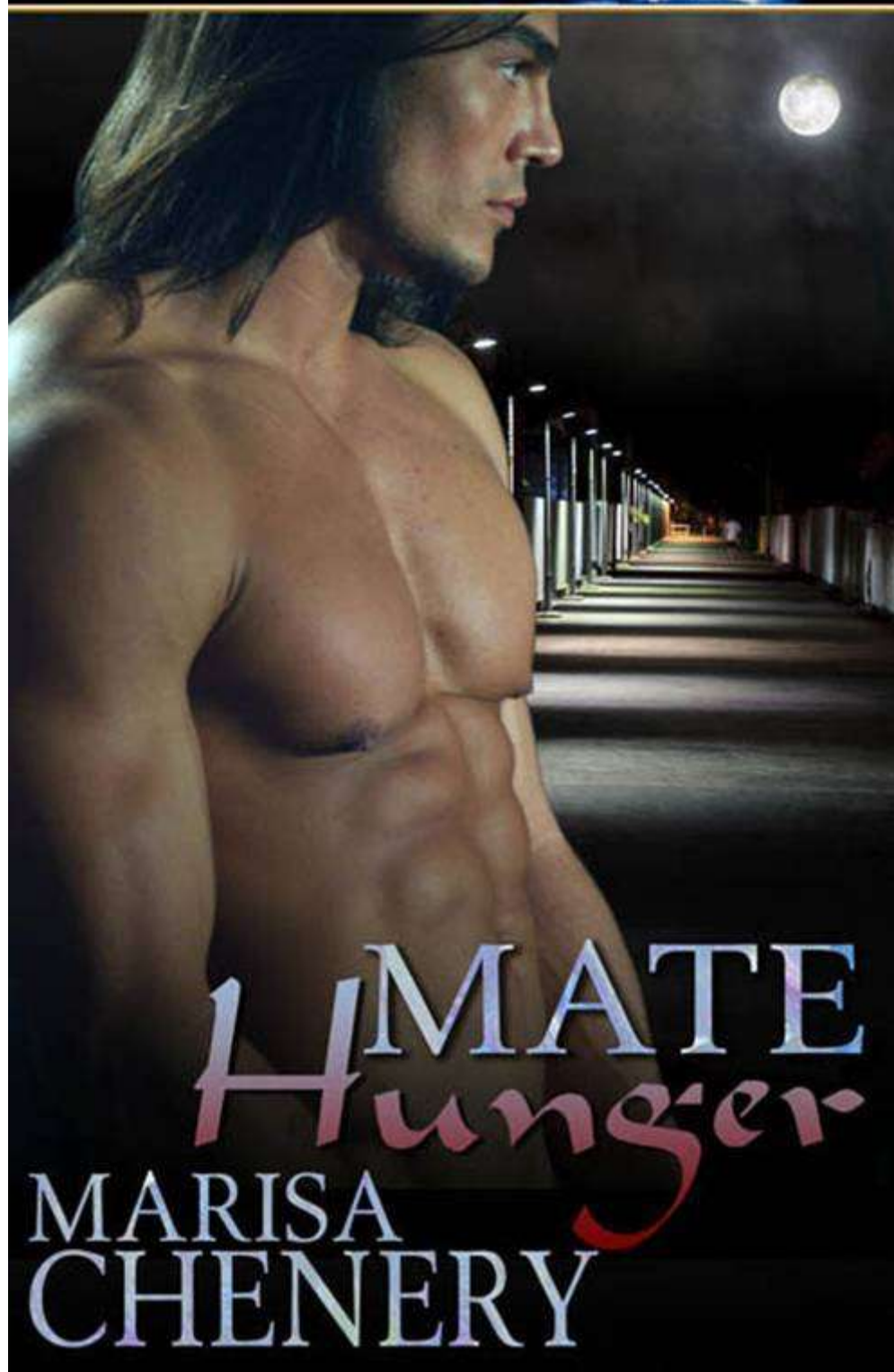


ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT



Mate Hunger

Marisa Chenery

Book two in the Ra's Chosen series.

Set is a warrior chosen by the sun god Ra to protect mortals from the undead who hunt them. That is what he knows. Unfortunately, having watched his leader, a fellow warrior, succumb to a destined mate, Set also knows he will someday suffer the same fate. Set doesn't need nor want a mate. He's just fine on his own, thank you very much. But when a spitfire of a woman is thrust into his life, whose sole mission seems to be to knee him in the groin and escape every chance she gets, he's intrigued. A lot.

Desiree may have lusted after Set from afar for months, but that doesn't mean she's going to go willingly with the behemoth of a man spouting a whole bunch of garbage about immortality, an ancient Egyptian god and her destiny as his mate. No doubt he's two bricks short of a load. But when they touch, passion like she's never known consumes her. Perhaps he's not so crazy after all...

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Mate Hunger

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MATE HUNGER

Marisa Chenery

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Ferrari: Ferrari S.p.A

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An Old Legend

In Egypt of old the sun god Ra held sway, worshiped as the father creator. Each day he rode the skies in his solar barque bringing light to the land. And every night he traveled through the dark underworld until the dawning of a new day.

During his nightly voyage, Ra faced his greatest adversary, a being of such evil and darkness, people shuddered—the demon god Apep, the eater of souls. Ra and his companions battled the demon, defeating him each night only to face him again when darkness fell once more.

It is said that one night Apep gained the upper hand, which caused thunderstorms to rage and the earth to shake. Using the chaos he had created, Apep unleashed two evils into the world. Two demons called Sek and Mot were set loose to bring down mankind by collecting souls for their dark master, turning mortals into soulless shells commanded by Apep.

To counteract Apep's evil minions, the sun god chose six warriors. He gifted them each with immortality and the powers needed to defeat their enemies. As Ra's Chosen, the warriors fought the evil that threatened to take over, pushing it back, to stand between man and demons.

Some say to this day Ra's Chosen still fight to protect the unsuspecting mortals around them. In the shadows they stalk their prey each night, ever on guard, forgotten by those who they had been charged to watch over.

Chapter One

Set pulled open the entrance door to The Oasis and scanned the bar. It had been a long night of hunting the undead and he was ready to relax while having a few beers with some of his fellow warriors. Hunting the undead could be thirsty work, especially during Phoenix, Arizona's hot, dry summer nights, which this one happened to be.

The undead front had cooled a bit, and Set didn't know if that was a good or bad thing. As one of the Egyptian sun god's chosen warriors, it was his duty to protect the mortals the undead preyed upon. The undead not only drank a mortals blood they also stole their souls to take back to the two demons, Sek and Mot, who collected them for their demon god, Apep. But that wasn't all the undead did to a mortal—they turned their victim into what they were with one bite. There was no saving a mortal from that fate once they had been bitten. The only cure was death at the end of one of Ra's Chosen's bronze *khopesh* swords—the Chosen's weapon of choice.

Spotting the other warriors sitting at their usual table at the back of The Oasis, Set made his way through the thinning crowd and sat down next to Kysen. A waitress quickly came over and took his drink order. Once she left, he looked around and said, "I thought it would be more crowded in here considering how hot it still is outside. It's nice and cool in here."

"Getting too close to closing time," Kysen said. "We probably will only have enough time for a couple of drinks before they kick us out."

Set nodded when the waitress returned with his cold beer. He glanced around at the others' nearly empty bottles and then raised his beer. "I guess I'd better hurry and catch up to the rest of you."

Akori chuckled. "I doubt it will take you very long to do that."

To prove Akori correct, Set lifted his bottle of beer to his lips and took a big swig. "At least tonight we worked up a thirst. I was able to find two undead and put them out of their misery."

One hit with the warriors' bronze swords and an undead instantly starts to decompose, leaving nothing but a pile of clothes as evidence of their existence.

"Hah. I did better than your measly two," Denger said. "I took out four."

Set smiled and shook his head.

"Only four, Denger?" Kysen asked with a smile. "You must be losing your edge. I was able to take out five. Maybe tomorrow night I should go hunting with you and see if I can give you some pointers."

Denger flipped Kysen off.

Having finished his beer, and noticing that the others were in need of a fresh round, Set turned to look for their waitress. He saw her standing over by the bar talking to the female bartender. Catching the waitress's attention, he signaled for another round. Set also noticed their table had attracted more than a few stares from the other patrons. Even though Ra's Chosen made sure they sat at the back of the room, keeping to the shadows as much as they could, they always drew some kind of mortal attention. Considering the Chosen were all around six foot eight and weighed close to two hundred and ninety pounds of pure muscle, they didn't exactly blend in with the crowd, especially when there was more than one of them around. All born in ancient Egypt, the warriors also shared the same straight black hair and tanned skin. Their eyes that had been brown at birth had become an almost gold color after they had taken their vow to be one of Ra's chosen warriors. They also had been granted immortality by the sun god.

The warriors didn't linger over the next round of beers served. Once he'd finished his drink, Akori pushed back his chair. "I need to feed before I head back to the headquarters. I saw a couple of likely donors just leave. Anyone else want to join me?"

Kysen pushed back his chair as well. "Sure, I'll go with you." He looked at Denger and Set. "How about you two?"

"I'm good," Denger said. "My bed is calling me."

Set shook his head and then held up his not-quite empty beer. "I'm going to finish this first, then I'm going to the headquarters."

Watching the other warriors stand and then head out of the bar, Set leaned back in his chair. He ran his tongue across his fangs. Like the undead they hunted, all of Ra's Chosen had to drink blood, but they never killed their donors or turned them into a living dead creature. Very much alive, the warriors still had to eat and drink as they had as mortals. Feeding from a mortal once a week, only taking what they needed, kept the warriors strong.

Set took another sip of beer. He'd hoped that it would fend off the blood craving he was feeling, but it wasn't working. He'd fed three nights ago. He shouldn't be craving blood again. His need for more blood was starting to become something he couldn't ignore. Not wanting to face what it meant, that he would soon find his mate, Set tried to put it out of his mind. He wasn't ready to take a mate. But just like Mehen, the leader of Ra's Chosen, he doubted he would have much choice in the matter.

Deciding he had better feed after all before returning to the warehouse where the Chosen had set up their headquarters, Set scanned the room looking for a likely donor. He soon spotted a woman sitting at a table close to the bar. As if she sensed him staring at her, she flipped her long, brown hair over her shoulder and returned his gaze. Set quickly slipped into her mind and planted the suggestion that she leave the bar and meet him at the back parking lot. The woman then stood and headed out the door.

Set finished his drink before he followed the woman he'd chosen outside. Considering donors usually found the feeding a pleasurable experience—they actually had an orgasm—the warriors only chose women. Also given the fact they also experienced the same pleasure, had them passing over males as donors. It wasn't that they couldn't feed from men, it just wasn't something they were into.

Rounding the corner of the building, Set found the woman waiting for him. He didn't waste any time. He took her into his arms and kissed her as he slowly backed her into the darker shadows. His fangs extended as he moved from her mouth to the side of her neck. At the large vein there, he dragged his tongue across it before he sank his fangs into her skin. When the first gush of blood filled his mouth it took the edge off his blood craving and not much else. Set felt a quarter of the pleasure he usually felt while feeding. Not so for his donor. By the time he'd taken what he needed and had used his saliva to seal the puncture marks in her neck, the woman was moaning in his arms as she came. Finished with her, Set forced her to meet his gaze while he wiped the memory of his feeding from her mind.

After he sent the woman on her way, Set's senses went on full alert as his skin started to prickle. His night of hunting obviously wasn't over just yet. One of the undead was nearby.

* * * * *

Desiree Hillier gave the top of the bar a final wipe down before she finished her shift for the night. She hadn't been working at The Oasis for very long, only a few months, but at this stage in her life it was the best job she could get. The tips were good and the view wasn't half bad either.

She glanced over at the back table where the object of her desire had been sitting with his friends recently. When they put in an appearance, the large men who came to the bar from time to time were usually a topic of discussion with The Oasis' female employees. Desiree hadn't been working at the bar for very long when she'd first seen them. Noting her interest, the waitresses had given her the complete lowdown on them. Unbelievably, there were six of them. The waitresses had even known their names—Mehen, Set, Denger, Kysen, Akori and Takan. Given what their names were and the slight accents they spoke with, Desiree knew they weren't native to Phoenix. That just seemed to add to the men's appeal, along with their good looks.

Tonight, Kysen, Denger and Akori had shown up first, then Set a short while later. A couple of the waitresses spent most of what was left of their shift mooning over Denger and Akori. Denger with his long, waist-length black hair that he tied back with a piece of leather at the nape of his neck, along with his handsome face, had no problem attracting women. Akori, who was even better looking than Denger, wore his black hair on the long and shaggy side. More than one waitress wanted to see if Akori's hair felt as soft as it looked.

Yes, Desiree thought all of them were really attractive, but it was Set who she had eyes for. She wanted nothing more than to bury her fingers in his black hair that hung past his shoulders and kiss him until they both forgot their names. Most times when Desiree saw Set, he wore black paratrooper fatigue pants, jungle boots and a muscle shirt that perfectly showcased his well-muscled chest and arms. Tonight had been no exception. She'd found her gaze drawn to him more times than she could count, before Set had finally left.

Giving the bar top a final swipe, Desiree sighed. She may be attracted to Set, but she doubted there would be anything more than her drooling over him from a distance. He never seemed to give her the time of day, and she was too chickenshit to go up to him because she found him to be a little intimidating. So Desiree was stuck in limbo wanting a man she didn't think she would ever have a chance with.

Finally able to go home, Desiree told one of the waitresses she was leaving, as she collected her purse from under the bar. She made her way outside and headed for the back parking lot to her beater of a car, a gray Honda Civic. The thing was pretty much on its last legs, but she'd been able to find a mechanic to patch it up to last a little bit longer without costing her an arm and a leg.

Reaching the parking lot, Desiree drew up short when her gaze landed on Set who was apparently having a fistfight with some other guy. With her car parked in a space on the other side of the fighting men, she didn't know whether she should take the risk

of trying to get around them or wait until the fight ended. Desiree edged nearer, weighing the possibility of her being able to sneak past them.

Desiree kept her gaze on the men as she slowly moved a little closer. Not one to condone violence, she had to admit Set seemed well able to take care of himself. Her gaze dropped to his arms, unable to stop staring as his muscles bunched with each punch he threw. She stopped walking when her gaze skidded over to the man Set fought. Desiree had to do a double take. Were those fangs? At closer inspection, they looked to be the real thing, but she knew they couldn't be. And his eyes. They appeared flat, almost soulless. A shiver ran down her back.

Her gaze settled on Set once again when he beat the fanged man back, putting some distance between them. Desiree then found herself frozen in place as Set pulled a knife out of the top of his boot and slashed the fanged man across the chest.

What happened next had Desiree covering her mouth with her hand. To her, it looked as if the fanged man's body started to decompose. An awful stench filled the air as, with a jerk, the fanged man's body seemingly disintegrated in a matter of seconds. Desiree couldn't hold back a gasp when Set kicked the now empty pile of clothes on the ground where the fanged man had once been.

Set's head whipped around at the sound. Desiree was unable to move as he slowly walked toward her, and she realized she'd probably just seen something she shouldn't have.

Set hadn't realized he'd had an audience watching him take out the undead until he'd heard the feminine gasp coming from behind him. The woman looked white as a ghost and on the verge of running. Knowing he couldn't let her leave with the memory of what she had seen, Set quickly closed the distance between them and grabbed her by the arm.

Up close, he now recognized her as the bartender who had been working behind the bar that night. He'd checked her out a few times since she started working there a

couple months before. With her pretty face, long, blonde hair and slim build, he'd even thrown around the idea of using her as a donor a few times, but whenever he came remotely close to her she'd always avoided his gaze.

Knowing there was nothing for it but to wipe the fight from her mind, Set pulled her closer even though she tried to yank her arm free. He slipped the bronze-bladed knife he still held in his other hand back into his boot before he gently took her chin in his hand. "You're perfectly safe," he gently reassured her. "Just look into my eyes and you won't remember what happened here."

She let out a little whimper, but soon stilled when he brought her even closer so their bodies touched. He then looked down into her wide, gray eyes. Set sucked in a breath when he suddenly felt as if someone had sucker-punched him in the gut. Falling deeper into her gaze, his cock went instantly hard. His blood hunger came roaring to life as her scent washed over him. He couldn't stop himself from drawing more of her delicious scent deeper into his lungs.

His fangs ached to sink into her to see if she would taste as good as she smelled. The feel of her body pressed to his had Set wanting to strip them both naked as he sank both his cock and his fangs into her. He wanted to hear her cries of passion while he took her over and over again.

Set shook his head, attempting to control his lustful thoughts and focused on her as he tried to wipe her mind. Nothing happened. He kept hold of her chin while he tried twice more before he gave up. He couldn't wipe her. It was like he'd run up against a brick wall. Set cursed under his breath. What he was going through, the sudden blood and sexual hunger she raised in him along with her intoxicating scent, and now his inability to wipe her mind, were all the things Mehen had gone through when he'd first met Blythe, his mate.

Conflicting emotions overtook Set as he let go of the woman and wrapped her in his embrace. On one hand, he didn't want her to be his. Since Mehen had taken a mate, and Ra had said the rest of them would find their mates eventually, Set had thought he

didn't need a woman in his life. But now that he had more than likely found the mate Ra had promised would be his, he didn't find the idea so abhorrent. She actually felt good in his arms, and standing close to six feet with the high heels she now wore, her height was a good match for his.

She shivered against him but made no attempt to push him away. In a quiet voice, she said, "You can let me go. I promise I won't tell anyone what happened. I...I really have no idea what I saw, anyway."

Set fought the urge to take her kissable lips, to get his first taste of her. "What's your name?"

"Desiree. I know who you are. You're Set."

He grinned to himself. Desiree may have avoided making eye contact with him, but she obviously was interested in him, which was a good thing. Her being affected by him would go a long way if it did turn out she was his mate. He would count on her attraction to him to help ease her into his world.

He loosened his embrace and took her by the arm once more. "Well, Desiree, it looks as if you'll be coming with me."

Not giving her a chance to deny him, Set started to drag her toward his black Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano that sat parked at the back of the lot. That was when Desiree started to fight him.

She dug in her high-heeled shoes, fighting him every step of the way. "Stop! All I want to do is go home."

Hearing fear in the shrill tone, Set slowed and turned back toward her. "Going home is not an option for you right now. Just be a good girl and come with me."

In a move Set never expected Desiree to make in her snug miniskirt, she lifted her knee, hitting him squarely between his legs. Instinctively, Set released his hold on her as he grabbed his abused balls. Feeling no small amount of pain, he quickly pulled himself together when Desiree started to run across the parking lot. He managed to catch up to

her just as she reached the driver's side of a beat-up Honda Civic that had seen better days.

Spinning her around, he did what he had to do to keep her from running from him. Set took hold of her chin, forcing her to meet his gaze so he could put her in a deep sleep. The instant she went under, Desiree slumped into his arms. Set cradled her gently against him before he picked her up and carried her to his car.

Once he had her belted into the Ferrari's passenger seat, he slipped into the driver's side. Unable to wipe Desiree, he had to take her to the Chosen's headquarters and see if any of the other warriors could wipe her, though he feared it would be a futile attempt. The idea of it set his nerves on edge. He now understood how Mehen had felt when he'd brought Blythe to their headquarters for them to try to wipe. Mehen had gone apeshit on Denger when he'd tried. Set didn't like the idea of any of his fellow warriors trying to get inside Desiree's mind when he couldn't, any more than Mehen had with his mate.

Set may not like the idea of it, but he knew it had to be done. Ra had forbidden them to let any mortal learn of the undead and what the Chosen truly were. And their keeping the memory of it was also a big no-no. In the end, if it turned out Desiree could be wiped and she happened not to be his mate, he didn't know if he could let her go.

Chapter Two

Set drove his Ferrari to Phoenix's old warehouse district where Ra's Chosen had set up their headquarters. From the outside, it looked like a typical older warehouse that was no longer in use, but on the inside it was nothing of the sort.

Pulling up to the gate of the chain-link fence that surrounded the warehouse's property, Set used his mind to open it before he drove through. He then pulled into the docking bay they used as a parking garage. There were five other expensive sport cars and Mehen's BMW motorcycle already parked there. Seeing all the vehicles, Set realized Akori, Kysen and Denger had beat him home. It also meant he probably wouldn't be able to slip Desiree inside the headquarters without someone noticing.

Set got out of the car and only took the time to retrieve his sword from the trunk before he moved to the passenger side for Desiree. With his sword belt slung across his chest, he picked her up so her head rested against his shoulder. As he carried her over to the door that connected the docking bay to the inside of the Chosen's headquarters, Set once again thought how right it felt to hold Desiree in his arms.

Coming even with the door, he entered the code into the security system's number pad. Placing his hand on the raised piece of stone set into the wall beneath the pad, he pushed down. A hidden needle within the stone came up and pierced his index finger. With a drop of his blood clinging to the very tip, the needle retracted and the door's locking mechanism clicked open.

Set pushed open the door as he licked off the blood that remained on his finger, healing the wound Ra's gift left behind. The stone had kept their headquarters safe long before the invention of security systems. Only the blood of Ra's Chosen and Blythe could unlock it.

Now inside the living area of the old warehouse, he walked down the long hallway where the walls and floor had been painted to resemble the stone used for the Temple of Amon Ra at Karnak in Egypt. The walls also had hand painted with hieroglyphs and pictures of Ra's exploits in bright jewel tones. His fellow warrior, Takan, had taken years to do them all. The headquarters were the Chosen's home away from home with its Egyptian style running throughout the part of the warehouse they used as living space.

Set managed to get Desiree to his personal quarters without encountering anyone. He pulled back the covers on his bed on one side of the mattress and gently placed her on it. Slipping off Desiree's shoes, he put them on the floor before he took her purse off her shoulder and put it on the nightstand.

