she would need to get some sleep real soon. The two hours she'd grabbed in her office after writing up her report on the alley vamp, Barry Johnson, had not been enough. Add in the factor that all she'd eaten in the past twelve hours was a stale bag of chips and she was in sorry shape.

Because she'd been curious about the detective, she'd had him researched and found that he had quite the history. Aside from being a dutiful officer, he was tenacious and tended to ignore commands. And...he'd recently been put on medical stress leave after his partner had been killed and he'd been injured trying to save him. And now he was here, most likely trying to find the killer.

Well she certainly wasn't going to give in to him because he'd suffered a loss. This was her city and her case.

Rolling the windows down as she drove did little good to wake her up considering the air was warm and still. She really did need to get some sleep. Pulling into the parking lot, she climbed out of her pathetic excuse of a car and headed to the bar.

She yawned just as she reached for the door handle.

Giving her head a shake and slapping her cheeks, Sienna took a deep breath before entering The Demon's Lair, Jacob's Cove's one

and only vamp/human nightclub. Just as soon as she was done asking some questions she was going to go home and crawl into bed. She was looking forward to it.

Stepping inside, Sienna was quite surprised at the atmosphere. It had the usual nightclub atmosphere, complete with the loud pumping rave/techno music, dim lighting, flashing colors and smoky air. And half-drunk patrons bumping and grinding on the dance floor. She'd been given the stats on the place and knew it was run by a shape shifter by the name of Zachary Adams who happened to be somewhat of a mogul in the business world. The place was a safe haven for the unusual, ranging from vampires to demons, werewolves, shape shifters and dozens of other creatures. Humans who dared to enter The Demon's Lair were informed of its not-so-relaxing atmosphere before being allowed in. And though the owner stuck to the rules, it was still a place that was on every cop's radar in Jacob's Cove.

"You need to read the disclaimer before I allow you any further, pretty lady."

Sienna trailed a glance over the burly vampire guard at the door as he held out a clipboard. She flipped open her ID, showing her badge before responding.

"I just need to ask a few questions. Your boss around?"

"Wait by the bar. I'll notify him you're here."

Sienna had a feeling the guy had an aversion to cops by the way his friendly demeanor changed the instant he saw her badge. Stay on her good side and they'd have no problems. She took a stool by the bar and had a look around. She knew the back room was used for many things, including an area for blood drinkers and the humans who came here to have their blood sucked by a vampire. She didn't understand the thrill, but apparently the combination of being drunk and having your blood sucked was a high. Not that she was ever willing to find out. She liked her blood right where it was. In her veins.

It was an interesting set up. Dance floor in the center of the room with tables lined in circles ever expanding around it. Two sets of spiral staircases on opposite sides of the room led to a balcony where more tables and seating areas crowded the room. From the railings hung lines of red lights that flashed in time with the music. They reflected on the fog on the dance floor to make it red. A chandelier of red and white lights hung over the dance floor and looked as if it had cost a pretty penny.

"Lieutenant Storm?"

Swiveling in her chair, she momentarily went gaga over the stunning blond Adonis before her in what looked like a designer suit perfectly fitted to his tall, thin form. She hoped to God she wasn't drooling.

"Would you be Zachary Adams?"

His smile was blinding and made her heart thump a little harder beneath her chest.

"One and the same." He held his hand out to her. "How may I be of service to you today, Lieutenant?"

Not only gorgeous but polite as well. She took his hand, not at all surprised by the softness of it. He didn't strike her as a man who used his hands to work. "Is there somewhere we could talk that's not quite as noisy?"

"Certainly. My office is right this way." He held a long arm out to his left.

Slipping from the stool, Sienna followed him and noticed along with the gorgeousness came an intoxicating scent. The guy was a charmer and she reminded herself she was on duty. He led her through the bar to the back and along a short hallway before coming to a stop.

"Here we are."

He stepped back, holding the door open to allow her in. She clamped her mouth shut, just to make sure she wouldn't drool as she passed by him as she entered his office. The instant the door closed, the loud pumping music was shut out. Looking around, Sienna noticed it was more than just an office. It looked as if the guy lived here. Along with a huge and what looked like a very expensive oak desk was a mini bar, a sofa in cream leather and a TV that filled an entire wall of approximately six feet by eight feet.

Holy shit!

"Can I offer you a beverage of the non-alcoholic type, Lieutenant?"

"I'm fine, thank you. Nice office." Trying for nonchalant, Sienna sat in the soft leather chair by his desk and hoped she wasn't showing how in awe she was of the space.

"Thank you. I designed it myself. Now," he began as he sat in a tall, cream leather chair behind the desk. "How may I help you?"

"I'm investigating Jacob's Cove's first serial murder case. You might have heard about it in the news."

"Yes, indeed. How awful." He clicked his tongue while giving his head a short shake.

"Yeah, and then some." What did she expect from a demon? "I was wondering if you might know of anyone who could be capable of such a heinous act?"

He leaned back in the chair, folding his long elegant fingers together on his lap.

"Of course you would come to the local demon bar to ask that. I understand that but, I assure you, I would not condone such an act in my club."

He owned a demon bar and she was supposed to believe he didn't condone demons and vampires taking humans for their own gain. Right. But she played nice.

"Okay, so not in your club but maybe you've heard something. Maybe someone's been talking while they sip a nice cold one?" It was common that murderers liked to brag.

"Nothing that I've been privy to, but you're welcome to ask my waitresses and the bartender, after hours," he concluded. "Having a cop poke around in my bar makes for nervous patrons. I can give you a list of all the employees in my bar and their addresses."

She could understand his apprehension at having her around. Still...she might see something or hear something while investigating. "That'll do just fine." For now, she supposed. Nothing wrong with coming in after hours to peruse the place.

"Is there an email address I could send it to?"

Slipping a business card from her ID folder, she slid it across the desk to Zachary. "The sooner the better, if you could."

"Of course." He stood and she understood it as a dismissal. "What race of demon are you, Lieutenant?"

She cocked her head to the side. "How do you know I'm a demon?"

"I make it my job to know everything there is about the people who enter my club."

Of course he would. "Tejakkan."

"Ah...a time-shifter. I can see why you would be an asset to the department. I'll have the information to you by the end of the day."

She left his office and decided it might be a good idea to keep an eye on Zachary Adams and his club.



It was a nice evening, Nathan decided as he sat on the steps to the lieutenant's apartment building, cracking sunflower seeds while he waited for her return. There was a light breeze in the air, enough to

chase away the warm air that had filled most of the day. He supposed it might be one of the last warm days left as fall began to make its way. Despite being late August, it still didn't explain the dead trees, grass, and lack of foliage in the city.

When the beat-up police cruiser pulled into the parking lot beside the building, Nathan checked his watch and noticed it was well past ten in the evening. He'd popped into the cop shop periodically throughout the day but every time he'd been told the lieutenant was out on her investigation. Finally he had caught the lieutenant.

As she strolled toward him, he admired the way she walked. Head held high, eyes straight forward, shoulders squared. Those black leather pants of hers formed a second skin over her long, lean legs. The short leather jacket she wore opened in the front, revealing a white t-shirt beneath it. And just a tantalizing glimpse of cleavage. Her blond hair was a short shag of mixed layers that seemed to suit her perfectly.

She really was a hot number.

"You are the hardest person to get a hold of, Lieutenant," he remarked, getting to his feet.

When those eyes focused on him he saw recognition, then something that looked like weariness. "Detective—"

"Powers," he supplied, holding his hand out to her.

"I remembered your name, Detective. I heard you've been in looking for me. It's been a crazy day. I usually prefer to do my business in my office and not in my home." She climbed the steps, then stopped and turned to him. "How did you find me, anyway?"

"The receptionist gave your address to me. I think that woman needs a vacation." She definitely seemed stressed.

"I'll make note of it and be sure to remind her not to give out my home address. If you want to talk to me, I'll be in the office tomorrow morning at eight. That would be the best time." She continued up the steps.

He tossed his handful of seeds aside into the dead flower bed beside the stairs, and followed her. "Now seems just as convenient."

She continued up the steps to the front door without sparing him a glance. "Tomorrow would be better."

He stepped up in front of her. "Look, all I want is access to your reports on the Heartless Killer, then I'll be out of your hair."

She came to a stop, eyebrows raised. "The Heartless Killer?"

Her eyes were a beautiful shade of blue lined by long lashes. Nathan couldn't get over how smooth her face was. There wasn't a flaw to

be seen. And she had the cutest nose he'd ever seen curving up just a little at the end. Her mouth wasn't half bad either and though he had yet to see her smile, he would bet his car it was a killer. "The media labeled him, not me."

She shrugged. "Leave it to the media. I thought you were here on vacation, Detective."

The sarcasm in her voice was thick.

"I lied."

"So it seems." She narrowed those big blue eyes at him. "I ran a check on you, Detective Powers. You've been put on stress leave."

Great, just what he didn't need. "It's a bullshit excuse to keep the department looking good. I'm perfectly fine."

"The report said you had a mighty severe head wound."

"Flesh wound. They always exaggerate in the reports." Sure, he'd had to have stitches and he'd had a concussion but he was fine now.

"Did they exaggerate about you being unstable as well?"

He clenched down on his jaw hard enough to make it ache. "I am not unstable."

"Tell that to the innocent victims you beat up."

He was losing his patience but since he needed something from her, he played nice. "If you think drug dealers and pimps are innocent you're in the wrong business, Lieutenant."

She narrowed those lovely blue eyes at him. "In any case, I prefer to keep this investigation in my own house. Good day, Detective."

She tried to go around him, but he stayed in front of her and he saw her jaw clench. "Look, Lieutenant Storm, all I want is some information. Why is that so tough?"

"Tell you what, Detective—you get some authorization that says I have to let you have the files and I'll make sure you get them. Until then, get back to your vacation."

He backed up and barred the door, and this time she growled at him.

"Move it, Detective."

There was something incredibly sexy in the way her voice vibrated with her anger. Nathan wondered what her skin would feel like beneath all that leather. "I understand that you don't want to share—"

"Great, then back off." She planted a hand on his chest.

His heart began to speed up. Taking her wrist in his hand, he felt her pulse skitter. Maybe if he seduced her she would be more inclined to let him have what he wanted on the case. He was spun so fast he didn't even have time to blink. She pinned him to the door with an in-

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credible amount of strength and when she spoke in a slow, even tone it was completely professional.

“Try that again and I’ll haul your ass into a cell faster than you can say boo.”

She shoved him aside and slammed the door in his face before he could stop her. Nathan was dumbfounded, and his heart was pounding.

He’d never been so turned on in all his life.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Sleep was as short-lived for Sienna on her second night on the job as it had been on the first. Two hours into a nice, dreamless night she'd been awakened to her cell phone jangling.

Another murder had taken place and it was her duty to investigate it.

Dragging her tired butt out of bed, hearing Daisy's disapproval in a tiny snarl, Sienna dressed then stumbled sleepily from her room. She threw some cold water on her face, some more on her messed-up hair, then drying both with a towel, grabbed her cell, her weapon, keys, and her badge. She shoved them in her fanny pack as she headed out the door.

Despite the crispness in the air, she had no need for a jacket. Her body regulated her temperature to accommodate. It was like having your own heater or air-conditioner built into your body. The only time she needed a jacket was when the temperature dipped below minus twenty. Frostbite was a bitch to deal with.

Climbing behind the wheel of the battered patrol car, Sienna made a mental note to call the repair shop and nag them into finishing her car already. She was tired of driving this piece of crap. The fact that it didn't have a GPS or onboard mapping system was just

sad. Settling for the primitive, she pulled out the paper map from the glove box and searched for her current location. Once she found it, she tried to find the murder site. After wasting several moments she finally located it and sent herself off. Once she found the general area she was looking for it didn't take much to find the scene. The flashing cop lights were a dead giveaway.

Parking on the street in front of a simple, white, two-story house, behind the cop car with its lights flashing, Sienna headed to the scene. Detective Vega met her at the front gate to the house.

"Called me first by habit," he explained as he led her around back. "Husband found her when she didn't come to bed after going out for a cigarette. Same MO—heart ripped from the chest. And they say smoking'll kill you."

"It does, but I doubt this is what they meant." Sienna stepped up onto the patio to see a young female, blond hair, approximately mid-thirties, lying face up with blood pooling around her and a fist-sized hole where her heart once had beat. She had the million mile death stare.

Sienna glanced over at Officer Barlow as she slipped into the sterile cap, gloves and gown.. "Give me the details."

He cleared his throat and began. "Helen McCroy, thirty-nine, stepped out approximately three hours ago for a cigarette. Hubby decided to check on her after noticing she hadn't come to bed after the news was over and found her like this. He's currently in the wash-room spilling his dinner. Officer Simmons is with him."

Kneeling down, Sienna examined the body from head to toe. The cigarette Helen had been so eager to have before bed was still between her fingers but had smoldered down to the filter. She had nice nails, not long but well taken care of. She wore a cream terrycloth robe which had parted to the side upon her fall. Beneath it was a green flannel night-shirt that had ridden up to her mid thigh. She had on white fuzzy slippers.

Spotting something in the hole on her chest, she knelt down to the body to take a closer look. "There's something inside here." Dipping her finger into the hole, she carefully pulled out a tiny button. Holding it up, she glanced at both Vega and Barlow.

"Could have come from the vic," Barlow supplied, opening a baggie for her.

"There are no buttons on the victim," Vega corrected. "Her night-shirt is a pullover and the robe has a drawstring. Think we could get lucky enough to pull a print from that?"

"It's possible. Anything's possible." She was a strong believer in that.

"You won't find anything on it."

She looked up to see Detective Powers inching his way toward her. Instantly her back came up. "Are you following me, Detective?" Because if he was, she was going to make sure he was nicely and promptly escorted from her city.

"Police scanner. I have one in the car and lucky for me I was able to tune it in to your frequency."

Sienna's jaw tightened. "You boys see this guy show up at the shop or around any of the scenes, arrest him."

"You have no justification for arresting me, but if you don't want to know why I believe you won't find anything on that button, that's fine by me." He turned to leave, then stopped when she swore.

"He might have some info, Lieutenant. He was working the case in Boston."

She hated that cutie Vega was right. "Fine." She gave in reluctantly. "Tell me what you know, but when you're done you get the hell off my scene."

Nathan turned around with a sardonic smirk on his face that she so wanted to slap off. "It's a plant," he added slowly as he shoved his hands in the pockets of his jeans. "He's famous for it. His first few kills show no evidence then the next you find something that makes you think he got sloppy. He likes to do that, to toy with the investigators."

"Thank you for your input, Detective, now buzz off." Sienna waved a hand at him, the tips of her fingers coated in the victim's blood.

"She always this cheery?" he asked Vega.

"It's two in the morning. Not many of us are cheery when we're woken to murder." Detective Vega turned back to Sienna. "I'll run it personally."

"Good, because if I hear someone tell me it'll take a week for the results one more time I may scream." Lifting Helen's cold hand, Sienna examined the nails. Short, no obvious signs of defense, but that didn't always mean anything. "Has the ME been called?"

"Sure has. He'll be here shortly. You think what Detective Powers said might be true?"

Standing, Sienna looked around and noticed he'd left as she'd asked. Good.

"Beats the hell out of me. Worth checking out, though. Get in contact with Boston and Denver and see what they have for us on their victims. I'm going to see what the husband has to say."

Leaving the body, Sienna headed inside. She stripped out of the gown, gloves and cap as she made her way into the house. The grieving widower did not need to be reminded of what he'd just lost. Following the sounds of sobbing, she found the husband, sitting on a beaten-up gray sofa. He had his head in his hands while a female officer sat beside him.

Glancing at her name tag, Sienna nudged to her left as she spoke. "I'd like a minute with Mr. McCroy, Officer Herman."

"Yes, Ma'am." With a squeeze to the grieving widower's shoulder, the officer left.

Sienna didn't take her spot on the sofa but instead sat in the chair across from him. "I'm sorry for your loss, Mr. McCroy. I'm Lieutenant Storm. I'm in charge of your wife's case and I was hoping you could talk to me and maybe give me some input."

The middle-aged gentleman with graying brown hair and a wrinkled and damp face looked up at her with obvious sorrow. "I asked her to quit that damn habit years ago but she refused. Said it was all she had to stop her from packing on the pounds. What do I care if she has love handles? All the more to love. Now she's gone," he sobbed, hanging his head down.

Spotting the box of tissues on the sofa where Officer Herman had sat, Sienna slipped a few out and handed them to Mr. McCroy. Though she didn't know exactly what he was going through, she could imagine the pain he was feeling. "Did you hear anything unusual before you went out to check on your wife?"

He blew his nose with a hardy honk as he shook his head. "Not a thing. I like to watch the news in bed. She was always ragging on me to turn the volume down. My hearing is a little vague these days." He sniffled, grabbed another tissue and wiped his nose. "Maybe if I had I might have heard her scream for help."

Sienna was pretty sure the woman hadn't had time to scream. She probably didn't even see it coming. "Did you see anyone in the alley behind your house after you found your wife?"

He looked up at her with watery brown eyes. "All I saw was my Helen lying on the cement with a hole in her chest."

Sienna nodded and pursued. "What about during the day or evening? Anyone unusual lurking about?"

He blew his nose again, honking like a horn as he did. "I got home late from work. I'm helping with the reconstruction of the downtown sector. Helen was in the tub when I got home. She likes to soak for an

hour after she gets home from her job at the hospital. Says it rejuvenates her after a long day."

"She was a doctor?"

"A nurse. Was. Oh Lord." Letting his head drop, he sobbed a little harder, his shoulders shaking with his tears.

Sienna recognized when it was pointless to pursue and left the grieving widower to himself. When she stepped outside she saw Dr. Hawthorn had finally arrived.

"Doc."

He tipped his head to her. "Lieutenant. Not the nicest thing to wake up to, is it?"

"Not the nicest thing to happen upon either, as the husband inside can attest to."

"So true. Same MO as the others. Hole through the back and chest, heart missing.. Mighty powerful force." He clucked his tongue as he examined the victim.

"I've asked around but no one seems to know—or they're not willing to tell me—if they know of anyone capable of this type of kill. You know how tight lipped vamps and demons can be towards cops."

She acknowledged Detective Vega with a nod. "Same here. I've got a list of employees at The Demon's Lair I need to interview. Wanna split it?"

"Be happy to. Just shoot it to my email addy and I'll have a look at it."

"Call me when you have the preliminaries, Doc. I'm going to do a door to door."

"It's the middle of the night, Lieutenant," Doc Hawthorn reminded her.

"Guess I'm about to piss some people off." Heading to the front of the house, Sienna spotted Detective Powers leaning on the trunk of her car. Her hands instantly curled into tight fists as she spoke. "Didn't I tell you to buzz off?"

"If I was a bee, I might have listened. You know I'm right about the button."

She stood only feet from him but she could still smell the cologne he wore. How was it he could smell, and look, so damn good at two in the morning? His blue jeans looked freshly washed and the black t-shirt beneath his relatively clean jean jacket looked freshly ironed. It didn't show signs of being worn for long which told her he must have been asleep before coming in and pulled his clothes fresh from his drawer.

But she certainly was not going to admit to him that he might be right. "I'd be a pretty stupid cop if I didn't test it." Leaving him behind, she headed to the house next door. When she noticed he was following her, she stopped short and glared at him. "What do you think you're doing?"

"Following you."

"I don't think so."

"Look, we're both working on the same case—"

She held her hand up in his face. "No, you're supposed to be on stress leave. *I'm* working on this case in *my* city. Got that?"

He took a breath before responding. "I could give you valuable input on this case and you could help me."

"I don't like to share. Now get lost, Detective." She headed up the walk to the neighbor's house and rang the bell. When no one answered, she rang it again.

"Some people might be asleep at this time of night."

Her jaw tightened when he came up beside her. "If you don't leave me alone, Detective, I will have you arrested." Obvious that no one was going to answer, Sienna made note of it, then headed to the next house on the opposite side.

"Speaking of which. You never returned my cuffs the other night."

She stopped abruptly, spinning on him and grabbing him by the arm. She twisted it up his back as she pushed him against the cop's car behind hers. "Want your cuffs back? Here you go." Slapping hers over his wrist, she attached the other end to the door handle, then smartly stepped back. With a salute, she turned on her heels and continued on her way.

"You think this'll stop me? He was mine before he came here, Lieutenant," he called out to her in an obviously angry voice.

"And now he's mine." Ignoring the quickening of her heartbeat, Sienna headed to the next house.

The guy may be a pain in her ass, but he was damn sexy. And the power she had felt in his forearm had definitely given her a little thrill. If only he wasn't being such a pain in her ass.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Nathan thanked the officer for releasing him, giving his wrist a rub before he headed to his car. He shot the lieutenant a steely glare before climbing behind the wheel. Fine, she didn't want to share the case, but did she have to be so obstinate. He really could help her out if she'd just give him a chance to talk to her about the case.

Pulling out his notebook, he began jotting down what he'd found out.

Same style of killing as the previous victims in Jacob's Cove and the ones in Boston and Denver. Diameter of the wound was six by five. What the killer used was undetermined. Had to be sharp and strong to break through flesh and bone without making any sound to alert the neighbors. At least the officer who had removed his cuffs had been kind enough to fill him in.

He hadn't been hostile to the men in charge of the case in Denver and neither had they been to him. He'd even thanked them for all their input. Unlike ungrateful Lieutenant Sexy Storm. And how the hell could he be attracted to someone as cold as she was? It had to be the leather. He couldn't remember the last time he'd seen a woman in leather. Well, discounting the porno he'd watched just after being put on stress leave.

Pushing her and that leather-clad body of hers to the back of his mind—or trying to at least—Nathan went back to his book. What the hell did the guy use to punch a hole through a person? Whatever it was it had to be mighty powerful. None of the MEs in either Boston or Denver had been able to give a conclusive explanation. They were as baffled by it as he was. There were no traces of anything that would lead to a weapon used. No traces of anything on the bodies. The guy was smart; Nathan gave that to him.

When his cell phone rang, Nathan glanced at the caller ID before answering and frowned at the *Unknown Caller*. “Detective Powers.”

“Hello, Detective. Lovely night out, isn’t it?”

Sitting a little straighter, Nathan glanced out his window to see the lieutenant pulling away. “Hello, Killer.”

“Did you enjoy my latest conquest?”

“I’m going to catch you and we both know that.” What he needed to do was get a tracker put on his cell phone.

“It’s nice that you have hopes. I’ve been so worried after losing Leo that you would give up. I’m glad you’re still as eager as you were before.”

Nathan’s fingers tightened a little more on the phone. “You think you’re so smart but you’re not. All you are is smug and eventually you’ll screw up. When you do, I’ll be there.” The line clicked off and Nathan sat listening to the dead silence

Clicking his phone shut, he shoved it back into his pocket, furious. Shifting the car into gear, Nathan had only one agenda.

Finding the killer. Any way he could.



The morgue always gave Sienna the creeps. Not only did it smell funky with its disinfectants and bodily fluids, but the dim lighting made it even spookier. How could a person work in such an atmosphere?

She smiled politely at the young woman ahead of her dressed in lab gear carrying a tray of vacutainers filled with samples. The vision speared into her as it usually did, sharply and fast. The woman tripped, the tray of vials fell on the floor. As glass shattered, blood spilled all over the white tile and onto her shoes.

Sienna shook her head clear, grabbed the tray right before the woman tripped over her own feet. “That could have been a costly mistake.” She handed the tray back to the woman.

"Yes, it could have been. Thank you." With a baffled expression on her face, the young woman continued on her way.

Moving right along, Sienna pushed through the cutting floor—she really hated that term—to see Doc Hawthorn busy at work. "Is that my latest?"

"No, this is Mr. Dawson." Cooper stroked a hand over the elderly gentleman's dark gray hair. "Wife decided to end his misery with a cocktail of his meds and alcohol. He had a good life. Or so she say's."

Mr. Dawson lay on the sterile metal table, his chest peeled open, his innards displayed for all to see, yet the doc continued to stroke his head. How could he be so indifferent to the display before him?

"Where's mine?"

