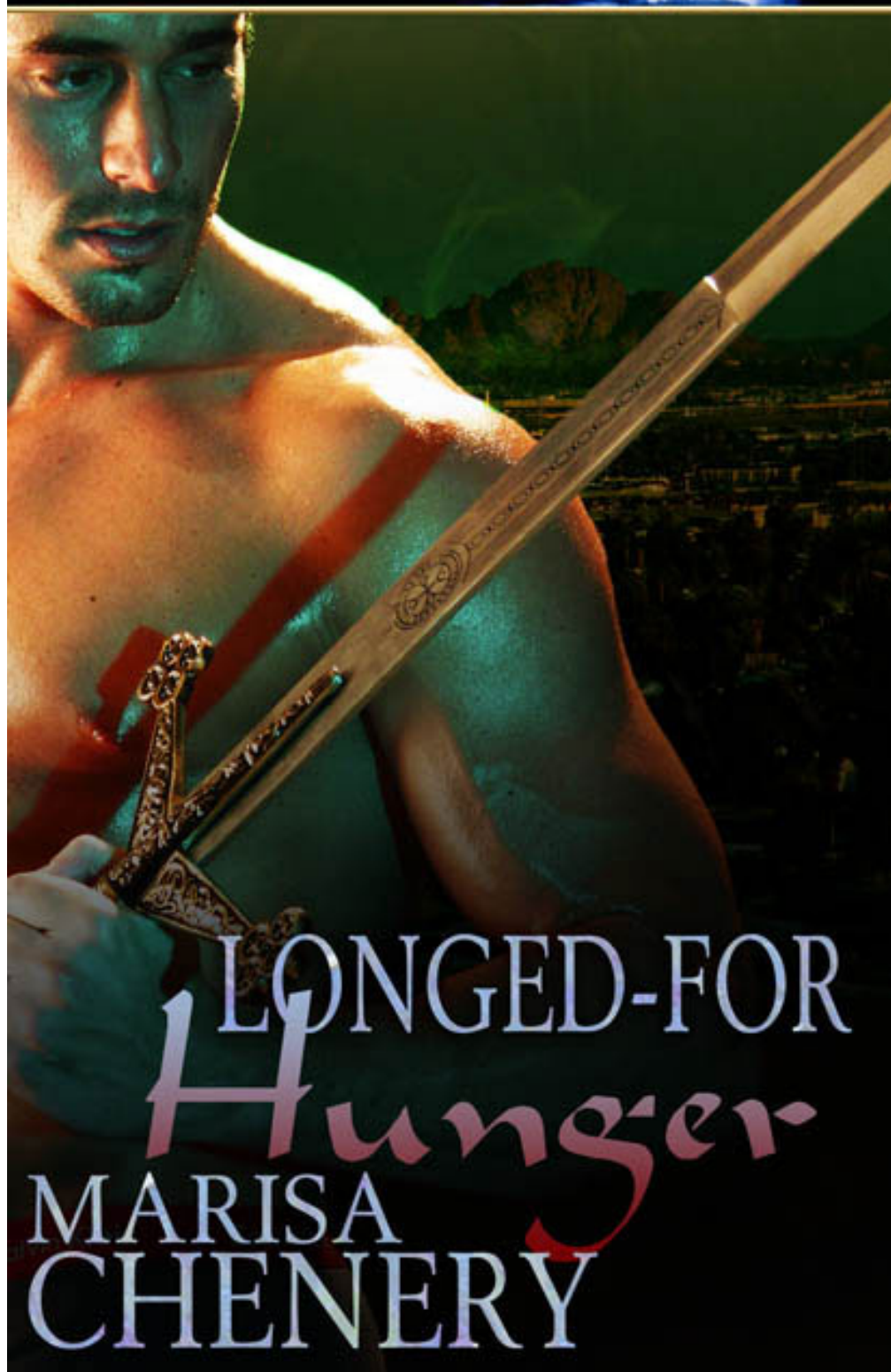


ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT



## **Longed-For Hunger**

*Marisa Chenery*

*Book three in the Ra's Chosen series.*

Denger is a hunter, spending his nights on the streets of Phoenix fighting the undead who threaten unknowing humans. It's in his blood. It's what he knows. But a new knowledge has taken hold. Like other warriors before him, he must hunt for a different kind of prey altogether. His mate. Once he finds her, nothing will keep him from claiming what is his. Nothing but her, that is.