Set stared down at Desiree. He'd put her in a deep enough sleep that she wouldn't awaken for a while yet, which was good since he now had to go talk with the rest of the Chosen about trying to wipe her. Figuring it was best to get this over with as soon as he possibly could, Set left his quarters and used his mind to lock the door behind him.

He headed straight to Mehen and Blythe's quarters first. Even though Set was second-in-command of Ra's Chosen, he still had to report his inability to wipe Desiree to Mehen before he went to the others. Hoping he wasn't interrupting anything, Set knocked on the door.

Mehen answered it. Shirtless with his fangs peeking past his upper lip, Set figured he *had* interrupted something. "Sorry," he said. "I know it's late, but I have a bit of a situation on my hands."

"What happened? The last I heard you were meeting up with Kysen, Akori and Denger at The Oasis."

"I did. After they left, I ran into one of the undead in the parking lot."

Mehen quickly looked him up and down. "You don't look injured. I guess it wasn't one of the undead warriors?"

Not too long ago they had found out that the demon, Sek, had created a new breed of undead who were trained to be warriors. Unlike most of the undead, these were able to think mostly for themselves and did not crave the souls of mortals their brethren did. They also were trained to fight with swords very similar to the ones the Chosen used. The only difference was the undead warriors' swords were made out of steel instead of bronze. Being undead, bronze still took them out like the normal undead.

Set shook his head. "No. It was your regular run-of-the-mill undead. That isn't the problem. The problem is I had an audience. The newest bartender from The Oasis watched me take the undead out." He took a breath before he finished. "Ah...I can't wipe her."

A look of pity flashed across Mehen's face just as Blythe said from somewhere inside the room, "Did I just hear Set say he ran into a woman he can't wipe?"

Mehen turned to face Blythe, giving Set a good view of Ra's mark he carried high on his back. In the center was a red sun with the Eye of Ra in the middle of it, colored red and blue. Two cobras, in striking position, faced outward on either side of the sun. Attached to them were two large wings outlined in black and colored peacock blue with the tips just touching the edges of Mehen's shoulders. Set carried the same mark on his back, as did all the Chosen. Even Blythe had it marking her skin, though hers was on the small of her back and not as large as the warriors'. Ra had given it, along with her fangs, when he'd gifted her with immortality.

"Yes," Mehen said to his mate, "you heard him right."

Dressed in a pink satin robe belted at the waist that only fell to the tops of her knees, Blythe appeared at Mehen's side. He'd turned to face Set. She gave Set a beaming smile. "You've found your mate."

"I never said that," Set said quickly. "I said I couldn't wipe her."

"Uh-huh. What about your blood hunger? Has that started to bother you yet?"

"It's good. I fed just before the undead showed up." When Blythe cocked a brow in his direction while she gave him a look that said she didn't quite believe him, Set said,

"I'll admit I've started to feed more often, and it hasn't been as satisfying as it used to be, but that doesn't mean Desiree is my mate. I've seen her working at The Oasis more than a few times and she never set me off. It's only been the last couple months that I started to notice the change."

Blythe crossed her arms over her chest. "You said Desiree was a new bartender at the bar. How long has she worked there now?"

"A couple months, I think. I'm not sure," Set said grumpily. "I haven't really paid that close attention to her before now."

Blythe smiled. "Ha. There you go. She has to be your mate." She then grew serious. "You said you couldn't wipe her. Please don't tell me you have Desiree locked up in one of the small storage rooms in the old warehouse."

He gave Blythe a hard look. "Of course I don't. She's locked up in my quarters. I learned my lesson."

When Mehen had first brought Blythe to the headquarters and none of them could wipe her, Set had locked her up in a storage room in the part of the warehouse they didn't use as living quarters. Set hadn't liked the effect she'd had over Mehen and figured if he could keep her away from their leader he would be able to think straight again. Not knowing Blythe was afraid of close, dark spaces, Set had given her a panic attack. Mehen had just about ripped his head off for that one.

"Smart man. Let me go talk to Desiree. I'm sure she would appreciate another woman's perspective on all this, especially one who's experienced what she going through right now."

"Well," Set said, "you see, she really has no idea what's going on. I didn't get a chance to explain much of anything before she tried to make a run for it. I had to put her to sleep before I brought her here."

Blythe shook her head and sighed. "Couldn't you have tried to talk to her calmly without scaring her?"

He scowled. "I didn't deliberately try to scare her. I *was* being calm, but that didn't stop her from nailing me in the balls."

A small smile played across Blythe's lips. "I bet you were your usual intimidating self. Did Desiree nail you in the balls before or after you decided you were going to bring her here?"

"After. She didn't want to come with me so I had to force her to walk to my car."

"No wonder she reacted the way she did. She probably thought you were abducting her or something. Desiree shouldn't be alone when she wakes up and definitely not alone with you. I'll go sit with her."

Mehen held up his arm to block Blythe when she went to step out into the hall. "You're not going dressed like that," he said as he looked her up and down.

Blythe rolled her eyes. "Fine, I'll get dressed and then I'll go to Set's quarters."

After she moved away, Mehen said, "Go back to the girl in case she does wake up. I'll tell the others what happened." He put his hand on top of Set's shoulder. "We'll try to make this as quick and as painless as we can for you."

Thinking of how the other warriors would soon be trying to get inside Desiree's head when he couldn't, made Set grind his teeth together. He fought not to snarl at Mehen. Even though the thought of it bothered him, Set knew it had to be done.

With a curt nod of his head, Set left Mehen and returned to his quarters. Desiree still slept. Closing the door behind him, he leaned back against it as he ran his gaze over her. Her scent that had his blood hunger rising to the surface had now filled his quarters. The urge to feed from her was just as strong as the urge to have her under him. Set ran his gaze down her long, shapely legs. He could almost picture what it would feel like to have them wrapped around his waist as he pounded into her. His fangs started to throb in time with his erection.

Pushing away from the door, he crossed the room. As he stared down at Desiree, Set gently brushed a fallen lock of blonde hair off her forehead. He then ran the back of

his fingers along her cheek. Her skin was soft. It made him want to see if the rest of her skin would feel just as soft.

With a sigh, he pulled his hand away. He really should wake Desiree up. The other warriors, along with Blythe, would be arriving soon. She needed to be awake if they were to test her. And if the others couldn't wipe her, she would have to be told what they were. If it came to that, Desiree would have to face the fact that she wouldn't be leaving the headquarters any time soon.

Set moved to sit on the small space on the bed next to her and shook her shoulder. "Desiree, wake up." She mumbled something sleepily and tried to roll over onto her side away from him. Set stopped her and shook her shoulder again. "You can sleep later. Right now you have to wake up."

Desiree blinked open her eyes. When her gaze landed on him, her eyes widened. She then scanned the room, her gaze flitting across the hieroglyphs that were painted on the walls and then back to his face.

"Where am I?" she asked in a shaky voice.

"You're in my quarters." Set leaned back to give Desiree room when she moved to sit up.

"What happened? The last thing I remember is you killing that guy with fangs and then saying you were taking me with you." She swallowed. "I told you I wouldn't tell anyone what happened."

Set could hear her heart starting to beat faster. The last thing he wanted was for Desiree to get panicky and try to do something stupid like run away. "Calm down. You're not in any danger. I couldn't wipe what you saw in the parking lot from your memory so we need to see if another can do it for me."

"Wipe my memory? What do you mean by wipe my memory?"

"Mortals aren't allowed to learn about the undead and retain the memory of it. It's our job to protect you mortals from them. If it ever became common knowledge among your kind it would make our job that much harder."

Desiree pushed herself away until her back came up against the headboard. "Undead? That's what that guy was? He looked like he was alive to me until you cut him with that knife."

Unable to stop himself, Set moved closer and reached out to pick up a lock of hair that fell across Desiree's shoulder. He rubbed it between his fingers as he spoke. "Oh, he wasn't really alive. He was just a shell with no soul."

"And the fangs?" Desiree asked quietly. "What would the undead need those for?"

"To feed. One bite from an undead and mortals become what attacked them. The undead steal the souls of the living. They also need their blood to sustain them."

Desiree reached up and snatched her hair from his fingers. "If I'm not supposed to know about the undead, why are you telling me all this?"

"Because if you can be wiped it won't matter."

"And if I can't be?"

"Then you won't be able to leave here."

Chapter Three

Not able to leave? Desiree's fear kicked up another notch. She looked into Set's handsome face wishing she had waited a little bit longer to leave the bar. She then wouldn't have seen Set cut down the fanged guy, or what he called an undead. She could still have her daydreams about him without having to face the fact that the guy she'd had fantasies about screwing was a complete nut job.

Did she believe what Set had said about it being his job—and she guessed the rest of his buddies—to protect mortals from the undead? That would be a big resounding no. And what was up with him calling people mortals? The way Set had said it you would think he hadn't classed himself in that group either. Why did she always have to fall for the screwed-up ones? She had a penchant for finding bad boys attractive, but she also had to attract the ones who weren't quite all there on top of it all.

Desperate to try to talk her way out of this situation, she said, "Look, you can't keep me here. I'll be missed. Someone will eventually notify the police that I'm a missing person when I don't show up for work. And I do have family. You can just let me go and I'll promise not to breathe a word of this to anyone."

Set opened his mouth to say something, but a knock on the door stopped him. He then turned his gaze to the door. Desiree heard the sound of a lock being turned before five men and one woman entered the room. The men she recognized as Set's friends. The woman she didn't know, but Mehen had his arm around her shoulders. Obviously she was his girlfriend or something.

The woman smiled as she walked toward the bed. "Good, you're awake." She held out her hand. "I'm Blythe, Mehen's mate. I'm sure you recognize the guys from The Oasis."

Desiree shook Blythe's hand and nodded. She took in the other woman's long, light brown hair and blue eyes. Blythe didn't look as if she was crazy or anything, but it remained to be seen. "I would say it's nice to meet you, but being held here against my will isn't making me feel very sociable."

"I guess it wouldn't," Blythe said. "I know you don't understand what's going on here, but just let me tell you I was once in your position."

"No offense, but I'm finding it hard to believe any of this undead thing is real."

"I didn't believe it either in the beginning. I thought these guys were members of some kind of vampire cult when I saw their fangs." Blythe gestured to all the men in the room.

"Wait a minute. I thought only the undead guy I saw Set kill had fangs." What were these people? A bunch of vampires?

Blythe cringed a little. She then looked at Set. "Sorry. I guess I got a little ahead of myself."

Desiree turned her gaze to Set. "You seriously have fangs?"

Set sighed before he nodded. "Yes, but we aren't the undead."

He then opened his mouth so Desiree could see his fangs. Then to her shock, they extended, growing longer so they almost touched his bottom lip. She jumped to the other side of the bed and held up her hands to hold him off. "What the hell?! You're a vampire."

"Relax, Desiree," Set said in a calm voice. "We're not vampires, though we do use our fangs to feed. We're Ra's Chosen, warriors handpicked by the Egyptian sun god Ra to protect mortals from the undead."

Desiree furiously shook her head. "If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck. You have fangs and drink blood. I would say that makes you a vampire."

"I think explanations would be better left until we've seen if we can wipe her or not," Kysen suggested. "She's just going to get more upset."

Mehen nodded. "I agree." He then looked at Set. "I suggest you hold her. It will be easier on the both of you that way."

When Set made a grab for her, Desiree slapped his hand away and tried to make a break for it by jumping off the other side of the bed. She never made it. Set, moving faster than she thought he could, easily had her by the upper arm and pulled her off the bed so they both stood facing the other people in the room.

He then moved to stand behind her. With his hands on top her shoulders, he pulled her toward him so her back was plastered to the front of him. Desiree clamped her lips together to stop the small gasp that threatened to escape when she felt the hard length of Set's erection pressing against the small of her back. Even though she knew he had to be two bricks short of a load, it didn't stop her body from becoming aroused. An ache began to build deep inside her pussy. As if he knew where her wayward thoughts had gone, Set held her tighter and his hard cock jerked inside his pants.

When Mehen stepped in front of her, Desiree forced herself to pay attention to what was going on. Mehen smiled, giving her a small flash of his fangs before he said, "This won't hurt. I just need you to look into my eyes. If it works, you won't remember any of this."

As Desiree met Mehen's gaze, she felt what could only be described as a nudge inside her head. It was the same sensation she'd felt when Set had said he was going to wipe her mind back in the parking lot of The Oasis. A few seconds ticked by before he shook his head and took a step back. "I can't wipe her. Just like with Blythe, it's as if I ran into a brick wall."

Takan moved forward to take Mehen's place. Desiree always thought of him as the shy one. He kept his black hair on the longish side, especially in the front. Every time she'd seen him, his long bangs were always hanging in front of his face, as if he were hiding behind them. Even now, he reached up and pulled more of his hair into his eyes.

"I'll make this quick," Takan said as if he was trying to reassure both her and Set since he glanced at the man who stood at her back before he locked gazes with her.

Same as with Mehen, Desiree felt the nudge inside her head. And since she still hadn't forgotten anything about what was going on, she figured Takan hadn't been able to wipe her either.

As the rest of the men came to stand in front of her one at a time, Set's body grew stiffer while his grip on her shoulders kept her pinned against him. She could feel the tension tighten inside him as each of the other men tried to wipe her. By Akori's turn, the last one who tried and met with no success, Set's entire body felt stiffer than a board along her back.

Mehen gave Set a meaningful stare. "She can't be wiped. And from the look of you, I would say you're going to have a lot of explaining to do."

In a strained voice, Set replied, "It can wait until the morning. Right now I need all of you to leave so I can cool down a bit."

Lifting his arm, Mehen pulled Blythe close to his side and smiled down at her. When Blythe smiled in return, Desiree noticed she also had fangs. "I understand," Mehen said. "No one will disturb you."

Desiree silently watched the others file out of the room. Once the door closed behind them she heard the lock click into place. Set still stood at her back with his hands on her shoulders. She tried to step away, to put some much needed space between them, but he didn't let her. With nothing else to distract her, Desiree couldn't help but notice how good it felt to be this close to Set. She had to stop herself from relaxing against him.

Needing to get away from him so she could get a hold of herself, she said, "Let go."

This time when she tried to move away Set dropped his hands to her waist and turned so she faced him. Meeting his gaze, Desiree's breath caught in her throat as the ache between her legs once again made its presence known. Set stared at her with raw hunger and longing in his eyes. No man had ever stared at her in such a carnal way before. Wetness pooled in her pussy as she fought the urge to rub herself against him.

As Set slowly bent his head toward her, Desiree put a hand on his chest intending to push him away, but she found herself clutching at his shirt instead. For too many nights she'd dreamed about Set. How many times had she wished he would look at her the way he was now? Probably more than a few hundred thousand times. She should be thinking of ways to escape, but her mind could only focus on the man who held her. Desiree licked her lips wanting nothing more than to feel Set's firm lips moving over hers.

When his mouth came down on hers, Desiree clutched his shirt tighter in her fist. She couldn't get her brain to send the signal to her hand to push him away. As his mouth moved against hers, gently sucking as his lips slanted across hers, she knew she was lost. With a breathy sigh, she kissed him back.

Set pulled her closer and angled his hips so he could grind his erection against her. He ran his tongue along the seam of her lips before he pushed it inside her mouth. His tongue twined with hers as he tasted her. Releasing Set's shirt, her other hand came up and she put her palms on his muscled chest. Under her right hand, Desiree felt Set's heart beating at a rapid pace, almost a match for her own. Her nipples tightened beneath her blouse, begging to be touched.

The feel of Set's hard cock nestled against her stomach had wetness leaking into her panties. In no way had her dreams done justice to Set's kisses. He licked and sucked on her mouth as he pushed her arousal even higher. He devoured her mouth with his, as if he wouldn't survive without the taste of her. Desiree couldn't stop the whimper of need that rose out of her throat. Lost in a sexual haze of Set's making, she rubbed herself against him.

It wasn't until Set sucked her tongue into his mouth and she came in contact with his fangs did Desiree realize what she was doing. Ruthlessly breaking contact with his lips, she pushed him away. Much to her surprise, Set released her and took a step back.

Her chest rapidly rose and fell as she fought to get her body back under control. Set panted with his fists clenched at his sides. Desiree's gaze trailed down his body and

landed on the prominent bulge in his pants. She had to close her eyes and take a deep breath before she opened them again and looked him in the face. The tips of his fangs peeked out from under his top lip.

"What are you going to do with me?" she asked in a voice that sounded too husky for her liking.

Set's heated gaze ran down the length of her body and then back up again. "There are plenty of things I want to do to you, things that we would both enjoy, but I don't think it would be a good idea. So I'll just have to settle on both of us getting some sleep instead."

Desiree looked at the king-sized bed and then back to Set. There was no way she was going to sleep in that bed with him. It wasn't that she thought Set would try something. No, it wasn't that. She just didn't trust herself. Having him lying next to her would be too much of a temptation. She had to keep him at arm's length, but so far she was failing miserably. When it came to wanting Set, she was just too weak to resist. And that irked the shit out of her.

"I'll sleep on the floor," she said quickly.

Since she figured she was stuck wherever she was for the night, Desiree decided to wait until the morning when she was well rested to try to escape. Tiredness was starting to beat at her. It had already been a long night. Between what she had seen in The Oasis' parking lot and then having Set basically abduct her, she was feeling the strain.

Set took her by the arm and steered her to one side of the bed. "No one is going to sleep on the floor. There is plenty of room in the bed for the both of us. Now in you go."

Desiree remained where she was. "I don't think that will be a good idea."

"Tough," Set said. "It's going to happen whether you want it to or not. It's not open for discussion."

The words that Desiree was about to use as an argument flew out of her head when Set took hold of the bottom of his muscle shirt and yanked it over his head. Her gaze zeroed in on his wide, muscular chest. It was hairless and tanned, and her fingers itched

to run over all that exposed smooth male flesh. Desiree swallowed as her mouth went suddenly dry. Not noticing that she'd been struck stupid, Set bent over to undo his jungle boots. Her mouth went even drier at the sight of his hard muscled ass in his black paratrooper fatigue pants.

Her gaze moved over the bare skin of his back when he straightened and kicked off the boots. His wide back narrowed down to a slim waist and hips. Her gaze then snagged on the large, winged tattoo that had the Eye of Ra in the center and covered the upper part of his back, reaching to his shoulders. The colors were as bright as the ones used to paint the hieroglyphs on the walls.

Set didn't give her much time to admire his tattoo before he turned back and pointed to the bed. "Bed. Now."

Desiree shook her head. With Set half naked, there wasn't a chance in hell she'd be able to get any rest.

"Fine. I'll help you."

Before she realized what he meant to do, Set scooped her up in his arms and put her on the bed, following her down. He turned her to her side so she faced him while he lay on his and held her to his chest with one arm around her. He pulled the covers over them.

With her head tucked under Set's chin and their bodies touching from the chest down, Desiree had to bite back a moan of pleasure. He expected her to sleep like this? That so was not going to happen. His closeness was only turning her on again. Arousal thrummed through her body. Hoping to get in a more comfortable position, she started to squirm. When that only led to Set's erection coming into contact with the mound of her pussy, Desiree went still. Wetness pooled between her legs at the feel of his large cock so close to the spot where she ached to be filled.

She shifted again, but Set clamped a hand on her hip to keep her still. "Go to sleep," he said through gritted teeth. Then the lights in the room turned off.

Unable to see anything, the pleasurable sensation of being held in his arms intensified. Desiree shifted again, which caused Set to groan. "I'm never going to be able to sleep like this. You're too close."

"And I won't be able to sleep if I can't feel you in my arms," Set replied huskily.

"Why? Are you afraid I'll try to make a break for it while you're sleeping?"

"Partly."

"Can't you just tie me to the bed or something?" Desiree felt as if her body was on fire wherever it touched Set's. Instinctively, she moved against his hard cock.

"No. Stop moving." Set's voice sounded even more strained.

"Then let me go."

"If you can't sleep, then I'll make you go to sleep."

Set pulled back a bit and put a finger under her chin so she looked up in the general direction of his face. A second later, Desiree fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

Chapter Four

Able to see in the dark just as well as he could in the light, Set stared down at the sleeping woman he held in his arms. He knew he was torturing himself by holding Desiree this close, but he needed to feel her pressed against him. After having to watch each of his fellow warriors try to get into her head, he'd wanted to tear into them. With each attempt, the word *mine* had echoed inside Set's head over and over again. He'd wanted to stake his claim on Desiree so there wouldn't be any doubts as to whose woman she was.

The kiss he and Desiree had shared had been something a baser part of him had needed. Claiming her lips, tasting her as her delicious scent tinged with the scent of her arousal swirled around him, Set knew it wouldn't have taken much on his part to end what their kiss had started. Desiree wanted him, even though she wasn't happy with the present situation.

Set had a feeling he would have a fight on his hands with Desiree tomorrow. Unlike Blythe who had quickly accepted what Ra's Chosen were once it was explained to her, Set had a feeling Desiree wouldn't be quite as accepting. Her attitude wasn't going to do him any favors. Almost certain she was indeed his mate, he knew he wouldn't be able to let her go. The only way he would know for sure was to feed from her. If her blood appeased his blood hunger when no other's could, then he would know for sure. And Set highly doubted Desiree would let him feed from her any time soon.

Closing his eyes, Set forced himself to ignore the throbbing of his cock. He would give Desiree some time to become more comfortable with being around him, then he would claim her as his mate. He would make love to her until thoughts of returning to her old life disappeared.

* * * * *

Desiree awakened to find herself alone in Set's bed. After a quick glance around the room showed he was nowhere in sight, she rubbed the sleep out of her eyes and sat up. With Set gone, now was the time for her to start planning a means of getting the hell out of Dodge. If Set thought she would quietly accept being kept a prisoner in his home, he had another think coming. She may have the hots for him, but that didn't mean she was going to let the vampire hottie get away with keeping her against her will.