Doc Hawthorn stepped away from the body, slipping out of his soiled gloves to replace them with fresh ones before pulling the sheet off Mrs. McCroy behind him. "I was going to get to her right after Mr. Dawson."

"Mind if we do it now? I want to take a few more samples of the wound."

Doc Hawthorn shrugged. "What specifically did you want to test for?"

"Particulate, DNA, anything that might give me an idea what we're dealing with."

"Well, I believe we can both agree the killer isn't human. Four victims, all killed in the same manner, no evidence of a weapon used. Wounds are consistent with a blow from the back to the front. Punching through tissue and bone as he grabs the heart."

"Agreed." And he had to be pretty damn powerful. "Know any demon that can do that?"

"Not offhand."

"Me either." She grabbed a cotton swab, pulled off the lid to the tube before sliding it along the inside of the wound. She capped it, laid it on the sterile tray before repeating the process until she'd swabbed the entire wound inside and out, front to back. "What are the chances of getting the information back within two days?"

"About the same as you delivering a child in the next few days. But I can put a rush on it and we can both keep our fingers crossed."

It was the best that she could expect, she supposed and how sad was that. "When will the forensic lab be opening here?"

"Just as soon as we hire more technicians. We're having trouble keeping people on. When they find out the city's run by vampires

they tend to run screaming. But we do have a crack technician ready to step up as soon as he finishes his schooling, which won't take long. Mr. Ryder is a savant and has already excelled in his classes in the short time he's been attending."

She had no idea what he was talking about. "You lost me, Doc."

"Oh, do forgive me. I tend to ramble when I'm excited about something. Dusty Ryder is a brilliant young man and also happens to be involved with the mayor and chief's daughter. He's training in forensics."

"Gotcha." At least for the most part. "Anything come back on the other vics yet?"

"No evidence to suggest a weapon was used. No traces of wood, metal, or dust. The hairs found on the bodies were those of the victim. Scraping under the nails came back normal. Victim's own DNA along with dirt. Nothing out of the ordinary."

"Crap. Okay, thanks, Doc. Wait," She turned back. "I thought you said it would take two weeks?"

"The chief twisted some arms, so to speak." He smiled like a proud father.

Good for him. "Next time you see him, tell him I say a big thanks." Leaving the morgue, Sienna was as frustrated as she'd been when she'd entered. Even though she'd received the tox reports, nothing was found to give her a clue as to who she was looking for.

Back to square one.



It was beginning to piss him off. All he wanted was some information to help solve a case and all he was getting was door after door slammed in his face. This city really needed to learn to share. Sitting in the lobby waiting area, Nathan scowled. "Wait in the lobby. I'll inform the lieutenant you're here just as soon as she shows up," he mimicked in a snotty tone. Like he had all the time in the world to wait. Okay, so he really didn't have anywhere else to be, but that wasn't the point. Every day wasted gave the killer time to kill again.

You'd think the cops here would understand that.

The instant he spotted her strolling down the corridor Nathan shot out of his seat and went after her. "Are you ever in your office, Lieutenant?"

She flicked him a mildly disinterested glance that said it all. "Only when I have paperwork to do."

"What's with the lack of employees in this place?" At four in the morning in his precinct the noise level was enough to deafen someone. In this precinct, you could hear a pin drop.

"We're having trouble convincing people to stick around."

"Must be that sunny disposition of yours." When she glared at him he kept right on going. "If that's the case, then I would think you'd be pretty grateful to have someone help you out, such as myself."

"You couldn't handle working here. Especially not in your...delicate condition."

He really did not like the way she said that or that she knew about his head wound and circumstances to begin with. And for a split second, he contemplated not telling her. But he wanted the help in catching the bastard as much as she wanted to catch him, so he gave in. "He's been calling me."

"Who's been calling you?" she responded with mild interest as she continued walking.

"God. Who do you think? The Heartless Killer." That had her stopping and quick.

"What?"

"Are you deaf? The killer—he's been calling me, on my cell." He didn't think her eyes could get any bigger than they already were but when they flew wide open at his statement he didn't mind that he'd proven himself wrong.

"He's calling you?"

"I think that's what I said. He's called me several times," he added sarcastically while flipping his cell phone open and closed. "But hey, if you don't want my help—" She snatched it away from him in a hurry. "Hey!"

"I want to get a tracer put on this."

"Oh sure, now you want my help." Not to mention being greedy. It was his phone and he wanted it back.

Those pretty blue eyes of hers narrowed with deadly aim at him. She said nothing now as she headed down the corridor to the right and through a large door with a piece of paper taped to it with her name and rank on it.

"Wow, you guys spare no expense here." He tapped the mock nameplate with a smirk on his lips.

Ignoring him, she picked up her phone and dialed a number. "I need a tracer for a cell phone. Who do I call for that?" She grabbed a pad and pen from the desk and began to scratch something onto it. "Is

he with the department? Why not? Whatever. I'll call him." She set the receiver down and finally looked up at him. "How long has he been calling you?"

Nathan sat on the edge of her desk. When she glared at him, he casually slid off. "It started a week before he killed my partner. He called twice but didn't stay on the line long enough to trace it. He called me again the day I came here and just now — well, half an hour ago, right after that nice officer undid my handcuffs. Which you still owe me a set."

She pulled a pair from her back pocket and tossed them across the desk along with the keys. How she managed to fit anything in those tight pants was beyond him. "Happy?"

"Not really. I liked mine." She held her hand out; he smiled and slipped them into his back pocket. "He sent me a letter too."

"Jesus." She slapped her palms on her desk as she leaned forward. "And you're just informing me of this now because?"

"You didn't want my help," he reminded her with as snide a look as he could muster. Damn, she was hot. He especially liked the way her hair looked all messed up. It suited her narrow face perfectly.

"Do you still have the letter?" she asked through grinding teeth.

"What kind of cop would I be if I tossed it?"

"I want it."

"That's nice." He took a seat in the chair and dusted off his jeans.

Her eyes flared. "I could have you arrested for obstruction of justice."

"Or you could say please," he offered sarcastically, smiling as he looked up into her, noticing the un-amused expression and loving it.

"I'd rather arrest you."

"Yeah, you probably would. It's back at my hotel room and before you have a coronary it's locked up in the safe, secured in a sterile bag. I know how to do my job, Lieutenant."

"If that were true you'd have put a tracer on your cell phone sooner. Come on, let's get the evidence."

He watched her skirt her desk and his eyes trailed to that round, firm ass of hers clad in all that shiny black. Not even her snide comment about his detective abilities could dull the heat that was building in his loins just looking at her butt in leather. "How do you get into those things?"

"Into what?" She yanked her door open and stood waiting for him to exit.

"Those pants. Damn, they're tight." He whistled between his teeth. He could imagine sliding his hands up and down those long lean legs to grab hold of each firm, tight butt cheek.

"Stop staring at my ass, Detective."

"Can't help it. It's just..." He whistled again holding his hands out in front of him. "Damn."

"After you," she snarled at him with her hand held out in front of her.

He'd do just about anything right now to get her out of those pants and, looking up at her as he moved toward the door, he decided just to throw caution to the wind and—the air rushed out of his lungs as she shoved him against the wall across the hallway.

"What the hell?" The woman had some power in her.

"Don't try to kiss me again."

Giving his head a shake and taking a deep breath, Nathan replied, "I didn't try to kiss you." Yet.

"But you were thinking about it. We're on the job, Detective."

"Oh, so after hours would be fine then. Good to know." Humming a jaunty tune, he headed down the corridor and wondered what her face looked like behind him.

He was pretty sure she was scowling.

CHAPTER NINE

Watching Detective Powers' car pull out of the parking lot, Sienna followed him. She told herself she was not going to think of him in a non-professional manner. She was not going to let his smooth, musky cologne affect her, or those big blue eyes of his, and especially not the fullness of his lips or the cleft in his chin that was covered in a light dusting of dark stubble. She was stronger than that. She was most definitely going to ignore those firm, muscular arms of his, nor would she think about the way they would wrap around her body as he held her tight to that broad chest of his and—damn it, she was thinking about him in a non-professional manner.

Sienna signaled left as he did and told herself to think of the bigger picture. She had a murderer to catch and that was all that mattered. When he pulled into a parking lot only blocks from her own apartment, she told herself it was no big deal. A mere coincidence that in a city as big as Jacob's Cove, he picked a hotel only blocks from her apartment. Exiting, Sienna met him at the hood of her car. "You're staying here?"

"That bother you?"

She shrugged carelessly. "Get the letter."

"All work and no play—"

Sienna stopped him short with a palm planted firmly to that broad chest of his.

"There's a killer out there taking innocent lives. I don't play with other people's lives, Detective."

He glanced around to her back, lifting his eyebrows. "You hide it well, which is astounding if you ask me considering those pants look painted on."

"What the hell are you talking about and quit looking at my ass?" The guy had some nerve.

"The stick up your ass."

"Look, buster—"

"Right this way, Lieutenant," he interrupted.

She followed him, growling under her breath. If he didn't have vital information that she needed to help solve this murder case she would deck him good and proper and send his round, tight ass back to where he came from.

She yanked her eyes up when she realized she was watching his butt as he walked.

"How's the pooch?"

"She's fine," Sienna remarked curtly, telling herself to stop letting her hormones get in the way of her job.

"We had a dog when I was younger. Golden Retriever named Casper. We—my sisters and I—would tie him to our sled every winter and have him drag us around. Well, we would have to throw his ball for him to run but we had so much fun with him."

She softened, thinking about a big yellow dog dragging three laughing kids behind him as he ran for his ball. "I never had any pets growing up, so as soon as I moved out on my own I decided to get a pet. My first step was a goldfish. It didn't last long." Sienna was baffled when he stopped halfway up the stairs. "What?"

"Are we having a civilized conversation?"

She didn't know what she'd been thinking, divulging something so intimate about herself. She normally didn't talk about herself or her life. "Just passing time. What floor are you on?"

"Third. You know, I think the stick might have come loose for a moment."

She ground her jaw and narrowed her eyes. "Let's just get the letter."

"Sorry." He stopped her with a raised hand and she narrowed her eyes at him. "That was uncalled for."

"The note," she ground out. Inching past him, she continued up the stairs. She didn't have a stick up her ass, as he so poignantly stated—not normally at least, but this case meant everything to her. It was her first case as lieutenant in Jacob's Cove and she was determined to put the guy behind bars in a timely manner. It was her case and she was determined to keep it that way.

"Look, I said I was sorry."

"Great, fine. Apology accepted. The note," she reminded him and continued up the stairs past him.

"What's with the leather? I mean, not that I don't like it, and let me just say how nice and round your ass looks in those pants—but seriously. Leather?"

Spinning around, Sienna glared at him. "Keep your mind on the task at hand, Detective."

"My name is Nathan and keeping my mind on the task at hand is pretty damn hard to do when I've got such a magnificent ass staring me in the face."

"Don't make me regret not arresting you." She might enjoy slapping the cuffs on good and hard and slamming him face down on—sweet God, thinking about it was making her hot.

Damn it!

With a beaming smile bright enough to blind her, Nathan strutted past her to the doors on the third level without saying a word.

Keep your thoughts on the job and not on how damn sexy he looks when he smiles.

She followed him down the corridor to the third door to their right. When he slipped the pass-card from his wallet, slid it in the slot, and opened the door, she waited for him to enter before following. Fool her once.

"Make yourself at home."

"Just get the letter." She looked around the tiny hotel room and decided it wasn't half bad. It looked and smelled clean and that was the most important thing. It was times like this when her heightened sense of smell came in handy. There were no underlying odors that had been covered up by cleaning liquids.

Sienna spun quickly when Nathan came up behind her, catching him off guard.

"A little jittery, Lieutenant?"

She saw the letter in his hand, sealed in a bag, and thought that at least he'd done that right. "I want to get that printed. Wait—why didn't you send it off for fingerprint analysis?"

"I headed out right after getting it."

Her brow knit together. "Does he tell you where he is in the letter?"

"He implies I would be smart enough to figure it out." He held the plastic bag up, turning it. "It doesn't take a genius to figure out where he sent this from."

She saw the Jacob's Cover return address on the envelope. "So you came after him, thinking he might actually be here? Did it ever occur to you it was a ploy to get you away so he could keep killing?"

"If you knew this guy like I do, you wouldn't need to ask that. And that is why you need me on this case."

She scooped the bag from his hands. "No, I need you to back off and let me handle it. Now—"

"The hell I will," he interrupted, getting right in her face.

It was times like this that her heightened sense of smell was a pain in the ass. His cologne wiggled its way into her nose to slide like smooth whiskey into her body with an arousing tingle. "I can arrange to have you detained, Detective."

"Bullshit. Why are you so hard-pressed to keep me out of this? I have valuable information that could be useful in capturing this guy."

"Detective," she leaned in a little closer, challenging him, "if you had captured this guy before now, we wouldn't have to dick around about the whys." She saw something come into his eyes right before he backed away. "Now, let's get a tracer put on your cell phone."

"And how do you suppose you'll get any information on this guy's whereabouts without me? This is my cell phone after all and the killer calls me, not you," he pointed out with a deep, dark tone. "Or did you fail to think of that when you decided you didn't want my help?"

She hated—*hated*—being made a fool and right now that was exactly what he had done. She stepped in real close and lowered her voice to match his. "You will remain in this hotel room, waiting for him to call and to ensure you do so, I will have a guard placed outside your door."

He leaned in a little closer until they were practically nose to nose. "You and I both know you can't forcibly detain me without just cause."

Her blood was pumping but not all of it was from adrenaline. She waved the letter in his face. "Obstruction of justice."

"I obstructed nothing. I came to you, I told you he was calling me and I told you about the letter. You have nothing, Lieutenant. Now,

we can stand here all day arguing, or we can get this baby set up with a tracking device." He waved his phone beside them. "Your call."

Keeping the snarl to herself, she spun around and headed for the door.

He was a smarmy bastard.



The Digital Domain was a computer shop like most other computer shops. There were shelves of computer software and gizmos that would make any techno geek weep. Sienna, thankfully, was not one. To the side of the room was a service desk where a tall, raven-haired woman greeted them with a smile wide on her face. From the color of her dark blue eyes, Sienna deduced she wasn't a vampire.

"I'll do the talking," Sienna informed Nathan as she headed to the desk.

"Good day. How may I help you?"

"Lieutenant Storm." She flipped her badge. "Is there a Jonah Moore here?"

"Yes, Lieutenant, he's expecting you. I'll just buzz him and let him know you're here."

"Thanks." Sienna turned to Nathan who was eyeballing some computer parts on one of the shelves. She had no idea what he was looking at and really didn't care. Her attention was drawn to the cutie pie who stepped through a doorway at the back of the room. He used a cane to walk, which she barely noticed due to the fact that he was such a cutie. His sandy hair was cut in perfect short layers that accentuated his charming boy-next-door face. Even the telltale yellow vampire eyes made him look sexy.

This city wasn't just filled with vampires, but sexy ones at that.

"Jonah Moore." He held his hand out to her and the smile he beamed at her showed off the dimples in his cheeks. "I was informed that you are in need of a tracking device."

"Yes, I am—"

"Detective Powers," Nathan interrupted, sticking his hand out. "I need a tracker for my cell phone."

Sienna slanted her eyes at Nathan and her jaw tensed as she spoke. "Detective Powers has been contacted by a suspect in a case I'm working on. How long would it take to set up his telephone with a tracker?"

Jonah took the cell phone from Nathan, flipped the back open, made a little humming noise before he closed it up. "Twenty min-

utes." He looked up at Sienna and Nathan. "Maybe less. If you follow me to my office, we can get started on it."

"Perfect." Sienna purposely stepped in front of Nathan as they were led to the back office. It was her case, after all.

"Does this have anything to do with the serial murders going on lately?" Jonah asked as he sat down behind his cluttered desk in the middle of the room.

Sienna thought it was rather an odd set-up, until he wheeled himself backwards to a shelf at the back of the room. "I'm not at liberty to say."

"Figures. Oh well, I'll just ask Trin. Okay, I can set this baby up to a regulation police comp or I can set it up with a laptop you could take with you wherever you go. The laptop will allow you to take it with you when you go home at night—or whenever you go home." He wheeled back with some sort of tool in his hand.

Did everyone know the mayor personally? "The laptop would be great." That way she could have it in her car, or like he said, take it home, and she would be able to monitor the calls. "I'm told that police services have an account with you."

"That they do." He smiled and that boyish charm quickened her heartbeat. "Laptop it is." He popped the back cover off again, then wheeling himself around, began to work on the cell phone.

"This will be perfect. I can carry it with me wherever I go and that way if he calls, I'll know his location instantly."

"Wait a minute there, hot pants. What do you mean you'll have the laptop on you? I'll be the one with the laptop."

She shifted onto one hip and gave him a sideways glance. "I don't think so. And don't call me hot pants."

"My cell phone, sweet cheeks."

She narrowed her eyes and had a fleeting thought to slam the heel of her hand into his sexy nose. "You can keep the cell phone but the laptop is JCPD property. Since I am the lieutenant in charge of this homicide it will be my choice where it goes, and I chose me."

He stepped into her face. "You're not on the job twenty-four/seven, Lieutenant."

"When I am off duty another officer will be in charge of it."

"You're just being a hard ass now."

"Watch it, Detective."

"Finished."

They both turned to Jonah as he rolled his chair back to the desk. "Now all I have to do is calibrate it to the laptop and you're set."

“Perfect.” Sienna shot Nathan a heated glare.

“I take it the two of you aren’t partners?”

“What?” Sienna snorted. “No, no, he doesn’t even work at the JCPD.”

“I see.”

“I’m thinking we might make a good partnership outside of the business though.”

Sienna spun on Nathan with a heated glare. “Might I remind you we are here on business, Detective?”

“Nope.” Nathan grinned foolishly.

Jonah’s lips curved up in a sly smile. “Okay, here you go.” He held a small laptop in his hand that looked like it could actually fit in her pocket. “Let me just show you how it works and you can be on your way.”

Moments later as they left the Digital Domain Sienna rounded on Nathan with a feral look. “When we are on the job we remain professional. Is that understood, Detective?”

“It was just a comment.”

“One that was uncalled for given the situation. I just took over the position as Lieutenant and I don’t need you muddying my reputation.”

“How long?”

Her brow creased. “How long what?” The guy was giving her a headache.

“How long have you been here as lieutenant?”

“A week,” she snarled it, yanking her car door open.

“Where were you before coming here?”

“Kansas. We’re on the clock now, Detective. Enough chit chat.”

CHAPTER TEN

The woman was fascinating to say the least, but he really liked her tenacity and determination. Plus, when she was mad her eyes got all fiery and Nathan was sure they'd be just as heated in the throes of passion.

"I'm going to be keeping an eye on this puppy and as soon as he calls you again, we'll get his location. All you have to do is sit in your little hotel room, watch some sports, and have some beer."

"Yeah, you keep believing that. So, what's with this city and yellow eyes?" It seemed everyone was sporting them. Not that they were that bad to look at, yellow just wasn't his shade of preference for contacts.

"I already told you. Vampires."

She startled him when she leapt over the car and bolted across the road. Nathan had no idea what she was doing, but her speed was extraordinary. He wasn't sure he'd ever seen anyone move that fast. Taking off after her, he burst into the small shop just as Sienna was apprehending a young man. She had him pinned to the wall and the way she stood, her legs spread slightly apart, posed a very sexy picture.

Then she shoved her hand into the kid's pocket and pulled out a gun.

"You're under arrest for attempted robbery."

"I wasn't doing anything but shopping," the kid griped, struggling to break her hold.

"Yeah, and I'm the Fairy Godmother." Yanking the cuffs from her back pocket—and that still amazed him that anything fit in those tight pants—she slapped them on the kid's wrists.

"Get bent, lady. I wasn't doing anything wrong and you can't arrest me just because I had a gun in my pocket. It's not illegal to carry a gun."

"Tell it to someone who cares." She shoved him out the door and across the street. Nathan followed.

He waited until she had him securely fastened in the backseat of her car before speaking. "How'd you know he was carrying?"

"Intuition."

He stepped away from the car when she climbed behind the wheel and as he headed to his car, she pulled away.

If she thought he was letting her work this case alone, she had another thing coming. Keeping his distance, Nathan followed her as she headed back to the precinct. He wondered if she would be more inclined to involve him if they were personally involved. Might be fun to try. Now all Nathan had to do was find a way to win her over, personally, before wiggling his way into her professional life.

Pulling up along the curb, Nathan watched her drag the kid from the back of the car. By the looks of it the kid was still bitching about his rights and some such shit. Nathan wished he could read lips. Might be interesting to find out what they were saying to each other.

He imagined it might go something like this.

"You can't arrest me for something I didn't do."

"Cry me another tune, jerk."

"This is police brutality."

"You want brutality? If you don't pipe down I'm going to shove my fist down your throat."

Maybe not to that extent but close enough. He loved what a hard-ass she was. And speaking of her ass, he could not get rid of the picture of her butt in all that tight leather.

Rolling the window down all the way, Nathan pulled out his bag of sunflower seeds and began munching while he waited for the leather-clad sex goddess to leave. What he wouldn't do to get his hands on her ass. Damn, it was a mighty fine ass and those tight leather pants were a definite turn on. He wondered if she even wore anything underneath it. There were no panty lines but that didn't mean she didn't wear a thong and lord all mighty if he didn't stop thinking about her

ass he was going to be spouting a woodie the size of a banana pretty soon.

When his cell phone jangled in his shirt pocket, he spit the seed in his mouth out the window and checked the caller ID. His heart sped up when he saw it was an unknown caller.

Clearing his throat, he answered. "Detective Powers."

"Do you have any idea how tasty the human heart is, Detective?"

Nathan sat a little straighter in his seat. "Can't say I do. Why don't you tell me about it?" He knew to keep him on the line as long as possible.

"I could go into detail but I'm afraid your delicate nature couldn't handle it. But I will tell you how rejuvenating they are. And succulent. Each one has its own taste—some sweet, some bitter. Your partner's was very sweet."

That had him pausing for a moment, until he realized the killer was goading him and bit his tongue. "Why do you take their hearts? I mean, I know serials like to keep trophies, but why the heart?" He checked his watch noting the time. He had to at least keep him on the line for a full minute.

"Weren't you listening, Detective? I told you why. They're delicious."

Nathan swallowed the rising acid building in his gut. "You...you eat them?" What the hell? Was this guy for real?

"Of course I do. You should try it sometime, but then again, you wouldn't get the charge I do from a heart."

"Do you cook them?" He couldn't believe he was asking this. He saw the Lieutenant race from the building to her car and started his own up.

"Cooking them would destroy the life in it. Did you know that if you rip a human heart from its shell fast enough, it continues to beat for several seconds? That's when the life force is the strongest."

Nathan sped after the lieutenant and continued his bizarre conversation. If the guy was serious he couldn't let it get to him right now. He had a mission. "How do you know whose heart is good? Do you watch your victims beforehand?" She came to a stop and jumped from her car. Nathan followed. They were only a matter of blocks away from the precinct.

"Now that would be giving you too much information. Maybe another time. See you, Detective."

The line went dead and Nathan continued his chase. The woman had legs, that was for sure and he was having trouble keeping up with

her. By the time he met up with her, several blocks ahead, he was panting up a storm. "Jesus, you're fast."

"This is where he was calling from." She slipped on a pair of sterile gloves and lifted the dangling public phone.

Nathan glanced around but didn't see anyone familiar. The streets weren't overly busy, which was a good thing but unfortunately, Killer was nowhere to be found. Not only were the streets dead, but there were only a few shops open on the block. "Someone in those shops might have seen him," he pointed out and without waiting for her, headed to the one directly across the sidewalk from the payphone. The instant he entered he noticed it was a lingerie shop and the woman inside was dressed as scantily as the products they sold.

Flipping out his badge, he introduced himself to a pretty blonde with tits the size of watermelons.

Had to be fake. "Detective Nathan Powers. Mind if I ask you some questions?" He heard the lieutenant come in behind him.

"You can ask me anything, sweetheart," the blonde purred seductively.

"Did you see anyone using that payphone within the last five minutes?" He pointed out the large show window to the phone.