After the death of her husband three years ago, Nyx is content to spend her evenings at home, wrapped up in the vampire romance novels she loves. But when she collides, literally, with a man who could have stepped out of the pages of one of her books, she begins to think living her love life through romantic tales may not be the way to go. But as with any good story, there's a plot twist. Once she discovers Denger's true nature, she must decide if she can risk her heart and live a life where truth is stranger than fiction.

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[www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com)

Longed-For Hunger

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# *LONGED-FOR HUNGER*

Marisa Chenery

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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**

Denger pulled his souped-up Mustang over to the curb and parked. As he emerged, a blast of mid-morning Phoenix heat assaulted him. It was time to hunt. But unlike the undead he and his fellow warriors sought at night, he was after a different kind of prey. A woman. And not just any woman—his mate.

With no real destination in mind, he walked down the sidewalk at a casual pace. His eyes lingered on each woman he passed, hoping they would stir his blood hunger.

Two of his fellow warriors, Mehen and Set, had already found their mates. Ra, the sun god, had said each of them would find the one woman meant for them. Out of the remaining four warriors of Ra's Chosen, Denger knew he was next in line to find his mate. His blood hunger had increased. Previously, a once-a-week feeding from a donor would be all he needed. It no longer was. The increase in blood hunger was the first sign that he would find her soon.

Unlike Mehen and Set who had just waited to stumble across their mates, Denger had decided to take the bull by the horns and see if he could find *his* woman. He wasn't one to patiently sit by, waiting for what was to be his to fall into his lap. So when his need to feed increased to more than once a week, he'd started to roam Phoenix's streets during the day, ever on the lookout for the one woman who would be his. So far none of the women he encountered set off his blood hunger or stirred his body, something only his mate would do.

The chances of him finding her this way had to be pretty slim, there was only so much of the city he could cover in a single day but it didn't stop him from trying. It had only been a week, but Denger didn't plan on giving up his search any time soon. He could be as stubborn as the next person when he wanted something, and he wanted to find his mate. He'd been alone for centuries. He wanted what Mehen and Set had.

Denger had been walking for what seemed like hours when he lifted his face to the sun, drawing strength from its heat, and took a deep breath. *Ra, a little help would go a long way you know*, he said inside his head. *Can't you at least give me a little sign as to who she is?*

As expected, Ra didn't reply. The sun god was like that. He liked to make his warriors work for the answers they sought. Denger closed his eyes for a second and blew out a breath while he continued his aimless walk.

The feel of a soft, feminine body slamming into the front of him drew Denger up short. He quickly grabbed the woman by the upper arms to steady her and looked down. When the woman lifted her hazel gaze at the same time, his cock went instantly rock hard and his blood hunger start to ride him.

"I'm so sorry," she said. "I should have been paying more attention to where I was going."

Denger let his gaze run over her chin-length red hair, pert nose and full, kissable lips. The longer he stared, the harder his cock became. He dropped his gaze to her body, which was slim. She barely reached the middle of his chest. He guessed her to be around five-foot-four. Compared to his over six and a half feet, he dwarfed her.

Then her scent filled his nose. Denger fought the urge to roughly pull her against him. He drew in a deeper breath, pulling more of her intoxicating scent into his lungs. His blood hunger rode him harder and his fangs dropped before he could get himself back under control.

Ducking his head to hide his fangs, that now grazed his bottom lip, from her view, he muttered, "No need to apologize. It was partially my fault."

"It's what I get for hurrying," she said. "I'm late for work and all I could think about was getting inside before my boss got pissed at me." She motioned toward the entrance of the bookstore they stood in front of.

"I shouldn't hold you up then," he said as he let her go.



Before she could say anything more, Denger stepped around her and continued on his way. It took everything in him not to return to her. But he didn't think flashing a fang at their first meeting would put him in good stead. He would walk away for now, but that didn't mean he was going to stay away.