Vampire hottie. Desiree shook her head at her description of Set. He could call himself whatever he wanted, but his fangs and blood-drinking habits labeled him a vampire in her books. Not that she'd ever seen a real vampire before learning that Set and his buddies were ones. And up until last night, she'd only thought vampires were the stuff of myths and legends.

Spotting her purse lying on the bedside table, Desiree felt a surge of hope. Quickly snatching it up, she opened it and fished out her cell phone. She could use it to call the police, tell them she'd been abducted. There was only one small problem, though—she had no idea where the hell Set lived. He'd knocked her out before he'd brought her here. There also were no windows in his bedroom to give her any clues to even guess where in Phoenix his home was. She had to hope her not having an address to tell the police wouldn't stop them from coming to get her. In this day and age, they should be able to pick up on her cell phone's signal and be able to find her that way. At least she hoped they could.

Flipping open her phone, Desiree felt her hopes shatter. Her phone was showing that it had no signal. It figured. At least she'd charged her cell phone the day before. Maybe if she tried again later the phone would have a signal then.

Before she turned off her cell, she saw the time was just after nine thirty in the morning. Putting the phone back in her purse, Desiree realized she really needed to use the washroom. Getting off the bed, she headed to one of the two other doors inside the

room. It stood open, and after a quick glance inside, Desiree was relieved to see it was a bathroom en suite.

She did her business then splashed some water on her face. She would have liked to take a shower, but there was no way she was going to strip naked. Knowing her luck, Set would arrive back in his bedroom while she was in the shower. Desiree could almost picture what would happen if Set caught her inside it naked. He would look at her with hunger in his eyes as he slowly stripped off his clothes. He would then join her in the shower, his large wet body slipping against hers. She would reach between his legs and –

Desiree yanked her gaze off the shower. God, she was pathetic. She really had to stop lusting after Set. It also showed she thought about him way too much. She was worse than some lovesick teenager who couldn't keep her mind off her first crush. At twenty-eight, Desiree was way beyond those years.

After she dried her face, she headed back into the bedroom. Even though she figured it would be locked, she tried the door anyway. The knob didn't turn all the way. Not willing to just sit on the bed and wait for Set to return, Desiree went to the other closed door and opened it. This one opened up onto a walk-in closet. There weren't that many clothes in it, but she recognized the leather jacket as being Set's. She'd seen him wear it a few times when he'd come to The Oasis.

Desiree walked to the jacket and ran her hands over the supple leather. She lifted the arm of it and brought it to her nose. It smelled like Set. After being held in his arms, cradled against his chest more than once, she would recognize his scent anywhere. It was a combination of musky male and the spicy cologne Set wore. Closing her eyes, she took a deep breath as she rubbed the leather sleeve against her cheek.

Realizing what she was doing, Desiree dropped the sleeve like a hot potato and backed away from the jacket. Out of the corner of her eye, something snagged her attention. Hanging from a hook at the back of the closet was what looked like a sword. She crossed over to it and pulled the sword out of its scabbard. It was a lot heavier than

it looked. It also didn't look like a typical sword. The top part of the blade was rounded almost like a sickle. The blade also had a reddish tinge to it that reminded her of bronze. She started to run her fingers along the flat of the sword when the sound of someone clearing his throat had her spinning around.

Set stood inside the doorway of the closet with his shoulder leaning against the frame and his arms crossed over his chest. "What exactly do you think you're doing with my sword?"

Caught red-handed, Desiree thought maybe she could turn this situation to her favor. She pointed the sword in Set's direction. "Let me go and I won't have to use this on you." He gave her a look that said she wouldn't stand a chance against him, even with the sword. "You may think I won't, but I'm not afraid to use this."

"Don't you know it isn't smart to make threats you can't follow through on?" Set straightened. "Give me the sword before you drop it on your foot and chop off your toes."

When she didn't lower the sword or move to hand it over to him, Set crossed over to her in one long stride and easily took it from her. He then went and put it back in its scabbard.

Desiree watched him turn back to her. Set didn't look angry, but he didn't exactly look pleased either. She slowly started to back away, which only caused him to say something under his breath in a language she didn't understand.

"You can stop being afraid of me," Set said in a gruff voice. "I'm not going to hurt you." He then closed the distance between them and crowded Desiree until her back came up against the open closet door. His eyes grew heavy as he put his hands on either side of her head and looked down at her. "The only thing you have to worry about is me wanting to strip you naked and taste every inch of your shapely body before I take you against the wall."

The husky timbre of Set's voice did delicious things to her body. It seemed to sink right into her, stroking all the intimate places she wanted him to touch. Her heart

thudded against her ribs as Set slowly lowered his head. He was going to kiss her again, and God help her, she wanted him to.

Breathless, waiting for his lips to take hers, Desiree felt a wave of disappointment wash over her when Set pushed away and his mouth hovered a scant inch from hers. When he turned and walked to the middle of the room, she had to fight the urge to demand he come back and stop teasing her. Instead, she took a deep, calming breath and followed him out of the closet.

Set turned around and motioned to his dresser. Sitting on top of it was a plate of eggs, bacon and toast. He then said, "Blythe figured you would be hungry. She also said I should bring you some of the food now before the rest of us eat it all."

"You eat food?" The question popped out of her mouth before she could stop it.

"Of course I eat food. So do the others. I told you, we aren't the undead. We need to eat like any other mortal does."

"And you need to drink blood too?"

"Yes. The blood keeps us strong. Never mind about that now. Come and eat your breakfast before the food gets cold."

Desiree's stomach growled. The food did smell good, and the last time she'd had something to eat was dinner the night before. Giving Set a wide berth, she walked around him and picked up the plate and utensils next to it. She sat down on the end of the bed and started to eat. The whole time she ate she felt Set watching her. Being under his close regard only made Desiree shovel the food into her mouth faster. In five minutes flat she'd cleaned the plate.

Set reached for the now-empty plate and shook his head. "It wasn't a race to see how fast you could eat, you know?" He then put it back on the dresser.

"You've fed me. Now what?" Desiree asked. Set said nothing, he only continued to stare at her until she started to feel uncomfortable. "Well? Are you going to answer me or not?"

His answer was to sit down next to her. Desiree shifted on the bed, putting a little space between them. Today, Set was dressed in snug-fitting blue jeans and a black t-shirt that seemed molded to his chest, shoulders and biceps. The man was a walking temptation.

Set took a deep breath and held it for a few seconds before he let it out. "I'm not looking forward to this, but it has to be said. I can't let you leave, Desiree."

She stiffened. "Why not? Because no one could 'wipe me'?" She said the last part accompanied by air quotes.

"That is one of the reasons. As I told you last night, mortal kind can never fully learn about the undead. Ra has forbidden it."

"And I said I wouldn't tell anyone. Who would believe me anyway? I'm just a bartender, for Christ's sake. It's not as if I'm some kind of reporter who would turn around and leak the story to the public."

"Be that as it may, you are going to have to accept that this will be your new home."

Hearing Set say that he was not going to ever let her leave sent a chill down Desiree's spine. In no way did she want to become a statistic on a missing persons' list. "I will never be able to accept that. I like my freedom as much as the next person. If you do this, I'll try to escape any chance I get."

Set chuckled, though it held very little humor. "I had a feeling you would say that. Look, it isn't as if I want to keep you a prisoner, but I will until you realize this is the start of a new life for you." His light brown eyes latched onto her gaze. "With me."

Unable to tear her gaze away, Desiree said, "With you? What exactly do you mean by that?"

"You already know I want you. Well, it goes much deeper than that. I think you're my mate."

Desiree fought the urge to laugh out loud hysterically. "Your mate? You think I'm your mate, but you aren't sure. I'm going to have to say that I'm not. We don't even

know each other. I'll admit that I find you attractive, but that's as far as it goes. There's no way in hell I'm going to sign on to be the mate to a blood-sucking vampire."

Set had her on her back and under him on the bed before Desiree could blink. Her heart threatened to beat out of her chest as she watched him open his mouth while his fangs lengthened until they touched his bottom lip. She couldn't tell if the hunger she saw in his eyes was from arousal or whether he just hungered for her blood. She couldn't miss the feel of his hard cock nestled between them, or the way Set seemed to be eyeing the vein in her neck.

His fingers came up and gently stroked the side of her neck where her pulse rapidly beat. "I'm not a vampire, nor am I one of the undead." Set grabbed her hand and placed it over the left side of his chest. "My heart beats. I'm one of Ra's Chosen warriors. And to set the record straight, I can go out in the sun. Ra's light makes us stronger and will heal our wounds. I don't sleep in a coffin, nor do the symbols of the one god harm me. I also love garlic. I'm just a man who also happens to be an immortal warrior." Before he continued, Set met her gaze again. "And you *are* my mate, Desiree. You set off my blood hunger like no other. I lust for your body and your blood. No other's blood will satisfy me but yours. You can say whatever you want, but I know you want me as much as I want you." His voice dropped to a husky murmur. "Even now, I can smell your arousal mixing with your scent."

To be outted by her own body sucked, especially since Desiree didn't want to feel the things Set stirred inside her. For a split second, being told he wanted her blood made her wonder what it would feel like to have Set bite her while he sank his cock into her pussy. But then she got a hold of herself and started to push at his chest. She wasn't going to be anybody's blood bank.

Set easily shackled her wrists in one hand and held them above her head. "Relax, Desiree. I would never take what you aren't ready to give. I'm not a monster. Feeding is an erotic experience for both parties."

To prove what he said was correct, Set bent his head and licked the large vein in her neck before he gently dragged his fangs across it. A shudder swept through Desiree, and it had nothing to do with fear. Her pussy clenched when he did it a second time. She had to bite her lip to stop herself from telling him to bite her. It didn't help that she could feel how thick and large his cock was through her clothes. Wetness pooled between her legs when she thought of how good it would be to have it buried deep inside her. She spent more time being aroused around Set than she did fearing the situation she found herself in. Desiree mentally yelled at herself to stop, but her body just wasn't cooperating.

With a groan, Set released her before he rolled off her and onto his back. Desiree sat up and stared down at him. His large chest rose and fell as if he'd been running a great distance. He stared up at the ceiling. She also noticed his fangs were still extended. Desiree could all too easily see throwing herself on top of that gorgeous, hard male body and having her way with him.

To distract herself, she asked, "So are you going to keep me locked in your room until I willingly agree to become your mate?"

He turned his head toward her. "If you aren't willing to accept this, then yeah, I don't have any qualms about keeping you locked up until I can change your mind."

From the heated look Set ran over her body, Desiree had a feeling she knew exactly how he would go about doing it, too. His look promised lots of sex. Lots and lots of sex. She cleared her throat. "And if I don't let you feed from me, what then?"

"For now, I'll have to seek out other donors. Now that I've found you, they soon won't sate my blood hunger, though."

She hated herself for asking this next question, but she couldn't help herself. "And will it be an erotic experience for the both of you?"

He gave her a slow grin. "It won't be as pleasurable for me as it once was, but the women I choose to be donors will not be immune. I'll have to wipe their memories afterward, but they'll find their release in my arms while I take their blood."

Stupidly, that bothered her. Immensely. Desiree didn't like the idea of Set being that intimate with another woman. She wanted to tell him to stay away from other women, but she knew she had no right to. She wasn't going to let him feed from her. What did she expect?

Set sat up. "You don't like the idea of me seeking donors." He said it as a statement rather than a question.

Hoping to sound nonchalant, she said, "Why would I care? It's none of my business what you do." She turned to look at one of the walls so she wouldn't have to see Set's knowing smile.

He cupped her cheek and forced her gaze back to him. "All it will take to stop me from going to other women is for you to let me slake my blood hunger with your blood. I meant it when I said only yours will satisfy me. Soon I won't be able to use other donors. Their blood will have the opposite effect on me. As my mate, only you will be able to keep me from hungering. That's the way it is with Mehen and Blythe. Mehen resisted Blythe for so long his blood hunger started to get the best of him. He also learned the hard way that he could only stomach the blood of his mate."

Wow. *Talk about your ultimate form of commitment*, Desiree thought. Mehen either had to stay true to Blythe or suffer from blood hunger. That would be a huge incentive not to fool around. But she still wasn't willing to fall for all this mate business.

She shook her head. "Sorry, but you feeding from me is not going to happen."

Set smiled. "We'll see." He then stood. "If you can promise you won't try to bolt, I'll show you around headquarters. Blythe seems to think it will help you adjust better."

Desiree nodded. "No offense, but I'm sick of seeing these four walls. I'd like to have a change in scenery."

When Set moved to the door and opened it, she decided for now she would play along. But that didn't mean she wouldn't be watching and learning everything she could that would help make her escape easier.

Chapter Five

Desiree may not have thought he realized what she was doing, but Set knew she was trying to find the best way out of the headquarters. Her gaze constantly looked right and left as he led her from his personal quarters to the meeting room. She could look all she wanted, but for now, he wouldn't be showing her the door that led to the docking bay and outside.

As he showed her where the others' private quarters were, Desiree only seemed to be listening with half an ear. Given how distracted she was, more than likely planning an escape route, Set took the opportunity to run his gaze over her. Even wearing the wrinkled, slept-in clothes, he thought Desiree was a knockout. When he was around her, all he could think about was threading his fingers through her long blonde hair and taking her mouth until she whimpered with need. His cock was constantly standing at the ready when she was near. And when he'd pinned her to the bed and dragged his fangs over the soft skin of her neck, they had ached as much as his cock.

He honestly didn't know how much longer he could hold off from either making love to Desiree or feeding from her. Sex and feeding usually went hand in hand, but if she wouldn't let him take her blood he would be more than happy to settle for the sex, at least for now. She might fight what was between them, but Set knew it wouldn't take much to have her surrendering to him. He just hoped he could hold out. Last night, holding her in his arms as she slept, had been a new kind of torture. Aroused to almost the point of pain, he'd only slept a few hours before he'd finally given up and gotten out of bed. There was only so much a man could take.

Once they reached the meeting room, Set pulled open the door and waved Desiree through. She looked around, her gaze skipping over the large wooden table that sat in the middle of room and then landing on the computer set up in one corner. Set made a

mental note to have Takan put a password on it. He didn't need Desiree getting on the internet and sending any cry-for-help emails to her friends.

Pulling her gaze off the computer, Desiree moved to the table and ran a hand over the surface of the polished wood. "So this is where you guys hang out and discuss all things undead?"

"Mostly. Each night before we go out to hunt, Mehen, who is our leader, will meet with us here and go over any plans he might have. We usually hunt alone, so he basically assigns each of us to different parts of the city to patrol."

"I see. So you guys are like your own little army?"

"Being warriors is all we've ever known. Plus it's our duty to hunt the undead."

"How exactly did the undead come about? You said that a bite from one would turn a mortal into what attacked them. There had to be only one to start with."

"We're not sure exactly how many undead were first released on mortal kind. What we do know is they are the work of two demons, Sek and Mot. Their demon god, Apep, managed to unleash them on the world a few thousand years ago. Ra's Chosen has been taking out the undead ever since."

Desiree seemed to blanch at that. "You're telling me you're a couple thousand years old?"

Set couldn't understand why that information bothered her. He'd told her he and his fellow warriors were immortal. "Yes. I was born a mortal in ancient Egypt centuries ago. Same with the rest of Ra's Chosen." He'd lived for so long that the memories of his time spent as a mortal seemed like they belonged in another lifetime.

Pulling out one of the chairs from the meeting table, Desiree plunked down on it as if her legs would no longer hold her up. She then said weakly, "I'm lusting after a man who is an ancient relic."

Not liking to be compared to an ancient relic, Set grabbed the chair she sat on and turned it away from the table to face him. He then put his hands on the armrests and

leaned in until his nose almost touched Desiree's. "I would gladly show you how much I'm not what you just called me. I may have seen a lot more years than a mortal, but that does not mean I'm so ancient that I couldn't take you to bed and make love to you all night. Or make you scream your pleasure so many times that you wouldn't be able to move afterward."

Desiree's kissable lips parted on a sharp, indrawn breath. His gaze landed on them as he felt his fangs drop. Just like that, his cock became so hard he would be surprised if it didn't end up having the imprint of his zipper on it. The sexual tension between him and Desiree was so thick you could cut it with a knife. Once he finally got her into bed, he had a feeling the sex would not just be good, it would be explosive.

"Show me the rest of this place," Desiree said as she shot up off the chair, pushing him out of the way.

Set smiled to himself as he pushed the chair back into place. He was getting to her. He just had to find the right button to push to make Desiree capitulated.

He guided Desiree back out into the hall. As they neared the kitchen, he could hear Blythe and Akori's voices coming from inside. Taking Desiree by the elbow, he pulled her into the kitchen. She tried to jerk her arm free, but he didn't release her.

"So you finally let her out for the guided tour, did you?" Blythe asked when she caught sight of Set and Desiree. "Glad to see you took my advice, Set."

He shrugged. "As long as Desiree behaves, I don't mind if she leaves my quarters." Set looked over at Desiree and found her staring daggers at him. "What?"

"You make it sound as if I'm a child who misbehaves. You forced this on me, remember?" She then wrenched her elbow free and jammed it into his side.

Akori started to laugh. "Between you and Mehen, I've learned what not to do when one finds his mate. Not that I want one, mind you. I don't care what Ra says. This warrior will not be settling down anytime soon."

Set shook his head. Akori was what Blythe called a man-whore. He loved women, all women. The thought of finding his mate was Akori's worst nightmare. He could

deny it all he wanted, but Set knew the poor bugger would be doomed at some point. Ra had said they would *all* find their mates eventually. That meant even Akori.

Blythe rolled her eyes at the other warrior. "Keep telling yourself that, Akori. Every man is free to dream." She then turned to Set. "Have you taken Desiree to the temple yet?"

"No. That's going to be our next stop."

"Good. And if my father happens to talk to you while you're there, tell him I expect him to come see me soon."

Set grinned. "If he doesn't, you'll have to tell Ra yourself."

Blythe waved them away. "Fine. Go finish your tour." She then pointed at Akori. "Since you're here, you can come with me when I go shopping and help me carry the mega grocery bags. It's the least you can do since you guys scarf down the food as soon as I bring it home."

Glad it was Akori who got nailed this time to go grocery shopping with Blythe, Set walked Desiree out of the kitchen and headed toward the temple. As they walked, he could feel Desiree staring at him. "Something you want to say?"

"Actually, yes. Your conversation with Blythe, does it mean what I think it means?"

"I'm not sure. It depends on what you're thinking."

"Is Ra really Blythe's father?"

He nodded. "Yeah, he is. Blythe didn't find out until after she and Mehen became mates. She grew up not knowing who her father was. Her mother dumped her with her parents when Blythe was really young and never came back. So it wasn't as if her mother told her who he was."

Desiree shook her head. "A part of me is saying all this stuff you've told me about the undead and an Egyptian god actually existing is too unbelievable to be real. And that you and everyone who lives here are nothing but a bunch of crazies. But seeing

your fangs extend and a man completely decompose before my eyes with no trick photography, it's hard not to say that they're real."

"It's understandable that you would think that way. It's hard for you to believe in what you've been sheltered from and come to think only exists in made-up stories. That you are coming to accept will make the transition to your new life much easier."

She frowned. "I may be coming to accept all this weird crap as real, but that doesn't mean I'll accept having to give up my old life."

Not wanting to start that old argument, Set put his hand on the small of Desiree's back and guided her to the entrance of their small temple to Ra. Stopping to stand between the two wooden pylons that had been carved by Takan and painted to resemble the stone ones that stood at Ra's temple at Karnak, Set said, "Come see our temple to Ra, Desiree." He then stepped into the bright sunlight that filled the room.

Letting out a squawk, Desiree grabbed Set's arm before he could get very far and pulled him back into the shadowed entrance to the temple. "What the hell are you doing?"

Set gave her a confused look. "I'm showing you Ra's temple."

"You can't go in there. The sunlight is in there."

He gave her an exasperated look. "Would you stop thinking of me as a vampire? Only the undead have to fear the sun." Using his greater weight, Set easily dragged Desiree into the temple. Once he reached the middle of the room, he stopped, closed his eyes and lifted his face toward the ceiling.

Seeing that Set indeed hadn't burst into flames when the bright sunlight landed on him, she took a deep breath to get her heart to stop racing. When Set had first stepped into the temple, her heart had just about jumped into her throat. Even though he had told her the sun wouldn't harm him, she hadn't totally believed him. The only time she

had ever seen him had been at night at The Oasis. She still had a hard time getting her head around the fact that he had fangs and wasn't a vampire.

Her heart now beating at a normal tempo, Desiree looked around her. The temple had been painted to resemble stone and also had hieroglyphs painted on the walls. A few benches lined the walls. The middle of the temple was a large open space with nothing breaking it up. Looking up, she discovered how the sun was shining in when there were no windows set into the walls. The ceiling that rose high above her head was made out of clear panes of glass, which covered the whole width and length of the temple. Desiree looked up at the clear, blue sky above her and figured the view at night would be just as spectacular with the stars shining bright.

Set lowered his head and opened his eyes. "Blythe is going to have to come and talk to Ra herself. He isn't answering me right now."

"That's what you were doing? You were trying to talk to Ra?"

"Yes. We also worship Ra while standing in the sun as well to let the sun's rays glorify our spirits and bodies." Set held out his arm. "Ra's rays will never harm one of his Chosen. See? No smoke. No me turning into ash."

To cover her mistake, Desiree gestured toward the walls. "I noticed there are hieroglyphs everywhere. Did you guys paint them yourselves?"

"Takan did them. He's the artistic one around here. The rest of us, we're better off sticking to our swords than wielding a paintbrush."

Even though Takan was just as big and muscular as the rest of the warriors, she could quite easily see him meticulously painting the hieroglyphs. She could only imagine how long it would have taken him to do them all by himself. It had to have taken years.