"I really don't pay much attention to the outside. I'm all about the inside." She turned her attention to the lieutenant. "You like leather? We have a new line of leather bustiers and matching G-strings you might be interested in."

She flipped her badge and snarled. "Not here to shop. Where's the rest of your staff?"

"Oh, I'm it this time of day."

"Waste of time."

Sending the busty blonde a smile, Nathan followed the lieutenant to the next shop.

"My case, remember. I'll do the questioning."

"How can I forget when you remind me of it constantly? You're an only child, aren't you?"

She shot him a heated glare as she pushed her way into the next shop which happened to be a comic book store. She flipped her badge as she spoke. "Lieutenant Sienna Storm. Did you see anyone using that payphone within the past few minutes?"

The young man looked up from his comic books to stare blankly at her. "Huh?"

She snatched the comic away and repeated the question. "Did you see anyone using that payphone outside within the past few minutes?"

"Nah, I was reading. Been a slow day."

"Anyone else work here?"

"Just me."

She flew out of the store as fast as she had the last. Catching up to her, Nathan kept in time with her stride. "Slow is putting it mildly. This is the deadest city I've ever known."

"Is that a pun?"

"Is what a pun?"

She stopped by her car and huffed her response. "Never mind." She flipped her phone open and called in a crime scene unit to print the payphone. "How did you know I was here?" she asked the instant she disconnected.

"I followed you."

Her eyes went a little wider. "You foll—" She threw her hands in the air then pointed a finger at him. "Don't follow me."

"Then give me the laptop."

"We've been through this already." She threw her car door open and Nathan stepped in her way before she could climb in behind the wheel.

"Why are you being so obstinate about this? We both want the same thing."

"It's my case."

"Fine, it's your case, but you could at least let me help you."

"I work alone."

"That is just sad, Lieutenant, because I've always thought four eyes were better than two."

"Then get a pair of glasses."

He wasn't sure what prompted him to do it now, but going with his instincts, he grabbed the back of her head and pulled her forward to press his lips to hers. He felt her restrain herself, then plant her hand on his chest before giving him a hard shove.

He stepped back—better that than having his hands caught in her car door—as she climbed behind the wheel. Nathan watched her speed off and smiled.

The lieutenant had some mighty fine lips.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Sienna pulled into an alley several blocks away and stopped the car. She leaned her head on the steering wheel and blew out a long breath. Then she lifted her head, and began hitting it against the steering wheel while chanting, "You will not fall for another cop," over and over again.

She jumped, visibly, at the knock on her window, and when she turned to see who it was, felt the heat sting her cheeks. She rolled her window down and snapped at Nathan, "Stop following me."

"That'll give you a nasty headache."

"Leave me alone, Detective, before I decide to use you as a punching bag."

He rested his elbows on the edge of the door while looking through the open window. "Actually, I came after you to apologize for the way I kissed you."

"But not for the kiss itself."

"Hell no! I'm not afraid to admit you turn me on but I could have done it more smoothly, and in a better place."

"Or not done it at all."

He reached in, grabbing her chin in his hand and she should have seen it coming but there was something about him that dulled her

senses. When he kissed her, this time, she didn't push him away. She knew she should have, but damn it, his lips were so...tasty.

When he pulled away, she actually regretted it.

"I wouldn't hit my head again if I were you. It might bruise that delicate skin of yours."

He stepped back and as he walked away Sienna watched him in her mirror. He had a damn sexy swagger, and a nice ass. When he pulled out beside her and shot her a wink, she felt her heartbeat quicken.

Then she lowered her head and hit it on the steering wheel several more times, chanting, "I cannot fall for another cop," over and over again.



Sienna gazed upon the dilapidated house before her that looked as if one strong wind might topple it over. She checked the address on her sheet, and finding they matched, she shook her head and walked up the three steps to the front door. She actually worried her knock would send the house toppling. When the door creaked open an inch, Sienna saw the chain on the door and figured the person inside wasn't the trustworthy kind.

It was a smart move.

"Yes?"

Sienna flipped open her badge and held it to the crack in the door. "Lieutenant Storm. I'd like to ask you a few questions."

"About what? I didn't do anything."

Paranoid as well. "Are you Tracy Ward?"

"Maybe."

Sienna held her impatience. "I only want to ask you some questions to see if you might have noticed anyone out of the ordinary at work lately. You work at The Demon's Lair, am I correct?"

"Yeah, so, it's legit."

"I'm sure it is. That's not why I'm here. Could I please come in, Miss Ward?" The door closed and for a second Sienna thought it wouldn't open again. Then it creaked open and she saw the petite brunette come into view. Miss Ward was dressed in a blue fuzzy robe, with her hair piled on the top of her head in a messy ponytail. She stepped aside to allow Sienna inside.

The interior of the house looked better than the outside in that Sienna didn't worry so much that it would fall over anytime soon. Miss

Ward led her to the living room which was decorated in bold reds and whites. Sienna sat in a stiff-backed red leather chair while Miss Ward took the sofa.

"I'm usually asleep at this time of day, so if you could make this fast I would appreciate it."

Sienna nodded and pulled out her notepad. "Like I said, I would like to know if you've seen anyone out of the ordinary, or maybe overheard someone bragging about killing someone recently."

"Hell, in my line of work everyone's out of the ordinary and killing is the norm. And if you think I'm going to give you names, you can just turn yourself around and head back where you came from."

Sienna sighed inwardly and kept calm. "I don't want you to name names. I just want to know if you've noticed a new customer lately, say, in the past two weeks."

Miss Ward scratched her messy head. "We've had plenty of new faces in the club lately. Word gets around that we're a demon bar and they come running from all over."

She was getting nowhere fast. "I bet. Have any of them been talking about the recent murders in Jacob's Cove?"

"Well sure." Miss Ward sniffed, wiped her hand across her nose, and Sienna figured a good dose of coke had gone up those nostrils in the past hour.

"And what are they saying about it?" Sienna prompted.

"How bizarre it is. That the guy's fooling the cops," she snickered, then cleared her throat when Sienna just stared at her. "If you're asking me if any of them's been boasting about doing it, then I have to say no."

This had been a waste of her time. Even if the coke-sniffing woman knew anything she certainly wasn't going to tell her. But she had to try everything possible. "If I leave you my card, will you contact me if you hear anyone boasting about it?" She slipped her card from her ID pouch and held it out to Miss Ward.

She took it, sniffed again, then shoved it into the pocket of her robe. "Sure, whatever."

"Thanks." Sienna left with a deep sigh. It was beyond her why a person wanted to shove things up their nose, or into their veins for a thrill. When she spotted Nathan leaning against his car parked directly behind hers, she sighed a little deeper. Her life would be so much easier if he left town. "I thought I told you to quit following me."

"It's a free country. I can drive where I please. Get anything out of her?"

"That's classified."

"That's fine, you can keep it to yourself. I'll just go up and see what I can get from her."

She stopped him as he moved past her. "It's not your case anymore, Detective."

"Not officially, no, but that's not going to stop me. I want this guy taken down, Lieutenant, and I'm not giving up until he is."

"Making it personal will only cloud your judgment." His eyes darkened and she knew she was hitting a sore spot. "What he did to your partner is rough—"

"Rough," he snorted. "Seeing my partner with a hole in his chest is a little more than rough."

"And all the more reason why you should stay out of this. Your vision is clouded by the death of your partner."

"I was this close to nabbing him, Lieutenant, this close." He held his fingers up an inch apart. "He was standing right over me but because my partner was in my arms, dead, I let my guard down. I won't do that again."

"You've seen him?"

"Yes."

She threw her hands in the air and was ready to scream when she decided calm was better. "Why didn't you mention this sooner?"

"Well, let's see, Lieutenant, might it have something to do with you not wanting me involved in the case?"

Her teeth made a hard grinding noise as she clamped her jaw down tight. "You need to see the sketch artist."

"Are you telling me you don't have a picture of him already?"

"Follow me." She refused to answer his question.

He grabbed her arm, stopping her, and her pulse sped up. When she glared at him, she showed him she was not impressed. "You didn't contact my department, did you?"

"Release my arm, Detective."

He didn't. "Did you even do a search to see if he'd killed anywhere else before coming here?"

"Back off, Powers."

"Sweet fuck, woman, what the hell kind of cop are you?"

She slapped his hand away and rounded on him. "I'm a damn good cop and, yes, I did a search on the killer but I didn't receive any data other than his previous victims. If there was a composite of him, it wasn't given to me."

"It figures. It fucking figures they wouldn't release the composite I gave them. I'll get it for you." He released her arm and stepped back.

“Thank you. Look, I know this is hard on you, what with the death of your partner and all and I don’t mean to sound cold, but if this guy is going to be stopped, we have to put our emotions on the back burner.”

“I won’t put my emotions on the back burner, Lieutenant, because then Leo’s death was for nothing. My emotions are driving me to bring this fucker down and if you don’t like it, then well...I’m sorry.”

“I get that, I really do but running around half cocked won’t help anyone. Now, go get this composite so we can send it out on the airwaves.” She climbed in behind the wheel of her car and waited for him to pull away. She’d read all about what had happened to him and his partner and her heart went out to him. Though she couldn’t understand why nothing had been mentioned about him seeing the killer. Something wasn’t right.

As he drove past her, she told herself to just stay calm. Getting involved with him was not a good idea.



The instant Sienna entered her apartment Daisy was there to greet her...with one of Sienna’s shoes in her mouth. “Oh, Daisy.” Bending down, she took the shoe from the dog and tried not to give in to the happy-eyed tail wagging response from her companion. “What am I going to do with you?”

Carrying the chewed-on sneaker back to her bedroom, Sienna decided she needed to keep them in her closet and the door securely shut tight. She tossed the bitten-up shoe with the others and headed back to the kitchen. She was going to have to do some serious shopping soon.

“You hungry, girl?” She didn’t know about the dog, but she was starved. The lack of food she’d been consuming as of late was starting to wear on her and she knew if she didn’t eat more regularly she was going to end up dropping. It would be so much easier if the cop shop had something in their vending machines other than stale chips. Maybe she should talk to the Chief about that.

Checking through her cupboards Sienna realized she not only had to shop for clothes and shoes but food as well. She just needed to carve out an hour or two in her day to do so.

Yeah...right, like that was going to happen any time soon.

With nothing in the cupboards, Sienna headed for the phone to order take-out.

And there was Daisy, sitting on the living room floor, devouring yet another one of Sienna’s shoes. “Damn it, Daisy! What is with you

and eating my shoes?" Scooping it up, Daisy sent her another sappy puppy look and once again, Sienna ignored it as she tossed the shoe in her room. "Stop eating my shoes."

The puppy whimpered, tail between her legs and slunk off.

Grabbing her cell phone to call for food, Sienna groaned at the knock on the door. All she wanted was ten minutes alone, to de-stress. It was probably creepy Mr. Hadley again asking if he could help her unpack. God the guy gave her the willies. With a great deal of reluctance, she trudged to the door. Yanking it open, she was surprised to see Nathan on the other side.

And he held a large box of pizza that teased her hunger.

"Hey. Have you eaten yet?"

Her mouth watered and it wasn't entirely from the scent of the pizza. How did he always manage to smell so damn good? Even above the spicy pepperoni, cheese and onions she could smell his cologne. "I was just about to order something."

"And now you don't have to. Oh hey, cutie."

Sienna glanced down to see Daisy sitting by her feet, her little white tail wagging like crazy, and another one of Sienna's shoes in her mouth. "Damn it, Daisy. Enough with my shoes." Yanking it from the puppy's mouth, Sienna tossed it toward the bedroom.

"She chewing up your shoes?" Nathan asked as he boldly entered her apartment and set the pizza on her counter.

"Yeah. And if it's not my shoes it's something else she's chewing on." She closed the apartment door, her hunger getting the best of her.

"She must be teething. You should get her some puppy chew toys and some soft bones. That should keep her away from your shoes. Isn't that right, girl?" He knelt down to scratch Daisy's head and of course, the dog loved it."

"I'll look into that." She hadn't thought about dog toys.

"Trust me, it'll do wonders and save you some cash in the long run." He got to his feet. "I hope you like loaded?" He took out a slice of steaming hot pizza for himself.

"I'm not a fan of pineapples and peppers but I can pick them out. Why are you here, Nathan?" She scooped up a slice for herself and the instant it touched her mouth she was in heaven. Food that didn't come in a bag.

"You wanted this." Licking his fingers, he grabbed a rolled up piece of paper from his back pocket and held it out to her. "The composite of the killer. It's rough."

She dropped her slice of pizza back in the box, then licking her own fingers clean, she took the roll of paper. Opening it, she could see what he meant by rough. "Who drew this?" It looked as if a teenager had drawn it from a comic book's character.

"I did. I know, I need to work on my drawing but you get the point of it," he mumbled through the pizza in his mouth. "When I gave my description to the sketch artist he laughed at me and told me I must have been hit on the head harder than they thought. Since it wasn't in the report you got from my department I'm guessing they never took me seriously."

"Are these horns on his head?" Two sets to be exact, back to back on either side of his head protruding out to the side. Along with the horns was a bumpy face resembling someone with severe acne, long bushy hair and thin slits for eyes. It was an interesting composite, if it was accurate.

"Some sort of growth, I'm guessing. Same as his face. I imagine it wasn't easy growing up like that."

Sienna glanced in his direction. Was he for real? This was obviously a demon. "You do know he isn't human, right?"

Nathan finished off his slice and made busy work of devouring another. "Oh sure," he snorted, then bit into the slice in his hand.

He still didn't see what was right before his face. She'd thought after seeing the vamp he would figure out this wasn't a normal city. "You still don't get it. This," she held up the crude sketch, "is a demon, though I'm not sure what race."

"Sure he is," he snickered and finished off his pizza. "Got anything to drink?"

She walked to the fridge, grabbed two beers, and handed one to him. "You seriously believe those are growths on his head and face?"

"Well, he certainly isn't a demon."

Sienna knew the only way to get him to believe was to show him. She took the beer out of his hand before he had a chance to open it.

"Hey..."

"You can get a beer where we're going." Grabbing her keys, Sienna headed to the door.

"Where are we going?" Nathan asked as he went after her.

"To a club."

"You feel like dancing?"

She locked her door. "I'm going to show you the truth."

CHAPTER TWELVE

Nathan wasn't sure why Sienna was dragging him to a nightclub, but who was he to argue if it got him in a little closer to her. When they pulled up to a large building with a neon sign on the front stating it was The Demon's Lair, Nathan decided just to play along.

"Come here often?"

"Only on business. Not my kind of scene."

He rushed in front of her to open the door and the instant he did he was blasted with loud thumping bass and rocking tunes. Okay, so the place had good taste in music at least. "Yet this is where you've decided to bring me. Makes me wonder why."

She flipped her badge to the big, furry looking bouncer standing in the doorway.

"We don't want any trouble, Lieutenant," the bouncer grumbled in a deep, raw voice.

"I don't intend to make any. Just want a look-see. Maybe my guy's in here tonight."

The burly bodyguard stepped aside with a great deal of reluctance. Nathan heard him mumble into his two-way as they walked past him, "Pigs on scene."

The bar was definitely flashy and not only in regards to the flashing disco-style lights on the dance floor and on the railing to the sec-

ond level, but the people were dressed rather...interestingly. Or was it a costume? Maybe that was what the bar was about. Being in costume. How else could you explain the devil-looking characters, the vampires, and the werewolf-looking guys?

"Interesting set up."

"It works for the clientele. See anything interesting yet?"

Nathan had to move in right beside her to be able to hear her over the thumping music. "Other than the freaks dressed as monsters?"

"They're not dressed as anything, Nathan. This is who they are."

She stopped short when a tall, blond gentleman dressed to kill in a designer suit stepped in front of them. "Mr. Adams."

"Lieutenant? Is there a problem?"

"Not so far. Just showing my pal here around."

The gentleman eyed Nathan from head to toe, giving Nathan an uneasy feeling before the smile filled his face. "Fresh meat?"

"Not for the taking. He's in denial of what this city is. Thought I would show him what we have to offer in Jacob's Cove. Wanna help me out?"

He smiled again, deviously. "I don't do guys, but I assume you mean this."

Nathan's jaw dropped when before him, the tall gentleman transformed—yes, he was transforming—into...the lieutenant. "What the hell?"

"Not funny, Adams. You don't want to be doing that again," Sienna warned.

Nathan knew he'd have to pick his jaw up off the floor but that wasn't a priority at the moment. Figuring out what the hell had just happened was. "How the hell...did you just...what the hell's going on?"

"Mr. Adams happens to be a shape shifter. He can morph himself into anything or anyone, as he's just proven now. The so-called monsters around you are real and they would just as easily have you for a snack as they would shake your hand."

"Everyone gives their consent upon entry into my bar, Lieutenant," Adams insisted, changing back into himself

Nathan was in shock and who wouldn't be after seeing what he'd just seen. "You changed into her."

"I can become you if you would like?"

Sienna held up her hand, stopping him. "Thanks for the show, Mr. Adams. We'll be on our way now."

"Ooh, you're a cutie. Wanna go to the back room for a little tickle and taste?"

Nathan stared at the woman currently slithering against his arm. She had the same yellow eyes he'd seen on so many people since coming to Jacob's Cove, and the fangs. "What are you?"

"Thirsty and horny."

"He's not up for grabs, Nina. Go find someone else," Adams advised, prying her off Nathan's arm.

"She's a vampire. There are lots of them here, and in the city. And the guy we're after is a demon. Ready to head back home now?"

Nathan swallowed the huge lump in his throat. He was trying to get his brain to wrap around everything he'd seen. "No." He turned his attention to her. "This is all real?" He'd heard tales but never in his wildest dreams could he imagine the tales were true.

"You bet your ass it is and you'd better wise up because, mostly, these creatures want to have you for a snack."

As he looked out to the dance floor, watching the creatures moving to the rhythm of the music, everything began to take on a whole new light. "I wasn't crazy."

"Huh?"

He looked over at her and it was all starting to make sense. "The department put me on leave because they thought I'd lost my mind and the shrink agreed. But I wasn't crazy and I wasn't seeing things. He really did have horns and a thorny face."

"The killer?"

"Yes. I am so going to slap them in the face with this." And as soon as the killer was caught he was going to do just that.

"Great, you do that."

As he walked out of the club, Nathan knew nothing would ever be the same again.



Since they'd driven to the club in her car, and Nathan had left his keys in her apartment, Sienna invited him back up to her apartment, though all she wanted to do was fall face first into bed.

He'd asked dozens of questions on the ride back to her apartment and she'd done her best to answer them. She knew he was in shock, like any normal person would be after finding out the things they thought were only fairytales and fiction were actually real.

She let them into her apartment and, as usual, there was Daisy, sitting on her rump, tail wagging, shoe in mouth.

"Oh, Daisy, what am I going to do with you?"

"Buy her a bone and some chew toys. Mind if I finish my beer?"

"Actually—"

"This is all just so fucking bizarre," he chuckled halfheartedly, then tipped the can of beer back and drank down half.

Sienna took the shoe from Daisy and tossed it back into her room. "Your cell phone's about to go off."

She'd no more than finished the sentence when it rang. With a baffled look on his face, he answered it. "Nathan."

Sienna grabbed the laptop and sitting on the sofa, waited to see if it was from the killer.

"Hey, Dad. I know...I just can't get away. No, I don't like making my mother cry. Tell her to reschedule for two weeks and I can make it then. I promise. Yes. I'm fine. Actually, my headaches haven't been too bad these past few days. I will. Give a kiss to Mom. Thanks. Later. My dad," he explained after tucking the phone back into his shirt pocket.

"I gathered as much." She set the laptop on the coffee table.

"My parents worry about me."

"Parents tend to do that especially when their child is injured."

"Yeah, my mom's been really protective of me since I was injured. It's weird, but I feel like a weight's been lifted off of my shoulders. Since my partner was killed, I've been feeling...well...lost, I guess. We'd known each other since the rookie days and were partners for three years. He was like the brother I never had."

"I get that. It must have been tough for you to lose him." She'd been lucky that none of her partners had ever gone down in the line of duty.

He carried his beer to the sofa and plunked down beside her. "When I saw him, Leo, lying there on the gravel, a hole in his chest, his eyes wide, his mouth hanging open, I guess I lost it a little."

"Any normal human being would."

He nodded and gulped down more beer. "I had a little meltdown in the hospital and had to be sedated. They put me on leave right after, which pissed me off. Well, right after I gave my description of the killer. They thought I was nuts, but I wasn't. I'd even questioned myself as to whether I had seen correctly. The sun had been in my eyes. I was in shock after seeing Leo dead. But I wasn't delusional after all. He's a demon. Man..." He set his empty can on the coffee table and ran a hand through his hair. "Demons are real."

There was something innately sexy about the way he ran his hand through his hair then stroked the stubble on his chin. And the aroma

coming off of him was stirring something deep inside of her. He always smelled so damn good. "Yes, they are."

"You've always known that?" He looked over at her.

Now came the touchy part. "Yeah, well...I am one."

His eyes went wide. "Get out!"

"My place." She said with a dab of humor, holding her hands out.

His eyes trailed over her body, stirring her up. "But you don't look like a demon."

"Not every demon has horns. Some of us look human." And that was sometimes a problem when dealing with rogue demons. They looked human.

He ran his hand across his mouth again. "Then what makes you a demon?"

"My father is a pure blooded Tejakkan demon and my mother was human. My kind has several abilities. One is the stealth, senses, and hearing of a cat, the other is the ability to see moments into the future."

"Get out." He leaned back, staring at her. "Do you have nine lives as well?"

"Five actually." And thankfully she hadn't lost any of them.

"Seriously?" his eyes widened a little more. "That was a joke but you're serious."

"Perfectly."

"Jesus. Ever lost a life?"

"Not so far."

"Jesus," he said again, swiping a hand across the stubble on his chin. "How do you mean you can see moments into the future?"

"Like when your phone rang. I knew it was going to happen before it did. In the alley when we first met, I saw the vamp and his intentions and that was why I was able to get to him before he tried anything. I also saw you pull a gun and aim it for my head. Most of the time I can block it, but there are times when it sneaks past my barrier."

"That is just...wow...weird." He blew out a long breath, then just stared out in front of him for several minutes. "Okay, this might take a while for me to process it all."

"Take your time. Hey, thanks for the pizza by the way." Seeing it still sitting on her table, Sienna got up to put it in the fridge.

"Anytime." Nathan carried his empty can into the kitchen. When she turned from the fridge, they bumped into each other.

"Sorry."

“Small kitchen.” Her mouth was suddenly very dry. She saw what was coming next and decided to make the first move. She inched toward his mouth, her eyes fixed on the plumpness of his lips. She’d never kissed a man with a mustache or beard before Nathan, and she found it rather interesting. As their lips met, the soft scrape of his trimmed mustache and beard tickled her lips. It was a unique sensation she found she rather enjoyed.

He threaded his fingers through her hair, cupping her head in his palm as he drew her closer. She went willingly, placing her hands on his arms. His mouth was soft, his lips full, and there was a faint hint of the beer he’d just finished drinking.

When he released her to look into her eyes, she felt everything inside of her come alert.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

She could step back now, end the embrace, end what was clearly about to happen. Yet Sienna stayed as she was, looking into his dark blue eyes. The alarm bells were ringing so loud in her head she was sure he could hear them.

Do not get involved with another cop.

Ignoring her head, she went with her needs instead. She took a step closer, her chest touching his and tilted her head as she brought her mouth closer to his. What she needed now was to fill the emptiness inside of her she'd been feeling for much too long now.

She just needed to feel.

Yanking the shirt from his jeans and releasing the buttons, she spread it open and touched the firmness of his chest. There were muscles here, well defined but not overpowering. She liked that. His fingers yanked at her shirt, pulling it from the waistband of her pants and as he pulled it up, his fingers grazed her heated skin.

She shivered.

They released long enough for him to slip the shirt over her head and toss it on the floor. Their bare flesh pressed together as their mouths sought to seduce. He kissed like a seasoned pro and touched her bare flesh with as much knowledge. She wrapped her hands

around his arms, testing the muscles there and as his arm flexed, the sensation went right to her core. Tugging at his belt, she moved them toward her bedroom. Their lips never once parted in their mating dance.