\* \* \* \* \*

Even though she was late to start her shift, Nyx watched the man who she had bumped into hurry away. Her gaze landed on his tight backside and she sighed. He had one of the best asses she'd ever seen and his jeans were just tight enough to give her a good view of it. She lifted her gaze higher and latched onto his waist-length black hair he wore pulled back in a ponytail at his nape. Nyx bit back a groan. She liked men with long hair. Add in an extremely muscular build and a face so attractive he could make a woman's pussy wet just by looking at her, Nyx couldn't help but appreciate the scenery.

Turning away, she headed into the bookstore. Attractive the man was, but there was something about him that made her feel a bit uneasy when he stood towering over her. It wasn't so much that she was afraid of him. It was the lethal air that seemed to surround him. That and the fact that just before he'd walked away she could have sworn she'd caught a glimpse of what appeared to be the tips of a pair of fangs protruding past his upper lip.

Nyx gave herself a mental shake and made her way to the back of the store. Yeah, right. The guy had fangs. It had to be her overactive imagination, or the one too many vampire romance novels she'd recently become addicted to. There was no such thing as vampires. And even if there were, they sure as hell wouldn't be walking around outside in the sun.

Her boss, Janet, came out from the back room just as Nyx reached the counter. Nyx quickly said, "I know. I'm late."

Janet waved her statement away. "Only by five minutes. That's nothing. And it's not as if there is a mad rush of customers."

On her way in, Nyx had counted four customers in the store. "You know me. I hate to be late for anything." She walked around the counter and put her purse on a shelf under it. "I promise I'll be on time tomorrow."

"Relax, Nyx," Janet said with a chuckle. "It's no biggie. You've worked here for four years and this is the first time you've been late. I don't think that's grounds for me to fire you."

"That's nice to know. So what would you like me to do first?"

Janet motioned to two stacks of books that sat on the end of the counter. "It's time to change the display in the front windows. Interested?"

Nyx nodded and glanced at the titles of the books, which were a mix of hardcover and mass-market paranormal romances. She smiled. "Most definitely. And you do realize I'll be book shopping at the same time."

"I figured you would," Janet said with humor in her voice. "I think you're one of our best customers. I don't know how you find time to read so much."

"Give me a good book over TV any day. It's better than sitting at home every night staring at the walls."

Janet shook her head. "It's been three years, Nyx. It's time for you to stop spending your nights alone."

Nyx scooped up the first stack of books. "I know. I just haven't met the right guy yet."

And she did know. She still counted the days since she lost her husband to cancer. At least she wasn't counting the hours as she'd done in the beginning. Derek had been the love of her life and her high school sweetheart. They'd married when they were both twenty-one. Losing him three years ago had been a blow Nyx hadn't been sure she would survive. Even now, years later, she still felt as if she would never be whole again.

"The reason why you haven't met the right guy is because you haven't exactly been looking either," Janet said. "You're only thirty. You're too young to be moldering away. I still think I should set you up with my cousin. He'd be perfect for you."

"No you won't. No blind dates." This wasn't the first time Janet had suggested she set her up with her cousin. Janet meant well, but Nyx didn't want her first date since losing her husband to be with a man she'd been set up with.

Janet held up her hands in surrender. "All right. I won't push."

With a nod, Nyx said, "I'll be at the front then."

She turned and walked to the display windows. Even though Janet had said she wouldn't push, the chances were good she would bring up the topic of her cousin being good for Nyx again. She smiled. Janet had become a close friend shortly after Nyx had started working for her. Only two years older, Janet sometimes took on the big sister role, looking out for Nyx. After Derek had died, Janet had been there for her every step of the way.

At the first window, Nyx put the stack of books on the floor and took out the ones already on display. Once it was empty, she took the second stack of new books to the window. Standing, she mentally organized them the way she thought they should be displayed then set to work.

A quarter of the way through the first stack of books, she looked out the window. Nyx straightened when she caught sight of a man standing directly across the street watching the bookstore. It was the same man she'd bumped into earlier. There was enough distance between him and the window that she couldn't tell if he was watching her or not. Stupidly, the thought that he might actually *be* watching her set Nyx's heart beating a little faster. He really was gorgeous.

"What has you so preoccupied?" Janet asked behind her. "I said your name twice and you still kept staring out the window. It must be something interesting." She moved to stand next to Nyx. "Whoa, mama. Look at that beefcake across the street. Is he the reason why you didn't hear me?"

"Maybe. I've had a chance encounter with him."