Desiree left Set's side and moved to one of the walls. "They're beautiful. They mean something, right? Just like the ones found on the walls on the tombs in Egypt?"

“Yes. The glyphs here are mostly about worshipping Ra and his greatness. The glyphs in the rest of the headquarters tell the many stories of Ra’s exploits, as well as those of Ra’s Chosen warriors.”

She ran her finger over one of the hieroglyphs that had the Eye of Ra in it. That was the only one she knew the meaning of. She had to admit that it was just a little bit freaky that she was standing next to a man who came from a time when hieroglyphs were the only written word in Egypt. An Egyptologist would have a heyday if one of them ever found out the warriors had lived through Egypt’s ancient past. Desiree didn’t know much about that time period. She was more familiar with the boy king, King Tut, and the treasure trove of grave goods that had been found in his tomb, which wasn’t saying much since just about everybody knew about King Tut.

Desiree turned back to Set. “So is this the end of the tour? Or do you have more to show me before you lock me back up in your quarters?”

“This is it.”

When Set made no move to leave the temple, she said what had been on her mind since she’d awakened. “What’s going to happen tonight?”

“You’ll stay locked in my quarters while my fellow warriors and I go hunt the undead.”

She shook her head. “That isn’t what I meant. What are you going to do about me not showing up for work tonight? My boss will call my place to find out why and I won’t be there.” Desiree then gestured to her clothes. “Then there is the whole subject of me not having any clothes but the ones I have on my back. And my landlord will notice something is up when I stop paying my rent.”

Set’s face grew stern. “Don’t worry about it. Those things will be taken care of.”

Hearing Set tell her the things of her life would be taken care of, and how they would be without her consent, caused her temper to flare. She didn’t like this helpless feeling she had. Set had no right to basically yank the rug that was her old life out from under her.

Desiree pulled herself up straighter and glared at Set. "I don't want you to take *care* of anything. The only thing I want you to do is let me go. I don't care that you think we're mates. I will never be ready to play house with an immortal Egyptian warrior who wants to drink my blood. Get over it. It's not going to happen."

Set took a step closer, eliminating some of the space between them. From his expression, Desiree could tell she had started to annoy him. "It will happen," he said in a sharp tone. "It'll only be a matter of time before you beg me to take you and your blood." He leaned in. "You have to stop fighting it. I promise I'll rock your world."

Now completely pissed off at Set's highhanded remarks, she said, "Screw you." Then for the second time in as many days, Desiree jammed her knee into Set's balls.

Not waiting to see if he was temporarily incapacitated, she kicked off her high heel shoes and took off at a run out of the temple. Having spotted another door at the end of the hall that Set had left off the tour, she raced toward it. When she reached it, she burst through only to draw up short once she entered the open space that appeared to be an old warehouse. She also noticed she wasn't alone. Mehen and Denger were there with their shirts off while they practiced with swords that matched the one she'd found in Set's closet. The two men lowered their weapons when they realized she was there.

Before Desiree could think of what to do next, a large hand landed heavily on her shoulder. The hand spun her around so she faced Set whose eyes flashed with anger.

"Kick me in the balls again," he said through gritted teeth, "and I'll tan your ass so hard you won't be able to sit down for a week."

Not willing to back down, Desiree shot back, "And if you don't let me go I'll make your life a living hell."

Set clenched his jaw so tight she could see the muscles along it jump. He then slung her over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes and started to walk in the direction of the door. When she started to squirm, hoping it would force Set to put her down, he hissed at her and whacked her on the butt, hard.

His voice anything but pleasant, Set said, "Be still or I'll do something we'll both regret."

Knowing there was no use in fighting, Desiree let herself relax. Her first escape attempt hadn't exactly been a bust. She'd at least learned that the Chosen's headquarters was located in an old warehouse they had remodeled. And guessing the number of years the renovations had to have taken, judging by the hieroglyphs, Desiree had to assume the warehouse was in Phoenix's older warehouse district. She also knew a number of the warehouses in this part of the city had been turned into loft apartments. She'd even toured a few of them with the hopes that one day she'd be able to afford to rent one. So she knew exactly where in Phoenix she was. A smile played on her lips. Now that she knew where the headquarters were, she only had to wait for the opportunity to escape to come and then she was out of here.

Chapter Six

Set walked down the street in the area of the city he'd been given to hunt for the undead. He'd been more than ready to leave the headquarters this night. He needed to get away from the woman he'd left in his personal quarters.

After the argument he'd had with Desiree, Set had locked her in his quarters and spent the remainder of the day busying himself elsewhere. The steps that needed to be taken to end Desiree's old life had given him a good enough excuse to stay away from her. With Takan's help, since the warrior had been the one to do something similar when Mehen had first brought Blythe to the headquarters, Set had moved all of Desiree's things to the old part of the warehouse, given her landlord notice and phoned her boss at The Oasis to tell him Desiree would no longer be working there. The first part, the emptying of her small apartment, had been done easily and quickly by Takan and him. Gifted by Ra with the ability to move time and space, they flashed Desiree's stuff to the headquarters a little bit at a time.

When dinnertime rolled around, Set still couldn't bring himself to go to his quarters. Knowing he was taking the easy way out, he got Blythe to take a plate of food to Desiree. While she was there, he also got Mehen's mate to get his sword. Blythe had only shaken her head at him, but she'd done as he'd asked.

Set also was going to purposely stay out hunting late into the night. That way, he hoped when he did return to the headquarters Desiree would already be asleep. After their fight where she'd tried to emasculate him with her knee, he didn't know if he wanted to shake her silly or screw her brains out. He ached to have her under him so much that he knew it wouldn't take much of Desiree's prodding to have him ripping her clothes off and showing her exactly how much he wanted her, and how much she wanted him.

Not known for his patience, or for being tactful, the wait for Desiree to accept him was grating against his nerves until they felt rubbed raw. He was a man who took action. Got things done that needed to be done, with no thought for how it would affect the people around him. Knowing Desiree was his mate, and being unable to claim her without making her hate him for it when he knew if push came to shove she would give him her body as well as her blood, was killing him. He was so wound up he felt as if a thousand scarabs were taking bites out of him.

Distracted by thoughts of what he was going to do about Desiree, Set didn't realize until it was too late that the pricking of his skin wasn't from imagined scarabs but from the nearness of what he was supposed to be hunting. An undead slammed into him and sank his fangs into the side of Set's neck. As Set pulled him off, the undead's fangs ripped a large gash across his throat. Since all of Ra's Chosen were immune to an undead's bite, being bitten just pissed Set off.

Tackling the undead to the ground, Set beat at him until he stayed down long enough for Set to unsheath his sword at his back and cut him across the chest. The undead let out a shriek as he decomposed into nothing. The only thing left behind was an empty pile of clothes, along with the lingering sickly sweet scent of decomposing flesh.

After he sheathed his sword, Set kicked the clothes into a dark alley. He put his hand to his neck, which came away bloody. The feel of it dripping down the side of his throat and into the collar of his black t-shirt meant Set would have to look for a donor. Once he fed, the wound would heal faster.

As if on cue, Set looked up when he heard the sound of footsteps walking in his direction. A woman, who seemed to be alone, slowed her steps when she saw him. Turning to the side, but keeping his face toward her so she wouldn't see the wound in his neck, he put his hand over it and returned her smile of interest.

Once she came closer, he looked into her eyes and took over her will. "Come," he said, as he held out his hand. Without a word she took it and allowed him to lead her into the shadowed alley.

When they were hidden enough that if any passersby should happen along they wouldn't be seen, Set took the woman into his arms. As she settled against him, he realized it didn't feel right. Her scent was wrong, and when he dipped his head and dragged his tongue along the side of her neck, her skin didn't taste right either. Even her body pressed against his did nothing for him. Usually the anticipation of a feeding would have his fangs dropping by now. They hadn't.

With a groan, Set closed his eyes and imagined it was Desiree he held in his arms. That it was her scent that filled his lungs, her body that moved sensually against his. His fangs lengthened as he remembered how good it felt to have Desiree's lips move under his, her pussy grinding against his throbbing cock through their clothes.

Completely immersed in his fantasy of Desiree, Set opened his mouth and sank his fangs into the neck of the woman he held. When the first gush of blood hit his tongue, the fantasy disappeared. His blood hunger roared to life, cramping his stomach as if he hadn't fed in weeks. He continued to feed hoping more blood would ease the cramps, but when the woman cried out as her orgasm washed through her, Set released her neck and swiped his tongue over the bite mark to heal it. Unable to stand having the woman touch him, he quickly wiped the memory of him and his feeding from her and sent her on her way.

With a curse, Set made the circuit back to where he'd parked his Ferrari. His plan to stay out late hunting had now gone by the wayside. With his stomach cramping from blood hunger, and the wound in his neck no closer to healing, he now had the proof he needed to be absolutely sure Desiree was the one meant for him. The blood of another no longer would sustain him. His cramping gut was sending him that message loud and clear. Not wanting to go through extreme blood hunger as Mehen had before he claimed Blythe as his mate, Set knew his time had begun to run out. Somehow he was

going to have to find a way to win Desiree's trust, and quickly, which meant he couldn't avoid her any longer. He just hoped she wouldn't fight him every step of the way.

* * * * *

Boredom eventually had Desiree snooping around Set's quarters in the hopes she'd find something to do besides stare at the four walls. Literally. Looking at the hieroglyphs painted on them had occupied some of the time, but after she'd seen the last one Desiree started to feel as if she was trapped in a cage.

She'd thought about taking a bath, but she'd showered earlier in the day when Blythe had brought her lunch and assured her Set had left the headquarters to do some errands. As for sleeping, Desiree was too wound up to even think about going to bed. As the day grew late, she couldn't stop herself from thinking Set would return any minute. But when Blythe had come again with another plate of food, this time dinner, and left once she collected Set's sword out of his closet, she relaxed some. That was also when the boredom had really set in.

Figuring it served Set right for locking her inside his quarters, Desiree went through his dresser drawers. She found they didn't hold a whole lot. There were some t-shirts and muscle shirts, all in black, along with socks and a few pairs of athletic shorts. Noticeably missing was underwear of any kind. An uncontrollable shiver of awareness went through Desiree as her mind zeroed in on the fact that Set was walking around commando under his pants. Quickly shutting the last dresser drawer, she firmly told herself not to go down that particular path.

Next, she moved to the wall unit that faced the end of the bed. The upper part of it was a closed cabinet. Desiree pulled open the doors. Bingo. She'd found a large, flat-screen TV. Hoping it at least had cable, she picked up the remote that sat beside the TV and turned it on. She flipped through the channels that kept going and going. Desiree figured the warriors had the top-of-the-line digital cable package. On her wages, she'd only been able to afford the most basic.

Lying on her stomach with the pillows under her chest, Desiree settled in to watch a movie on one of the movie channels she'd found. An hour into it, the door slammed open and Set walked into the room. As he kicked the door shut behind him, and it locked on its own, Desiree noticed the jagged bloody wound on his neck.

She jumped off the bed and moved to stand in his path when he started to walk toward the bathroom. "You're bleeding."

Set scowled at her. "Tell me something I don't know." When he went to walk around her, Desiree moved to block him once more. "Would you get out of my way? I need to clean up." He then brushed past her.

Desiree followed him into the bathroom. "What happened?"

He pulled his sheathed sword off his back and put it on the bathroom counter. With rough movements, Set yanked his t-shirt off and threw it on the floor. Reaching for one of the clean cloths that sat folded on a shelf on the wall near the sink, he turned on the water. "An undead bit me. No thanks to you."

Not in the best of moods at present, Desiree shot back, "What the hell do you mean by that? You can't blame your being bitten by one of the undead on me. Christ, I wasn't even there."

Set turned his head to the side as he looked in the bathroom mirror and dabbed the wet cloth over his wound. "Damn right I blame you. If I hadn't been thinking about you in the first place this never would have happened."

Temper flaring, she said angrily, "It's not my fault you couldn't pay attention enough to do your stupid job."

The cloth Set had been using landed in the sink with a wet smack when he threw it down. He turned to glare at her. "Boy, haven't we gotten mouthy all of a sudden. What happened to the woman who was too afraid to even look me in the eyes?"

"She's been stuck inside this goddamn room alone for too many hours and that tends to piss her off."

"You only have yourself to blame for that as well. You don't want to cooperate, which means you had better get used to being inside this room, because you won't be leaving it any time soon."

Knowing she was being a tad immature, Desiree picked up Set's sword anyway and threw it out into the other room. It landed with a loud thud on the floor and skidded across it almost to the door. She turned back around to find Set giving her a thunderous look. Too angry to be intimidated, she scowled back.

"Go pick up my sword," Set said tightly with anger lacing each of the words he spoke.

"No."

"Pick. Up. My. Sword. Or else."

"Or else what? Are you going to spank me if I don't pick up your precious sword?"

Set's reaction to her goad was not what Desiree would have expected. Instead of laying into her, he closed the space between them and sank his hands in her hair as his mouth came down on hers, kissing her with his teeth and tongue. He took her bottom lip between his teeth and gently bit down before he dragged his tongue across it.

As Set's lips moved over hers, devouring her with his mouth, Desiree's anger melted like ice left out in the hot sun, only to be replaced with burning arousal. Reaching up to put her hands on the bare skin of Set's chest, she molded the thick slab of muscles she found there. She skimmed her hands across his flat nipples to find they were as beaded as her own.

Set continued to kiss her as he dropped his hands from her hair and put them on her hips. He pulled her closer and ground his fully engorged cock against her. Desiree moaned at the feel of him. Her pussy grew wet, preparing itself to take Set's body into her own. Her arousal shot even higher. Desiree had said she wouldn't sleep with Set, but with her body on fire, having played a cat-and-mouse game of desire, she couldn't deny herself the pleasure.

Desiree dropped a hand between them and cupped the large bulge in Set's pants. He felt hard and thick in her palm. She gave his cock a squeeze and felt it jerk in response, which in turn caused wetness to leak out of her pussy and into her panties. Knowing there would be no going back, Desiree wrapped her arms and legs around Set when he lifted her and carried her out into the bedroom.

Desiree felt the mattress rise up and meet her as Set placed her on top of it. He sucked her tongue into his mouth while he undid the buttons of her blouse. Tongues twining, she felt Set's fangs against hers. This time, the feel of them didn't bother her as much as they had before.

When Set lifted his head and stared hotly down at her while he took off her blouse, Desiree noticed his fangs had extended. "Your fangs are showing," she said huskily.

He covered one of her breasts with his large hand and pinched her taut nipple. "I can't help that. They ache to be inside you as much as my cock does."

Desiree ground her pussy against the hard thigh Set had put between her legs. "No biting."

Set groaned. "I'll do my best not to."

Dipping his head, Set nuzzled the side of her neck, his fangs gently scraped against her skin. Desiree tensed, but when he moved to kiss a path across the tops of her breasts as he undid the hooks of her bra before he stripped her of it, she relaxed. But she soon arched her back in invitation when Set moved even lower and dragged a fang along her nipple before he sucked it into his mouth. Desiree threaded her fingers through his hair and held him to her. With each pull of his mouth, she felt it deep down inside her pussy.

Set released her nipple and moved to lavish the same attention on the other. His hand trailed down her side and followed the waistband of her skirt to the back where he undid the hook and zipper. Then shifting on the bed so he lay at her side, he pulled her skirt down and off her legs.

His hand delved between her thighs. The heel of it came to rest on her mound as his fingers stroked her pussy through her panties. Flicking a tight nipple with the tip of his tongue, Set said, "I have to taste you."

He hooked one finger into the top of her panties and pulled them down her hips and off. Desiree watched Set run his gaze down her naked body. Everywhere his heated gaze touched, it almost felt as if he was physically touching her. Her breathing grew more rapid as a fresh wave of desire surged through her.

Set ran a hand down her side as he slowly kissed a path from between her breasts down to her stomach. "So beautiful," he breathed against her skin.

Almost beyond the ability to form a coherent thought, Desiree could only say, "Set." She then made a breathy moan when he shifted to settle between her legs and placed a kiss on the inside of her thigh.

He pushed her legs farther apart. "I know exactly what you need."

At the first swipe of Set's tongue along her pussy, Desiree's hips came off the bed. Her eyes drifted shut as he licked and sucked at her clit. When a finger pushed inside her core, moving in and out with steady strokes, she didn't know if she would last for long. Set knew how to play her body in just the right way. A second finger joined the first, filling more of her pussy. Set showed her no mercy as he worked his fingers inside her while he alternated between sucking and flicking her clit with the tip of his tongue.

Desiree felt the tension mount inside her core, her inner walls tightening around Set's fingers, and then she was there. With a whimpered groan, she started to come. Set continued to suck on her clit as wave after wave of pleasure washed over her. When it was over, she tried to drag Set up her body. She may have come, but she wanted him buried deep inside her.

Set slid off the bed and stood with his back toward her. His shoulders noticeably rose and fell with each breath he took. "Set?" she asked softly.

"It's okay. I just need a few seconds to get my blood hunger in check."

He took a couple of deep breaths, drawing her gaze to the winged Eye of Ra tattoo on the upper part of his back. It really was a work of art. Desiree had a sudden almost overwhelming urge to drag her tongue over the tattoo. She then found herself distracted by an even better view.

Set undid his jeans and pushed them down, giving Desiree a spectacular view of his hard muscled ass. Then he turned around and she felt her mouth go dry. Now that he was as naked as she, Desiree let her gaze run down the length of Set's body. It was hard in all the right places. Gazing at his erect cock that stood out straight from his body, she knew she had to touch it.

She shifted on the bed so she knelt on the mattress in front of Set and wrapped her hand around his cock. She pumped it up and down his shaft. He felt like velvet-wrapped steel. Her pussy throbbed to be filled as Set pumped his hips, pushing his cock tighter into her hand.

"Are you going to make me wait any longer?" Desiree asked huskily while she leaned in and dragged her tongue across his flat nipple.

"No more waiting," Set said as he pulled her hand off him and pushed her back down onto the bed.

He climbed onto the mattress and settled on top of her with his hips between her spread thighs. The tip of his cock pressed against her slick opening, causing both of them to suck in a sharp breath. Set pulled back then entered her. He sank to the hilt with one stroke. He then set a slow and steady pace. Desiree put her feet flat on the mattress and lifted her hips to match his strokes. With each stroke in, his hard cock stretched her, filled her all the way up.

Holding his upper body on his bent arms, Set pumped into her faster. Desiree squeezed her inner muscles around his cock. Another orgasm started to build inside her with each stroke of his shaft. She reached up and cupped the back of Set's head and led his mouth down to hers. He kissed her, pushing his tongue between her lips. Desiree moaned into his mouth as she felt his cock harden even more.

The closer she came to her release, the more Desiree deepened their kiss. Set surged into her faster, harder. It was enough to send her flying. She made a keening moan as her inner walls squeezed Set's cock like a tight fist. Their lips still joined, he pumped into her one final time then he stiffened above her while he came, emptying his cock deep inside her pussy.

Desiree opened her eyes when Set pulled his mouth from hers. He wore a pained expression on his face while he stared hungrily at her lips. There was something lurking in his gaze that had Desiree thinking there was another reason he was staring at her like that, other than sexual hunger.

Realizing how vulnerable she was, trapped beneath his much greater weight, Desiree knew if Set wanted to feed from her he could quite easily subdue her. Cautiously, she asked, "Set?"

His gaze never left her mouth. "Your lip. While we kissed, I must have nicked your bottom lip with my fang." Without thinking, she licked her lip and tasted the coppery taste of blood. Set groaned. "If you let me feed from you, Desiree, the sex will be even better. I promise you it won't hurt. My taking your blood will be the first step in us becoming mates. You have to take my blood to complete it."

Desiree shook her head. "No, Set. The sex has to be enough. I'm not ready to give you more." Even if she had been willing to let him feed from her, she didn't think she could drink his.

Besides, if she wanted to escape, there was no way she could let Set forge a bond with her through an exchange of blood. Her making love to him didn't change anything. As long as he wanted to keep her from her old life, she could never accept this new one he had tried to force on her.

She broke out of her thoughts when Set started to lower his head. "I said no."

"I would never take what you won't give to me freely, but the scent of your blood is making it hard for me to control my blood hunger. My saliva can heal it so it won't be

such a temptation." When he lowered his head again and she stiffened, ready to fight him off if it came to that, he said, "Trust me, Desiree."

Set held her head in his hands to hold her still. He lowered his mouth so it hovered a hairsbreadth above hers, then he slowly swiped his tongue across her bottom lip. His body started to shake as all his muscles seemed to clench. He lowered his forehead to hers and took deep, rapid breaths.

"By the gods, Desiree, your blood tastes even sweeter than it smells. It makes my fangs ache. My cock inside you, while your blood fills my mouth would be ecstasy."

With a loud groan, Set rolled off her to lie on his back beside her. The muscles in his arms bulged as he squeezed his hands into tight fists. Desiree reached out to touch him, but thought better of it when his upper lip pulled back to reveal his extended fangs. The inner battle Set waged showed visibly from the pinched lines that bracketed his mouth and the corners of his eyes. Seeing him this way, Desiree almost felt her will to deny him her blood crumble.

Before she could do or say anything, Set leapt off the bed and headed for the bathroom. "I'm taking a shower. Try to get some sleep." At the door, he turned his head and said, "I'll find somewhere else to sleep."

She sat up on the bed. "You don't have to do that."

"Oh, but I do." He ran his hungry gaze over her body. "If I sleep with you in that bed, I'll want you again. Next time, I don't know if I'll be strong enough to resist feeding from you. When I take you again, I want all of you. Your body and your blood. So until you're ready, I think it would be best if I sleep elsewhere."