Finally freeing the belt, she went to work on the snap of his jeans.

His hands as greedy as hers searched her pants for the release. Finally finding it at the side, he wasted no time tugging it down. "God, these are so sexy." He slid her leather pants down her hips.

Working his jeans past his hips, she felt the silkiness of his boxers and her body began to heat up. She kicked out of her pants, still devouring his lips. His hands caressed her skin, stirring her up even more. Her nails bit into his flesh as she clawed at his chest. He moaned against her lips, sending shivers in all the right places. She bumped into the bed and, taking him down with her, felt the weight of his body press hers into the soft duvet beneath her bare skin. He pulled one leg up and she curled it around his waist. His hand on her thigh was firm but as he slid it up and over her hip, she felt the calluses on his hands scrape over her skin. Already sensitive, it woke every pore up and had them begging for more.

Finding the clasp on the front of her bra, he released it and the instant her breasts were free, he cupped one in his hand. He wasn't rough now, but he knew what he was doing. His thumb circled the tip, bringing her nipples to full alert. She arched her back, moaning as their tongues danced.

"Condom."

"Pants."

She lay there panting while he searched through his jeans for a condom. Finding it, he held it up smiling, then it faded as he stared down at her. "Damn, you've got a nice body."

"Yours isn't so bad either."

Perching over her, he took her mouth once more and their hands sought to pleasure. She felt him press against her, hard and ready. Tugging at his boxers, she couldn't wait to feel him inside. Releasing her mouth, he tore the condom package open with his teeth then went right back to seducing her lips.

She took the condom, reached down between them and took him in her hand. There was nothing average about him and the thought of all that length pushing inside of her made her a little uneasy. Which added to the arousal.

She slipped the condom on while he tore at her panties, tugging them over her hips and down her thighs. She lifted the leg curled

around his waist, bending it to allow him to slip the silk off her foot. Guiding him to her opening, their eyes met as he pressed slowly inside. Her body gave to his, spreading her wide. Feeling like she hadn't had sex in years, she wrapped her other leg around his waist and invited him all the way in. Her body, fuelled and ready, began to move in a slow rhythm. She arched her back when his mouth took her nipple in, his tongue doing erotic circles around the tip. Gripping his hair in her hand, she urged him to continue while their hips moved in perfect unity.

He pumped. He suckled. His teeth nipped. Her body came alive.

She worked her hips as he pressed himself deep inside, over and over again. And when the orgasm began to build, she yanked his head up to her and took his mouth. Grabbing her hands, he yanked them over her head and pumped her even harder. She poured over him and cried out against his mouth as she was rocked with an earth-shaking orgasm. He grunted, pushed once deep inside, and she felt him twitch with his own release.

He collapsed on top of her, both of them panting. Sienna hadn't felt this invigorated in a very long time.

"Damn it. Not now."

"What?"

The phone rang, ending their happy moment.

"You knew that was going to happen?" He pushed himself up to look down at her.

"Yeah. Just like I know it's a call about another body. I have to get it." She pushed him aside, rolled, and grabbed the ringing phone. "Lieutenant Storm. Be there in five." She hung up and bounced off the bed.

"Your dog's a voyeur."

"What?" She looked to the end of the bed and saw Daisy laying there with her tail wagging. "Guess so. I've got to roll," she added as she threw her clothes back on. She grabbed another t-shirt from her drawer, not bothering to retrieve the one in the kitchen and slipped it on. As she ran to the kitchen to find her keys, she heard Nathan come up behind her.

"Where are we going?"

She eyeballed him. "We aren't going anywhere. I am." Spotting her keys on the table beside the pizza she scooped them up, then ran for the laptop. "If he calls, I'll be watching." She locked up behind him then raced down the stairs to her car. She casually waved to him as she pulled away.



If she thought he was going to just slink off to his hotel room and not follow her to the scene, she was mistaken. Throwing his car in gear, Nathan drove after Sienna. He saw her check her mirror, saw the moment she spotted him, and he was pretty damn sure she was growling when she saw him. He stayed right behind her even when she threw her hand out the window and flipped him the bird.

Laughing, he matched his speed with hers. This was actually fun. When she swerved around the next corner, he took it a little smoother but still kept up with her. He wished he could hear inside her car right now. Nathan was pretty sure she was swearing a blue streak.

The flashing police lights in the distance caught his attention and even if she found a way to shake him, he'd know where to go. When she pulled into an alley and came to a stop, he parked right behind her.

Let the fireworks begin.

Casually he slid from his car, knowing full well she was going to go off on him. When she turned, facing him, he walked toward her in a lumbering stroll. The fury on her face was a glowing beacon in the dark night.

"Back off, Detective. This isn't your case anymore."

"Are we seriously going to have this conversation after what happened earlier?"

"Just because we had sex doesn't mean I'm letting you in on the case," she stated in a low, deep tone, her index finger jutting out at him.

Nathan grinned, shoving his hands in his jeans pockets. "I was referring to the demon bar and the sketch, Lieutenant." He imagined there was a great deal of heat coming off her in her rage right now. "I thought we'd gotten past this."

"Well, you were wrong. Stay back."

"Free country," he reminded her as he began to follow her. He kept his chuckle low when he heard her growling.

"Keep him back," she ordered to the officers on scene before stopping at the side of the body lying on the ground.

Nathan simply stayed where he was and smiled at the young officer who came up to him.

"What do we have, Detective Vega?"

"Fenton, John, twenty-two. Same MO as the previous murders. Hole through and through, heart missing."

Putting on her sterile cap, gown and gloves, she crouched down to the body and Nathan watched her work. The sympathy he saw in her eyes touched him deeply.

"The doc on his way?" she inquired while examining the body.

"Should be here momentarily," Vega remarked, kneeling down beside her.

"Can I have a little more light over here?"

A tall, thin officer strolled off toward a patrol car, pulled out what he assumed was a flashlight before heading back to Sienna. When the light was shone on the body, Nathan could actually see more. He had a fleeting thought to say thank you but kept it to himself and watched them work.

"There's something in the hole."

Nathan shifted to his left to try to get a better look.

"No way that just fell off of the perp," Detective Vega spouted and Nathan wished he could see what it was they were looking at.

"Give me a bag and tweezers," Sienna ordered as she leaned in closer to the body.

Since no one was watching him, Nathan inched his way forward, stopping just behind the lieutenant. What he saw was a young man, eyes wide, one arm over his head, the other on his gut. Both legs were straight out, the heels of his runners touching and toes perfectly straight up. "He's been posed."

Sienna looked over her shoulder and her snarl didn't faze Nathan much. "Didn't I tell you to stay back?"

"Yep. He was posed. No one falls, landing perfectly straight with one arm over their head and the other one on their belly let alone their legs straight and feet perfectly pointed up. Look at the alignment of his body. It's perfectly straight."

Sienna stood up, walked to the boy's feet, then back to the head. "You're right. Damn it, I should have seen that."

"You were busy looking at the handkerchief in the wound, which I am going to have to say was placed there as well. He's getting bolder." Cocky, Nathan thought as he glanced over the rest of the body. He flashed back to Leo laying on the ground, eyes wide, a hole in his chest. He hadn't been posed but that was because the killer had other plans. When the killer had hit him over the head, Nathan had fallen face first onto his partner's chest, his arms around his friend. That was the pose he'd wanted for the other officers to find.

"I would have to agree with the detective." Vega held up the hanky bringing Nathan back to the present. On it written in bold red print—which Nathan would bet his paycheck was written in the victim's blood—were the words *Tag, You're It*.

"What the hell does that mean?"

"He wants to play," Nathan supplied. He heard footsteps in the distance and saw the ME heading toward them.

"Well, I'm a poor loser," Sienna remarked in a dark, determined tone. "Doc."

"Lieutenant." He clucked his tongue as he suited up in his sterile gear. "Have photos been taken yet?"

"We were just about to do so. Carmine," Detective Vega waved his hand at the young officer who in turn headed back to the car.

Sienna held the doc back when he moved to the left side of the body. "Shoe prints over there we haven't captured yet. That's why we're staying on this side. We'll move back and give you room. Officer Carmine, take the pictures. Detective, take the impressions. Tell me we have an image scanner at the precinct so I don't have to ship the prints off to God knows where."

"We have one, except...no one knows how to use it," Detective Vega remarked sheepishly.

"Well, today's your lucky day." Nathan stepped in. "I happen to know how to use them. We use them all the time at my precinct." The steely glance Sienna gave him only made him smile. "Still want to keep me out of the investigation, Lieutenant?"

When she narrowed those beautiful blue eyes at him, his smile grew. Sleeping with her hadn't garnered him rights on the case, but his technical abilities certainly would.

Victory was a sweet reward, and Nathan was going to milk it for all it was worth.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Sienna wasn't all too happy at letting the detective in on the investigation, but she wasn't so stupid as to keep him out for her own reasons. And she had to admit, the guy knew what he was doing. The instant they'd been shown to the crime lab he'd gone right to the scanner and got to work.

"I dated a girl in the crime scene department," Nathan explained while he got the image scanner booted up. "She showed me a few things." He winked at her.

"I'm sure she did. Stick to the task at hand, Detective."

"I can multitask." He clicked some buttons on the machine, then swiveled over to the computer. "I'm dying to know. What's with the leather?"

"What?" Sienna had no idea what he was typing in but he definitely was no stranger to the task. His fingers flew over the keys in rapid time.

"Leather pants." He scooted back to the machine, punched in some more numbers, hit another button, then scooted back to the computer. "Why do you wear them?"

"I like the feel of it. I want to have you sit down with a sketch artist and get a more detailed picture that I can send out on the airwaves."

"You don't like my drawing, Lieutenant? I'm hurt." He grinned slyly at her. "It's ready. Let's slide the impression into it and see what it can tell us."

"A more professional sketch would work better for identification." It was fascinating to watch him work. He took the gel imprint of the shoe they'd captured at the scene and slid it into the slot at the side, then punched in a few more numbers before leaning back.

"This'll probably take about a half an hour." Getting up from his chair, he sent her a dark, sexy look. "I'm thinking we could probably figure out something to do to pass the time."

She held her hand up, stopping him from coming any closer. "Not on the clock." When the doors opened and Doc Hawthorn entered, she backed up a step and did her best not to show her embarrassment. "Doc."

"Guess what I hold in my hands?" He waved a yellow envelope in the air.

"Please tell me those are my results."

"They are indeed." He glanced over at Nathan, tilting his head. "I don't believe we've been formally introduced. Dr. Cooper Hawthorn."

"Detective Nathan Powers. You're a vampire?" They shook hands. "So, do you, like, suck blood from humans?"

"He's new to the whole vampire/demon thing," Sienna explained when the doc's brow lifted, then turned her attention to Nathan. "It's against the law for vampires to take victims without their consent in Jacob's Cove, though we're still working on getting that law through the vamps' heads."

"Get out. You have vampire laws?"

"In a town filled with them, yeah, you've got to have rules." Sienna took the envelope from the doc, tore it open in her eagerness to find out the information. "Blood analysis came back as the victim's. No foreign bodies in the blood to indicate anything other than human blood. No fingerprints on the button or any other substance." She looked up at the doc, pursing her lips. "He doesn't leave any hair fragments, no skin on the inside of the wound, no traces of clothing. How the hell is this possible?"

"Maybe he wears a sterile suit when he kills them," Doc offered.

"He was wearing jeans and a black jacket when I saw him." Nathan took the papers from Sienna, glancing over the data.

"You've seen him?"

He looked up at the doc as he responded. "Once. There's nothing in here about the weapon he might be using."

Sienna looked at him with a lift of her brow. "He doesn't use a weapon, at least we don't believe he does."

"He has to use a weapon. How else do you explain it?"

"He uses his fist," the doc explained, curling his own hand in a fist. "He punches through from the back to the front, catching his victims off guard."

"You're serious?"

"Perfectly."

"He's a demon, remember, Nathan? Some demons have extraordinary strength," Sienna began explaining, taking the papers back. "No one hears the victims even mutter a plea so that leads me to believe he catches them off guard and kills them quickly. One sharp blow to the back, shoving his fist through to the front, snatching the heart out with it. Bam! Bam!" She jabbed her fist out, pulling it back in a quick example of what the killer might do.

"Jesus." Nathan wiped a hand across his mouth. Then his eyes went wide. "He eats the hearts. He told me he eats them raw. Said if you snatch it from the body fast enough it still beats. Holy fuck...that means..."

"Sit down, Detective," Sienna coaxed, seeing how white his face had turned. She knew where his thoughts had just trailed.

"He ate Leo's heart."

"Get him some water, Doc," Sienna instructed, putting a hand on Nathan's shoulder to ease him down into the chair. "Don't think about that."

Nathan looked up at her and swallowed deep. "He fucking ate his heart."

"Here." She handed Nathan the paper cup of water the doc had brought her, urging him to drink.

Absently, Nathan took the cup and had a sip.

"I'm afraid I'm a bit lost," the doc whispered to Sienna.

"Leo was his partner in Boston," Sienna spoke quietly to Cooper. "Our guy killed him a few weeks ago and knocked out Nathan. He's been on stress leave ever since."

"I didn't need the fucking stress leave," Nathan blurted out, getting to his feet. "I wasn't nuts when I gave my description of the guy. He's a demon and I wasn't nuts. I'm bringing him down." His voice dipped low.

The bell rang on the scanner, drawing everyone's attention. "Let's get something on him first. What does it say?"

Snatching the readout from the printer, Nathan cleared his throat as he read. "Shoe brand, Dawson; size, twelve large. Instep indicating he puts pressure on the inside of his feet as he steps. There are traces of sand, particulates of clay, plastic, paper, animal, and human feces. Our boy doesn't clean his shoes often. The list of suppliers are long."

"Yeah, but how often does a guy with horns and a thorny face walk into a shop?" Sienna took the printout and saw what Nathan meant by a long list. "We can split the list in three after we get a composite of the killer." Looking up at Nathan, she saw the fierceness in his eyes. "Put your personal feelings on the back burner, Detective. We need you to give an accurate description of this guy without revenge clouding your vision."

"My vision is perfectly fine. Am I included in the three?"

It was time she put her stubbornness aside and let him in. "You bet. Now let's get rolling."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

At least this time when he'd given his description of the killer, he hadn't been laughed at. It made a world of difference, and gave Nathan some much needed peace of mind. It didn't hurt that the sketch artist was a demon himself. What race had he said he was? Right—Shradluc, whatever that was. Aside from the pointy ears, orange saucer-shaped eyes, forked tongue and three fingers on each hand instead of five, he looked normal.

Sure he'd been pissed the shrink and his captain put him on stress leave, but deep inside, Nathan wondered if he hadn't imagined what he'd seen. A man with horns and a thorny face. Not your typical human characteristic, but he hadn't known at the time that the killer wasn't human.

He did now.

Unfortunately, not everyone in the world believed in demons and vampires. As was the case with the last three shoe stores he'd called and faxed the photo to. Two of them had laughed at him, the third had simply hung up on him. Undaunted, Nathan plugged on.

He'd been given an office to work in, which came with four walls, a door, and a window. Not to mention his own coffee pot. Could it get any better than this?

"Any luck?"

Nathan glanced up from his list to see Detective Dante Vega leaning on the doorjamb, coffee cup in hand.

"Not so far. You?"

"Plenty of skeptics—some angry, some only swore at me and told me to stop wasting their time. Par for the course I suppose."

"I would have been one of those skeptics not so long ago and I probably would have sworn at you to boot. What's it like, being a vampire?"

Casually, Dante strolled into the office and eased himself into the chair across from Nathan's desk. "It takes some getting used to, especially the sun, but I've learned hats and gloves are a vampire's best friend."

"You don't burn up in the sun?"

"Nah, just get fried nice and toasty."

So much for what he'd seen on TV.

"How long've you been a vampire?" Nathan inquired while grabbing a refill of coffee. His had gone cold some time ago.

"Five months, give or take."

"Did a vamp jump you and turn you?" Nathan took his fresh coffee to his desk.

"Nope. My brother turned me." When Nathan's eyes widened, Dante grinned. "He did it to save my life. I'd been attacked and was bleeding out. He turned me to keep me alive."

"Nothing like brotherly love." Nathan was pretty sure he wouldn't be too happy if one of his sisters did it to him.

"There's a history that goes with it, but trust me, what he did for me was the greatest show of love he'd displayed since our teens. So what's your story, Nate? Do you mind if I call you Nate?"

Nathan shrugged while swallowing his sip of coffee. "I've been a cop for fifteen years, detective for five. Lived in Boston all my life. Been hunting the Heartless Killer for nearly a year now—"

"The what?"

"The Heartless Killer. It's the name he was tagged with. You know the media."

Dante shrugged in response, sipping his coffee.

"He killed my partner a few weeks ago."

"Sorry to hear about that. Must be rough."

Nathan set his cup down, nodding. "I found him. My partner. I'd set it up so the killer would meet me in an out-of-the-way location. I knew he couldn't resist meeting given he'd been toying with me for weeks. My mistake was letting my guard down. I know now he had

it planned and took Leo out to prove to me he always has the upper hand."

"Losing a friend is hard enough but witnessing it is worse."

Nathan nodded. "He wants to play with me and he thinks he'll win."

"Hence the reason he's been calling you. The lieutenant filled me in. She seems very persistent and thorough. I don't think she'll rest until he's caught."

"I want this guy caught more than anyone."

"Yeah, I can understand why. Glad to have you on board helping. We can use it right now."

"I've been trying to help but the lieutenant's a stubborn woman."

"That she definitely seems to be." Dante lifted his cup and drank.

"I'm just glad she's letting me work with you all on this now. Makes things easier."

"All around. So what was your reaction the first time you saw a vamp?"

Laughing, Nathan rubbed his bearded chin. "I thought it was a new thing for druggies. The yellow eyes, but then I saw yours, and this chick at a diner I had breakfast at and I started to wonder. Then the lieutenant took me to a club and holy shit! This guy changed into the lieutenant right before my eyes. It was the damndest thing."

"Ah...you met Adams from The Demon's Lair. He's a shape shifter. We have a few of those in the city now. They're a cagey bunch to catch."

"I can see why. I never would have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. So...do you like drink from humans?" He felt like a tool asking but it had to be asked.

"Nah, mostly from the blood bank or from Basil's stock. He's the chief of police."

"No shit?"

"I shit you not. Plus, I occasionally drink from my sweetie, Gypsy, but that's more of an erotic thing than a necessity."

"You lost me." How could clamping your teeth onto a woman and sucking the blood out of her be erotic?

Dante shifted his legs, resting one foot on the knee of his other leg. "Vampires get off on drinking blood from their mate while having sex. Trust me when I say getting off as a vamp is a hundred times better than as a human. I've had both."

Sienna cleared her throat, drawing the attention of both men as she stood in the doorway to Nathan's office. "Oh, excuse me. I didn't

mean to interrupt your chit chat. I'll just go back to my job of trying to catch this killer and leave the two of you to your boy time." With a narrowed look, she turned around and left.

"I think we've just been chastised."

Nathan cocked his head to the side. "You think?"



Obviously, she was the only one who wanted to catch this killer. Sienna stormed into her office, slamming the door behind her as she walked to her desk. She had been sure Nathan would be more studious in trying to capture this guy, but apparently she was wrong. Grabbing her car keys, ID, and cell phone, Sienna stomped back to her door. Throwing it open, she came face to face with both Nathan and Dante. She said nothing but simply glared at them.

"What did you want to talk to us about?"

Her response to Nathan was short and stern.

"It's all right, Detective. I've got the case from here." Moving around him, Sienna stormed off.

"Just hold on a second," Nathan called out to her but she kept walking.

"Maybe we should let her cool down."

"Good idea, Detective Vega," she remarked, having heard him clearly even though she was several feet away. Another one of the benefits of her abilities.

Rushing up beside her, Nathan matched her stride. "What the hell is your problem?"

She stopped short, jabbing a finger at him. "I let you in because I felt sorry for you and this is how you repay me? By sitting around drinking coffee and gabbing about sex."

Nathan's eyes went wide, his dark lashes lifting all the way up to his dark eyebrows. "You felt sorry for me?"

"Yes, because your partner's heart was eaten by this madman. I thought—"

"I don't need your pity," Nathan said through gritted teeth.

"Maybe I should have worded that differently." Damn, he looked sexy when he was mad.

"I think you worded it just fine. Let's get something straight, Lieutenant." He got right in her face. "I do not need your pity. I'm a damn good cop and I have skills and knowledge you could use in this case. I'm an asset, not someone to be pitied. Got it?"

Oh, she really had put her foot in her mouth this time. "Look, I'm on edge. I haven't been sleeping much. I just moved here and the first day I'm here I catch this case. I haven't even had time to unpack my belongings."

He blew out a long breath before he spoke. "I noticed."

Her eyes darted around her to make sure no one heard that comment. To be sure, she pulled him aside and into one of the vacant offices. "About last night."

"What about it?" he asked in a much calmer tone now.

He was just as sexy when he was calm. Which wasn't helping her with what she was about to say. "It was a one-time deal. No more."

One dark eyebrow lifted as he inched his way toward her. "Really?"

"Yes." She backed up, needing to keep space between them because she knew if he got any closer she would give in to her desire and kiss him.

"Why are you breathing so heavy, Lieutenant?" he persisted, inching ever so slowly toward her.

"I'm angry," she lied.

He smiled and made her heart speed up. "Bullshit."

"Look, it was just sex. We both enjoyed ourselves but now you go your way and I go mine." Shifting, she moved to his left, ready to leave but when he grabbed her arm, stopping her, it made her pulse soar.

He turned her and she saw what was coming and once again, did nothing to stop it. What was wrong with her? Why was she so spineless when it came to men?

He yanked her against his chest, wrapped his arms around her, and covered those thick warm lips over hers. The prickle of his mustache and beard tickled her senses, making her heart thud even more. His tongue grazed her teeth as he took the kiss deeper. She was lost to him and melted into the kiss.

Sienna gripped the ends of his hair and pulled him closer. She could taste the coffee he'd had only moments earlier mixed with the intoxicating flavor that was all his own. She wanted him in the worst way, conscience be damned.

When he released her, she stood there with ravaged, swollen lips, feeling as if she had floated to the moon.

"That was not a kiss from a woman who doesn't want more."

Blinking rapidly, Sienna told herself to get a grip. "Just because you're a skilled kisser doesn't mean I'm going to ask for more." Oh God was she a stupid woman.

His smile was slow and devious. "Actions say more than words, Lieutenant."

She stiffened her back and got a hold of herself. "You're an arrogant ass."

"And you want to jump me here and now." He laughed at her shocked expression, then folded his arms across his broad chest as he spoke. "What did you want to see me about earlier, Lieutenant?"

Arrogant was too mild a term for him. And damn him for getting her all hot and bothered. "I found a shop our boy bought his shoes in and they recognized his picture when I faxed it."

His eyes brightened. "Yeah? Where?"

"Boston."

"No shit? What shoe store?"

"Bennington's. Um...there's something else." She debated telling him now but figured in the end he was better off knowing.

"What?"

She took a deep breath before plugging on. "He used your partner's credit card to purchase the shoes."

Nathan's eyes slanted until they were dark slits of black. "That bastard," he growled in a low dark tone.

"I was going to ask you and Detective Vega to do a search on the other victims' credit cards to see if he's done anything similar. I'll take care of it." She walked to the door, her legs a little wobbly from their kiss.

"Give me the names of the victims and I'll do a search."

She stopped and, turning to him, saw the hurt in his eyes. It nearly melted her heart. "I'll take care of it," she repeated.

"Give me the names."

With a nod, she headed back to her office.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The fresh air had done a world of good for his burning eyes. Nathan volunteered to grab some food simply because his eyes had been crossing from reading data. He hated paperwork but knew it was a necessary evil in his business. Still...four hours of paperwork and computer readouts were enough to make anyone's eyes cross.

Since the sun had gone down some time in the last four hours, Nathan kept his eyes open for any weird activity as he made his way down the block from the sub shop to the cop shop. He'd thought it was foolish to take his car when it was only a block away, but now with the darkness settling in, he was a little uneasy.