Janet cleared her throat loudly. "Ahem. And exactly when did that happen? You're holding out on me. I thought you said you hadn't met the right man yet. If Mr. Beefcake over there doesn't do it for you, you need your head examined. If I wasn't married, I wouldn't mind a little close encounter with that one."

Nyx chuckled. "I'm sure Pete would be happy to hear his wife is lusting for another man."

"Hey, I'm married, not dead. I can look. And don't try to steer the conversation off you."

"What I meant by encounter is that we literally bumped into each other just before I came into work. We apologized and then he went on his way."

Janet elbowed her. "Obviously you left a lasting impression or he wouldn't be across the street watching the store."

"Or he could be some nutcase who has decided I'm to be his next stalking victim."

"He can stalk me any time he wants."

Nyx rolled her eyes. "I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that."

"I think you should go out there and talk to him."

"Ah, I don't think so. Who knows, he could only be waiting for someone. Like a girlfriend or a wife."

"Chicken."

She shook her head. "I'm not chicken. Now leave me alone so I can get the displays finished."

With one last sigh, Janet turned and walked to the back of the store. Nyx did her best to ignore him while she worked, but her gaze seemed to unerringly drift to the window and then across the street. Each time she looked, he still stood in the exact same spot, not seeming to have moved.

When the hours went by and Nyx went to look out the front window from time to time only to find the man still there, thoughts that he could *indeed* be a stalker played through her head. If he was interested in her as Janet thought, why did he just stay outside on the sidewalk and not come into the store?

By the end of her shift, she'd almost convinced herself that the chances of him being a stalker were pretty high. Nyx dragged her feet about leaving and even tried to talk Janet into letting her stay until she closed the bookstore for the day. But Janet only shooed her off.

Prepared not to look across the street, Nyx left the store. She'd only taken two steps when she found her gaze drawn to him, but he wasn't there. Telling herself she was being a fool for feeling disappointed, Nyx continued down the sidewalk. With the two new vampire romances she'd purchased, she'd go home, curl up with one of them and read, just as she did every evening.

## **Chapter Two**

Denger watched the little mortal walk down the sidewalk from the entrance to an alley two stores down from the bookstore. Once she was far enough ahead, he followed her.

The need to know if she was truly his mate had had him standing for hours across the street from where she worked, watching her through the large windows. Every time he'd caught sight of her, the more he hoped she was indeed his. He'd also spent most of the day with the hard-on from hell. He craved her body and her blood. Just the thought of sinking his fangs into her soft flesh while he took her body had caused them to drop more than once. He'd had to hide them from the mortals around him.

She turned into a parking lot and he hurried to catch up. Just as he closed in on her, she quickly swung around, lifted her leg and kicked out the flat of her foot, which connected with one of his kneecaps. Caught off guard, Denger's leg gave out. Before he could recover, she kicked his other knee and gave him a hard shove so he landed flat on his back on the pavement. She wasted no time jumping on his chest, pinning his arms with her legs as she painfully took hold of his ponytail and wrapped it around her fist.

Even though he would have no problem getting himself free, Denger let her believe she'd overpowered him. He had to hand it to her, for such a little thing she'd managed to get the drop on him. With a man of his size, that was impressive.

He smiled. "I have to say this wasn't quite what I expected."

She gave his hair another painful yank. "I saw you hanging out across the street from the bookstore. Why are you following me?"

"Take it easy," he said. "I like my hair attached to my head. I just thought we could talk."

"If you wanted to talk, why didn't you come into the bookstore instead of waiting until now? I saw you standing across the street for my entire shift."

"I didn't want to bother you while you were working."

That wasn't exactly the truth. He hadn't gone inside the store mostly because he wouldn't have wanted to leave. Given how they didn't even know each other's names, he didn't think she would have appreciated him dogging her heels with a raging hard-on while trying to keep his extended fangs out of sight.

"So instead you decided to play the stalker and sneak up behind me in a parking lot?" she asked and gave another yank on his hair.

"I can assure you I'm not a stalker. After we bumped into each other I only thought to get to know you better. It wasn't my intention to sneak up on you. How about we start from the beginning again? I'm Denger. I'd offer you my hand, but you have my arms pinned to my sides."

Not that he was really complaining. With her perched on his chest as she was, it just seemed to arouse him even more, especially since her jean-covered pussy wasn't all that far from his face. That thought had him fighting to keep his fangs from dropping once again.