Desiree silently watched Set walk inside the bathroom and firmly shut the door behind him. A few seconds later, the sound of the shower running reached her ears. She knew it was ridiculous to feel as if Set was rejecting her when it was her denial to let him take her blood that caused him to leave her. But knowing that didn't make the feeling go away. Sex with Set only made Desiree want him even more. She felt trapped between a rock and a hard place. This was not how she'd pictured it would be if Set and

she ever hooked up. Why couldn't he have been a normal man? It would have made things so much easier.

* * * * *

After a shower that had washed the scent of Desiree and sex from his skin, but not the taste of her blood from his mouth, Set quietly pulled on his jeans, turned off the lights and left a sleeping Desiree locked in his quarters. Before he shut the door, he gazed over at her sleeping form one last time. Leaving her naked beneath the sheets was not easy for him. Her body and her blood called to him like a siren's song.

Knowing he probably wouldn't be able to sleep, Set headed to the meeting room to surf the web for what remained of the night. At least that way he hoped he would be able to distract himself from thoughts of Desiree. And he needed to.

Just that one tiny taste of her blood and his blood hunger had just about overtaken him. It had also eased some of the stomach cramps. Until he fed from Desiree, he knew his blood hunger would claw at his guts. He could feed only from her now, not that he wanted to find a donor to take her place. Having slept with Desiree, he didn't think he could stand the touch of another. And the thought of another's blood filling his mouth held no appeal for him.

His feelings for Desiree had also grown stronger. While he'd made love to her, the word *mine* had echoed inside his head. He wouldn't, he couldn't, let her go. And having sex with her had given him more pleasure than he'd ever experienced in a woman's arms. Now all he had to do was convince Desiree to complete their mating, which Set had a feeling would be far from easy. If he'd had his blood hunger under control he would have had no qualms about keeping Desiree in his bed, making love to her until she accepted him as her mate. But unless she let him feed from her that wasn't an option.

Shortly after dawn, Takan found him still surfing the web. The other warrior looked at him questioningly. "Shouldn't you be with Desiree trying to win her over?"

Set turned to face Takan. "Let's just say it's better for me to be out here right now. I now know what Mehen went through when he fought not to feed from Blythe. It's hell. And it feels even worse since I'm not the one who is denying it."

"If you're sure Desiree is your mate, why not sleep with her? She may change her mind about letting you feed in the heat of the moment."

"There is no question that Desiree is my mate. I tried to feed before I came back here last night and all I got to show for it is my blood hunger ripping at my stomach."

Takan glanced at the bite mark on Set's neck. "And I see it didn't speed up the healing process either."

"Nope, it didn't." Set groaned and scrubbed his face with his hand. "As for the heat of the moment thing, that won't work. If it had, I wouldn't be here while Desiree is tucked away naked and asleep in my bed."

"I wish I could offer you some better advice, *sen*."

Takan calling him *sen*, brother in their native tongue, had Set saying back in that same language that he wished it as well. But Set knew only Desiree could help him now.

"And before I forget," Set said, "can you put a password on the computer so Desiree won't be able to use it?"

Flipping more of his hair into his face, Takan shook his head. "You know keeping Desiree a virtual prisoner will make it that much harder for you to win her over. I can see not letting her leave the headquarters, but she should be able to move about freely within them. Both Blythe and I think it would be a good idea."

Blythe and Takan were very close, and had been since shortly after Blythe's arrival. Before Mehen had accepted Blythe as her mate, some of them had assumed Takan wanted Blythe for his own. That had not turned out to be the case. The quiet warrior only thought of Blythe as he would a sister.

Set sighed. "I don't know if I can trust Desiree not to try to make a run for it. She already tried earlier today. I doubt our sleeping together made her change her mind about that."

"You're going to have to trust her at some point. You can't keep her locked up in your quarters permanently. That'll just make her hate you."

"I'll think about letting her have the run of the headquarters, but just put the password on the computer for now. All I need is for her to email one of her friends or family and have them sic the cops on us."

"Fine, I'll put a password on the computer. If you're done there, I'll do it now."

Standing, Set let Takan have the steno chair. "Thanks. I'll leave you to it. I'm going to the temple to get rid of this bite mark."

"That would be a good idea. I'll let you and the others know what the password is later."

"Sounds good."

Set left Takan to it and made his way to Ra's temple. Tired, his neck throbbing from the bite mark, he was more than ready to bask in the healing rays of the sun. If only it would be that easy to fix his problems with Desiree.

Chapter Seven

Deep inside his new hidden lair, Sek watched his undead warriors prepare themselves to sleep through the day. There were sixty of them lying in a row with their swords at their sides. No thanks to Ra's Chosen, he'd slowly been able to increase his undead warriors numbers. Unlike a normal undead, it was a little harder to create an undead warrior.

The human soul had five parts. The Ib or heart, the Sheut or shadow, the Ren or name, the Ba or individual personality, and the Ka or life force. For him to make an undead, all the parts of the soul had to be drawn out of the body, except for the Ka. Once the Ka left the body there would be no reviving it. The Ka kept the undead's body animated. With the Ba gone, the part of the soul that made a human unique, the undead became nothing but a mindless husk, which Sek found useful. To make one of his undead soldiers, the Ka as well as a very small part of the human's Ba had to remain – just enough to give them the ability to think for themselves on a small level, and to be trained to fight.

It was also because of Ra's Chosen Sek had been forced to abandon his last lair. The warriors finding its location had been a hard blow, along with the number of his warriors and the regular undead they had destroyed while there. It had taken months for Sek to recover from that hit. It had especially hurt since he'd had the leader of Ra's Chosen under his control before Mehen's fellow warriors had come to the rescue. And losing Mehen's mate when Apep had wanted the woman, had not kept Sek in the demon god's good graces. Any more failures and Sek knew Apep would take it out on his flesh, literally.

He'd just entered the dark tunnel that would take him to his own chamber when the demon god's voice painfully filled his head, grating against his nerves like fingernails scraping down a chalkboard.

Sek.

"Yes, my lord?"

I have a task for one of your undead warriors.

"What would you have him do?"

When darkness falls, I want him sent to a place where mortals congregate. I have seen a way for him to infiltrate the headquarters of Ra's Chosen.

Hissing against the intense pain that filled his head as Apep put the details of his plan directly into his head, Sek fell to his knees. When the pain stopped, he shook his head and said, "It shall be done, master."

It had better be. I will tolerate no more failures from you. You will pay if you don't fulfill this task.

A crushing pressure took hold of Sek's head, making him gasp in pain as blood dripped from his nose. Then it, along with Apep's presence, faded. Sek wiped his nose with the back of his hand. He knew that was only a small taste of what Apep would do to him if he couldn't follow through on the plan the demon god had come up with. Thirsty for revenge after suffering a major loss at the hands of Ra's Chosen warriors, Sek was more than ready to strike this blow that would hurt them as much as they had hurt him.

Getting to his feet, Sek continued down the tunnel. The coming night would be the first step in ridding himself of those do-good warriors.

* * * * *

After Desiree had awakened, alone, she went and took a shower. Afterward when she returned to the bedroom, she found Blythe seated on the bed waiting for her.

Desiree also noticed that the other woman held a change of clothes. Some of Desiree's own clothes.

She crossed the room as Blythe stood and held the clothing out to her. "I thought you would like these."

Desiree cinched the towel tighter around her body before she took the offered garments. "These are mine. How did you get them?"

Blythe gave her a sheepish look. "Set and Takan moved all your things from your apartment to here yesterday."

Now Desiree knew what Set had been up to all day yesterday while she sat locked in his quarters. It irked her that he could so easily pick up the pieces of her life and rearrange them to his liking.

"I suppose along with the apartment being gone I also no longer have a job," she said.

"Sorry. I know it seems a little harsh, but it really is for the best. With you and Set being mates, you would have had to make the move anyway. Right?"

Really not wanting to answer that particular question, Desiree changed the subject. "What's it like being mated to one of the warriors?"

Blythe smiled, giving Desiree a good view of her fangs. "The best thing that ever happened to me. My first marriage was a joke. I never thought I would ever find a man I could trust enough to fall in love with again, but then I met Mehen."

"What exactly does it mean to be mated? Set told me to complete it he would have to feed from me and I would have to drink his blood." Desiree did her best not to show how the idea of drinking Set's blood didn't appeal to her, but something must have shown on her face because Blythe started to chuckle.

"I can tell you aren't thrilled with the idea of having to drink Set's blood," Blythe said with a smile. "It's not as disgusting as you think. And once you get your fangs —"

"Fangs? Do you mean once I drink his blood I'll turn into what he is?"

"No. It won't happen like that. Ra will have to gift you with your fangs and immortality, though you'll probably have to drink his blood first. That is how he gave the warriors their gifts. I didn't have to."

"Because you're his daughter?"

"Yes. As for the blood exchange you'll share with Set, it will form the mating bond between you. You'll be able to talk to each other telepathically through the link and feel what the other is feeling. Sex, let's just say being able to feel what your partner does makes it a hundred times better. Add feeding from each other..." Blythe shivered. "It makes it even more mind-blowing."

Desiree found sleeping with Set to be the best sex she'd ever had. If the mating bond made it even better, she didn't know if she could survive that. She'd end up being nothing but a big puddle of goo afterward.

"Anything else I should know?" she asked.

Blythe turned around and lifted the bottom of her t-shirt. Just above the waistband of her jeans on the small of her back was the same tattoo Set had across the upper part of his back but smaller. "You and Set have the same tattoo."

Turning back around, Blythe shook her head. "It isn't a tattoo. It's the mark of Ra's Chosen. All the warriors have it in the same place on their bodies. Ra placed it on their backs after he gave them their gifts. I guess being a mate to one of the warriors means you get the same mark. Not that I mind since it came from my dad."

The mark, Desiree wouldn't have minded either. She'd been playing around with the idea of getting a tattoo on the small of her back for the last year or so. So it looked as if the only part of the whole being mated to one of Ra's Chosen she actually would want would be Ra's mark. That wasn't enough to have her clamoring to be one of the gang any time soon.

Desiree pointed to the heavy gold chain around Blythe's neck that had a golden Eye of Ra in the center of it. The eye itself was a diamond about the size of her palm. "Would I get a necklace like that too?"

Blythe shook her head. "I don't think so. This is a gift from my father. He gave it to me when I needed to rescue Mehen from the demon, Sek."

Desiree nodded. She didn't know what to say about that one.

"I'll let you get dressed," Blythe said. She headed for the door, but stopped and turned back to Desiree just before she reached it. "Oh, and just so you know, you can leave Set's quarters any time you want. Takan and I have convinced Set to let you have access to the rest of the headquarters without his being with you. Just don't try to leave. If you try to go outside I can't promise that you won't find yourself locked inside here again."

Deciding that it would be better for her to play along for now, Desiree nodded. "I promise I won't. Being stuck in here for twenty-four hours straight is long enough."

"Good. Once you're dressed come to the kitchen and I'll make you some breakfast."

"You don't have to do that. I can get something for myself. I don't want to put you out."

Blythe smiled. "You won't be putting me out. I'm the chef around here. Cooking is something I enjoy."

"All right then. I'll see you in a few minutes."

After Blythe left and closed the door behind her, Desiree pulled on the jeans and t-shirt Blythe had brought for her to wear. Going back into the bathroom, she pulled Set's comb through her damp hair. Under different circumstances, Desiree knew Blythe and she would have probably become good friends. She liked the other woman. Right now, though, she wasn't above using Blythe as a tool to escape.

* * * * *

After she ate the breakfast Blythe had made for her, Desiree decided to test how much of the headquarters she had the run of. Her first stop was the meeting room. Having seen the computer in there the other day, she figured it had to have internet.

Given as how the warriors had the top-of-the-line digital cable package there was a good chance they had internet as well.

Cracking open the meeting room door and finding it empty, she slipped inside. She then quickly made her way to the computer and hit the power button, waiting for it to boot up. A window popped up asking for a username and password.

Desiree cursed under her breath. Well so much for that idea. She had a feeling if she asked for the password Set would make sure she didn't get it. The computer no longer of use to her, Desiree pushed the computer's power button again and held it until she'd forced it to shut down. She then left the meeting room and headed for her next stop—the old warehouse section where she'd seen Mehen and Denger practicing with their swords.

No one stopped her when she reached the door that connected the headquarters to the old warehouse. She half expected one of the warriors to jump out and tell her to get away from the door, but so far she hadn't seen any of them today, not even Set. After one last glance down the hallway, Desiree opened the door and stepped through it.

After she quietly closed the door behind her, she moved deeper inside the warehouse, thankful she was alone to do some exploring. The first thing she noticed was that all the things from her apartment had been placed in a corner on one side of the large open space. Going over to her belongings, Desiree looked into boxes where items had been haphazardly thrown inside. It also looked as if Set and Takan had done a thorough job of emptying her apartment.

Desiree turned away and looked up at the row of windows that ran along the width of one of the walls. The windows were all set high in the wall just out of her reach. But if she had something to stand on she figured she would have no problems opening a window. They were also big enough for her to slip through to the outside.

She was about to look for something that would work as a step stool when the door that connected the warehouse to the headquarters banged open and Set walked through. His gaze seemed to frantically search the warehouse until it landed on her

standing among her things. Desiree didn't miss the relieved look that crossed Set's face as he walked toward her. He may have allowed Blythe and Takan to convince him to let her out of his quarters, but he obviously still didn't trust her not to make a run for it. Until Set trusted that she would stay with him, Desiree knew she would have to give him no reason not to.

Desiree watched as Set closed the distance between them. He wore a pair of dark blue jeans and a black muscle shirt. Knowing exactly what he looked like underneath his clothes, her fingers itched to touch his bare skin once again, to run her lips and tongue over all his hard muscles. Her gaze drifted down to the crotch of his jeans. Set's cock was just as big as the rest of him. She licked her lips, thinking she would like to lick him there, take him in her mouth and —

A loud hiss had her lifting her gaze to Set's face. He stood an arm's length away from her. His hands were fisted at his sides and his fangs had dropped down past his upper lip. His pupils were dilated, heavy looking with stark hunger. A quick glance down and Desiree saw the bulge in his pants had gotten larger. Her body went instantly wet as she remembered how good it had felt to have Set's cock moving inside her.

He hissed again. "You can't look at me like that," Set said through his clenched jaw.

Desiree cleared her throat. "Like what?"

"Like you want to devour me. Keep it up and I'll have my cock, and my fangs, inside you before you can tell me no." Set's fists clenched tighter as his wide chest rapidly rose and fell.

Unable to stop herself, knowing full well she played with something that could easily turn on her, she closed what space remained between Set and her and placed her hand on his chest. Meeting his gaze, she said, "After last night, I'm sorry but I'm going to look." How could she not look? Just the sight of him made her panties wet.

He captured her around the waist and held her tight against him. Desiree sucked in a sharp breath as his erection nestled against her belly. Set bent his head and stuck his

face against the side of her neck where her shoulder and it met. He drew in a deep breath as if he wanted to savor the smell of her.

“Are you sure you won’t reconsider about me feeding from you, Desiree?” he asked huskily. “All I’ve been able to think about is having you under me again and how good your blood tasted. I ache for you.”

Desiree shivered. His words, spoken in a deep rough voice, made her pussy clench with need. Even though she was sorely tempted to cave in and let Set take her with his body and his fangs, she said shakily, “No. I told you I’m not ready.” She reached between them and cradled his hard cock through his jeans. “But that doesn’t mean we can’t have sex.”

Set’s whole body went stiff as he dropped his hands to her ass and ground his erection into her hand. “I told you we can’t as long as you deny me your blood. I don’t know if I can stay strong enough not to bite you.”

Squeezing his cock, Desiree nuzzled the base of Set’s throat. She drew in a deep breath. She loved the spicy scent of his cologne that mixed with his own male scent. Lost in the sexual haze that had suddenly formed around them, she pressed her lips to the hollow of his throat. “You were able to hold back last time. I want you again, Set.”

A shudder racked his body as he groaned loudly. He gripped her ass tighter when she lifted her head and nipped his chin. “Are you afraid of small, tight spaces?” he asked, his voice strained.

She shook her head. “No.”

“Good.”

Set’s lips came down on hers, kissing her hungrily as he backed her across the floor of the warehouse. When her back came up against a door, he opened it. His mouth never leaving hers, he maneuvered her into a small room, flipped on a light switch and closed them inside.

Chapter Eight

His blood pounded in his ears as Set turned Desiree and put her back against the wall of the small unused storage room. He had promised himself he wouldn't touch her like this again until he could feed from her, but with her lips on his skin and her hand on his aching cock, he couldn't stop himself. Her telling him she wanted him had been all it had taken to crumble the last of his defenses.

Continuing to kiss her, careful not to nick her with his fangs, Set reached up and cupped Desiree's breast. He plucked at her taut nipple through her shirt. He wanted nothing more than to strip her naked and lick every inch of her supple body, but he wanted her too badly to take his time with her. With the scent of her arousal filling his head, punching his to even greater heights, he knew at least she wanted him just as badly.

Set pushed his tongue inside her mouth, twining it with hers before he thoroughly tasted her. Her delicious scent, along with the taste of her on his tongue, had him making short work of opening the button and zipper of her jeans. Desiree moaned into his mouth as he shoved a hand down the front of her jeans and panties. The feel of how wet she was for him made his cock painfully throb.

He released her mouth and moved to the shell of her ear. He swirled his tongue inside it before he said breathlessly, "By the gods, you're wet. If I don't get inside you soon I'll come in my pants." Set circled Desiree's clit with a finger before pushing inside her drenched core.

Desiree gasped at the invasion. "We can't have that."

Her nimble fingers undid the button and fly of his jeans. His cock sprang free when she parted the material. She wrapped her hand around his shaft and pumped it up and down his length. Set sucked a breath between his teeth as his hips bucked against her.

Set removed his hand from inside her pants and would have pulled them down past her hips, but Desiree stopped him. She gave him a wicked smile and shook her head. "Not yet. There's something I want to do before you get inside me."

Desiree slid down the wall until she was on her knees in front of him, forcing him to back up a step. She met his gaze as he looked down at her. She gave him a heated look before she pulled her gaze away and focused on his cock. When she wrapped her hand around the base of him and licked her lips, his erection grew even harder. Panting as if he'd run a marathon, all uphill, he watched the tip of her tongue come out and lick off the bead of pre-cum that sat on the head of his cock. A low moan punched out of him.

Unable to look away, Set placed his hands on the wall in front of him as Desiree licked him from base to tip before she took his cock into her mouth. His eyes just about rolled back into his head when she started to suck. She took as much of his length as she could manage, stroking her tongue under the sensitive head. The hand that gripped his base moved on the part of his shaft she couldn't take. If she kept pleasuring him this way Set knew it wouldn't take much to have him coming.

Even though what Desiree was doing to him was beyond good, Set wanted to be buried deep inside her when he found his release. Pulling away from her, he took her by the underarms and pulled her to her feet. He grabbed the top of her jeans and yanked them, along with her panties, down her hips and legs. Desiree stepped out of them and kicked them away.

Desperate to be inside her, Set picked her up and got her to wrap her legs around his waist as he put her back against the wall. Desiree dug her heels into his ass and urged him forward. Needing no more urging, he took hold of his cock and led it to her slick opening. He surged into her, seating himself to the hilt with one thrust. The feel of her moist inner walls closing around his shaft had his breath hissing out of him.

Desiree put her hands around his neck. "Make me come, Set," she panted. Using her leg muscles, she lifted herself up the length of his cock and then settled back down on it.

He didn't need to be told twice. Holding her ass in his hands, he pulled back and then surged inside. He took her hard and fast. They both moaned as he filled her over and over again. Desiree's legs tightened around his waist, her heels dug into his ass as he rode her.

Set angled his hips so his pelvic bone rubbed up against Desiree's clit each time he entered her. Her inner muscles clamped around his cock, squeezing him tighter. In and out he pumped, feeling her pussy take every inch of him. He didn't think he would ever get enough of Desiree. She was his. He needed her as much as he needed the air he breathed.

Faster he pounded into her and then she was there. Her whimpered moans filled his ears as her pussy convulsed around his cock, milking him like a tight fist. He put his face into the crook of Desiree's neck and surged into her one final time as he too found his release. His hoarse cry filled the small room as his cock pulsed deep inside her, filling her with his cum.

The scent of her skin and the sound of her blood rushing through her veins had his blood hunger coming to the fore with a vengeance now that he'd come. His fangs throbbed as he turned his head and dragged them against the skin of her neck. It would be so easy to sink his fangs into her and take what his body craved so much.

"Just one taste, Desiree. I need the taste of your blood filling my mouth." He dragged his fangs against her skin again, then licked her.

Desiree stiffened. "I can't let you."

She pushed at his shoulders, but he didn't move from her neck. He slid his hands from her ass to grip the top of her thighs. "You are my mate. Mine. Why do you keep refusing me?" When she pushed at him again, he dug his fingers into her legs and lightly bit down on the side of her neck.

"Don't, Set. Let me go. You're hurting me." Taking a handful of his hair, she pulled his head away.

Seeing the fear in Desiree's eyes, Set fought to subdue his blood hunger. Slowly he pulled out of her body and let her stand on her feet. He put his hands on the wall on either side of her head. "Don't move. I need to calm down." He clamped his jaw tight until his teeth ached.

Set closed his eyes as bit by bit he got himself back under control. He groaned and wrapped an arm across his stomach as a particularly vicious stomach cramp dug its claws into him.

Calmer, no longer feeling as if he would tear into Desiree's throat, he opened his eyes to find her staring at him with concern showing in hers. He backed up and stuffed his now flaccid cock back inside his jeans before he did them up.

"Set?" Desiree asked cautiously. "Are you all right? You look as if you're in pain."

"I'm fine. Get dressed," he snapped. He knew he was being unreasonably short with her, but each time he made love to Desiree his blood hunger got worse, which in turn made his stomach cramp painfully.