Okay, he was more than a little uneasy. He was downright freaked.

What the hell was wrong with him? He'd faced down more than one angry gunman in his day, not to mention wrestling with a few drugged-up lunatics wielding knives. He was damn sure he could manage just fine if he happened to come face to face with a vampire or some other weird creature of the night.

Looking over his shoulder, Nathan approached the front door to the cop shop and as he turned back to it, ready to pull it open, he jumped. Sienna stood on the other side, one brow lifted. Obviously she'd seen him jump.

Damn it.

"I got the food." He held the take-out bag in the air, giving it a shake, trying to disguise his embarrassment.

"Something spook you out there?"

"No." Laughing it off, he headed down the corridor to their offices. Like he would admit he was freaked out to her.

"You sure?" She followed right beside him.

"I'm positive." Why couldn't she just let it go?

"I can read your mind, you know, Nathan, and I know you were afraid there might be a vamp hanging about ready to take a chomp out of you."

He stopped short, turned to her with a shocked expression. "You can read minds?" When she only stared at him, he blew out a long breath as he spoke. "Oh give me a break. Okay, so I was a little jittery out there. It's not like I grew up with vamps and demons and shit. Of course they freak me out, but that gives you no right to read my mind."

She smiled and Nathan thought how very striking she was when she relaxed. "I can't read minds, Detective. I was pulling your leg."

"You..." A rumbling noise came from deep within his throat. "That was not nice."

With a sly smirk, Sienna grabbed the take-out bag and walked off.

She wasn't going to get away with it that easily. Grabbing her arm, he swung her around and before she could utter a single syllable he closed his mouth over hers. He felt her resist and her body stiffened but it only encouraged him more. Pulling her tightly against him, he wrapped his arms around her body and took the kiss deeper. When she softened and melted into the kiss, he felt very victorious.

They were interrupted by the clearing of a throat.

Sienna broke the embrace, her eyes wide as she saw Detective Vega standing behind them with a huge smile on his face.

"Just thought I'd check to see what was taking so long with the food, but I can see what the hold-up is. Carry on." He waved a hand at them, still smiling as he turned and headed back to their office.

Sienna rounded on him with a heated glare. "Don't ever do that again."

"Kiss you?"

"While on duty." She jabbed a finger at him then smartly stomped off.

Feeling very smug, Nathan slid his hands into the pockets of his jeans and sauntered off. Yep, victory definitely was sweet.

By the time he entered the office, Sienna had taken her spot behind her desk and unwrapped her sub, Dante doing the same from his chair by her desk, still grinning.

"You two make any progress while I was gone?" Taking his sub, Nathan sat in his chair and opened his sandwich. It amused him to see the lieutenant had yet to look up at him.

"Two of the victims' cards were used after their deaths," Dante supplied after swallowing. "One was used to buy food and clothes. The other was used at a hotel. We sent a description of the killer to the hotel but haven't heard back yet."

"Probably won't until morning," Sienna added, wiping meatball sauce from her mouth. "We should all probably go home and get some sleep while we can."

"Lucky for me I don't need much sleep." Dante grinned then bit into his chicken salad sub.

"We need to do drinks, man, I have so much I want to ask you." Like for one, Vampires ate real food apparently and did not just drink blood. He was learning so much about vampires and none of it was what was told on TV or in books.

"The first free night we have." Taking his sub, Dante got to his feet and headed to the door. "Catch you both later."

"You should go home too, Detective."

Setting the remaining half of his sub on the chair Dante had just vacated, Nathan wiped his mouth, stood and walked around her desk. "I could do that, or I could do this instead."

She stopped him with a raised hand planted firmly on his chest. "Not a good idea."

"Were you reading my mind again, Lieutenant?" Nathan teased, taking her hand in his and pulling her to her feet.

"You forget I can see things before they happen. I knew you were going to do this."

"Then you know what my next move is."

She planted her hand on his mouth and gave his face a shove. "Yep."

It really wasn't fair that she could see what he was about to do, but he had ways of working around that. He was a persistent man af-

ter all. Taking her hand in his, he pulled it from his mouth and, turning it over, kissed the inside of her wrist. He felt her pulse speed up and smiled inwardly at that small victory. Then in a swift move that he hoped caught her off guard, he pulled her into his arms, dipped her back, and nibbled on her neck. "Your pulse is racing." And she tasted glorious.

She pulled herself up and took a step back. "Stop it."

"I don't think you really mean that." He pounced, pinning her to the wall and looking into her eyes, he captured her mouth. She didn't protest, which only encouraged him to pursue it further. Grabbing her left thigh with his right hand, he skimmed his palm up and over her hip. God, leather was sexy. Slowly, he moved his palm up along her body, lightly caressing her breast before slipping his fingers into her hair.

Her tongue slipped out to tease his as he took the kiss deeper.

He ground his pelvis into her groin and her legs parted. She wanted him and there was no denying it. Their previous encounter had obviously left them both wanting more. Nathan certainly didn't mind indulging himself and apparently neither did she.

Releasing his grip on her hair, he ran his hand along her arm, then over to her waist. Tugging her shirt free of the waistband, he slid his hand beneath the fabric to feel her quivering skin.

Her palms planted firmly on his chest right before she gave him a good shove back. He caught his breath, staring at her with bafflement. "What gives?"

"Not here."

"Fine. My place or yours?" It could be the car for all that mattered just as long as he could get his hands on her.

Her cell phone rang and Nathan was so not happy at the interruption.

She snatched it out of her pants pocket, answering, "Lieutenant Storm. Okay, tag Detective Vega. I'm on my way."

"Another one?"

"Seems so."

Grabbing his jacket, Nathan followed her out the door.



Sienna hadn't argued when Nathan had insisted on riding with her. He was a part of this now whether she liked it or not. Mostly the reason she didn't like it was because she was falling for him. Another cop. Despite her vow to do otherwise. Why did she always

have to fall for cops? They were nothing but trouble and she should know, given that she was one herself.

Her body still keyed up from their encounter moments earlier, Sienna reminded herself she was on the job and not to think of the way Nathan touched her, kissed her, seduced her.

Or how utterly intoxicating he smelled.

"Why doesn't your car have a GPS?"

Startled out of her thoughts, she signaled to take the corner as she responded. "Because it's a piece of crap and it's not my car. It's a loner until mine is repaired, which seems to be taking forever. For some reason the yahoo at the shop didn't know how to fix my car so he shipped it to the nearest city. Loser. They tell me they have to order in the part and it should be another week. I hate this car."

"Sounds like you have some issues."

She shrugged. "Don't get me started. Okay, I know the city is still in rebuild mode but how can a mechanic not know how to fix a car? Why hire him then?" She shook her head, shaking it off.

"Interesting. I didn't think they still had cop cars without GPS. What's up with that?"

"Beats me. Something I plan on discussing with the chief when I have a free minute." Spotting the flashing cop lights, Sienna pulled into the alley and behind the car. "If you're going to be on the scene, you'd better suit up." Leaving her seat, she opened the trunk and pulled out her kit. She handed a pair of latex gloves, gown and a cap to Nathan before taking her own. "I'm still the primary. Got it?"

"Loud and clear, Lieutenant." He saluted her with a bright smile.

That was a lethal smile he had, Sienna thought with a sigh, and one of the reasons she was drawn to him. Shaking her thoughts clear she spotted an officer who looked as if he'd just come out of high school standing by the latest victim. It worried her that there were so many untrained officers on the force and decided she really needed to talk to the chief and get some seasoned officers into the mix.

"Lieutenant Storm," she introduced as she crouched down to the body. "You're the first on the scene, Officer..." she craned her neck to get a look at his nametag, "Vega? You related to Dante Vega by any chance?"

"Brother. And yes, I was the first on the scene. Actually, this is my first day on the job and, really, I'm only supposed to be on traffic but this woman came running out at me, screaming bloody murder so what was I supposed to do?" He shrugged.

She could see the resemblance now. Not just in the facial features but the stance as well. His hair was longer than his brother's but the color was the same and so were the shape of the eyes, nose and mouth. "Where is the woman now?"

"In my car. I told her to wait there until someone with authority showed up."

Sienna looked up, saw the woman leaning back against the seat, and decided she could use a few more moments to cool down. As Sienna looked down into the wide eyes of the dead boy before her, she heard the quick footsteps behind her.

"Sorry it took me so long to get here. Car wouldn't start. Hey, Danny."

"Bro."

"Nathan."

"Dante."

"Now that we've all had our nice little hello-fest, can we get to the reason we were all called here?"

"Yes, Lieutenant," Dante replied sheepishly, kneeling down beside her. "He looks maybe fifteen."

If that. The kid still had peach fuzz on his face. "No visible ID but it could be in his back pocket. We'll wait until Doc Hawthorn gets here to check that out. What's this?" She pointed to the clear plastic bag with a white piece of paper in the hole, taking up the place where the boy's heart had once been. "Wanna photo it, Detective Vega?"

"I'm on it." Getting to his feet, Dante shuffled off for his camera.

Sienna scanned the rest of the body, looking for anything and saw exactly what she'd seen with the others. The body was meticulously positioned on the ground, his clothing even smoothed out. The bastard had time to straighten the kid's clothing after killing him and she was betting no one saw him. What kind of demon was he?

"Here we go."

"I want close-ups of the paper," she instructed and scooted to the side to allow the detective to capture the shots. When he'd taken several, she inched back toward the body and with careful approach, slipped the plastic from the hole, then carefully pulled the paper out. The moment she opened it she was blinded by a white hot flashing of light and the sounds of a deep-throated laugh piercing her skull. Dropping the note, she clamped her hands over her ears as she fell back onto her butt.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

She could hear him, could feel him, and it was like slime over her heart. Sienna tried to shake it off but she knew it would take time to get him out of her system. If only she'd seen where he was it might make the pain worth it. Then again, she could always pick up the note and try it again.

Despite the risks to her life.

"Sienna!" Kneeling down at her side, Nathan took her hands in his. "What's wrong? Talk to me."

She could see his lips moving though his voice was crowded out by the roar in her head. "Secure the note. It has his blood on it," she shouted, hands still on her head.

"What's wrong?"

This time she heard Nathan's voice mixed in with the roar. "I'm okay. I just need a minute." Pulling her hands from her head, she gave them a shake before standing. Sienna knew the roar in her head would last several minutes yet.

"How do you know it has his blood on it?"

She turned to Dante, tilting her head, giving her ears a rub. "Say it again? I'm having trouble hearing you."

"Jesus, we need to get you to a doctor." Grabbing her hand, Nathan tugged her away from the body.

She tugged back. "I'm fine. This is normal for me when I come in contact with someone's blood and I'm not prepared for it. It'll pass. What did you say, Detective Vega?"

"How do you know it has his blood on it?" He carefully lifted the note in his gloved fingers.

"I touched it and felt him. It's part of my abilities. Check out the writing. It's his blood not the victim's he used to write it with." The roaring in her head was beginning to dull.

Shifting the note, Dante frowned as he looked at it. "If that's the case, we have his DNA."

"Won't do us much good if he isn't in the records. Test it anyway. All I got from it was his laughter. He enjoys what he does." And that sickened her even more.

"I thought you said you couldn't read minds?" Nathan asked with a narrowed look her way.

"I can't, but I can read people through their blood. Let's get back to our victim here." She heard a car pull up and figured it was probably the doc.

For the next half an hour they worked the scene, did what had to be done, and when it was all taken care of, Sienna slipped away to her car and took a moment to herself to take a painkiller. The headache just wasn't going away. Rolling her neck first, she rested her head, face down on the hood, and hoped to God it would ease up soon.

She jumped when Nathan's hands touched her neck and when she tried to shift, he pressed down a little more.

"I've been told I give great massages. Wow, these muscles are as tight as a board."

She stepped away from his hands, despite the desire to feel them on her skin. "Comes with the job. Are you ready to roll?"

Nathan nodded, slipping his hands in his jeans pockets. "Anytime you are."

Sliding behind the wheel, she waited until Nathan had buckled his seat belt before she sent them rolling.

"How is it you can read a person through their blood? I'm confused by the whole thing."

She really didn't feel much like talking but she knew he wouldn't stop unless she answered him. "It's part of my abilities. My mind can link with the person through their blood. Most of the time I can block it, but when I'm not expecting it...well, it just slams right into me."

"And it gives you a headache?"

"A mind splitting cluster bomb is more like it." Which, thanks to the painkillers she'd taken was now starting to ease.

"Sounds like something you'd want to avoid. Okay, by linking with a person, does that mean you can see where they are?"

"Yes. It's essentially like being a part of them. I've linked with a person on a few occasions, missing children and so forth, but not often. Each time I do it I risk slipping into a coma." Which was why she only did it in emergency cases.

Nathan grunted. "Then what's the point to the ability?"

She signaled and turned left on Anderson road. "It works just fine if you're pure Tejakkan, which I am not. My mother was human and that is why I risk coma every time I try to link with someone. My brain isn't equipped to withstand the procedure."

"Tejakkan?"

She glanced over at him as she drove. "It's the race of demon I come from. My grandfather was the Majaha. The King of Tejakkan's."

"Demons have a king?"

She snickered, signaling left. "The things you learn, huh?"

"It blows my mind. How did I not know anything about demons and vampires before now?"

"Because you weren't open to seeing them. They're all around us, in every part of the world. A majority of the unsolved cases tend to be about a demon or their counterparts. But because the human race doesn't want to believe, they don't see the evidence before them. I worked a few of those cases in my career."

He shifted in his seat. "It actually makes sense. Jesus, I've been so blind."

"Welcome to the world of the sighted, Detective."

"What a world it is. You said 'was,' in reference to your grandfather."

"He passed away eight years ago." Traffic was slow which still blew her mind. Even in the wee hours of the night in Kansas the traffic was horrendous.

"I'm sorry. So does that mean your father is now King? Hey, should I call you princess?" he snickered, giving a mock bow as best he could while sitting in the car.

"No, my father is not king and no I am not a princess. My father is the third son so unless both my uncles and their children die before my father, he won't ever see the throne."

"But you're still royalty. That is so cool."

She pulled up to his hotel and stopped the car, utterly glad to have the conversation over. "Home sweet home. Get some rest."

He glanced out the window and into the darkness. "I thought we were going back to the cop shop?"

"There's nothing to do right now but wait. It'll take the doc a few hours to do the autopsy. We could both use that time to rest."

"In that case, maybe we could finish what we started earlier in your office."

She saw the move coming and blocked it. "We need to rest."

"From the impression I got in your office, you need something else." He slid his hand into her hair, cupping her head.

What she needed was irrelevant. What was smart was the point. "I need to check on Daisy. She's probably chewed my apartment up by now and she'll need to pee."

"We can go back to your place then."

"Detective—"

"Put our professions away. Right now we're two adults with needs and don't tell me you don't want me because I know differently, Sienna."

He took her mouth so quickly it shocked her. But damn it if it didn't fry her brain and make her want. And when his tongue skimmed her teeth before dipping into her mouth she knew she was a lost cause.

She pulled away, sighing. "I told myself I wouldn't do this again."

"Do what?" He stroked a finger along her cheek.

She wanted to melt. "Get involved with another cop."

"Cops have needs too." He grinned at her and she was lost.

Damn it, why did he have to be so charming. Shifting the car into gear, she sent them rolling toward her apartment. "Sure, just not with other cops." Yet she didn't seem to be stopping.

"What's the problem with dating a fellow officer?"

"It only leads to heartbreak and trouble. Trust me, I know."

He angled in his seat. "Do tell, Lieutenant."

"This isn't the time."

"This is the perfect time. Spill."

Why she gave in was beyond her. "I was involved with my captain a year ago. We were pretty tight or so I thought. I actually saw us getting married."

"Let me guess, he didn't."

Signaling left, she turned the corner. "Oh, he really didn't and to top it off, he told me he was through with me. I was devastated but

that gave way to the anger I felt when I found out he was posting semi-nude shots of me on his blog.”

“Get out!”

She pulled into her parking spot and climbed out of the car. “He was fired and I switched divisions. I couldn’t stay there. His buddies didn’t make it easy for me to stay so I transferred. Now I’m here and I’m done talking about my past. Let’s focus on our killer.”

Nathan was silent as they entered her building. When he grabbed her arm, the look on his face stopped her. “A real man knows how to treat a woman. The scumbag who ripped your heart out doesn’t even come close to being a man.”

He’d just managed to cause her heart to skip a beat. She actually had to suck in a breath before she managed to speak. “Let’s just stick with the task at hand.”

“Finally, you see it my way.” In a quick move, he pinned her to the wall on the stairwell and captured her mouth in a strong hot kiss. His hands skimmed along her sides before taking her hands in his. As he released her lips, he brought her hands to his mouth, and grazed his teeth over her knuckles. “Sex is just what you need now. It’ll help relieve those tense muscles in your neck.”

Well, hell. How was she supposed to turn him down now? Her body was vibrating with need. Daisy just might have to wait a little longer to pee. “You’re right.” Hurrying up the stairs, she unlocked her apartment door. He took her in the doorway, kissing her stupid one more time before slamming the door shut with his foot. All she could think was *Take me now*.

Tugging his jacket over his shoulders, she backed them toward her bedroom. He groped with her shirt, pulling it free of the waistband of her pants.

“How is it you can go outside without a coat on when it’s freezing cold?”

“My body adapts to the temperature. It cools when I’m hot and heats when I’m cold. It’s part of my species. I can’t release your belt buckle.” And it was damn frustrating.

“It’s a sliding snap mechanism.” With one simple move he had it open.

“Huh,” was all she said as she tore at his zipper. She heard a whimper behind her and, angling her head, saw Daisy in the middle of her bed, a snowstorm of feathers all around her. “Oh, Daisy.” She’d managed to tear open every one of Sienna’s pillows.

"Two words: Chew. Toy." Laughing, Nathan pulled Sienna's shirt over her head and tossed it aside.

"Let me clean the bed off first."

"It can wait." He released the front clasp of her bra and took one taut nipple into his mouth.

"Oh wow..." The bed could definitely wait. He had the most clever mouth she had ever known on a man. The way he swirled his tongue over her breasts sent ripples cascading across her body. And when his fingers began tugging at the zipper on her pants, she couldn't wait to have him inside of her.

With haste she tugged his jeans down, kicked out of her pants, then pulled him down onto the bed with her.

"Condom."

"Right." Perched on her elbows, Sienna watched as Nathan bent over to pick up his pants. He had a round, firm ass that was absolutely bitable and just over his right hip was a small dragon. "Nice tattoo."

He glanced over his back, then busily slid the condom into place. "Thanks."

"It's kinda small." Most men tended to have ostentatious tattoos to show they were tough. But apparently that wasn't the same for Nathan.

"It was a birthday present from my insane sisters. They got me drunk on my thirtieth birthday and when I passed out they took me to a friend of theirs who does tattoos. They told him to put the tattoo somewhere I wouldn't see and to make it small and manly. This is what I ended up with."

Sienna snickered, picturing his face when he finally saw it. "Cute."

"Adorable." He scooped Daisy off the bed and carried her to the door. "No offence, girl, but I don't perform for the public." Shutting the door, he turned his attention back to Sienna. He stood there a moment, just looking at her.

"What?" She felt a little uncomfortable the way he was looking at her.

"I'm debating which I prefer more. You in the nude, or in black leather."

"Can you debate that after we're done?"

He didn't waste any time and joined her on the bed. She spread her legs for him as he held himself above her and when his lips came down on hers, nothing mattered but this moment.

They rolled on the bed of feathers, caressing, touching, feeling. Lips met, tongues teased, and teeth grazed. When he finally pressed

himself into her, she took him in on a sigh. Every tense muscle in her body gave way to the pleasure he was awarding her. With each movement of hips, with each touch of lips, she felt herself falling farther down into the murky pit of love. When he caressed her face with his palm, looking into her eyes, she let herself go.

She'd done it again. She'd let herself fall for a cop.

As she collapsed in Nathan's arms, Sienna decided this time, she wasn't going to let go.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Nathan woke to a slippery tongue sliding over his cheek from a very friendly dog. "Morning, Daisy." Giving the puppy a scratch on the head, Nathan sat up and had a look around. The spot beside him where Sienna had slept was vacant and cold, which told him she'd been up for a while. "She in the kitchen?"

The puppy proceeded to pick up the shoe she had obviously carried with her onto the bed and gnaw on it.

"I don't think she'll be too happy with this. I have got to get you a chew toy." Taking the shoe from the dog was no easy feat. What resulted was a mild tug-of-war between man and dog and ended in man scooping the puppy up and kissing her on the head. "Sucker." Yanking the shoe from Daisy's mouth, Nathan tossed it over the bed, and then set Daisy back on the bed.

Grabbing his pants, he slipped into them, and then trudged from the room. Boxes lined the walls, yet to be unpacked. Nathan wondered if she planned on staying here or had plans of moving to a house. It would make more sense for the dog if she moved to a house. The little squirt could run and play in the backyard instead of roaming the tiny apartment destroying everything in sight.

Spotting a note tacked to the front door, Nathan tugged it free and read.

"Off to work. Catch you later."

"Aw, she's so romantic." Smiling to himself, Nathan slipped the note in his jeans pocket and as he turned back to the bedroom for the rest of his clothes, he saw Daisy sitting in the doorway, shoe in mouth.

With a heavy sigh, Nathan scooped up the dog and headed to the bedroom to change.



Sienna stood beside Doc Hawthorn while he filled her in on cause of death. Not that she didn't already know what had caused the poor boy's death, but it was part of procedure. She listened intently as he described the dimensions of the hole and how the heart had been torn out in the same manner as the other cases. The blow would have been so fast that the boy wouldn't have felt a thing before his heart was ripped from his chest. For that at least she could be grateful.

"So he comes up behind his victims and with one quick jab, punches through their back, grabs the heart on his way through to the front. Then he carefully lays his victims on the ground and what... takes the heart back to his place or eats it right there and have you ever heard of anything more disgusting?"

"Actually, I have." Cooper pulled the blood-soaked gloves from his hands and tossed them in the trash can. "I've been around long enough to have seen just about everything."

"Scary."

He made a low humming noise. "You must've seen your share of oddities in your lifetime, not just in your line of work but with your father's shops as well."

Cocking her head to the side, Sienna responded with surprise. "You know about my father's shops?"

"I do. I also know your father, or knew him. Years ago when Basil and I were trying to find our way in the world, we settled in Kansas. We rented a room above your father's shop for a time. Basil and I have both kept in touch with him since. He taught me a great deal about spiritual healing."

"Huh...I don't remember seeing either of you."

Cooper smiled, producing crease lines at the corner of his eyes that added to his charm. "This was before your time, my dear."

"Oh... Okay, so if you've seen something like this before, do you have any idea what kind of demon we're dealing with?"

"I've never seen this in particular, but there was a time when I was being held by one of the worst vampires known to mankind. I saw

some pretty horrendous acts. Such as the eating of a human hearts by vampires thinking it will give them a high.”

“Disgusting.” Sienna shuddered.

“Indeed it was. But I imagine not so much for the one eating it.”

With another shudder, Sienna headed for the door. “Let me know when the tests come back.” Leaving the morgue, Sienna took the elevator up, wondering what kind of sick individual could do something as horrible as eating a human heart. It was beyond her, but then again, she didn’t understand how a vampire could drink blood from humans either. Despite her having grown up with the unusual, there were still some things that weirded her out.



With the back seat of his car loaded up with doggie supplies, Nathan pulled away from the pet store. He was rather surprised by the condition of the shop. On the outside it looked as if it had been through a horrendous act of violence, yet when he’d gone inside, the shop had actually looked clean and well kept. While paying for his items, Nathan struck up a conversation with the clerk and asked about the outer shell of the shop.

“Damn vampires thought they owned the city when the sun was gone. But I showed them they didn’t own me,” he explained. “I shot any bastard that came near this place but it didn’t stop ‘em from vandalizing it. They got theirs though, didn’t they? Thank God for the Hawthorns.”

Utterly confused, Nathan asked, “What did you say about the sun?”