When she didn't move from her position or say anything, Denger decided now would be a good time to try a little experiment—to see if he could wipe her memory or not. If he could, he wouldn't totally wipe her memories of him, just his coming up behind her in the parking lot. If he couldn't wipe her, it would be another sign she was his mate.

Latching onto her gaze with his, he concentrated as he tried to erase the memories. He slammed into a mental brick wall. Just to be sure, Denger tried a second time with the same result. The only indication that she'd felt his attempts was the small furrowing of her brows.

She was his. He barely managed to stop himself from flipping her onto her back and taking her mouth in a heated kiss. He had to play it cool. She was still leery of him. He sure as hell didn't want to scare her off now that he'd found her.

Denger tried once again to get her to relax enough to release him. "Not that I don't mind you sitting on me like this, but the pavement isn't exactly comfortable. I promise I won't jump on you once you let me up."

She seemed to think it over for a few seconds, then slowly unwound his hair from around her hand and slid off his chest to stand beside him. Not wanting to spook her, he took his time getting up. So far so good. She didn't bolt once he stood at his full height.

He stuck out his hand. "I'm Denger."

"Nyx," she said and placed her hand in his.

Denger closed his fingers around hers and gave her hand a small shake. He deliberately held it a little longer than was necessary before he released it. "A lovely name for a lovely lady." He then watched her cheeks pinken slightly.

"Ah, thanks. It's nice to meet you, Denger."

"I apologize if I gave you the wrong impression. I thought if I left I wouldn't see you again. I didn't want to take that chance."

"Uh huh. Well, can I suggest the next time you want to introduce yourself to a woman you take the more direct approach?"

"Thanks for the suggestion, but I doubt there will be a next time." Nyx started to move away. Denger stopped her. "Wait. I want to see you again."

Nyx turned around to face him. She then said reluctantly, "I don't know."

"It doesn't have to be a *date* date. Just coffee. We can go to the coffee shop that's down the street from the bookstore. Say tomorrow afternoon?" Denger watched Nyx's gaze run over his body while she thought over his invitation. When she reached the



crotch of his jeans, her attention snapped back to his face. He shrugged. "I'm not going to deny it. I'm attracted to you."

Her face flushed once again. "I don't know if I should see you again."

"Why not?" Denger then thought of something else. "You're not married, are you?" If she was, he didn't know what he'd do. He already thought of her as his. He didn't want to have to steal her from another man, but if that was what it would take to claim her as his, at this point it was something he was willing to do.

Nyx shook her head. "No... No, I'm not married. Not anymore."

"You're divorced."

"No. My husband died of cancer three years ago." Before Denger could say something else to convince her to see him, she added, "I haven't started to see other men yet. It's been a really long time since I went out on a date of any kind. I don't know if I'm ready."

Even though it had been a few years since she'd lost her husband, he could hear the sadness in Nyx's voice when she spoke about him. Feeling the need to comfort his mate, Denger reached out and stroked the back of his fingers against her cheek. "I'm sorry for your loss. It's just coffee. Think of it as a small test to see if you're ready to start dating other men."

Nyx searched his face. She then bit her bottom lip and nodded. "All right. I'll go out with you for coffee. I have to work tomorrow afternoon but I get a half-hour break at three. We can go out then."

He smiled. "I'll be there." Having won that concession out of her, he quickly leaned in and brushed her lips with his, wishing he could taste her fully. "We'll take baby steps." Pulling away, he started to walk backward. "Until tomorrow."

Denger turned on his heel and left the parking lot. Walking away from the woman who was to be his mate was hard, but at least he now knew who she was and where to find her. The rest would hopefully fall into place.

\* \* \* \* \*

Returning to Ra's Chosen's headquarters, an old warehouse they'd converted into living quarters, Denger parked his Mustang in the docking bay they used as a garage. He hurried to the door that was connected to the headquarters proper. After punching in the code on the number pad, then pushing down on the stone beneath it, the door unlocked. He swirled his tongue around the tip of his index finger to heal where the needle from the stone had pierced it, taking a drop of his blood. The stone was a gift from Ra and would only unlock the door for Ra's Chosen and the mates of two of the warriors, Blythe and Desiree.