Desiree stiffly pulled on her panties and her jeans. Once she was dressed, Set opened the door and stepped out into the warehouse. He had to get away from Desiree for a while. He didn't know what to do to get her to change her mind about his feeding from her. Each time he took her and didn't feed, his blood hunger increased. He didn't want it to get so bad that when she finally allowed him to take her blood he would take too much. Mehen had done that and had almost drained Blythe dry the first time he fed from her. Only Takan's quick thinking, telling Mehen to feed Blythe his blood, had saved her.

He didn't look back to see if Desiree followed him as he crossed the warehouse and stepped through the door that led to the headquarters. At a loss as to what to do about getting Desiree to accept him as her mate, Set headed for Ra's temple. He only hoped the sun god would speak to him and give him some much needed advice.

* * * * *

Desiree watched Set's retreating back as he walked through the door into the headquarters and slammed it shut behind him. By the way he'd snapped at her, and the way he'd held himself so stiffly as he'd walked away, she could tell Set was a trifle upset with her. For some stupid reason it hurt. But what did she expect? And why should she care that he gave her a great orgasm then left her right after? It wasn't as if she wanted to stick around and play mates with him.

As she moved out into the warehouse, Desiree crossed her arms over her chest and rubbed them. Goose bumps broke out over her skin when she thought of how close Set had come to biting her. And God help her, she'd wanted him to. If only he'd known how close she'd come to breaking her word to herself. Her mouth may have told him no, but she had a feeling if he'd pressed her hard enough she would have capitulated. Then where would she be?

Still feeling a bit shaky from her close call, she went and sat down on her couch. She let her gaze run over all her belongings. Her life seemed to be running away from her, and she wasn't the one holding the reins. And when she thought of her feelings for Set, Desiree felt as if she were on an emotional rollercoaster. She'd wanted him for so long, and now that she had him, she craved more of his touch. She had to stay strong against him, but each time they made love the more right it felt to be in his arms. If only they could have started off differently. If Set had allowed her to get to know him better before he revealed what he was, the kind of world he lived in, Desiree knew she wouldn't be fighting her feelings for him now.

She fell back against the couch cushions, grabbed two fistfuls of her hair and pulled. She had to get out of here, get away from Set, so she could get her head back on straight. Looking at her nightstand that had been placed near the couch, Desiree then looked up at the windows. It would work. It had to work. Either she had to somehow manage to make her escape, or without a shadow of a doubt, she knew it would only be a matter of time before she let Set claim her fully as his mate.

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Set lifted his face into the sun that shone down through the glass ceiling of the temple and called out to the sun god. "Ra, I need some help here."

This time Ra answered, his deep voice filling Set's head. *And what exactly do you need my help for?*

"You know I've found my mate. What can I do to get her to accept what is fated to be? She refuses me at every turn."

Ra chuckled. *I wouldn't say she has refused you in all ways.*

Since finding Blythe, Ra had suddenly found a sense of humor. Where the sun god used to be almost blasé about the mortal world in some respects, he now seemed more human when it came to his feelings. He'd also spent more time in the mortal realm than he ever had. Set had been surprised more than once to find Ra sitting at the kitchen table while he talked with Blythe.

"Yeah, well, that may be so, but it isn't doing me any favors. Desiree still refuses to let me feed from her. My blood hunger is getting worse. I don't know what to do to get her to accept me as her mate."

You must be patient, Set. Desiree just needs time.

"Time I don't have. I don't want to go through what Mehen did before he claimed Blythe."

It won't come to that. Unlike Mehen, you understand the changes that are taking place inside you. I assure you Desiree will accept this new life that has been chosen for her very soon. In her time of need all will become clear to her and she'll welcome you with open arms.

"Her time of need? What do you mean by that? How will I know when that is?"

You'll know.

With that last cryptic remark, Ra's presence faded. Sometimes Set really hated that there were times when Ra didn't just say exactly what he meant instead of leaving Set to guess at the meaning of his words.

Dropping his head, he rubbed his cramping stomach. If it was patience he would need to win Desiree over then Set knew he would have to keep his distance from her. Being around her only made him ache to touch her, and if he touched her, he would want to make love to her, and if he made love to her, his blood hunger would get even stronger. So he would have to stay away from her.

He would give her a day or so to see if Desiree would miss him or not. It would be hell on him. Even though he hadn't known her for very long, he was already falling for her. He couldn't get her out of his head. Making love to her only made his feelings grow stronger. Not one for ever believing in love at first sight, Set had to admit Desiree had started to worm her way inside his immortal heart from the first time his gaze met hers in the parking lot of The Oasis.

Resigned to the fact that he would have to put up with his blood hunger gnawing at his guts for a little while longer, he left the temple. At least he knew not to seek out other women as donors. Besides the thought of feeding from anybody but Desiree no longer held any appeal, he knew it would do more damage than good. Only Desiree would do. He just hoped she would come to her senses quickly and realize they were fated to be together.

Chapter Nine

At the time Blythe had told Desiree she would have dinner ready, Desiree walked into the headquarters' kitchen to eat her first meal with the rest of the residents who lived there. The warriors already sat at the large kitchen table, all except for one—Set. Hiding the disappointment she shouldn't have felt, she sat down at one of the empty places at the table next to Kysen.

The warrior smiled at her. "I'm glad to see you're starting to settle in here, Desiree. I'm sure Blythe is happy to have another woman around. She's really outnumbered."

Blythe chuckled as she put a mounded platter of roast beef in the center of the table then sat down at the end opposite to Mehen. "Outnumbered I may be, but I don't mind. What woman would complain about having to live with such good-looking men?"

Mehen cleared his throat loudly from his end of the table. "The only man you should be thinking about is me."

Blythe gave her mate a sexy smile. "Of course I do."

Akori groaned. "Are the two of you finished making goo-goo eyes at each other? The food is going to get cold and I'm starved."

"Go ahead," Blythe said. She then said to Desiree, "You'd better take as much food as you want the first time around, because I doubt there will be much left after the men get their share."

As the food started to get passed around, Desiree asked Blythe in what she hoped was a casual-sounding tone, "What about Set? Shouldn't we wait for him?"

Blythe shook her head. "No. He ate already."

"Oh."

Concentrating on putting food on her plate as it was passed to her, Desiree tried to act as if she didn't care whether Set was there or not. So what if he wanted to avoid her? So what if they'd had a quick bang in that small storage room in the old warehouse? Just because he'd had sex with her *did not* mean she had to repay him for the shattering orgasm with her blood.

Desiree put a forkful of the delicious-smelling roast beef in her mouth and chewed slowly. Who was she kidding? It hurt that Set had purposely gone out of his way to avoid being with her. God, she was losing her mind. She also had to get the hell out of here before she did something really stupid like fall for Set and this whole mate business.

The sound of Blythe saying her name brought Desiree out of her musings. "What was that?"

"I was wondering if you'd like to spend the evening with me once the men go out to hunt for the night. Since it will just be the two of us here, I thought we could have a girls' night. Watch a movie, have a couple of drinks."

Desiree sat up straighter. This could just be the opportunity she had waited for. If all the men would be out most of the night hunting the undead, and she now had been given the freedom of the entire headquarters, it wouldn't be too hard to find a time to slip away from Blythe. She could pretend to be really tired and want to call it a night early. Desiree doubted Blythe would check on her before she went to sleep.

She nodded her head. "Sure. That would be great."

Blythe smiled. "Good. I'm sure we can find something on the pay-per-view channel. You can come to Mehen's and my quarters once the men leave."

"I'll be there."

After that the meal passed pretty quietly. Desiree did notice that Blythe hadn't been kidding when she'd said there probably wouldn't be anything left after the men got to the food. By the end of the meal the roast beef had been polished off along with most of the mashed potatoes and vegetables. Desiree was just glad she wasn't the person who

had to feed the warriors on a regular basis. She could cook, but it wasn't her favorite thing in the world to do.

Wanting the others, in particular Blythe, to believe she was coming to accept her fate, Desiree helped Blythe with the cleanup after dinner was over. Once the dishes had been washed and put away, Blythe excused herself and said she wanted to spend some time with Mehen before he left for the night. After promising to meet Blythe later, Desiree left the kitchen and headed back to Set's quarters. Of course he wasn't there.

With her plans for the night swirling around inside her head, Desiree sat on the bed while she turned on the TV. Hopefully by this time tomorrow she would be long gone. She hated that she would have to leave all her belongings behind, but it was a price she would gladly pay to get her freedom back.

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Set watched Mehen drag Blythe into his arms and kiss her soundly as he said goodbye to her. The way they kissed, you would think they were going to be apart for months instead of hours. That was how the mated pair always acted when they couldn't be together. In the past, Set had been indifferent to their displays of affection. He really couldn't see the reason for them to cling to each other so desperately when they knew their separation wasn't permanent. Now that he'd found Desiree, he'd started to understand.

Seeing Mehen and Blythe together made Set ache to hold Desiree in his arms the same way. He wanted the taste of her on his tongue and her scent on his skin when he went out to hunt as a reminder of what he had back at the headquarters waiting for him.

Takan came up behind him. "So are you ready for another night of hunting?"

Set grunted. "More than you can possibly know."

"Don't worry. Desiree will come around. Just be patient."

He grunted again. "You're the second person to tell me that. Ra said the same thing to me today. It's easy to tell me to be patient when you're not the one who has to deal with constant blood hunger that claws at your guts."

Just thinking about how close he'd come to feeding from Desiree in the storage room made the claws dig in a little deeper. Set gritted his teeth as he wrapped an arm across his middle. If he didn't have to deal with his blood hunger he would have had all the patience in the world to wait Desiree out, but the way he felt now wasn't going to make that possible.

"Whatever you do, don't force her," Takan said. "Or plant the suggestion to let you feed from her. You'll just do more damage than good."

"Tell me something I don't already know."

Set had thought about planting the suggestion in Desiree's head as he would with any other donor, but that had lasted all of a millisecond. She was his mate. Not a donor he would turn his back on the second he finished feeding and wipe her mind. If there was to be trust between them he couldn't just take what he wanted.

Takan clapped him on the shoulder. "I'll keep my fingers crossed that you'll find more than enough undead to take your frustrations out on."

"You do that."

As Takan moved off to head out of the headquarters with the rest of the warriors, Set moved in behind them. He prayed like hell he would get lucky and be so busy taking down the undead that he'd be able to collapse once he got home. He'd managed to avoid Desiree at dinner, but he knew he wouldn't be able to stay away from her forever. The thought of her in his bed, warm and relaxed with sleep, would draw him to her like nothing else could. Feeling his cock harden and his fangs start to ache, Set knew he would spend most of the night in this condition.

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The undead warrior moved swiftly to his destination, careful not to draw the attention of any mortals he passed. Created to fight, but also to obey Sek, his master, in all things, he went about his orders with single-minded intent.

Finding what his master had said he would find when he reached the place he had been sent to, he crossed the expanse of the paved lot. At his objective, he tried to open it, but found it locked. A second later, as if on its own, it suddenly lifted. The undead warrior knew it had to be the doing of Apep, the demon god. This had been his plan, and Sek had told him if he failed Apep would relish in rending him limb from limb before he took what remained of his soul.

The undead warrior adjusted his sword that he wore on his back under his jacket and climbed inside the place he was to wait. When the time was right, he was to telepathically contact his master. After he closed the lid, he lay down to wait for his time to strike.

* * * * *

Having learned what time the warriors were going out to hunt, Desiree waited ten minutes after that to make sure they'd really left before she went and knocked on the door to Mehen's and Blythe's quarters. Blythe answered the door and waved her inside.

"Come on in. I already have the wine poured." Blythe motioned for Desiree to take a seat on the bed before she crossed over to the dresser and picked up two wineglasses. "I hope you like white wine."

Desiree sat down. "White is fine. I'm actually not a big fan of red wine."

Blythe sat down next to her and used the remote to flip through the channels until she came to the pay-per-view station. "Neither am I. So what do you want to watch? We've got an action movie, a thriller, a comedy or a chick flick to pick from."

"How about the chick flick?" Desiree had already seen the movie in the theatre so she knew it wasn't an overly long one.

As Blythe went about selecting the movie they wanted to watch, she said, "So how are things with you and Set? Are you finding it easier to accept now that you two are...you know?"

Despite herself, Desiree felt herself blush. "I get the feeling it's hard to keep anything a secret around here."

Blythe laughed. "Living in such close quarters, it's inevitable that we learn everybody's business." She then grew serious. "I had hoped that once you and Set had slept together you would have let him feed from you."

Desiree felt her back come up. "I'm not ready for that. That's going to take a little longer for me to get used to," she said defensively.

"I don't mean to pry, really. I'm only thinking of Set and what he must be going through."

"What do you mean?"

"Did Set tell you that now that he's found you he will no longer be able to feed from another?"

"Yeah, he did. He said he soon wouldn't be able to feed from donors because they would no longer satisfy his blood hunger."

Desiree hadn't been at all sure if Set had used his blood hunger as an excuse to get her to feel sorry for him and allow him to feed from her. But from the concerned look on Blythe's face she had to wonder if he'd told the truth after all.

Blythe snorted. "I bet he didn't tell you what would happen to him if his blood hunger became acute, either."

"No, he didn't."

"Figures. It isn't as if Set only craves your blood, he *needs* your blood to help him survive. He has already started to show signs of extreme blood hunger."

"Signs?"

"Holding his stomach, and he has a strained look on his face from the pain. I think he might have already started to lose a bit of weight."

"Pain?" Desiree didn't like the idea of Set being in pain no matter how much she resented his keeping her practically a prisoner.

"His stomach has already started to cramp. The longer he goes without feeding the worse the cramps will get. His stomach will start eating itself from the inside out. He'll eventually reach the stage where he won't even be able to eat food. He'll starve."

Desiree swallowed around the lump that suddenly formed in her throat. She didn't want Set to starve. She cleared her throat. "So only my blood will satisfy his blood hunger and stop him from starving?"

"Yes. Only you. I guess this is my dad's way of keeping mates together. After my mom, who he loved, ran out on him when she was pregnant with me, I guess he wants to make sure it doesn't happen to any of his Chosen."

Learning that Set could now only survive on her blood gave Desiree second thoughts about what she planned to do that night. Could she leave him if it meant he would be in even greater pain the longer she stayed away from him?

As Blythe started the movie, Desiree took a big sip of her wine. Was she being selfish to want to gain her freedom? She gave herself a mental shake. She didn't ask for any of this. She didn't ask to be the mate of one of Ra's Chosen. She had to try this. If anything, it would show Set she wouldn't just lie down and let him control her life. And to have him become that dependent upon her, it made her feel as if she couldn't get enough air into her lungs. Maybe Blythe was only exaggerating what Set was supposedly going through to play on her sympathy. More determined than ever to make her escape, Desiree pushed thoughts of Set and his blood hunger aside. It was time to think about herself. It was time to think of her needs before his. She would stick to the plan.

Chapter Ten

Halfway through the movie, Desiree forced herself to yawn largely. After the fourth time Blythe finally noticed. "Getting tired?"

Desiree covered another large yawn with her hand and nodded. When it was over she said, "Yeah. I think the last couple of days are starting to catch up with me. They have been a little stressful."

"That's understandable. Why don't you go to bed? I don't mind. There'll be plenty of other nights for us to do this."

If tonight worked, Desiree knew there wouldn't be, but she didn't say that to Blythe. "Are you sure?"

"Positive. Go to bed. I'm going to watch the rest of the movie and have a bit more wine. I'm feeling tired myself so I may not wait up for Mehen to return before I hit the hay as well."

Desiree slipped off the bed then went and put her empty wineglass on top of the dresser. "Well, thanks for the evening. Like you said, we'll have to do this again sometime. Have a good sleep."

"You too."

Once she stepped out into the hall and closed the door behind her, Desiree quickly walked to Set's quarters. As soon as she closed herself inside, her heart started to beat faster. She paced back and forth along the length of the room and then the width. Wanting to make sure Blythe would think she was really asleep, Desiree made herself wait a half hour before she put the next stage of her plan into action. By the time the thirty minutes went by she felt wound as tight as a top.

Desiree grabbed her purse off Set's dresser and hurriedly opened it to make sure her car keys were still inside. They were. Since she hadn't seen her car parked inside the

old section of the warehouse, and no one had mentioned it, she had to assume it was still parked in the lot behind The Oasis. It was also a major part of her plan of escape. If she did manage to make it to the bar and found her car wasn't there, Desiree didn't know what she'd do. She just hoped her boss hadn't had her car towed away since it had been there for days now. Who knew, he could have even called the cops worried why a stranger had been the one to resign for her. If that happened, the cops could have towed the car for evidence. But Desiree had a feeling Set was smart enough not to set off any warning bells.

Not wanting to think all doom and gloom before she even got started, she quietly opened the door of Set's quarters and poked her head out into the hall. It was empty. Silently, she left the quarters and shut the door behind her. Her heart thumped loudly in her chest as Desiree carried her shoes and ran silently to the door that connected the headquarters to the old section of the warehouse.

With a silent prayer, thankful none of the doors in the headquarters squeaked, she walked through to the old warehouse and headed straight to her bedside table. It only took a minute to pull on her running shoes and move the table under one of the windows. Knowing time was of the essence, she jumped up onto it and undid the catch. It easily pushed open, leaving a space just big enough for her to slip through.

Desiree clambered up and through the window. She let herself hang by her fingers on the outside of the building and looked down. There was a bit of a drop, but as long as she landed well she figured she could handle it. Taking a deep breath, she let go of the windowsill.

When she landed she felt the shock in her legs, but she quickly shook it off and took off running to the high chain-link fence that surrounded the property. Glad she had been a bit of a tomboy while growing up and had climbed her fair share of trees, Desiree hooked her fingers and toes into the fence and started to climb. It seemed to take far too long for her to reach the top, swing herself over and climb down the other side. Any minute, she expected Blythe to come running out looking for her.

Her feet back on solid ground, Desiree breathed a sigh of relief. So far, so good. Keeping to the shadows, she ran around the building to the street out front. She kept running, leaving the headquarters behind her. She got her bearings and headed for the area where she knew more than one warehouse had been converted into loft apartments. There had to be more than a few people still out and about at this time of night. It really wasn't all that late. She planned to blend in while she called for a cab to pick her up.

When she neared the first warehouse, she saw a cab pull up. Hoping the cab driver was dropping somebody off and not picking them up, she picked up speed. Today was her lucky day. Once the cab stopped, the backdoor opened and a young couple got out.

Puffing from her run, Desiree grabbed the door before the man could shut it. She asked the driver if he would take her as his next fare. When he said yes, she got in and slammed the door shut. He pulled away from the curb as she gave him the address to The Oasis.

Desiree leaned back on the seat and smiled. She'd done it. She'd managed to escape. Now all she had to do was get to her car before Set returned and found her missing.

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After a couple of hours of hunting, Set finally put down his first undead. Once the walking dead had decomposed, he sheathed his sword at his back. He wiped the sweat from his brow. Even though the night hadn't really chased away all the heat, he still had to wear his leather jacket to conceal his sword. It was better to sweat his balls off rather than having his ass arrested.

He'd just started moving when his cell phone started to vibrate. Recognizing the number as Blythe's cell, he flipped it open. "Is everything all right? Is Mehen okay?"

"Why would you think something happened to Mehen?" she asked.

"Because you don't normally call me while I'm out hunting. If it's not Mehen then what's up?"

Blythe didn't reply right away. When she did, she said softly, "Just promise you won't be mad at me."

Desiree immediately came to the forefront of his mind. Set had to take a deep breath before he said, "I won't get mad. What happened?"

"Well, she kind of got away."

"What do you mean she got away? I thought the two of you were going to have a girls' night." His words were clipped, but it was better than yelling at Blythe, which he was really tempted to do.

"We did, for about an hour. Desiree looked exhausted so I suggested she go to bed early. That was about forty minutes ago. I just went to check on her and I found your quarters empty."

Set squeezed his cell so hard he was surprised he hadn't crushed the thing. "How did she get out? Maybe she's just hiding somewhere in the building."

"I checked everywhere. She isn't here. I also found a window open in the old warehouse. It looks as if she used a piece of furniture to stand on and climbed out the window. I looked outside, but I didn't see her."

Set could only think of one place Desiree could have gone — The Oasis. He knew he shouldn't have left her damn car at the bar parking lot when Takan had found out that she owned a late model Honda Civic. Set remembered it being parked in the lot behind the bar on the night Desiree had come upon him taking out that undead.

Cursing his own stupidity, Set said, "It's all right, Blythe. I think I know where she went. I have to go."

Not waiting for Blythe to say goodbye, he closed his phone with a snap and shoved it back into his pants pocket. He doubted Desiree would have gotten a full forty minute head start. She would have been smart enough to wait until Blythe would think she was asleep. But she still had a good enough head start that there wouldn't be time for Set to go get his car. He ducked into one of the alleys and flashed himself to The Oasis' parking lot.

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When the cab arrived, Desiree paid the driver and then made her way to the back parking lot. She started to breathe a little easier when she spotted her Honda still parked where she'd left it.

At first glance, the lot appeared empty of other people. It wasn't until she was almost at her car that she noticed the two men in the shadows at the very back of it. Desiree froze when she realized one man was sucking on the neck of the other. A chill ran down her spine. She knew the only other type of being that drank from a human was Ra's warrior and this man wasn't one of them.

As if he sensed her presence, the undead lifted his head and looked right at her. He released the man he'd been sucking on and turned toward her. Frozen in fear, now knowing exactly what the undead did to their victims, stealing their souls as well as turning them into one of them, Desiree couldn't move.

The undead slowly stalked forward. His movements were enough to get Desiree to take a step back, and then another. The undead matched her steps as he opened his mouth and hissed. Desiree's heart skipped a beat and she broke out into a cold sweat when the man who had already been bitten got up and joined his attacker, opening his mouth so she could see his fangs.

She whimpered, afraid to turn her back on them as she backed up even more. Now Desiree wished she'd stayed at the Chosen's headquarters. Alone, and not armed with a bronze blade that would destroy an undead, she didn't think she was going to get out of this one.