“Not from here I gather. Well let me tell you this—you can thank your lucky stars you weren’t here a year ago,” the shopkeeper said. “There was no sunlight ‘cause some nasty bastard named Chaos performed some ritual to blot out the sun. Was the damndest thing to see.”

“I can’t even imagine,” Nathan said and let the man continue.

“The vampires took over the city and had most everyone running for their lives. But I stuck. An entire year of no sun. I never thought I’d see it again and I won’t lie by saying I wasn’t close to deserting myself. But I stuck it out and before you knew it, the sun was back thanks to our mayor and chief of police. The Hawthorns. You could read all about it at the local library.”

Nathan had and he’d been blown away. What a tale. It would make one hell of a movie, he thought. And right at the forefront of it

all were the mayor and chief of police who also happened to be vampires. They'd fought for their city and had won and now they ran the joint. Quite the story.

It sure did explain the decay of the city.

Beside him in the passenger's seat Daisy busily chewed on her doggie bone, making a mess but loving every moment of it. She was even sporting a new collar, which he was very proud to have picked out. He was sure Sienna was going to like it as well.

When his cell phone rang, he answered it with a cheery, "Hello."

"Good day, Detective. And how are you this fine morning?"

Nathan's spine instantly stiffened and he came to full alert. "I'll be a hell of a lot better when you're in custody."

"We both know that's not going to happen. You and the lieutenant seem to be hitting it off. She is an attractive lady. I can see why you would be taken with her."

Nathan's fingers clenched the tiny cell phone with enough force that he heard the plastic casing crack. "Are you watching me?"

"Of course. I always have...well...since that first moment I saw you after my first kill in Boston. You amuse me, Nathaniel."

Nathan preferred not to indulge the bastard's desire to get him riled up. "It wasn't very smart of you to use your own blood when writing that note, Killer. Now we have your DNA."

"How do you know it was my blood? I could have used any one of my victim's blood for that note."

Nathan signaled with his elbow while holding the cell in one hand and the steering wheel in the other. "We have our ways of finding out. It won't be long now before you're tucked nice and safe behind bars, and I personally am going to be damn happy to slam the lock closed on your cell."

"Shouldn't let revenge cloud your mind, Detective. It will only lead to mistakes." The line went dead and Nathan cursed.

Beside him, Daisy whimpered.

Closing his cell phone and dropping it on his lap, he reached across the seat and ruffled the puppy's head. "Nothing for you to worry about, little lady." When his cell phone jingled again, Nathan scooped it up, only this time his response was not as jovial. "I'm going to take you down, you bastard."

"Nathan?"

He cursed under his breath, chastising himself for not looking to see who it was before he answered. "Hey, Mom. Sorry about that."

"I should think so. Is that any way to answer a telephone? I taught you better."

Nathan cringed as the guilt grabbed hold of him. "Yes, Mom."

"Now what is this I hear you won't be attending dinner tomorrow?"

He sank a little deeper into his seat. "I can't make it, Mom. I'm sorry." He waited for it. Any second now she was going to either start yelling at him or guilt him into coming home and he, of course, would give in.

"I see. Well...I suppose we'll just have to make it another time then. Take care, son."

"Mom—Damn it!" The dog whimpered again and, setting his phone on his lap, he ruffled Daisy's head. "You're lucky you don't communicate with your mother...and I shouldn't say that. I love my mother dearly." He sighed heavily. He hated disappointing her, but he just couldn't leave at this time. Not when he was so close to catching the bastard responsible for taking so many innocent lives, including his best friend. His mother would understand that...eventually. He hoped.

Pulling up to the JCPD, Nathan hooked the leash to Daisy's collar before scooping her and her bone, along with a bag of toys, from the car. With the dog in his arms, he entered the front doors.

"Aw...what a cutie."

"Isn't she?" he replied to the receptionist. "This is Daisy. She's the lieutenant's pup. Daisy, meet Lexi."

Lexi gave the puppy a scratch, smiling and cooing over her. It was the first time he'd seen her happy. "I didn't know she had a dog. And what a sweet dog you are; yes you are."

"Is she in?"

Lexi kissed the dog's head before responding. "In her office."

"Thanks. Say bye to the nice lady, Daisy." Obliging, Daisy barked, which made Lexi laugh. Carrying the puppy in his arm, Nathan headed to Sienna's office. He could hear her talking as he approached her door and as he entered saw that she was on the telephone. He stepped inside and waited for her to finish.

She set the phone down and gave a curious look at both Nathan and the dog. "I've got officers at the location the call came from. What did the killer have to say to you when he called?"

"The usual. Bragging about his kill and letting me know he's watching me."

"He told you he's watching you? I need to put surveillance on you and why do you have my dog and what in God's name is she wearing?" Sliding out from behind her desk, Sienna approached them. "Is that a studded leather collar?"

"Indeed it is. I thought it was fitting, given what you like to wear." He glanced with a wanted eye at her leather-clad legs. "And I don't need surveillance. I can watch for him myself. I woke to this pretty lady kissing me. Though I would have preferred another pretty lady's lips, but that can be remedied now." Leaning closer, he attempted to kiss Sienna but she backed away. "Okay, maybe not. After reading your touching letter we headed out for a pee break, then some breakfast before going shopping. She loves these bones by the way." Setting Daisy on the floor, Nathan handed Sienna the soggy bone. "I'm told they'll help her teething problem."

"You're not awake twenty four seven. I'll get someone to watch you. You bought her a studded leather collar and a bone?" she added lastly, giving the collar a closer examination.

"And some toys." Nathan quipped, beaming. He held up the bag and pulled out a rubber bone. Giving it a squeeze, he made it squeak, which drew Daisy's attention. "Should keep her from eating your shoes and tearing up your pillows." He tossed it on the floor by Daisy, then took a step toward Sienna. "I don't need a watch dog."

Again she backed away. "He won't be watching you."

"Well, I am going to start thinking all you wanted from me was a quick lay."

"Keep your voice down," she scolded him while hurrying to shut her office door. "I don't need the entire precinct hearing about our sex life."

"Ah...I see." Seizing the opportunity now that the door was closed, he grabbed her hand and tugged her against his chest. "Can I have that morning kiss now?"

With a long sigh, she leaned toward him and gave his lips a quick nip.

"Wow, that was incredible," he commented sarcastically. "You can do better."

"Not in the office and, besides, we have more important things to discuss."

He held her firmly, though she tried to wiggle away. "I'll take the watch dog but only if it's you. There, business has now been concluded. Door's closed and it's only the two of us here now."

“What about the dog?”

Nathan glanced down at Daisy who was busy gnawing on her bone. “She’s occupied.” And since she was, he wasted no time occupying himself with Sienna’s lips. She always tasted so spicy. She kissed with as much zing. He loved her mouth, loved how her lips curved up when she grinned, how it fit perfectly in his as they joined. When he released her mouth and watched her blue eyes flutter open he realized just how much he loved that soft, dreamy look she had when she was aroused.

“Much better.”

At the knock on her door she bolted out of his arms, smoothed out her shirt, and wiped her mouth before responding. “Enter.”

“Relax, Lieutenant,” he whispered as he crouched down to tease Daisy with her rubber bone.

“Lieutenant. Oh, hey, Nathan. And who do we have here?” Detective Vega’s eyes drifted down to the dog.

“Daisy. She’s the lieutenant’s dog.” Nathan scratched the puppy’s belly which put her into doggy heaven.

“Really?” Dante’s eyes shifted to meet Sienna’s. “Didn’t picture you as a dog owner. Huh.”

“Was there a reason for your visit, Detective?” Sienna asked with firm authority.

“I have someone in my office who says he has some information on our killer.”

“What sort of information?” Nathan inquired eagerly, getting to his feet.

“That’s all he gave me.”

“And you left him alone in your office?” Sienna chastised with a great deal of reprimand in her voice.

“No,” Dante affirmed. “He’s in the interrogation room which is being monitored by an officer. I haven’t been off the job that long that I don’t remember procedure, Lieutenant.”

“Then let’s stop chatting and go do our job. Daisy, stay,” Sienna snapped at the puppy as she escorted everyone else from her office.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The young man sat at the long, stainless steel table with his arms crossed over his skinny chest and an uneasy look on his meek, almost weasely face. One glance told her he didn't like being here one bit. Which was good for her.

It meant he wouldn't be dicking her around.

"Conrad, this is Lieutenant Storm and Detective Powers. They want to ask a few questions." Dante spoke in a soft tone which seemed to ease the guy's nerves.

"Yeah, yeah, sure, sure, okay." He tapped his fingers on his arms still crossed at his chest. And Sienna bet the guy was juiced on something. He had that drugged up look.

She took a chair directly across from Conrad and kept her tone light. "Are you thirsty? I can have one of the detectives get you something."

"Nah, I'm good. Just wanna get this over with if that's okay with you?"

"No problem. I need to get this on record, which means I'll be recording our conversation. Is that all right with you, Conrad?"

He examined the digital recording device she set on the table with a bit of unease. "I suppose so."

"Great." Sienna clicked the record button, giving her name, rank and the case number before proceeding. "It's my understanding that you have some information for us regarding the recent killings in Jacob's Cove."

"Yeah...yeah...um...yeah..." the kid's eyes darted around the room.

If this guy didn't have a record, she'd eat her shoes. "What sort of information do you have for us, Conrad?"

"I know who you're looking for," he said quickly.

She leaned forward in her seat. "You know who the killer is?"

He tapped his fingers a little faster. "Well...not personally, but I know what you're looking for. I...uh...heard from a girl I'm seeing that you guys were questioning people in The Demon's Lair about this guy. I know what kind of demon he is."

Sienna felt Nathan shifting beside her. "What sort of demon is he?"

"Krejka," Conrad said quickly, then shoved a finger in his mouth and chewed on the nail.

Sienna turned to Dante. He only shrugged. "I don't think I'm familiar with that race of demons. What can you tell me about him?"

"He eats hearts," That had him giggling.

Sienna kept her patience. "Do you know why he does that?"

"It helps him, makes him stronger, gives him more life. The more he eats the longer he lives." He shrugged thin shoulders.

That was more than she had an hour ago she supposed. "Do you know where we could find him?"

Conrad shook his head rapidly, then pushed to his feet. "I only know what he is. I need to go now."

"Are you sure you don't know where he is?" Nathan pursued aggressively.

"I don't know. You gotta let me go now. You can't keep me here. I know my rights."

"You're free to go, Conrad." Sienna stepped in front of Nathan and opened the door. "Is there a number we could reach you at if we have more questions?"

"I don't got a phone." He hurried out the door and down the hall.

"I'll put a tail on him," Dante stated before leaving the room.

"He knows more than he gave us."

Sienna agreed with Nathan. "Yeah, but browbeating him would have gotten us nowhere. I want to know more about these Krejka demons."

"You and me both. Where are we going to get the information?" Nathan asked as he followed her from the room.

"Hopefully the chief can give me some insight. Take Daisy back to my place. I'll be there in a few hours."

"After we talk to the chief."

She stopped, turning to him. "There is no we, only me."

Nathan's blue eyes narrowed just slightly but she got the point. He wasn't happy. "I'm in this as much as you, Lieutenant, and unless you plan on locking me up I'm going with you."

She was tempted but instead shot him a steely glare then marched off. "I do the talking."

"Yes, sir."

She let the sarcastic comment slide. Stepping into the elevator, she punched the third floor, then waited while the doors slowly closed. She knew what he was about to do and just as he moved in for the kiss she stepped to the side. He lost his balance and stumbled forward.

"Not at work."

"Can I help it if you drive me crazy? And it's not fair that you can see my moves before I use them."

"Life isn't always fair, Detective." She stepped out of the elevator when the doors opened and headed down the hall to the chief's office, Nathan right on her trail.

"Jesus, you have a nice ass."

She spun on him, her eyes wide. "Stop it!"

He grinned like a man on the prowl. "Your front's not too damn bad either."

"Keep it up, Detective, and you will be sitting in a cell for the next few hours."

His lips lifted in a wide grin. Without saying a word, he stepped forward and opened the door before them. "Ladies first."

Growling under her breath, Sienna entered the receptionist area to find a pretty little lady with long, black hair and stunning blue eyes.

"Good day. How may I help you?"

"Lieutenant Storm to see the chief."

"And Detective Powers," Nathan added, sliding in right beside Sienna.

"I'll notify the chief of your presence. Have a seat."

"Thank you..." Nathan glanced at the name plate on the desk. "Felicity." He joined Sienna in the waiting area.

"I do the talking," Sienna reminded Nathan and when the door to the chief's office opened, she stood, ready to greet him. "Chief Hawthorn."

“Lieutenant Storm. Pleasure to see you again.” He held his hand out to her, his eyes shifting to Nathan. “I don’t believe we’ve met.”

“Detective Nathan Powers. I’m from Boston. I was the lead investigator tracking the killer. I’m here to help catch the bastard.”

The chief’s brows curled together as he turned his attention back to Sienna. “How can I help the two of you today?” He showed them to his office.

Both Sienna and Nathan took a chair while the chief sat behind his desk. “We were just given some information on our killer and I was wondering if you might be able to help me. We’re told the killer is of the Krejka race of demons but I’m not familiar with them. I’m hoping you might be able to tell me something about them.”

The chief sighed heavily, folding his hands on his desk. “What I know of them is that they are a vicious breed. Though they’re pretty much extinct, there are still a few around but last I heard they were being monitored.”

“How do you mean, monitored?”

“They were injected with a biogenetic tracker, which keeps track of their whereabouts at all times.”

Nathan sat forward in his chair. “Then our guy could be traced. Who was in charge of tracking them?”

Chief Hawthorn shrugged. “That’s about all the information I have. I’m sorry.”

“It’s more than we had an hour ago. Thank you, sir.” Sienna stood and with a nod of her head, she left the office, Nathan behind her.

“Do you have any idea where we could find out who’s in charge of tracking these demons?”

“No, but I think I might know someone who would.”

“Who would that be?”

“My father.” She pushed the down button on the elevator.

The vision speared into her in its usual fast-forward motion warning her of the crazed lunatic about to burst through the elevator, guns blazing.

She shook her head clear as the elevator rang its announcement at having reached the floor. “Take cover!” she screamed and gave Nathan a hard shove, knocking him back and away from the door. She crouched down on all fours, the hair on the back of her neck standing up and ready.

The moment the elevator doors opened up she saw the man holding the rifle aimed at chest level, ready to fire. She pounced, grabbing hold of his legs and knocking him down. The rifle in his hand flew

back and crashed into the glass mirror at the back of the elevator before falling to the floor. Sienna had him down on his face, arms pinned behind his back long before Nathan stumbled to his feet.

“What the hell?”

“Call down for back-up.” Pressing her weight on the man’s back, she yanked out her cuffs and slapped them on his wrists. “You have the right to remain silent...”

CHAPTER TWENTY

Nathan watched as Sienna handed the cuffed man to the officer, giving her details and orders with the confidence and authority of a woman who was well used to wearing the badge. He had to admit, she was damn sexy in her cop mode. Hell, she was sexy in any mode.

As she strolled toward him, her long, leather-clad legs moving swiftly, he wondered if he could persuade her to a quickie in her office.

Who was he kidding? Sienna would never agree to anything remotely close to sex while on duty. And that was another thing that he found attractive about her. She had a strong work ethic.

"He's crying temporary insanity," she snorted. "Everyone always wants to plead temporary insanity."

"Could be he really is nuts."

She ran her fingers through her hair, smoothing the mess back into place, which Nathan thought was pointless given the fact that her hair naturally looked tousled.

"His mind was perfectly clear when he decided to come into the cop shop, guns blazing in hopes of taking out the chief. Guess not everyone is happy with him taking over the city."

Something suddenly clicked inside his mind. She...was a demon. A frikin' demon. "How do you do it? How can you see what someone is about to do before they do it?"

"It's just something I was born with. If I was full Tejakkan I would see more and have more time than just seconds. My human blood kinda mixes things up for me. Dilutes it in a sense."

"But how do you see it? Is it like a movie? Do you hear someone telling you what is about to happen? I don't get the dynamics of it," he pursued as he followed her to the stairwell.

"I see it like I see what's in front of me now. It's that real, that life-like."

"Then how do you know what's real and what's about to happen?"

She pushed through the doors to the main floor. "I get this quick flash of light before I'm warned of what's to come."

"That is so weird. I don't think I'd be able to handle it. I think it would drive me nuts."

"Sure, if you were given the ability now, but I was born with it. It's as much a part of me as breathing. I don't know anything different."

They entered her office and Nathan saw her glance at Daisy, who was sound asleep on her sofa. Sienna's eyes always took on a softness when she looked at the dog. Beneath the hard work-conscious woman was someone who could go mushy over a puppy. Nathan found that to be very endearing. "Still...not sure I could handle it. So before we were interrupted by Mr. Gun-Happy you mentioned something about your father possibly knowing how we could find the person who's been tracking our demon boy. Why do you think your father could help us?"

She sat behind her desk, picking up her telephone and clicking on her computer simultaneously. "My father has connections. He runs a spiritual shop, one mostly catering to vampires, demons, werewolves, and more. If someone's been tracking our killer, there's a good chance he'll know who it is."

Nathan left her to make her call but just as he was about to sit and pet the sleeping Daisy, his cell phone jangled in his pocket. Pulling it out, he saw Sienna's eyes light up. Checking the caller ID he shook his head and mouthed, "It's my dad." Leaving Sienna to her call and the sleeping dog content on the sofa, he headed out of the office. This was not a call he was looking forward to. "What took you so long to call, Dad?"

"Don't be callous about this, son. Your mother is extremely hurt."

That had been obvious on her last call. "I know, and I'm sorry. But she knows what my job is like. When I'm on a lead I can't just drop it to go have dinner."

"You're not supposed to be on a case. Might I remind you of that?"

"No, you can't, but I'm telling you right now there is no reason to worry about me. I haven't lost my mind and I'm not doing anything that would constitute irrational. I'm working with the JCPD on this case and we've got some solid leads that could put this guy behind bars once and for all."

"I understand your need to get him, believe me I do. But if I didn't at least try, your mother would make my life a living hell. Make her feel better, son. Send her some flowers."

"I plan to. I'm sorry she's upset with me. When this is all over, I'll be sure to make it up to her."

"You do that."

Nathan tucked the phone back in his pocket, then just stood outside Sienna's office. He loved his family dearly, but there were times he wished they understood his job a little better.

He couldn't just walk away when someone was taking the lives of innocent people.



Leaning back in her chair, Sienna watched her puppy sleep while she spoke to her father. "I'm doing fine, Daddy."

"Fine....fine...what's wrong? Don't you like your new job? Are they giving you a hard time? You tell me what they're doing and I'll make sure and—"

"Daddy," Sienna interrupted and she knew he would pursue it later on at some point anyway. Maybe she should just let him go on and get it out of his system. Or not. "Fine isn't bad. I've been busy and yes, they treat me perfectly well here, better than well as a matter of fact. You should see my office. It's huge. I have a sofa." She laughed, looking at the black leather, three-seated sofa that her faithful puppy was zonked out on.

"Yet I hear something in your voice that tells me otherwise. You're lonely? Have you made any friends? You know how important it is to make friends, sweet pea."

She loved her father dearly, even when he was being overly protective. "I'm not lonely. I don't have time to be lonely. Listen, the reason why I'm calling is—"

"It's a man. You met a man and he hurt you. Tell me his name and I'll—"

"Dad," Sienna broke in firmly. "No one's hurt me. What can you tell me about the Krejka demons?"

"You don't want to mess with them."

"Besides that. I was told that they've been tagged and are being monitored. You wouldn't happen to know who would be the one monitoring them?" She could actually picture her father tapping his head as he thought about what she asked.

"Not off-hand but I could find out. Why do you need to know? Oh baby, you didn't fall for a Krejka did you? Please tell me you didn't. He'll break your heart then have it for lunch."

Sienna cringed at her father's analogy. "Relax, Dad, I didn't fall for one. The case I'm working on involves one. I have five victims all with their hearts ripped out. Chief Hawthorn—"

"How is Basil doing? And Cooper? Boy, it's been forever since I've seen either of them. What is Basil's wife like? I hear she's a real ass kicker."

"Daddy." She squeezed the bridge of her nose. "Can we stick to business, please?"

"It's always business with you. You need to relax, baby girl, and have some fun once in a while."

She sighed, heavily. "Chief Hawthorn told me that they are being controlled but he doesn't know by whom. I'm really hoping you can help me on this. Can you ask around, get some info for me and get back to me as soon as possible. Please?"

"Anything for my peach face."

She wondered if her father knew how insulting that sweet nickname was. Her face was not hairy. "Thank you, Daddy."

"Who is he?"

"You lost me."

"The man who has your heart all tangled up? Tell me it's not another cop."

"Bye, Daddy. I love you." She hung up knowing full well her father would not leave it at that. When Nathan entered her office, she could see something was bothering him. "Everything okay on the home front?"

"I need to send my mother flowers. I was supposed to attend a family dinner tomorrow and she's hurt that I'm putting work ahead of family." He shook his head. "Let's stick to business. What did your father have to say?"

Daisy woke with a long stretch and the instant she saw Nathan, her eyes lit up and she pounced off the sofa to scurry toward him. Looks like she wasn't the only one in love with him, Sienna decided.

"He's going to get the information and get back to me with it. I think you have an admirer."

Crouching down, Nathan scratched Daisy's ear, and the dog moaned in delight. "What can I say? The ladies love me." His eyes lifted to meet hers and she felt her knees go weak. All he did was stare at her.

"What're you looking at?"

"You." He stood up and slowly walked toward her. "I'm wondering how you'd look in a studded black leather collar."

She gritted her teeth. "I don't think I like that implication, Detective."

He laughed, taking hold of her hands. "What I meant was I think you would look hot in a leather-studded collar, black leather bra and panties, knee-high black leather boots, maybe holding a whip. I'm getting hard just thinking about it."

She wasn't about to admit to him that it was making her a little hot as well. "Leather bras don't have much support."

His eyes drifted down to her breasts, then back up to meet her eyes once more. She was a goner. "Sweetheart, you wouldn't be wearing it long enough for it to matter if it had support or not."

When he kissed her it made her entire body come alive. He was smooth, he was skilled and she fit perfectly in his arms when they came around to hold her against him. If it was wrong of her to fall for him, then at this very moment she didn't want to be right.

Then her telephone rang and she realized where she was. Pulling away wasn't easy but Sienna forced herself to do it.

With a deep breath, she scooped up the ringing phone. "Lieutenant Storm."

"Good day, Lieutenant. Guess what I have in my hands?"

"I'm not sure I want to answer that." Being the ME, God only knew what he held.

"Your toxicology report."

"Excellent. I'll be right down." She set the phone down and told herself to put her libido and her heart aside and remember why she was here. "That was Doc Hawthorn. Toxicology is in."

"I don't suppose you'd put it off for half an hour and finish what we started?"

She wanted to so badly it hurt, but she knew better. "When I'm on duty, the job comes first. Would you mind taking Daisy out for a pee break?"

"I wouldn't mind at all. But first...I want this."

The brush of the fine stubble over his top lip and on his chin tickled when he kissed her not once, not twice but three times before pulling away. As he scooped the dog up in his arms and left her office, Sienna felt her heart trip over that final step into love.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

She'd never been in the doc's office before and couldn't help but notice how meticulous it was. The steel and glass desk he sat behind was not only free from dust but each item on it was perfectly placed with what she figured had been a great deal of thought. The picture of who she assumed was his wife sat to his left, angled so not only could he see it but those who sat at the desk would be able to glimpse it as well. It told her he was proud and deeply in love with his wife. To his right were two picture frames. One was of the mayor and the chief of police in wedding dress and the other was of the young, dark-haired receptionist in the chief's office. Looking at her now, Sienna could see a resemblance to the chief and his wife. She wondered if she might be their daughter.

Aside from the three photos were the telephone, a note pad and pen, and one file, which lay open in front of him. The rest of his office was just as meticulously aligned.

She wasn't sure how anyone could live like that, but to each their own. "So what do you have for me?"

He handed her a slip of paper as he spoke. "The blood used to write the note was not that of our victim nor was it of any of the others."