Denger wasted no time going to his personal quarters to change for a night of hunting the undead. Dressed in black leather pants and t-shirt, he strapped his sword to his back before he pulled on his black leather jacket to hide it from view.

Ready to face what the night would bring, he headed for the kitchen on his way to the meeting room to meet up with the rest of the warriors. He found Blythe and Desiree there.

When she saw him, Blythe stood and took a thick sandwich out of the fridge. She handed it to him. "Sorry, the others ate your share of dinner when you didn't show up. So all you get is a ham sandwich."

He took a big bite, chewed, then swallowed. "This is fine. I'll get something after I come back tonight."

Blythe narrowed her eyes in his direction. "Don't you dare make a mess of the kitchen."

"I promise it will be spotless when I'm done."

The kitchen was Blythe's domain and she didn't tolerate anyone making a mess of it. Considering she cooked all the meals and was really good at it, no one put up a fuss about her rules.

"It better be," Desiree said with a grin. "I would hate to wake up tomorrow to find Blythe had killed you."

"I'm not that bad," Blythe said with a laugh. She looked at Denger. "So what kept you out all day? It had to be something pretty important to cause you to miss dinner."

He wolfed down half the sandwich before he answered. "You could say that."

The next thing Denger knew, Blythe had her arms wrapped around him and was hugging him tight. "You found her. I'm so happy for you."

He hadn't made it any secret that he was out searching for his mate. Akori and Kysen, two of his brothers-in-arms, found great glee in giving him grief about it, especially Akori. That warrior thought being mated was akin to being handed a death sentence. Akori loved women, all women, and never wanted to settle down with just one. According to Ra, Akori wouldn't be exempt from finding his mate. All the warriors would eventually find theirs.

Denger gave Blythe a squeeze before he disentangled her arms from around him. "Yes, I found her."

Desiree got up from the table and came to stand beside Blythe. "I guess we'll soon have another mate joining us. Unless you already have her here locked in your quarters."

"That better not be the case," Blythe said, crossing her arms over her chest.

When they had first met their mates, Blythe and Desiree had been witnesses to Mehen and Set taking down the undead. Since Ra had decreed no mortal could retain the memory of the undead, and neither Mehen nor Set could wipe the memory from the women, they'd brought them against their will to their headquarters for the rest of the warriors to try to wipe. None had met with success. Blythe had been quick to accept her new life with Mehen but Desiree hadn't been quite so accepting of Set.

"No, I don't have her locked in my quarters," he reassured the women. "I met her this afternoon, so no undead were around to mess things up." The undead only preyed upon mortals at night, going out to steal souls for their demon god, Apep. "For your information, I'm taking it slow with her. I'm going to meet her for coffee tomorrow afternoon."

A loud groan sounded behind Denger. "By the gods, not you too?" Akori asked in a pained voice.

"Don't start in on Denger, Akori," Blythe said. "I know you and Kysen in particular have been bugging him about trying to find his mate. Like I've said over and over again—your time will come. You'll find your mate too. Dad said so."

Ra was Blythe's father, something she hadn't learned until after she'd become mated to Mehen. Her mortal mother hadn't taken the news well of Ra being an Egyptian god when he'd revealed the truth about himself and had left him when she was pregnant with Blythe. After giving birth, her mother had left Blythe with her grandparents and basically dropped off the face of the Earth. Now that father and daughter had found each other, they spent a lot of time together trying to make up for all the years they had been apart.

Akori moved to Denger's side and shook his finger at Blythe. "What did I say about you saying that nasty M word? There will be no mate for me."

"You can run, but you can't hide, especially from a god," she quickly shot back.

Knowing where this would eventually lead, to neither one of them backing down, Denger said, "Thanks for the sandwich, Blythe. I'll finish it on the way to the meeting room." He then grabbed Akori by the arm and pulled him out of the kitchen.

The rest of the warriors were already there when they arrived. Denger swallowed the last of his sandwich and went to sit in one of the empty chairs at the long table while Akori took the other.

Mehen nodded in Denger's direction. "I knew you'd make it back in time to go out hunting. I don't think you've missed a night to hunt the undead since you were chosen by Ra."

It was true. Put a sword in his hand and he became an ultimate killing machine. Out of all the warriors, Denger would be the first to admit that he was the most bloodthirsty. He lived to fight, which had brought him to Ra's attention.