Just as the two undead were about to launch themselves at her, Set suddenly appeared in the parking lot. He moved at lightning speed, drew his sword and came between Desiree and her attackers. The blade of his sword shot out, catching each of the undead across the neck in one stroke. They both jerked then started to decompose.

Desiree covered her mouth and nose with her hand as she fought not to gag over the awful stench of decomposing bodies. Much to her horror, the one that had been

newly turned took longer to turn to dust than the one who had attacked him. She also noticed rusty-brown blood had covered the blade of Set's sword when it had connected with the newly turned's throat.

Shaking from the close call, Desiree watched Set wipe his sword on the pile of empty clothing on the ground before he sheathed it once more. Despite the heat of the night, she couldn't stop her teeth from chattering. Set turned to face her with a prominent scowl on his face. Anger seemed to roll off him in waves.

Desiree wrapped her arms around herself. She wanted to throw herself in Set's arms and hold him tight, but he didn't appear to be in the mood to be gentle with her. She now also saw him in a whole new light. Having seen how fast an undead could turn one of its victims, it showed the important role Ra's Chosen played in the mortal world. Without them to keep the walking dead at bay, mortal kind would cease to exist. And if Set and his fellow warriors were what stood between the undead and mortals, Desiree wanted their protection, wanted to be safely behind the walls of their headquarters.

She rubbed her arms as she tried to put some warmth back into them. "You're mad at me," she said.

Set's scowl deepened. "You had us all fooled, didn't you, Desiree? You only pretended that you were slowly accepting your new life with me. I guess the sex was only a tool you used to lull me into complacency."

"No." She shook her head. "No. That was real."

Set moved closer. "Whether it was real or not, it doesn't matter." He took hold of her arm and pulled her to his chest. "Like it or not you *are* mine. I suggest you get used to that fact and not pull a stunt like this ever again. Next time you may not be so lucky. Next time, I may not arrive in time to stop you from being turned into something I would have to destroy."

"Set, I'm sorr —"

"I don't want to hear it." He pushed her away from him then held out his hand. "Give me the keys to your car." After Desiree had dug them out of her purse and handed them to him, Set pointed to her Honda. "Is that your car?"

"Yes."

Latching onto her arm once more, Set guided her over to the passenger side. Once she was inside he slammed it shut and walked around the front of the car to the driver's side. Without a word, he turned over the engine and drove out of the parking lot.

When they were out on the street, she tried again to talk to him. "I promise it won't happen again, Set. I know I should have trusted you. Now that I've seen firsthand how deadly the undead are I understand."

"Not another word, Desiree," Set said roughly. "Not now."

Knowing it would just make Set even angrier if she continued to force the subject, Desiree turned her head to look out the side window. She just hoped Set would get over being angry at her, because the thought of being held in his strong arms was the only thing that helped her to keep it together.

Chapter Eleven

After he parked Desiree's car outside the docking bay at the headquarters, Set helped her out of the car and walked her to the door that opened to the living quarters. It didn't matter now that Desiree would know what door would lead to the outside. Her getting away made that a moot point.

Set punched the code into the security pad on the wall and then pushed his hand on the stone beneath it. Desiree sucked in a breath when she saw the needle with a bead of his blood clinging to the very tip disappear back under the surface. He caught her gaze and licked the spot of blood off his index finger, healing the puncture as if it had never been. Desiree's gaze darted from his finger to his face before she focused on his mouth.

Ignoring the sudden rush of lust that surged through him, Set pushed open the door and marched her all the way to his personal quarters. He didn't let go of her arm until she stood in the middle of the room.

In a gruff voice, he said, "If you know what's good for you, you'll stay here. I'm going to tell Blythe you're back. She was worried about you. Then I'm going to move your car into the old warehouse."

Not giving Desiree a chance to reply, he stalked out of the room and firmly shut the door behind him. As he walked down the hall, he fisted his hands at his sides. That had been too damn close. Not one to fear much of anything, his heart had just about jumped into his throat at the sight of Desiree standing in that parking lot with two undead about to attack her.

After he'd taken care of the undead, Set had felt his temper flare. Desiree had actually run from him. Having slept with her twice, he'd thought they'd gotten past this stage. And that the only hurdle he'd have to overcome was Desiree's refusal to allow him to feed from her.

He'd been patient. He'd put up with the painful cramping of his gut as he told himself she would come around. Set was through waiting.

Blythe opened the door to hers and Mehen's quarters just as he lifted his hand to knock. "Did you find Desiree?"

"Yes."

"Is she okay?"

"Yes, though if I had arrived any later she would have joined the ranks of the undead."

"She ran into an undead?"

"Two of them. Anyway, I just thought I would let you know that she's back." He pulled his car keys out of the pocket of his leather jacket and handed them to Blythe. "When Mehen gets back, can you ask him to get my car? I'm going to be a little busy with Desiree to get it myself." He then told her the street where he'd left it.

Blythe gave him a wary look. "Don't be too rough on her, Set. It's kind of overwhelming being plucked out of one life and dumped into yours, especially when you don't know what lurks in the dark."

"I'll take that into consideration." He started to back away. "You can also tell Mehen I'm putting Desiree's car in the old warehouse. I don't want to leave it outside."

"I will."

Set drove the Honda around to the back of the warehouse, used his mind to open the large sliding door and then drove inside. He parked the car just inside before he closed the door behind it. Thoughts of how close he'd come to losing Desiree filled his head as he got out of the car and slammed the door. The sound echoed through the warehouse.

He didn't know if he wanted to wring Desiree's neck or kiss her senseless. As he stalked back to his quarters, he felt his anger go from a simmer to a rolling boil. Desiree had actually run from him. She'd played him good. Give him some mind-blowing sex,

led him to believe she only needed time to adjust, and he'd fallen for it. He let his guard down.

After he yanked open his door, he slammed it shut prepared to take Desiree to task. When she looked up at him with her eyes bright with unshed tears where she sat on his bed, his anger dissipated. The sight of a lone tear running down Desiree's cheek completely undid him.

He crossed the room in two large strides and took her in his arms. His mouth descended on hers as she reached up and clutched the front of his shirt. All the anger he'd felt turned into intense need. As he kissed her, pushing his tongue inside her mouth, Set released her only long enough to pull off his jacket and take his sword from his back.

Cupping her face in his hands, Set deepened his kiss. Desiree moaned. The scent of her arousal perfumed the air around them. His cock went rock hard. Slowly, he lowered her onto the bed and stretched out flat at her side with one leg positioned between hers. Desiree ground her pussy against his thigh as her kiss became more demanding.

She grabbed the bottom of his t-shirt and pulled it up. He released her mouth to yank it over his head and throw it to the floor. He looked at Desiree and used the pad of his thumb to wipe the tear track off her face.

Desiree placed her hand over his and rubbed her cheek against his palm. "I'm sorry, Set. I won't run again."

"I know," he said, his voice husky with desire. He did. This had to be Desiree's time of need Ra had told him about.

She reached up and ran a finger across his bottom lip. "Make love to me. I need to feel you inside me."

Set gently nipped the tip of her finger with one of his fangs. "I intend to do just that. I'm going to be so deep inside you that you'll never think of leaving me again."

Claiming her lips once more, he kissed her until he had her moaning. Not wanting to leave her mouth, Set grabbed the collar of Desiree's t-shirt and ripped it down the center before he tore it off her. He undid her bra and pulled it down her arms and off.

Set left her mouth and kissed a trail along the side of her jaw. Unable to help himself, he dragged his tongue along the large vein in her neck, but he didn't bite her. Instead, he continued downward to her full breasts. Her pale pink nipples had tightened into buds. He bent his head and swirled his tongue around each one. Desiree threaded her fingers through his hair, holding him to her. Opening his mouth, he sucked a nipple inside. With each pull of his mouth, Desiree rocked her hips, grinding her pussy against his thigh. His cock jerked inside his pants.

Set nuzzled between her breasts, opened his jeans and led Desiree's hand to his erection. "Touch me," he said against her skin, his voice husky with desire.

A deep moan rose out of his chest when she wrapped her hand around his cock and slowly pumped it up and down his length. As she continued to stroke him, Set undid her pants, needing to touch her. He thrust his hand down the front of her panties and groaned when he found her pussy soaked with her juices. He pushed a finger inside her and pumped it in and out of her core in time with her strokes on his cock.

When he pushed a second finger into her pussy, Desiree lifted her hips. Her inner walls clutched his fingers as she started to ride them. "Set, please. I need you now."

Set felt his fangs extend past his upper lip. He lifted his head and met Desiree's heavy gaze. "I'm going to take you with my cock and my fangs. Make you mine."

He waited for Desiree to refuse him once more, but instead, she cupped the back of his head and brought his mouth down to hers. She shoved her tongue inside his mouth and licked each of his fangs. He shuddered with pleasure.

Taking hold of her pants, he yanked them along with her panties down past her hips. Desiree kicked off her shoes then wiggled beneath him as she helped him push them down her legs and off. They then worked together to take off his boots and jeans.

Using his thigh, Set pushed Desiree's legs farther apart as he settled between them. The tip of his cock rubbed against her wet pussy. Set felt her juices coat the head of his shaft as he rocked his hips against her. He then reared back and sheathed his cock inside her with one thrust.

The feel of her slick inner walls closing around his shaft, taking all of him, made Set grit his teeth as he fought not to come. Being inside Desiree's pussy was a pleasure he never wanted to give up. He hooked one of her legs over his arm so she could take him deeper and pumped his hips between her thighs. Desiree's whimpered moans filled the room as she clutched at his shoulders.

"I need more. Harder," she gasped.

Set thrust harder, almost pulling completely out of her body before he pushed back inside. His cock was so hard he felt as if he would explode at any minute. Each time he pumped inside her, he felt the head of his shaft butt up against her womb. After almost losing her, he needed this, to reaffirm she was still his.

Letting go of her leg, Set lifted his upper body off Desiree and rested his weight on his hands. He surged into her pussy with hard thrusts. Just as she started to come, she titled her head back. His gaze zeroed in on the large vein at the side of her neck that throbbed in time with her heartbeat. His blood hunger rose to the surface, making his fangs ache as his body tightened, his orgasm almost upon him.

Set continued to ride Desiree until he felt the last flutter of her climax. She opened her eyes and gazed up at him. Slowly, he lowered himself and licked the side of her neck. He grazed it with a fang to give Desiree the final chance to refuse him. She shuddered beneath him, turned her head to the side and cupped the back of his head to hold him to her.

That was all the invitation he needed. Opening his mouth, Set sank his fangs into her soft skin. As the first gush of blood filled his mouth the cramps that had plagued him since meeting Desiree disappeared. He felt stronger than he ever had. Her blood

tasted like the sweetest nectar. All the other donors he'd fed from didn't compare to Desiree. The word *mine* pounded in his head in time with his body pounding into hers.

As she clutched at his back, Set felt Desiree's pussy clutch at his cock as another orgasm overtook her. He thrust into her faster. When he started to come, he removed his fangs from her neck and dragged his tongue across the bite mark to seal it. Then with a loud bellow, he pushed into her one final time. His climax seemed to go on and on, filling her with his cum. Once he'd given her everything he had, he collapsed on top of Desiree. Knowing he was too heavy, he rolled them to their sides and drew her leg over his hip.

She fought to catch her breath and looked into his eyes. "That...was amazing. I know you told me it would be pleasurable, but I didn't think it would be that good." She caressed his cheek. "I'll never refuse you again."

"What changed your mind?"

Desiree bit her bottom lip. "Those two undead. Seeing how quickly the victim turned into one, put this whole undead thing into a clearer perspective for me. I've walked around never realizing what lurked in the dark. It scares me that those things exist. When I'm here, I'm safe and protected."

Set brushed a lock of hair off her forehead. "Is that the only reason why you let me feed from you? Because I can protect you from the undead?"

She shook her head. "No. I realized when I stood there as two undead stared me down that the one person I wanted to save me, to scoop me up in his strong arms and take me away from the things that go bump in the night, is you."

Desiree's words made his heart beat a little bit faster. "You are my mate, Desiree. I want what Mehen and Blythe have with you. And I'll feel better once the mate bond is in place. I'll always be with you then." He raised the inside of his wrist to his mouth, but Desiree stopped him before he could break the skin with his fangs. He frowned.

"Don't look like that. I promise I'll take your blood to form the bond, even though I'm not sure how I'm going to like it, but not tonight. Please. Blythe explained what the

bond is like, that we'll be inside each other's heads. I want that closeness with you, but I've had more than enough excitement for one night. Just give me a day or two. That's all I ask."

Set nodded, then pulled her head under his chin as he cuddled her close. "I can wait. I suggest you get some sleep now, because I'm far from being through with you this night."

Desiree smiled against the hollow of his throat. "I suggest you do the same. I've had more than a few fantasies about a certain warrior, and now that I have him, I want to make them real."

He tightened his arms around her as his cock jerked at her provocative words. It was going to be a long night for the both of them. With Desiree as his mate, Set had a feeling it would be a long night every night from here on out.

* * * * *

The undead warrior prepared to send out a silent message to his master from inside the trunk where he lay curled up. When the car had driven away with him hidden inside it, he knew the demon god's plan was one step closer to fruition. Then the car had been parked again.

Master, he called. Everything is going according to plan. So far none of the warriors have felt my presence.

Sek's voice filled his head. Good. Apep is shielding you from them. Wait to make your move. Dawn is approaching. You know what to do once darkness falls again.

The undead warrior had already felt the night slipping away. Yes, master. I'll contact you once I've completed the rest of my mission.

Do not fail me. I will be made to suffer for your failure. Apep will punish us both.

It will be done.

Once Sek's presence faded, the undead warrior closed his eyes and slept.

Chapter Twelve

Desiree awakened to the feel of a warm male body surrounding hers. She smiled when she thought of all the times Set had taken her during the night. For a centuries-old man, he had the stamina of a teenage boy. He'd also fed from her twice more. Having him sink his fangs into her neck as his cock filled her was the most erotic thing she had ever experienced. Set would bring her to orgasm, then bite her and she would be thrown right back into another one. The pleasure was so intense that Desiree wasn't sure if she hadn't blacked out for a few seconds during one of them.

She turned her head to look at Set where he slept beside her. His muscular chest rose and fell with each even breath. Her gaze ran lovingly over his face. She could see the shadow of stubble on his cheeks, chin and upper lip. Desiree resisted the urge to run her fingers over the bristles. Set had earned his rest.

So as not to wake him, Desiree slowly turned on her side and propped her head on her hand so she could look down at Set. Now that she had fully come to terms with who and what Set was, she found her feelings for him to be a lot stronger. Looking back to how their relationship started, she had to admit that he'd never done anything to hurt her. So he had taken away her freedom, but now that she had a better understanding of the undead from unwanted firsthand experience, she knew he'd done it to protect her. And to make sure that knowledge about them never reached the wrong people. Desiree knew if the truth about the undead ever became known to mortals, Ra's Chosen would have a much harder time doing their job. People tended to freak out. They also tended to cause mass hysteria about things they didn't understand or feared.

Desiree sighed to herself as she watched Set sleep. She could admit it now. She loved him. She had a feeling she'd started to fall for him months back when she'd watched him from afar along with the other warriors at The Oasis. Desiree didn't know

if Set loved her, but he needed her in a way no other man could. He enjoyed her body and wanted the mate bond that would bring them even closer, giving them the ultimate knowledge of how they felt for each other. If he didn't love her now, Desiree knew she was willing to bring him around. And if they did truly become mates and Ra granted her immortality as he'd done for Blythe, she would have forever to make him love her.

Set suddenly rolled over and tucked her under him. He smiled. "I think I've caught my mate staring at me while I sleep."

She smiled back as she put her arms around his neck. "What can I say? The view is breathtaking."

"I would have to agree." Set bent his head and brushed his lips along hers. "I have to say waking up with you beside me is a great way to start off the day. But I can think of something else that will make it even better."

Desiree felt his erection brush the inside of her leg. "Mmmm, I think I could go for that."

"I thought you would."

Set then kissed her in earnest. He licked the seam of her lips before he pushed his tongue inside her mouth. It twined with hers, making her shift beneath him to get his cock just where she wanted it. He palmed her breast and squeezed. Her nipples grew taut as her arousal started to build deep inside her pussy. No matter how many times they made love, Desiree still wanted more of Set.

Deepening his kiss, Set reached down, took hold of his fully erect cock and led it to the entrance to her body. She was already wet for him, so his erection easily slid inside her. She moaned into his mouth as his shaft filled her, stretching her. Then he reared back and slowly entered her once more.

Set kept his strokes slow and steady. Desiree wrapped her legs around his waist and lifted her hips to match his rhythm. She moaned again as he slid even deeper inside her pussy. Even though she'd lost count of the number of times Set had made her come during the night, Desiree felt another one quickly build. She squeezed her inner muscles

around his thick shaft, arching her back so it hit in just the right place to increase the pleasure she felt.

Just before she reached orgasm, Set wrapped his arms around her waist and dragged her up with him as he moved to sit in the middle of the bed. Desiree adjusted her legs so her knees landed on the mattress on either side of his hips. She moved her hands to the top of his shoulders and held on as she impaled herself over and over again on his cock.

With his arms around her back, Set bent her slightly over them and sucked one of her nipples into his mouth. As he sucked, Desiree felt each pull inside her pussy. She clutched his shaft with her inner muscles, her movements more demanding as her climax pushed even closer.

Set released her nipple and dragged his tongue along the side of her neck. She shivered in anticipation. "Come for me, Desiree," he said huskily. "I want to hear my mate scream my name as she comes."

He then sank his fangs into her neck. That was all it took to send her into an intense orgasm. She whimpered, "Oh God, Set. Yes!"

When her pussy rhythmically clutched at his shaft, Desiree felt Set start to come, pulsing deep inside her as he continued to feed. After the last wave of pleasure receded, Set withdrew his fangs and dragged his tongue over his bite mark.

Desiree cupped his face and kissed him softly. "I think I want to wake up each morning like this."

"That can be arranged," Set said with a smile. He then sighed. "I think we'd better shower and get dressed. Mehen just told me I have to meet him in the kitchen and to bring you along with me."

She frowned. "He did? I didn't hear anything."

Set chuckled. "That's because he told me his orders inside my head. All of us can communicate with each other telepathically. It comes in handy while out hunting. You

and I will be able to do the same thing once you've taken my blood and the bond forms."

"Will I be able to talk to the others as well afterward?"

"No. Just me." Set then grew serious. "If we'd had that bond last night you would have been able to call out to me when you first saw the undead and I would have flashed to you even sooner."

Desiree knew why Set had brought that up, even without having the mate bond with him. He was worried she would refuse to follow through on it. "I promise I'll take your blood."

"When? You've accepted me as your mate. Correct? I don't want to wait to truly claim you as my own."

She looked lovingly into his light brown eyes. "Of course I've accepted you as my mate, and everything that goes along with it. We'll do it tonight, after you've come back from hunting. There are a few things I want to do today before we take that final step."

"Like what?"

"Well, for starters, I should probably call my parents and let them know I'm all right in case they've tried to call me. And tell them about the new man I have in my life." Desiree then thought of something else. "I won't be able to tell them the truth about you. Or what it will mean for me to be your mate. I'll have to give them up eventually."

Set tucked her hair behind her ear. "If Ra grants you immortality, at some point your parents will notice you aren't aging. It will be unavoidable. Will you be okay with that?"

"I think so, but I really don't want to think about that right now."

"It's all right. You'll have years before you have to worry about it." Set groaned. "We'd better hurry. The others are now yelling inside my head to hurry up."

Desiree smiled. "I guess we'd better hurry then. I get the shower first."

Throwing herself out of Set's arms, she jumped off the bed and ran to the bathroom. When she closed the door and locked it behind her, she giggled when she heard Set grumbling about how she had deprived him of the chance to wash her back. Not wanting the others to resort to banging on their door, Desiree quickly turned on the shower and got in. She made a silent vow that she'd let her warrior wash her back, along with other parts of her, very soon.

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Less than an hour later, Desiree and Set walked into the kitchen hand in hand to find the other warriors and Blythe waiting for them. Blythe took one look at them and rushed over to give them each a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

"I can see you two have worked out your differences," she said. Blythe then leaned in to Desiree and whispered in her ear, "And I can see you let your warrior feed from you. I bet you'll never think of sex the same way again."

Desiree felt her face heat as she whispered back, "You could say that."

Blythe grinned. "I told you. I knew you would like it."

Mehen loudly cleared his throat. "If you're finished, Blythe, I think we should change the subject. I for one don't need to hear anymore about Set's sex life."

"I do," Akori said with a laugh. That earned him a swat to the back of the head from Kysen. "Ow." Kysen ignored him while Denger gave him a scowl.

"Anyway," Mehen continued. "Blythe told me last night about Desiree running, and you rescuing her from a couple of undead, Set. Do you two have things worked out now?"

Set put an arm around Desiree's shoulders and pulled her up against his side. "Yes. Desiree has agreed to become my mate."

Mehen looked at her. "You're now willing to do this, Desiree? Can you now completely accept what that will mean to you? How it will change your life forever?"

She nodded. "Yes. I've accepted all of it. Last night was an eye-opener for me. I understand now why it's so important to keep what you do a secret. I would never want to do anything to jeopardize that."

"Good." He then turned to Set. "I suppose you'll want to talk to Ra about granting Desiree immortality."

"Yes. I figured I would do that tomorrow. Desiree wants to tie up a few loose ends of her old life first."

Blythe let out a whoop. "Tomorrow will be perfect. This way I get to plan for the celebration afterward. I'm going to cook us a big meal. And Set, I'll go talk to my dad about Desiree for you. I better start getting things planned." Blythe then went over to Takan and grabbed his hand. She kept talking as she started to lead him out of the kitchen. "You're going to help me, Takan, since the others can't cook worth a damn."