"Because it's his." She took the paper, looking down at the report. Nothing shocking, nothing overly helpful. "I'm researching something that might help us define who this blood belongs to." She handed him the paper. "But it could take time. I've been thinking...I could end this now, or possibly end it, and link with the killer."

The doc took the paper and set it perfectly in its spot in the folder. "But does the end result justify the means? If you ask me, I would advise against it." He looked up at her with utter sincerity.

"I've linked before and I've been fine...well, mostly. The headaches last a while and the uneasiness takes some getting used to, but if it helps us catch this guy...I have to think about at least trying."

"There are times," he began, folding his hands on his desk, "when what we have to offer isn't always for the best. And who's to say you'd come out of it with the ability to help catch him? We both know it could put you in a coma to try and link with him. How would that help us catch him?"

She knew all of that, still... "Like I said, it's a thought. We'll catch him, one way or another. Thanks, Doc."

"I wish I had better news for you."

"Maybe you will next time." She left his office, wondering if the risks might be worth it this one time.



Sienna could smell the intoxicating aroma all the way down the hall and she wondered who was busy cooking. The closer she got to her apartment the stronger the aroma got. Baffled, she inserted her key and found her door was unlocked. Claspng her weapon firmly in her hand, Sienna slowly opened the door. Giving it a shove, she went in ready.

And there was Daisy, bone in mouth, staring up at her. Tail wagging.

"Good, you're home. I hope you're hungry. I made lasagna." Nathan stepped into the hallway leading from the kitchen, one eyebrow raised at her gun. "If you don't like lasagna just say so. You don't have to shoot me."

"Har har." She disengaged her weapon. "I thought you were an intruder."

"Who happened to stick around and make you dinner?" Tipping her chin up, he kissed her solidly on the mouth. "Give me five seconds."

While Nathan rushed off to the kitchen, Sienna put her weapon away and kicked out of her shoes. Her stomach seemed to recognize the aroma as food and rumbled its need to eat. As she made her way to the living room she saw the scattering of dog toys all over the floor. "How many toys did you buy her?"

"Enough to keep her from chewing on your shoes." Turning her, Nathan pulled her into his arms and this time the kiss was stronger, more possessive.

She felt herself being pushed backwards. When she bumped into the wall she came up for air. "What are you doing?"

"Taking you to bed."

"What about the lasagna?"

He undid the snap on her pants. "It'll keep." Tugging her shirt from her waistband, he yanked it over her head.

"But I'm hungry." Not that she was arguing a great deal when he continued to push her toward her bed.

"So am I." He kicked out of his shoes while removing his own shirt. "You look absolutely edible."

Going with the flow, deciding her libido came before her stomach, Sienna stepped out of her pants. "I wondered what happened to you. You never came back after taking Daisy for a pee."

He stripped out of his pants and shorts, tossing them carelessly aside. "I decided to bring her back here and after that I decided to cook. I like to cook when I'm frustrated."

She hadn't pictured him as a man who liked to cook. That definitely surprised her. "Wait a sec...how'd you get into my apartment?"

He gave her a shove, causing her to fall backwards onto the bed. "The landlord let me in. Told him I was a friend and you asked me to watch your dog but I forgot the keys to your place at my hotel. He was very gracious as he let me in."

She pursed her lips. "I'm sure. Remind me to have a talk with him. Oh..." His mouth was hot and wet as it took her breast. When his tongue slid over the tip a shiver cascaded over her body. All the worries she'd had, every little ounce of stress simply slid seamlessly from her body as he worked it over. His hands were skilled and seemed to know exactly where to touch to make her moan. His lips caressing her bare skin were soft and warm but managed to make her shiver and when he braced himself over the top of her, she looked up into his eyes and surrendered herself completely.

She was in love and right now she didn't give a damn that it might be wrong or stupid. She simply savored the moment.

Feeling absolutely content, Sienna lay in Nathan's arms. When Daisy jumped up onto the bed to join them, Sienna thought how perfect her life was right now.

Then her stomach rumbled.

"Lasagna..." Kissing Sienna's head, Nathan pushed the covers aside and slipped from the bed. "Be right back."

He scurried from the room, giving her a nice view of his round, firm, naked ass. Sitting up, Sienna lifted Daisy onto her lap and ruffled her head. "What do you think? He's pretty cute, huh? Damn sexy for sure and a hell of a lover. And so far, he isn't exhibiting psychotic possessive behavior. I think I did okay this time."

Daisy's reply was to curl up beside her, against her hip, and drop off to sleep.

"You suck at girl talk, Daisy."

"Here we go. Piping hot lasagna, redwine, and warm bread."

"All served by a gorgeous, naked man. What more could a girl ask for?"

Climbing onto the bed, tray in hand, Nathan grinned like a fool in love and Sienna's heart melted. "We'll have plenty of time to find out after we fill our bellies." Setting the tray on the foot end of the bed, he handed her a glass of wine and set his on the nightstand before serving the lasagna. "Hope you like it. It's my mother's recipe."

"I love all pasta and this smells heavenly." Daisy seemed to agree as she woke from her short nap with her nose in the air. Because she was a sucker for that sad puppy look, Sienna cut off a piece of noodle, blew on it to cool it down, then held it out to the pup. Daisy took it without any hesitation.

"If it's good for the dog, it can't be all bad."

Sliding a forkful into her mouth, Sienna closed her eyes and sighed. "Mmmmm."

"I take that as approval?"

Her head bobbed up and down as she chewed and swallowed. "I haven't had anything this good in my mouth in a very long time."

"I could remedy that later," Nathan teased with a cock of his eyebrow.

Laughing, Sienna dug in. She realized now just how famished she was. "Your mother taught you to cook?"

He broke off a piece of bread, dipped it in the sauce, then handed it over to the dog. "If I wanted to eat, I had to learn to cook. My mother's belief was that women weren't the only ones to have to cook; men should learn the craft as well."

"That's good. Your mother sounds like a smart woman."

"She is, and she knows just how to get what she wants. I sent her a huge bouquet of roses along with a suck-up note. I hope she forgives me soon."

"I'm sure she will. You being her only son and all. It sounds like you have a nice family." She dipped her own bread into the sauce but instead of sharing it with the dog, gobbled it down herself.

Nathan remedied that by giving the puppy a large noodle. "I can't complain. What about you? Any siblings?"

She washed the bread down with the wine, tipping her head in approval. Not only could he cook but he knew his wines. "Nope. Just me and my dad."

"What about your mother?"

She scratched her leg with her foot. "She died giving birth to me." All she'd ever had were pictures of her mother and what her father told of her. Sienna had often wondered what it would be like to have a mother and envied those who had been blessed with one.

"I'm sorry." He placed a hand on her arm, just a brief show of sympathy but it meant the world to her.

"My father told me stories about her, though it not quite the same as having her in living color. But I have to be grateful she chose to even have me, knowing the risks."

"What risks?" Nathan handed the puppy another chunk of bread.

"She's going to get fat." Nathan only shrugged. "My mother was human, my father is not. Tejakkan demons gestate differently than humans. Instead of the normal human nine months, Tejakkan's pregnancy term is eleven months during which the child inside not only nurtures off of the mother but if the mother is demon as well, it feeds off of her powers to develop their own. Since my mother was human, I attempted to feed off her powers, which of course there were none, but ended up draining her of her energy and blood. My father told me that he tried to convince her to terminate the pregnancy and that they would find a surrogate but she refused. She was determined to have me and it cost her her life in the end."

Nathan set his empty dish aside and turned to her. "One, I can't believe he told you he asked your mother to terminate you and two, it is not your fault she died giving you life."

He was so sweet and it only made her love him more. "Oh, I know it's not my fault and I don't blame my dad for telling me the truth. He's been everything to me, he loves me more than I can say and he

has always spoiled me. He only told me to warn me of what might happen to me should I ever become pregnant with a demon child. I've reassured him that it will never happen."

"You don't want kids?" He took her empty dish and set it on the tray with his, then carried the tray to the dresser before rejoining her in bed.

Sienna shrugged, stroking the puppy's soft, white head. "It's kind of tough to have a family in my line of work. My hours suck and I'd never know when I could be called out to a scene. That's no way to bring up a kid."

"I've always thought the same thing." He slid in behind her, spreading his legs as she rested her back against his chest. "That's one of the many reasons why my mother hates what I do for a living."

His hands on her neck, massaging the muscles felt so good. Relaxing. "That must be hard on you. Not having her support."

He kissed her neck, making her moan. "She just hates how much work takes away from my social and family life."

"I'm sure she also worries that her only son will be hurt in the line of duty." She reached up to touch his face as she angled her head to look up at him.

"There's that too. You have the most gorgeous eyes I have ever seen."

Her body and mind went to absolute mush and just as he was about to kiss her, the telephone rang. "Damn it!"

He reached over to the nightstand, snatching the phone and handing it off to her.

With a heavy sigh, Sienna answered. "Lieutenant Storm."

"We just got a call. Two more bodies have been spotted, Lieutenant," the receptionist informed her.

"Location?"

"Lexington Park."

Sienna sighed. "I'll be there in five."

"Another one?" Nathan asked as he set the phone down.

"Two. We have to roll."

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

She'd been on plenty of brutal murder cases but seeing the young couple sitting on the park bench, arm in arm with fist-sized holes in their chests and a huge pool of blood beneath them was enough to have her biting her quivering lip. Neither looked older than seventeen. Their eyes, wide in death, stared out at her in shock. The last thing they saw was their killer.

"He punched through the front this time and right through to the back, breaking the wood of the bench. Wounds are different than the previous ones in that the front is smoother than the back leaving me to believe the front was the point of entry"

Sienna stood before the once lovers now eternally linked in death and listened to the doc explain the manner of death.

"We've got some wood splinters in the wounds."

She watched as Detective Vega opened a sealed bag and held it out to the doc. Everything seemed to move in slow motion for her.

"Are you okay?" Nathan whispered in her ear.

Licking her lips, reminding herself to not think of the couple before her and just process the scene, Sienna nodded. "Just assessing," she lied, then moved toward the pair, kneeling down before them. She could actually see right through to the doc standing behind them.

Shaking her thoughts away, Sienna looked over the scene. "We have blood droplets leading away from the body going north."

"I'll follow them, take samples as I go," Detective Vega stated, as he headed off.

"He had to have gotten them at the same time using both of his hands."

Sienna looked up at Nathan, nodding. "I'm thinking the same thing. If he'd taken one at a time, the other would've had time to move, to try to get away and there are no signs of a struggle." It was clear he hadn't arranged these bodies by the holes in the park bench. "So what did he do? Did he walk up to them, make small talk, then punch his way through their chests with both fists? Who found them?"

A familiar officer stepped forward, looking more than a little green. Sienna recognized him from the first crime scene. "I did, sir."

"Talk to me, Office Dickie."

He cleared his throat. "I was making my rounds through the park. Vamps like to stalk the dark waiting for joggers or in this case, lovers." He swallowed again as his eyes briefly flitted to the bloody pair. "I called it in as soon as I saw it."

She bet he did, right after he barfed up his dinner. "Did you see anyone around, see anyone walking or running away from the scene?"

"No, sir. It was just the two of them. I even looked around but there was no one. They're so young..."

"Yes they are." Sienna turned to the doc now. "How'd you get here so fast?"

"My wife and I were having dinner with Dante and his wife when he got the call. His home's fairly close by." Doc Hawthorn stood up and walked around the bodies to speak to her face to face. "I put their death at under three hours. Their bodies're still relatively warm and not stiffening up yet."

Sienna checked her watch, calculated the time they had been killed, and thought about what she was doing three hours ago. While she was rolling in the sheets with Nathan, two innocent lives were being snuffed out.

Turning, Sienna glanced around the empty park. Was he here, was he watching, enjoying the aftereffects of his carnage? Closing her eyes, Sienna tried to pick him up with her mind. She'd touched his blood once, not so long ago, she hoped she still had a link to him. But when all she saw were the wide eyes of the two innocent lovers, she opened her eyes and blew out a breath in frustration.

Then seeing the blood droplets, she knelt down and touched a finger to the blood.

“Lieutenant, don’t—”

The surge pushed through her, stabbing her right in the chest, right over her heart. The heat washed through her, stealing her breath and knocking her over. The last thing she heard was Nathan yelling, “She’s not breathing!”



Nathan paced the waiting area, his nerves rattled, his patience running thin. It had been nearly twenty minutes since he’d rushed Sienna to the hospital, the doc pumping her chest to get her heart beating. He was trying to process what the doc had told him but it was so bizarre. Nathan knew Sienna wasn’t completely human, but the idea that when she’d touched the blood on the ground she’d most likely connected with one or both of the dead bodies which had stopped her heart was nearly incomprehensible to him.

When Dante rushed into the waiting room, eyes wide, wanting to know how Sienna was doing, Nathan had nothing new to tell him.

“So what happened to her? All Officer Dickie said was that she collapsed and she wasn’t breathing.”

Nathan scratched the stubble on his face, wishing desperately that someone would come out to tell him how she was doing. “I’m baffled by it, but I’ll do my best. Sienna touched her finger to one of the blood droplets on the ground and fell backward, convulsing. When I knelt down to her, she’d stopped breathing. Doc says she connected with the deceased bodies and it stopped her heart.”

“Shit,” Dante gasped, wiping a hand across his mouth. “She’ll be fine, man. She’s in good hands.”

Nathan wished he could be as optimistic, but Sienna hadn’t been breathing and her heart had stopped. Sure, Doc Hawthorn had gotten it pumping again, albeit irregularly, while he’d rushed to the hospital, still... What was taking so long?

“Listen, I know one of the nurses here. I’ll see if she’s on duty and maybe she’ll get some answers for us.”

“That’d be great.” But just as Dante headed for the door, Doc Hawthorn came in. Nathan pounced. “Well? How is she? Tell me she’s alive, Doc.” His chest felt so tight Nathan worried it might crack.

“She’s alive and she’s stable. Actually, she’s complaining about being kept in the bed and demanding to be released.”

“Where is she?” He had to see her. Now!

"Room 2134. Down the hall and to your left."

Without another word, Nathan hurried from the room. The people he passed in the hall were a blur to him as he rushed to Sienna. Pushing her door open, he found her standing up and struggling to put her pants on. "What the hell are you doing?"

"Getting dressed."

He caught her when she stumbled and set her down on the bed. "You're supposed to be in bed."

"I hate hospitals."

He took her pants from her and it was a testament to her lack of energy when she couldn't wrestle them out of his hands. "Who doesn't? But you still need to stay here."

"Screw that. I'm fine." Grabbing her shirt lying on her bed, which Nathan deduced she'd pulled from the storage locker across from her bed, she began untying her hospital gown.

"You are not fine. Your heart stopped beating, you stopped breathing, and look at you..." He yanked the shirt out of her hands and received a growl. "You don't even have the strength to dress yourself. Stop being so stubborn and lie down."

Her eyes narrowed as she spoke in a low tone. "Don't tell me what to do."

"Do you get what happened to you? You nearly died." And that tightness in his chest only grew tighter. It was a familiar sensation, one he'd felt when Leo had died, one he thought would kill him then but had slowly eased to a dull ache. He'd loved Leo like a brother and losing him had nearly ripped him apart.

The realization of what that tightness in his chest now meant had Nathan pausing.

"And now I'm fine," Sienna protested, snatching the shirt from his hands.

He was in love with her. Taking her by the shoulders, Nathan turned her to face him. Her skin was pale, her eyes were dark, her make-up was smudged, and her hair was a mess. He loved her despite all of that. "You nearly died," he said somberly, then pulled her into his arms.

Slowly, her arms came up to wrap around him. "I'm okay, Nathan. Really. I'm just fine."

Shifting so that they were face to face, he poured his heart out to her. "Do you have any idea what it did to me when I felt your pulse and there was none? I had no idea what had happened, all I knew was that you weren't breathing. Jesus, Sienna, it scared the shit out of me."

She touched her hands to his face and the look she gave him was soft and warm and only made him love her more. "I'm sorry I scared you. I linked with the female; it was her blood on the ground I touched. I felt his fist punch through my chest. Not a feeling I care to have again. I only caught a glimpse of him but if I were to try again, I know—"

"No!"

She blinked rapidly at his demand. "Excuse me?"

"No." He took her hands in his, looking her directly in the eyes. "You are not going to try again. It killed you, Sienna. You died! They brought you back, this time. Next time you might not be so lucky. You are not doing that again!"

She tugged her hands free, a fierce look on her face. "Don't tell me what to do." Tossing her hospital gown aside, she threw her arms into the sleeves of her shirt.

He spun her around. "I already lost one person I love. I am not going through that pain again." Her eyes went wide. "Yes, that's right. I just said that I'm in love with you."

She pulled out of his arms and grabbed her pants, not saying a word.

Nathan watched her angrily jerk her pants on, confused by her reaction. "Did you hear what I said to you?"

"I heard you." She jumped up and down, slipping into those skin-tight pants he loved so much.

"And?"

"And what?"

He rubbed his beard. Not the reaction he'd been hoping for. "Why are you pissed off?"

"You just told me you love me."

"And that pisses you off?"

"Yes." Sitting on the bed, she grabbed her boots and slipped her bare feet into the slick leather.

He stood there, staring at her. "I'm confused."

Blowing out a breath, Sienna slipped her other foot into her boot. "You're a cop."

"And so are you. I'm still confused."

"I told myself I would not fall for another cop."

He tilted his head. "Sienna—"

"Every cop I've ever dated has done nothing but break my heart. After Donald broke my heart I told myself I would stay guarded, not let myself fall again. Then you come around and once again, I'm fall-

ing for a damn cop. Now you stand there telling me you're in love with me and it pisses me off because all you're going to do is break my heart and carry on like nothing happened. Meantime, I'm left to deal with the pain."

"How many cops?"

Her brow curled. "What?"

"How many cops have you dated?"

"That's not the point."

His left shoulder lifted nonchalantly. "Are we talking five? More than five? Less than five?"

Standing before him, her eyes blinked rapidly. "I'm not getting into this with you right now."

He followed after her as she marched from the room. "See...that only leads me to believe it's more than five."

She threw her hands up. "This is not happening. I'm signing myself out," Sienna stated to the nurse at the desk as she marched past her.

"Wait, Miss Storm. You need to have the authority of the doctor," the nurse called after her.

"Screw the doctor."

"How many more than five?" Nathan pursued, following beside her.

"Drop it, Nathan."

"Sienna?"

She waved Doc Hawthorn off and kept walking.

"She's being stubborn," Nathan explained then hurried to catch up to her again. "And you think just because those assholes hurt you that I'll do the same thing?"

"I don't think; I know."

"Oh, what, because you had a little vision or something?" he snorted, hurrying ahead of her to open the door.

"No, because number one, you're a cop, and number two, you're a man."

He stopped cold in front of her. "That's not fair to group me in with the assholes who've hurt you. Just stop for a minute." Grabbing her by the arms, he held her in place. "Do you love me?" He saw her jaw clench.

"I'm not going to tell you I love you because the minute I do, you'll leave me."

He fought the grin threatening to break free. "I am not that asshole captain Donald and what makes you think I'll leave you?"

“Well, duh...you don’t live here.”

“So what?”

“This is stupid.” She spun around and he caught her as her knees buckled.

“You need to go back inside and get into bed.”

“You drag me back in there and I swear I’ll shoot you in the legs to stop you—wait. Where the hell is my weapon?”

“Doc took it off of you when he was working on you. It’s in the trunk of my car. You wouldn’t shoot me.” He didn’t hide the grin this time. “You love me.”

“Don’t!” she warned with narrowed eyes.

“You love me,” he chimed then kissed her before she could respond. “Fine. No hospital, but you are going to bed.” He scooped her into his arms, laughing when she slapped his chest.

“Put me down.”

“When we’re at my car.”

“I demand you put me on my feet, Detective.”

“And out comes the rank.” He laughed. When she wanted to keep distance between them she used his rank. But he was on to her now. She was in love with him and he was in love with her.

Wasn’t life grand?

“Here we go.” He set her on her feet, then unlocked her car door. “After you.”

“Jerk.”

“Aw, now, that’s not very nice.”

With a snarl, she slammed the car door in his face.

Laughing, Nathan strolled around the hood of the car to his door.

Life truly was grand.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

She wanted to be alone, to think, to assess her feelings, his feelings for her and to decide what she wanted to do next. But Nathan had other plans, damn him, and insisted on escorting her to her apartment.

Didn't mean she had to talk to him, though.

But as Sienna entered her apartment, the scent of the lasagna Nathan had cooked for her earlier, still lingered in the air, and rippled through her system to land squarely on her heart. Stepping over the puppy toys he'd bought for her dog didn't help either.

"What are you doing?" she asked when Nathan pushed her toward the bedroom.

"Putting you to bed."

She shook him off and headed back to the living room. "Stop playing doctor. I'm fine and I have work to do." Pulling her cell phone from her shirt pocket, Sienna began to dial only to have it snatched out of her hand. "Hey!"

"First, if I were playing doctor you'd be naked by now. Second, work can wait." He tossed the phone on the sofa and turned her back to the bedroom.

"Stop it!"

"I will when you're horizontal. I'll carry you if you keep struggling."

Sizing him up, Sienna deduced she could take him in a second. Grabbing his arm, she spun, ready to flip him over her shoulder, and found herself being lifted up and tossed over his shoulder. "Put me down right now."

"You're feisty." He turned the bedroom light on. "Normally I like that, but not when you're in a weakened state." He plopped her butt first onto her bed.

She stood up, challenging. "I am not weak."

He pushed her back down. "Right."

Before she could stand again, he climbed on top of her, straddling her legs and pinning her to the bed. Daisy was of no help whatsoever as she hopped up on the bed and began to lick Sienna's face.

"Nope, not weak at all," Nathan boasted with a satisfactory smile on his face.

It grated on her that he was right. She'd spent her energy trying to flip him over her back. Damn it, she hated being weak. "Get off of me, you buffoon!"

"Yeah sure, because I look stupid. You might as well stop fighting because I'm not giving in."

Grunting, Sienna gave up and lay still, staring up at him. He was so damn charming even with that smarmy smile on his face. She'd never cared much for a man with facial hair before, but the thin dark line over his upper lip and the dusting of dark hair on his chin added to his attractiveness. And made her heart swell even more.

"Fine, I'll stay in bed but at least let me phone and make sure the scene was processed properly."

"It was. Dante saw to it."

"Who brought the bodies in? Doc Hawthorn was with me."

"He called in a technician and instructed him to keep the bodies secure until he could get back to them. It's all been taken care of and now all you have to worry about is taking care of yourself. Look—Daisy has the right idea."

There she was, cute as can be, curled up beside Sienna and sound asleep.

Blowing out a breath, Sienna closed her eyes. Maybe if she tried real hard she could remember something tangible about the killer.

"That's a girl."

The kiss on her forehead startled her and when Nathan climbed off of her she figured he'd taken her closed eyes as a sign of giving in. It worked to her advantage. She closed them again. She sighed in-

wardly when he pulled the blankets over her and her pup then kissed her head once more.

When she heard him walk to the door and click off the light she figured he'd leave her to sleep. And the instant he left the room she planned on making her calls.

Then she felt the bed give beside her and his arm come over her and all her plans got washed away by the warm sensation of his lips on her cheek.

"I still have my clothes on."

"I have no intentions of jumping your bones," he whispered.

"I can't sleep with my clothes on." The blanket was tossed aside and when she tried to sit up, he pushed her back down. His hands came to her waist and before she could protest, he was drawing the zipper down. With a heavy sigh, she let him strip her of her boots, then her pants and finally her shirt. In the faint light coming from the bedroom window she saw as he undressed, then climbed in beside her.

His arm came over her chest and his naked body pressed into her side. His hand caressed the puppy at her side and feeling the fatigue swallow her, Sienna fell deep into sleep.



Because Nathan didn't want to wake Sienna with the fresh scent of coffee brewing, he leashed the dog and headed out to purchase a steaming cup and let the puppy relieve herself. Daisy barely made it to the sidewalk before squatting down in the gutter and emptying her bladder.