Takan didn't seem at all disturbed that Blythe had singled him out to help her. If anything, he looked more than happy about it. Even though Desiree couldn't see much of his eyes with his hair hanging in his face, Takan wore a large smile as he followed Blythe out of the kitchen.

Mehen chuckled. "I guess that will keep Blythe and Takan busy for the rest of the day. Come on you two. Blythe managed to save you some breakfast. It's on the stove keeping warm."

Desiree let Set walk her over to the kitchen table. When she sat down he went over to the stove to get them some food. She watched as the rest of the warriors sat back down to finish eating or to drink their coffee. Even though Desiree would have to give up her family, she knew she would gain another in return. They may not be related by blood, but the warriors and Blythe were just as close as if they were. At least Desiree would never have to worry about being lonely, nor did she think her life would ever be boring.

* * * * *

Once they finished eating their breakfast, Desiree went to the meeting room to use her cell phone to call her parents. For some reason the meeting room was the only place inside the headquarters her cell had a signal. She sat down in one of the chairs at the large wooden table. Once Set had walked her here, he'd left her alone to make her call, for which she was grateful. She would rather he didn't overhear this first conversation with her parents. Desiree knew her mom in particular would start giving her the third degree about Set as soon as she learned about him. Desiree had learned early on in life not to bring boyfriends home unless she wanted her mom to grill the poor guy like he was a criminal or something.

After she dialed her parents' phone number, her mom picked up after the third ring. "Hi, Mom. It's me."

"Desiree, where have you been? I've tried to call you at your apartment and it says your number has been disconnected. I called your cell, but I kept getting your voice mail. I even tried calling you when you were supposed to be at work and they said you quit. What is going on?"

Desiree gritted her teeth. She knew her mom was only worried about her, but damn didn't she make her feel as if she was a teenager again who'd tried to sneak into the house after breaking curfew. "I'm sorry, Mom. I didn't mean to worry you."

"Well, you did. This isn't like you."

"I know, but I've met someone. And I'm positive that he's the one, Mom."

There was a long stretch of silence before her mom spoke again. "When did you meet him? You can't have known him for very long. Just last week you said there wasn't a man in your life."

"I've known Set for a few months now." More like she'd known *of* him for the last few months, but she wasn't going to tell her mother that.

"Set? What kind of name is that?"

"It's Egyptian."

"So does this Set love you? He must, to have disrupted your life this way. Are you living with him?"

Desiree took a deep breath. *Patience, patience.* "I think Set does. And yes, I've moved in with him. Just so you know, he's well-to-do and he wants to take care of me. That's why I quit the bar. You know how I wasn't too thrilled with working there in the first place." Set was rich. He'd told her exactly how well-off he really was. After being alive so long it wasn't too hard to build up a big enough savings to be considered filthy rich.

"Do you love him?"

"Yes, I do."

Her mother sighed. "I only want you to be happy. But that doesn't mean your father and I don't want to meet him."

That would be something else Desiree had to dread. She had no idea how her parents would react when she brought home a six-and-a-half-foot, muscle-bound warrior.

"Set and I will come to visit soon. Right now we're busy trying to get me settled into his place."

"Make sure you do. Can you at least give me a phone number?"

"Set doesn't have a landline. Call my cell if you want to reach me. If I don't pick up, leave a message and I'll call you back."

"All right. I'm glad you're okay. Don't scare me like that again. Since you're my only child, I tend to worry about you."

Her mother had doted on her while she was growing up. Since her mother hadn't been able to carry another baby to full term after Desiree, her mom had lavished all the love and attention she would have given to all her children on her only child. At times, Desiree had found it a little stifling.

"I know, Mom. Look, I have to go. I promise I'll call you in a couple of days. All right?"

"Fine."

"Tell Dad I said hi."

"I will. I love you."

"I love you too. Bye."

After she ended the call, Desiree sat back in the chair and blew out a breath. That hadn't gone too badly. She'd just have to warn Set that when they did go see her parents her mom would more than likely put him under a microscope. Set wasn't going to thank her for that.

Chapter Thirteen

That night, Set was reluctant to leave her. Desiree didn't want him to go, but it was something she would have to get used to. It was his duty to hunt the undead. He couldn't very well get out of it when he'd sworn to the sun god that he would do it. And the undead would not just go away all on their own. All of the warriors needed to be out hunting each night.

When Set pulled her to him and kissed her goodbye thoroughly in front of the other warriors, Desiree felt her toes curl inside her shoes. Once he pulled away, she was almost breathless.

She took a step back as she saw the knowing smiles the others wore. "I'll be waiting up for you."

"I'll come back as soon as I can."

Mehen came over and slapped Set on the back. "If things end up being slow tonight, you can quit hunting early, my friend. I have a feeling you won't be much good for anything until she's finally completely yours anyway." He then gave Desiree a wink.

Once the warriors left, Desiree headed for the kitchen. Blythe was there waiting for her. They were going to pop a bunch of popcorn and watch a movie together, again. This time Desiree wasn't going to try to escape.

Blythe sat at the kitchen table flipping through a recipe book. She looked up when Desiree walked into the room. "The guys left?"

Desiree went and sat down beside Blythe. "Yeah. I have a feeling Set will be home earlier than the others."

"It wouldn't surprise me if he was," Blythe said with a laugh. "So are you all prepared for tomorrow?"

"I think so."

Blythe patted her hand. "You'll be fine. It doesn't hurt. And you'll like my dad."

"What's it like having an Egyptian god for a father?"

"Great. Growing up, I always wanted to know who my dad was. Ra is a good father, though he has to work on a few things. Like the fact that he doesn't get weirded-out by the whole idea of his daughter having sex."

Desiree laughed. "My dad had a hard enough time when I started to date. The subject of my sex life would probably give him a stroke."

"Ra is really laid back about it." Blythe closed the recipe book with a snap and stood. "So are you ready to pig out on some popcorn and sit in front of the TV until our men return?"

"More than ready."

Blythe put a stainless steel Dutch oven on the stove, poured some vegetable oil into it and turned on the burner. She then turned to get the package of popcorn. "Since I'm immortal, and you'll soon be also, cooking popcorn with oil isn't going to hurt us. I think popcorn tastes better this way anyway. And the more melted butter the better."

"I hear you."

Blythe had just finished popping the popcorn, turned off the stove and had moved the pot to a cool burner when a man suddenly ran into the room. Desiree had only a split second to see the man's eyes were just as dead-looking as the undead she'd seen the night before, and that he had a sword strapped to his back.

"Run, Desiree!" Blythe shouted. "He's one of Sek's undead warriors." She then picked up the hot pot of popcorn and threw it at him as the diamond on her necklace started to light up.

The undead warrior moved with preternatural speed as he knocked the pot away, spilling popcorn all over the floor before he slammed his fist into Blythe's face. Blythe dropped like a stone and the light inside the diamond went dim.

Shell-shocked by how fast the attack on Blythe had been, Desiree forced herself to turn and run. But she was a little too late. The undead warrior had her by the hair with her arms pulled behind her back before she'd taken two steps. Whimpering with fear, Desiree tried to kick out at him.

With a loud hiss, he yanked her around so she faced him and opened his mouth to show her his fangs. "You are expendable. Do what I say and I won't bite you."

Somehow, he managed to keep her arms pinned as he hefted Blythe over his shoulder. The other woman was still unconscious. A trickle of blood dripped out of the corner of Blythe's mouth and fell to the floor.

The undead warrior's grip on her wrists felt as if a steel band was wrapped around them. Desiree could feel the circulation slowly being cut off as he pushed her out of the kitchen. Much to her dismay, he knew exactly which door would take them outside. He kicked the door out and dragged her through the docking bay. The only vehicle inside it was Blythe's BMW.

When they reached the gate to the high chain-link fence, he pulled her to a stop. Desiree knew there was no way he could climb the gate with Blythe hanging over his shoulder while trying to drag her up it at the same time. She soon found out how wrong she was in that thinking. He shifted his hold to her waist, and with what seemed like very little effort, he jumped straight up and over the gate. Desiree would have fallen to her knees if he hadn't been holding her when she landed. Instead of taking her by the wrists again, he wrapped her long hair around his hand and yanked on it until tears came to her eyes.

"Move," he growled. "Once we're clear of the sun god's shielding, my master will come for you both."

Realizing he was bringing her and Blythe to Sek, Desiree tried to fight her way free. All that earned her was another painful yank on her hair as he pulled her up against his front.

He dragged one of his fangs against the back of her neck. "One bite. That's all it will take. Push me and I'll gladly take your soul."

Desiree broke out into a cold sweat at the feel of his sharp fang grazing her skin. Unlike when Set did it, she felt repulsed and scared to death. Knowing she couldn't risk being turned into one of the undead, she started to move when he shoved her. Blythe's and her only hope was the warriors. But with Blythe out cold, Desiree knew there was no way they could call out for help. Now Desiree wished she'd taken Set's blood to form the mating bond with him when he'd wanted to earlier that day. If she had, she would have been screaming in his head for him to come rescue her.

* * * * *

He'd only been hunting for fifteen minutes when suddenly Set got the feeling that Desiree was in trouble. He told himself he was being ridiculous, that she was safely inside the headquarters, but the feeling wouldn't go away. After another five minutes had passed and he still couldn't shake it, Set decided to give her a call just to make sure.

Since Desiree's cell phone signal was sketchy at best inside the warehouse, it didn't concern Set that his call was automatically forwarded to leave her a message. He did that, then decided to call Blythe's cell as well. When Blythe didn't answer and her phone rang and rang until he was eventually prompted to leave her a message as well, the sense of wrongness increased.

He hung up his cell and put it away as he contacted Mehen telepathically. *Mehen, have you tried calling Blythe on her cell phone tonight?*

Mehen quickly answered, *No. I don't normally anyway. With the mate bond, we don't need to use our cells. Why?*

I have a bad feeling that something happened to Desiree. I tried calling her on her cell, but she must have lost the signal again. I then tried Blythe on hers and she never picked up.

Give me a second. I'll try to talk to Blythe through our bond. It took Mehen all of two seconds and then he was yelling in Set's head, *She's not answering. I get nothing when I call out to her. Flash to the headquarters now! I'll meet you there.*

Set appeared inside the headquarters' hallway outside the personal quarters the same time Mehen did. Mehen bellowed Blythe's name, but the warehouse was eerily silent. They followed the scent of popcorn to the kitchen and ground to a halt when they found it dumped on the floor. There also were drops of fresh blood as well.

Mehen crossed to the blood, dipped his finger in it and brought it to his nose. A loud roar rose out of him and his fangs punched down past his upper lip. "It's Blythe's," he snarled. He then sniffed the air. "I smell another's scent."

Set sniffed the air as well. He picked up Desiree's and Blythe's scents that were mixed in with another that didn't smell human. It didn't smell like a demon. The best way to describe it was that it smelled "off".

Following the scent, Mehen and Set ran out of the kitchen. When it led to the door that connected to the docking bay, they took in the sight of it hanging off its hinges. Set's fangs extended as his temper soared. Someone, or something, had taken his mate. And without the mating bond, he didn't have any way to contact Desiree.

Mehen and he ran outside, following the scent to the high chain-link gate. Set opened it with his mind and they ran out onto the street. Out in the open, the scent was weaker than it had been in the headquarters, but it was enough for Mehen and Set to follow. They could also smell Desiree's and Blythe's. Taking off at a run alongside Mehen, Set realized what whoever had taken them was doing – the women were being taken out of the range of Ra's shielding that protected the headquarters' location from demon-kind. He just prayed Mehen and he could find them before it was too late.

* * * * *

The undead warrior kept Desiree walking at a fast pace. With the headquarters behind them, he would stop every few seconds to stare off into space, then once again

get her back into motion. If Desiree didn't know better, she would think each time he did it he was trying to telepathically contact someone. And she knew who that someone had to be—Sek.

Once in a while, Desiree would slow her steps so she ended up walking slightly behind the undead warrior. She would have just enough time to get a quick glance at Blythe where she hung down his back like a rag doll before he would yank her by her hair back in front of him. Blythe had yet to awaken.

After what seemed like hours, he turned Desiree onto a deserted street that had a dead end at the bottom of it. The undead warrior once again got that blank look as if he was trying to contact someone. This time it lasted longer than a second and a smile spread across his face.

"My master comes."

Scared, knowing if Blythe didn't wake up soon and Sek took them to his lair, they would be as good as dead, Desiree silently chanted, *Wake up, wake up, wake up*. She then stiffened when a man appeared about a yard away from where they stood. At first glance, he looked like any other male mortal. His blond hair fell in shaggy waves to his shoulders. For a demon that shunned the sun, incongruously, his skin was tanned. But it was his blue eyes that Desiree found disturbing. True evil lurked inside them.

Sek closed the distance between them and his gaze landed on Desiree. "Who do we have here? I sent you for one woman and you bring two with you."

"They were together inside the Chosen's headquarters," the undead warrior said.

"Well, well." Sek leaned in to Desiree and took a deep breath. He then straightened and gave her an evil smile. "It would seem another of Ra's warriors has found himself a mate. Apep never said the car belonged to someone that special. Things just got a little more interesting. We'll take her to the lair and see what Apep wants done with her."

As Sek reached for Desiree, Blythe finally woke up. She reared up off the undead warrior's back and screamed, "Mehen!" Then all hell broke loose.

Chapter Fourteen

Mehen and Set suddenly appeared in the middle of the street. A split second later, Akori, Denger, Kysen and Takan appeared as well. Blythe began to struggle, which caused the undead warrior to release Desiree's hair. Sek tried to reach for her, but Set came between them. He pushed Desiree out of the way as he swung his sword at Sek. The demon jumped back and a sword similar to Set's appeared in his hand.

Set beat the demon back, catching his blade across Sek's chest. But unlike the undead, the bronze blade didn't destroy him. Blood welled as the demon's eyes turned from blue to a glowing red. He snarled at Set and charged him.

More snarls drew Desiree's attention to the undead warrior in time for her to see Mehen pull Blythe out of his arms. The undead warrior reached for his sword at his back, but Mehen didn't give him a chance to pull it. Mehen's sword moved in a blur as he brought it down across the undead warrior's throat. Unlike his master, the bronze blade ended his existence.

Alone and completely surrounded by six of Ra's Chosen warriors, Sek held out his sword as he turned in a circle. He bled from more than one wound. The warriors closed the circle tighter around him. Sek had to know he couldn't win. When he lowered his sword as if he would flash away, the warriors struck. Denger's and Kysen's swords caught Sek across the stomach and chest. Akori and Takan slashed their swords across his back. Set cut Sek's hamstrings in one slice, causing the demon to fall to his knees. Mehen's sword caught Sek across the throat. Gurgling as blood pumped out of the deep wound, Sek fell forward onto the ground.

The warriors stepped back. Mehen opened his arms to Blythe and held her tightly against him. Set did the same to Desiree. She flung herself into his arms and squeezed him with all her might.

Set cradled her face in his hands and made her look up at him. "Are you okay?"

She nodded. "I'm all right. You arrived in time." Desiree glanced over at the fallen demon. "Is he dead?"

"Not yet, but he's incapacitated enough that he won't be able to save himself. We'll let the sun finish him off."

"But we'll make sure he doesn't go anywhere until the sun rises," Denger said.

He pulled a large dagger out of a sheath that he wore around his calf. Denger lifted it over his head and plunged it down into Sek's back, pinning him to the ground. Desiree shivered. Even though she found Denger's actions harsh, she knew that Sek would have done much worse to her and Blythe if he'd managed to get them to his lair.

Mehen called to the warriors. "I'm taking Blythe back to the headquarters. Set you should do the same with Desiree." He then looked at Denger, Akori, Kysen and Takan. "Even though we've taken out one of Apep's demons, there are still undead out there to hunt."

The four men nodded, then one by one they flashed away. Mehen then disappeared with Blythe. Set wrapped his arms around Desiree and she felt the ground fall out from under her feet. Once she got her bearings again, they were inside his personal quarters.

Set's lips came down onto hers as he kissed her hard. When he pulled away the tips of his fangs were peeking out from the bottom of his upper lip. "I don't know how many more close calls I can take. I need the mating bond with you, Desiree."

"I want it too."

Set kissed her again and started to pull at her clothes as he backed her toward the bed. By the time he pushed her back on the mattress they were both naked. Needing to feel Set buried deep inside her, Desiree spread her legs wide as his hips settled between her thighs. Already wet for him, his cock easily slid inside her pussy. Once he was seated to the hilt, he lifted the inside of his wrist to his mouth and bit down. When blood started to well, he placed his wrist to her mouth.

The taste of Set's blood on her tongue was nothing like she'd ever imagined before. Unlike what she thought it would be like, Desiree didn't find the act of drinking Set's blood repulsive. Just like when he fed from her, she found it to be arousing. Set moaned as she wrapped her hands around his wrist and sucked. He moved deep inside her, his hard thrusts making the climax that had already started to build inside her climb closer to the surface.

When she fell over the edge, Desiree released Set's wrist and whimpered with pleasure as her inner walls gripped his shaft in an intense orgasm. Set licked the puncture marks on his wrist, then threw back his head and yelled as he followed her into release.

Keeping their bodies joined, Set rested his weight on his bent arms and put his forehead on hers. *I can feel you inside me, Desiree.*

She gasped at the sound of Set's voice inside her head. She then felt another set of emotions and sensations that were not her own flow into her. She also felt the love he had for her.

I can feel you too, Set. I love you. Desiree flooded their bond with the love she had for him. She gasped again when Set did the same.

"I love you too, mate," he said out loud. "I'll never let you go."

Desiree smiled. "I never want you to."

When Set hardened and started to move inside her once again, Desiree found she could feel Set's pleasure as well as her own. Unlike anything she'd ever experienced before, she soon was coming in his arms again, crying out in passion. Set quickly followed.

For the rest of the night, they put the limits of their bond to the test. As dawn slowly broke over the horizon, Desiree and Set finally let sleep claim them.

* * * * *

Desiree swallowed when she met Ra's gaze. Set had awakened her after a few hours of sleep and had brought her to the temple. The others had already been waiting for them. Set had called out to Ra, asking the sun god to make them true mates. Ra had been quick to appear.

Standing just as tall as his warriors, and just as muscular, Desiree at first found it hard to believe she was actually looking at an ancient Egyptian god. Unsure what to do, she swallowed nervously, but Ra soon put her at ease.

He held out his hand to her and smiled. "There's nothing to be nervous about, Desiree. I'm sure my daughter explained what to expect."

Desiree nodded. "She did. She also said something about me having to drink your blood." That part made her the most nervous. She knew what drinking Set's blood did to her. Desiree didn't exactly want the same thing to happen here.

Ra chuckled. "Don't worry. When you drink from me you won't feel the same effects as you do when you drink from your mate."

Desiree relaxed. "Good. No offense."

"None taken. Shall I make you and Set true mates now?"

Once she nodded, a knife appeared in Ra's hand, which he used to slit the inside of his wrist. He then offered it to Desiree. She took it and brought it to her mouth. Ra had been right about her not feeling the same sensations. It felt as if she were sucking in pure energy with each pull of her mouth. When Ra gently pulled his wrist away, the wound healed in seconds. He then reached for her. He softly placed his lips on her forehead and a jolt of energy shot through her. She also felt a burning sensation on her lower back and in her gums and upper jaw.

After Ra released her, Desiree turned to Set and smiled. She could feel her fangs against her upper lip. The others rushed in to congratulate them, except for Takan. He smiled, but made no move to leave the shadows where he stood at the back of the temple.

Set swept Desiree up in his arms and nuzzled the side of her neck. "I can't wait to get you alone. I want those new fangs of yours buried in my neck while you feed."

Blythe cleared her throat. "Not yet you aren't. I spent all morning cooking. You two are going to eat first, then you can go lock yourselves away in your quarters." She then looped her arm through Ra's. "And you aren't going to run away either, Dad. You can help us celebrate."

Ra kissed Blythe's cheek. "I wouldn't want to disappoint my daughter."

Desiree watched Ra glance over at Takan with a look of longing on his face before he looked back at Blythe and let her walk him out of the temple. Desiree didn't have much time to think about Ra's look before Set kissed her soundly. When he pulled away, she knew she'd made the right decision about being his mate. He was everything she'd ever dreamed about. And she now had forever to show him how much she loved him.

Epilogue

Later that afternoon, Denger flashed himself to the deserted street where they'd left Sek to burn in the sun. The demon had to be long gone by now, and he wasn't about to lose a perfectly good dagger.

At the spot where he'd pinned Sek, he frowned when he couldn't find his dagger. Once the sun had done its job on the demon's body the blade should have been left behind. Denger swore under his breath. He should have come sooner. Probably some punk had found and taken it.

A little irked about the loss of his dagger, Denger flashed himself to the docking bay at the headquarters and got into his car. He was soon cruising down the street headed for downtown Phoenix. His blood hunger had recently increased, but unlike Mehen and Set, he wasn't about to sit back and wait for his mate to stumble across him. He was going to look for her.

Parking his car, he got out and walked down the sidewalk. He knew his mate was out there somewhere. He just had to find her.

* * * * *

Deep inside his lair, Mot looked down at Sek where he lay bloody and half dead. If not for Mot finding him, Sek would have burned in the sun. That would have messed up Sek's and his plans greatly. Luckily for Sek, Apep had sent Mot after him.

Sek started to scream. Mot smiled as the wounds on Sek's body began healing. Apep would heal him, but the process would be more painful than the actual wounds themselves. Such was Apep's way.

Turning away, Mot left Sek to his ordeal. Time was drawing ever closer that they would finally be able to take out Ra's Chosen warriors. Much work had to be done.

About the Author

Marisa Chenery was always a lover of books, but after reading her first historical romance novel she found herself hooked. Having inherited a love for the written word, she soon started writing her own novels.

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