"When you gotta go, you gotta go." When Daisy had finished her duty, she jumped back on the sidewalk, her tail wagging. "Think you can manage to go three blocks without another break?" When the puppy barked, Nathan took that as a yes and started off.

It was a nice morning with a little nip in the air that had his eyes snapping open. Which was good, considering he hadn't slept much during the night. While Sienna had slept soundly beside him, Nathan had counted each breath. He'd dozed off and on but when the dog woke him at six in the morning with a sloppy wet kiss he figured she needed a pee break. He'd been so right.

When his cell phone rang in his pocket, his first thought was that it was the killer. Checking the ID, he saw it was his mother. Nathan wasn't sure he was relieved or not.

But he answered in a cheery tone. "Hello, Mom, how are you this fine morning?"

"You sound in good spirits."

"I am." And he owed it all to the sleeping beauty he'd fallen in love with.

"I'm very relieved to hear that. I got your flowers. Thank you."

"You are very welcome. Daisy, sit." When the puppy obeyed, Nathan checked the road before crossing.

"Daisy? Who on earth is Daisy and why are you asking her to sit?"

"Daisy is..." How did he describe Sienna to his mother? *Aw hell, just come out with it.* "A dog and she belongs to the woman I'm in love with." There was a very long pause. "Mom, did you hear me?"

"I'm not sure. Did you just tell me you've fallen in love?"

"Yes I did." He beamed.

"With a dog?"

"Mom..."

"Fine, tell me about her."

"She's a cop, a lieutenant to be exact. She's beautiful, smart, tough, has the cutest dog you've ever seen, and she's stubborn."

"Does she have a name, son?"

He laughed. "Of course. Sienna Storm. You'll love her." And he realized now that he wanted his family to meet her, something he rarely ever did with his other girlfriends. Sienna...was different. She was...dear God, she was the one. "As soon as this case is wrapped up I'm going to bring her home to dinner." The dog began to bark wildly, drawing his attention. "I need to go, Mom. The dog's having a fit. I'll call you later. Love you." Disconnecting the phone, Nathan tucked it in his jacket pocket then knelt down to see what was wrong with Daisy.

He felt the presence behind him and as he looked up, his entire body came to alert.

"Hello, Detective."

Nathan stood and, reaching for his weapon, felt his body suddenly seize up. He couldn't speak, he couldn't move. All he could do was stare into the cold black eyes of the killer.

"I've been waiting for you."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Sienna woke to a sluggish sensation filling her body. As she sat up, her chest reminded her of her ordeal and had her pausing a moment to catch her breath. Looking to her left she saw the spot beside her was vacant and looked as if it hadn't been slept in for quite some time. Glancing at the clock beside her bed, she frowned at the time. It was after eight. She hadn't meant to sleep so long.

Pulling her legs from under the covers, she slipped off the bed, feeling groggy and weak. That damn vision had really taken a lot out of her. Grabbing her robe, Sienna pulled it on as she left her bedroom. Fully expecting to see both Daisy and Nathan in either the kitchen or living room, Sienna was more than a little disappointed to find the apartment empty.

And there was no coffee made.

Since Daisy was nowhere to be seen, Sienna figured Nathan had taken her for a walk. So she made coffee and while she waited for it to brew, she checked her messages. When someone knocked on her door she answered it, thinking it was Nathan. "Forgot to bribe the caretaker—oh...hey, Mr. Hadley. Daisy?" Closing her cell phone, Sienna reached out to take her dog.

"She was barking up a storm outside. Guess you didn't notice she got out."

Cuddling the shaking puppy, Sienna responded, "I thought my... yeah," she said after giving it a second thought. He didn't need to know she had a lover over. "I guess she must have gotten out when I got home. Thanks, Mr. Hadley."

"Your young friend might have forgotten to close the door when he left."

She really wasn't in the mood for small talk with creepy Mr. Hadley but remained polite. "Thanks again, Mr. Hadley." She started closing the door, which thankfully, encouraged Mr. Hadley to back up and leave. "Did you sneak out when Nathan left?" she asked Daisy while carrying her back into the apartment. It stung more than a little that Nathan had left without so much as a word.

Telling herself not to let it get to her, not to feel anything for him, she kissed the puppy on the head and that was when she noticed the note attached to her collar. "What's this?" Slipping it out, she set Daisy on the floor and opened the tiny swatch of paper. The blood caught her attention before she noticed what it said.

"I have him. You want him? Come find him."

She touched the blood used to print the note and the vision slapped her like an angry hand and knocked her back.

Nathan's eyes stared wildly as he was chained to a chair by someone wearing blue jeans and brown hiker boots. His body frozen, he was unable to do anything to stop what was happening to him. Secured, his left hand was lifted and the glint of a knife flashed him in the eyes. She felt the searing pain as it was sliced across his palm.

She came out of the vision gasping and falling solidly on her ass. Her chest ached, her head throbbed, and as her mind cleared she realized what had happened.

Nathan was in trouble.

She tried to stand but her legs gave out on her. "Damn it!" Daisy barked once then scurried off to the bedroom. On her knees, Sienna crawled to the telephone sitting by the sofa and dialed Detective Vega's cell. Leaning against the sofa, she caught her breath as the phone was answered. "I need assistance. Nathan's been captured by our killer. Come to my apartment. A.S.A.P." The phone fell from her grasp and the room went black.



She heard her name being called over and over again and when the cold hit her she opened her eyes to see Detective Vega leaning over her, a worried look on his face.

"Thank God! The ambulance is on its way."

"I don't need an ambulance." Though her brain was a little foggy, she remembered clearly what had happened. "He has Nathan. Where's the note? I had the note." Looking around, she saw it lying at her side and paused before picking it up. This time, when she linked, she was going to be prepared. "He's alive but I couldn't see where he's being held." She scowled at the detective when he took the note before she could pick it up.

"You linked with him? After what you just went through?"

"Don't you start on me now." Pushing to her feet, more than a little unsteady, Sienna headed to her room to change. She shut the door in the detective's face.

"We'll find him, Lieutenant, but not at the risk of your health," he shouted through the wood.

"It'll go faster if I link with the killer." She wasn't about to waste time on logistics when she had a sure fire way of finding Nathan. Throwing on a pair of jeans and a faded gray sweatshirt, Sienna yanked the bedroom door open to the detective's scowling face. "Don't look at me that way."

"You nearly died the last time. I want to find him as much as you do but—"

"Who is in charge here, Detective? Me. I make the decisions on this case, not you." Grabbing her weapon and badge, she looked around then realized he still had the note. "Give me the note, Detective."

"The hell I will. And don't pull rank on me because I don't officially work for you. Remember, I'm just doing this to help my pals out."

"Fine." She didn't need him or the note. She could do this on her own. "Stay, Daisy," she demanded as she left her apartment.



He could feel the pressure of the chains around his body and the hard chair he sat in, but Nathan couldn't move. How it was possible was beyond him, but he accepted the fact that he was somehow frozen to his spot. And the damndest part was he couldn't even speak.

"How are you doing there, Nathaniel?"

At least he was able to move his eyes and looking to his left, Nathan watched his enemy enter the tiny room. It occurred to him now that this was exactly how the killer was able to take his victims without a struggle and without anyone hearing them scream.

They didn't have the ability to do so.

"Oh, silly me. How can you respond to my question without the ability to speak? Well, I need to remedy that. There you go. You can speak now."

"Why are you doing this?" His voice did work after all. What a relief it was.

"I find you fascinating, Nathaniel. You're a worthy adversary. You keep me on my toes."

"Yet I don't even know your name. Doesn't seem fair."

Pulling up a rickety-looking wooden chair, the killer sat. "I suppose you're right. Kenton Bladwell."

He had a name now, not that it did him much good...for the time being at least. "Mind my rudeness if I say it's not a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Kenton?"

"Well, that's not very nice at all."

"When I've got reason to be nice, I am. Being frozen and chained to a chair doesn't make me overly pleasant."

Kenton leaned back, an amused look on his face. "And you're not the least bit curious as to why you can't move?"

"You're a demon."

Kenton sat forward and his dark eyes gleamed with excitement. "I wasn't sure you knew of my kind. That makes things so much easier." He sat back and picked at the lumps on his face.

"What are you going to do with me?"

"Not kill you. I like you, Nathaniel. Originally, I was going to take your heart, but then I changed my mind and took your partner's instead."

Nathan's gut clenched. "Why?"

Kenton shrugged as he stood. "I realized if I killed you, we couldn't continue this game of cat and mouse, and I so enjoy our game."

Nathan wondered if there was any way of breaking the guy's control over him. "How are you keeping me frozen? I don't get how it works."

"It's the eyes." Kenton leaned down, his face meeting Nathan's. "The instant I first make eye contact I'm inside your mind. I have control of it from thereafter. I could make you do all sorts of things, like this."

Beyond his control, Nathan's tongue slid out of his mouth to lick his lips. It was not a comfortable feeling knowing someone had control of your every movement.

"I can control you and make you do almost anything I want, which is part of my plan. Thanks to all those healthy hearts my powers of control are at their highest."

"What sort of plan?" He could only hope Sienna knew he was missing by now and was busy searching for him.

Kenton straightened and wandered around the room. "It's growing more and more difficult for me to be out in the daylight. Jacob's Cove may be accustomed to creatures like me, but the rest of the world isn't as open. I need you to gather more humans for me to feed from. We'll tour the world. I hear the French hearts are especially tasty." Kenton licked his lips and Nathan cringed at the forked tongue that slid out.

Be damned if he would ever do anything to help the bastard. "If you control my mind, why do you have to chain me to the chair?"

"I can't control you when I'm asleep."

Ah...a loophole. "And you don't think the instant you drop off I'll make a break for it? These are only chains after all. I could find a way out of them."

"True," Kenton drawled as he knelt down at Nathan's feet. "But do you know the combination to deactivate the bomb I have programmed to the chair?"

He lifted the small sensor pad and Nathan cringed at the amount of explosives attached to it.

"I'd hate to lose you, Nathaniel, so don't play the hero."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

What she needed was coffee. Good, strong coffee to wash the fatigue from her body. So on her way to the office Sienna stopped at a local take-out joint and ordered the largest cup of coffee, to go, that they had. She gulped it down, hot, while driving one-handed, her mind solely on saving Nathan.

Why hadn't she told him she loved him?

Because she'd been afraid of losing him. And now—no, she refused to believe she would lose him now. She was going to save him from that beast and when she did she was going to profess her love even if it meant going against everything she'd promised herself.

If he left her after, she'd deal with the pain.

Coming to a stop in her parking spot, Sienna rushed from her car to the back entrance of the police station. By the time she reached the evidence room, her coffee was empty. Crumpling the take-out cup, she tossed it in the trash as she unlocked the door. Stepping inside, she scanned the rows of shelving units filled with evidence from previous cases. Following the dates, she headed to the back and found her case number and pulled the box out of the shelf. Tearing the seal, she yanked off the lid and quickly went through the evidence bags sealed inside until she found the one she'd come for.

Holding up the note, she knew without a doubt what she had to do.

Locking the door behind her, Sienna raced to her office. She came to an abrupt halt at seeing the chief and the mayor standing in her locked office. She reminded herself that both parties had the ability to transport themselves anywhere they liked. Even into a locked room.

"We know what you're about to do, Lieutenant."

"How did you find out?" Sienna asked Mayor Hawthorn as she sauntered past her.

The mayor followed Sienna with her eyes as she moved to her desk. "Dante called us. It's too dangerous, Sienna."

So they were on a first name basis now. That was fine. But it wasn't going to stop her from doing what had to be done. "I'm aware of the risk."

"Dante told us you had an episode last night that involved you channeling into the victim and losing consciousness. Your heart stopped and you had to be resuscitated."

She acknowledged the chief with a nod of her head. "And now I'm fine."

"Fine enough to pull this off without coding?" he challenged.

"And what's the alternative? I have no idea who the killer is, no idea where he is. Am I suppose to just sit back and wait for him to toss Nathan's heartless body away when he's done with him? I can't do that."

"You're in love with Nathan," Trinity said on a sigh.

"Yes," Sienna admitted and it felt damn good.

"I understand how you feel, but is he worth your life?"

Sienna stood tall, her back straight as she responded firmly. "Yes."

Trinity held her hand up, stopping Basil from speaking. "Then let us help."

"Are you serious, Trinity? This could kill her."

"Sometimes, love is worth dying for. What do you need us to do?"

"There really isn't much you can do. All I need is this and then I'm set."

"At least let us call in Cooper. Doc Hawthorn," Basil corrected when Sienna gave him a baffled look. "Having a doctor present could save your life."

"Fine, but only if he can get here fast. I'm done waiting." Before her eyes, the chief vanished and though Sienna had heard he had the ability it was different to see it firsthand.

"How do you do it?" Mayor Hawthorn inquired.

Sienna ripped the seal on the plastic evidence bag and shook the note onto her desk. "This note was left in one of the victims. It's written in the killer's blood. If I touch it, hold it long enough, I can link myself with him. By doing that, I'll be able to see where he is and where he's keeping Nathan. If I can't see it, I can slip further into his mind and read his thoughts."

"Sounds dangerous."

"And painful. I won't lie by saying there are no side effects. There are plenty. Locking with his mind could backfire on me and he could have control over mine, which would put me into a vegetative state. Damn human genes. But I'm riding on my demon genes and hoping they're stronger than the human part of me. Don't ask me to stop now because I won't."

Trinity flipped the long red braid of hair over her shoulder as she spoke. "I once gave my life for my husband, so I know all about wanting to do whatever you can to save the man you love. If I see that you are losing control, I will step in and bring you back."

Sienna's head tilted. "You can do that?"

"I can, and I will."

Sienna jumped when the chief popped into her office, the doc right beside him. "That is just wild."

"I cannot believe you're doing this," Doc Hawthorn chastised with a raised index finger. "After what you've been through, the risks are—"

"We've been through all of this already, Doc, so save your breath. I'm doing it and I'm told Trinity can help me should I lose control, so if you all don't mind, I'd like to get started."

"Good thing I brought my hospital kit." Doc Hawthorn lifted his ancient black bag.

"Here's hoping you won't need it." Deciding sitting on the floor was the best, just in case the doc had to perform CPR on her again, Sienna took the note carefully in her fingers and sat. Taking a deep breath, she placed her palm over the bloody print.

The jolt entered her like a stab of white hot light. She gasped, her head flew back and when she saw the doc rush to her side, she shook her head. "I'm good. I...feel him. He's...happy...secure. I'm going to go deeper. Unless I stop breathing, don't stop me. Got it?" When she received nods from all three, she closed her eyes and let herself sink into the mind of the madman.

It was dark, and the need, a great need for power, was so strong Sienna felt it grip her. He was strong, had recently become stronger, but she wasn't about to let that stop her. She had her own strength and, forcing an opening, pierced through the core to his mind.



"We have a visitor." Kenton said, rubbing his head as if he had a headache.

"Someone's here?" Thank God, Nathan thought. He was finally going to be saved.

"Not physically." Kenton sat back in the chair across from Nathan and smiled. "It's your lover. She's attempting to break into my mind. Isn't that fascinating? Did you know she was a Tejakkan demon, Nathaniel?"

"Yes." Damn it, she shouldn't be doing this. Not after nearly dying earlier.

"She's strong, but we'll see who is stronger. Would you like to say hi to your lover, Nathaniel? She can hear you, so why don't you blow her a kiss."

"Stop this, Sienna. Don't do this, please! I'm okay. He won't hurt me. He needs me. Just break the link and let me go."

"Aw, that is so sweet." Kenton grinned. "She says, 'not in this lifetime'. I like her; she's tough. I've never had a Tejakkan heart before. Could be interesting to find out if I would attain her powers."

"Sienna, stop, please, just stop!"



She saw him, heard him as if he were in the room beside her but she couldn't see where he was. "I'm not stopping until you're safe, so save it." Pushing harder, Sienna dug into the killer's brain and was bombarded with memories of his life that did nothing more than make her head feel as if it was splitting in two. "Not going to work, buddy." She swept the memories away like a person would an annoying fly. But when she stepped inside the memories of the killer, it was enough to make her stomach roll.

"You want inside, Lieutenant? Then by all means, come on in."

She felt herself being pulled into the abyss that was his mind and had no control. There were screams, so loud it nearly pierced her eardrums. The moans echoed in the darkness and rebounded inside of her mind. There was joy, so much joy as he took life after life and savored the power it gave him. He'd been a killer long before he knew

what the humans' deaths could do for him. He enjoyed toying with his victims, pulling off fingers, arms, ears, watching them bleed and beg for their lives. And he'd only been a boy when it had all begun.

She felt his greed, his hunger, his desire to inflict pain and it coiled in her belly like acid.

There were experiments, where he would see how long a human could live without arms, without eyes, without internal organs.

"Enjoying yourself, Lieutenant? Now it's my turn to play."

She felt him pull her in even deeper, felt the slippery fingers of his mind grab hold of hers and squeeze.

"NO!" Sienna screamed but the sound never got past her lips.

"Well, isn't this interesting. It seems, I can control your mind. Better end this little party before you ruin my plans. Grab your weapon, Lieutenant. That's a girl. Now put it to your head. Wonderful. Now pull the trigger."

Sienna felt the penetration into her mind like a tearing of skin. She cried out but then as quickly as the pain had come on, it ended.

"I told you I would help you."

Sienna felt herself being pulled back, pulled out of the dark abyss that was the killer's mind and as she broke free, the light pierced her eyes and made her cry out in pain.

"Her heartbeat is irregular. Lieutenant, can you hear me?"

She knew it was the doc's voice but she saw nothing but blinding whiteness. "I can't see! Why can't I see anything?" She panicked, swiping a hand at her eyes.

"Give your mind time to recoup. Just close your eyes and take a few deep breaths," Doc Hawthorn soothed, placing a hand over her eyes.

"I knew it was too dangerous," the chief spouted.

"I had to bring her out of it. He had control of her mind."

"You should have stepped in sooner."

"Stop it!" Sienna hollered at the arguing threesome. Pushing the doc's hand away, she opened her eyes, blinking rapidly. The haze that covered her eyes was dark and there were some sort of sparkling lights flashing before her vision. "I know where he is. I know where he has Nathan."

"Tell me where he is and I'll go get him," Detective Vega stated, kneeling in front of her.

"We have to move fast before he takes him somewhere else." Sienna turned to Trinity. "If I let you in, can you see where he is?"

"Yes, I can but it could—"

"I don't want to hear the buts. Next question. Can I transport with you? It's faster if we go by air...so to speak."

"I can, but it might—"

"Once again, not caring for the buts. Let's do it."

"You truly love him."

"With all my heart." Sienna held her hand out to Trinity.

"Then let's do it. Basil?"

"Try to stop me."

With a vampire at either side, Sienna opened her mind to let them in.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Sitting helplessly in his chair, Nathan wished he could do something to stop Sienna before it was too late. Closing his eyes, he tried to fight off Kenton's control. He didn't know if it would even be possible but he had to try.

"Damn it!"

Nathan's eyes flew open to see Kenton burst to his feet.

"I lost control. We have to go. She knows where I am."

As Kenton knelt at his feet for what Nathan assumed was to disengage the detonator, he hoped the guy would lose his grip long enough to let Nathan go. When Sienna with two other people popped into the room—and how weird was that—he sat in his chair, his jaw dropping.

Kenton spun around, then jumped to his feet.

"Don't look into his eyes!" Nathan yelled, hoping to warn them before it was too late.

"One step closer and I send your lover to smithereens." Kenton held up the detonator, his finger poised on the switch.

"It's a bomb," Nathan advised, his eyes glued to Sienna. She looked...different.

"You won't win, Lieutenant. I still have control over you. Take this weapon and kill them or I press this switch and turn your lover into mush."

"Sienna, don't. Listen to my voice," Nathan pleaded as Kenton handed her his gun. When her hand came up and took the gun, he pleaded even more. "Sienna, please, listen to my voice. You're stronger than him. Fight."

"Back off you two or I will press this button," Kenton warned the male and female who'd accompanied Sienna. "Shoot them, Lieutenant."

"Sienna, no!" Nathan cried out as she lifted her weapon. Then she aimed it at Kenton and pulled the trigger. The bullet hit him right between the eyes and sent the killer toppling to the floor. Nathan's body was suddenly like a lead weight and he was well aware of every ache and pain. As he looked up at Sienna, he saw her hand drop to her side, the weapon fall to the floor as her knees gave out and took her down. "Sienna!"

"I've got her."

He watched the female scoop Sienna in her arms, then vanish.

"What the hell?"

"She's in good hands. Let's get you out of here."

"If I move I'll set off the bomb."

"Not if I do this. I warn you, it might sting a little."

The dark-haired man placed a hand on Nathan's shoulder and the next thing he knew he was standing in a white room surrounded by noise so loud it was deafening and people scurrying about.

He was in a hospital.

Then his body felt as if it had turned to jelly and his knees gave out, sending him down onto the floor.

"I got you."

"Jesus! What the hell's happening to me?"

"After effects of transportation. The molecules in your body need time to readjust to the change. You'll feel better in no time. I hope."

"What do you mean, you hope?" It wasn't the most comfortable feeling having your body turn to jelly.

"I normally don't transport humans, but we can discuss this later. Right now, we need to make sure your lieutenant is all right."

"Sienna? Where is she?"

"Room two thirteen. Ah, this should do nicely." He pulled over a wheelchair and lifted Nathan into it. "Let's roll."



"I'm fine. Really. I just...got a little weak is all. I have to save Nathan."

"He's fine, now stop being so stubborn and lie still and let the doctor examine you." Trinity pushed Sienna back down onto the bed.

"How do you know he's safe? He was hooked up to that bomb. I shouldn't have killed that murdering bastard. I should have gone into his mind and gotten the code. Damn it...why didn't I think before I shot him?" She'd reacted instead of thinking first and if anything happened to Nathan...God, she would die if anything happened to him.

"How many fingers do I have up, Miss Storm?" the doctor asked as he held his hand up to her face.

The door to her room opened up and she was filled with both relief and utter love when the chief entered the room pushing Nathan in a—wait a minute... "Nathan?" She pushed the doctor aside and slid off the bed. She rushed to him, kneeling at his feet. "What happened? Are you okay? Oh God, what did he do to you? I shouldn't have killed him until he'd released you. Damn it, talk to me. Are you okay?"

Nathan cupped her face in both hands and silenced her with a hard kiss. When he finally released her he was smiling. "Now that you've shut up, I'll answer your questions. I'm fine, just a little...weak from my trip."

"I transported him here," the chief informed her.

"But aside from that I'm fine. Why are your eyes black, Sienna?"

"It's an after effect of my linking with the killer. It'll go away after a while...I hope. I love you," she blurted out, then plastered his mouth with short sharp kisses. "God, I love you so much I can't think." She continued to kiss him. "And if you leave me I will hunt you down and take you out at the knees."

"Maybe I should have left you attached to the bomb," the chief joked, taking a step away from the chair. "Why don't we leave these two love birds alone to hash out their feelings?"

Sienna waited until all three had left the room before she continued. "I didn't mean that."

"You sure as hell did." Taking her face in his hands, Nathan kissed her once, nice and slow, making her head spin. When he released her lips, he held her face in his hands and looked right into her eyes. "I love you too; you already know that. I love you, Lieutenant Storm, and I have no intentions of ever leaving you."

She felt her eyes well up and told herself to stop being such a sappy fool. "You have a job, family, a life somewhere else. I can't ask you to give all that up for me."

"You haven't asked me but I'm telling you that this is my life now, you are my life now, and maybe if I'm lucky, I'll have a job here as

well. I came to Jacob's Cove to find a killer, to get revenge, but instead, I found love."

That was it, she lost control and the tears spilled out.

"And besides, what man could resist a woman who comes to his rescue, guns blazing."

Laughing, she rested her head on his lap and let the tears flow. "I'm such a fool."

He lifted her head, thumbed away her tears. "Why are you a fool?"

"I told myself I would never fall for another cop and here I am, head over heels in love with one."

"Well, you know what they say?" He took her hands in his, smiling. "You have to test the water before making the plunge."

Laughing, she fell into his arms and let his lips take her away.

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