Akori snorted. "That's probably about to change. Lover boy over there found his mate."

Mehen smiled. "Is that true, Denger?"

He nodded. "Yes, and before you can ask, since both Blythe and Desiree already did, I don't have her locked in my personal quarters."

"No, he doesn't. He's got a date with her tomorrow afternoon," Akori said with disgust.

Kysen burst out laughing. "A date? What happened to the take-charge-take-no-prisoners-Denger I know and love?"

Denger flipped Kysen off. "She's my mate, not an enemy I have to fight."

"Ignore him," Takan said as he shook his long bangs into his face, something he did more often than not. "There is nothing wrong with taking things slow."

"I agree," Set said. "Just because Mehen and I were forced to bring our mates into our world before they were ready does not mean it will happen to the rest of you. Your blood hunger will give you a bit of a timeline, but don't push too soon. You don't want your mate trying to run from you at every turn."

Set spoke from firsthand experience. Desiree had tried to escape the headquarters more than once before she had truly accepted Set as her mate. It had taken her almost being attacked by an undead to get her to stop fighting Set and the feelings she had for him.

Now that all the warriors had had a chance to comment about his finding his mate, the conversation changed to the upcoming hunt that night, much to Denger's relief. Talking about Nyx made him long to be with her. Kysen's comment about him was basically true. When he wanted something he didn't back down until he got it. But with Nyx, knowing she hadn't really moved on from the death of her husband, that type of attitude wouldn't work. Even though it went against his nature, he'd take it easy with her. As long as his blood hunger didn't ride him too hard, he could hold out until he got her to trust him.

After Mehen assigned them each a section of the city to hunt in, Denger eagerly made his way to the docking bay. A night of hunting was just what he needed to distract his thoughts from Nyx. If it didn't, it would be a hell of a long night.

## **Chapter Three**

Nyx spent most of the night tossing and turning in bed. It was thoughts of Denger and their coffee date that kept her awake. She couldn't stop wondering if she'd made a mistake by agreeing to see him again. She was attracted to him, there wasn't any doubt about that, but Nyx found herself feeling guilty that she did. A small part of her felt as if she were betraying Derek. Thoughts such as that were part of the reason why she hadn't let another man into her life.

Shortly after nine in the morning, Nyx gave up on trying to sleep. The couple of hours she had managed to get would have to be enough. After a shower, she dressed and got something for breakfast.

With plenty of time still left before she had to go into work, she plunked herself down on the couch and picked up the new vampire romance she'd started to read the night before. It was the third book in one of her favorite series. Usually it didn't take much for Nyx to find herself completely engrossed in a book, letting the setting and characters take her out of her real world. But that didn't happen this time. Every time the book switched to the hero's point of view, she found herself picturing Denger as the vampire.

When she reached a scene where things were heating up between the hero and the heroine, Nyx had to put the book down. She could all too easily picture Denger doing the things the hero was doing to the heroine to her. Her thoughts caused her long-celibate body to come out of hibernation. Where before she was content to read her romance novels, she now found herself longing for Denger's touch.

By the time she arrived at work, Nyx was having serious second thoughts about going out for coffee with Denger. If only she'd thought to ask for his phone number, she could have called him and told him not to show up.

Janet took one look at her face and said, "All right, what's up? You look stressed as hell about something."

Stowing her purse under the counter, Nyx said, "I've done something that I'm now regretting."

"What did you do?"

Nyx took a deep breath, then let it out slowly. "I kind of agreed to go out for coffee on my break today with a man."

Janet let out a whoop. "Let me guess, you're going out with Mr. Beefcake from yesterday."

"Yes, but now I'm not so sure I should."

"Aw, hon, you can't back out now. You need to do this. I'm sure Derek wouldn't want you to be alone. He would have wanted you to move on with your life. And I knew it was you Mr. Beefcake was watching yesterday."

Nyx shook her head. "His name is Denger. And it's because of Derek that I'm having second thoughts. I feel as if I'm betraying him, betraying his memory."

Janet put her arm around Nyx's shoulders. "It's understandable that you would feel that way, but you don't have to. It isn't as if you're breaking your marriage vows. You're a young widow. No one would expect you not to find another man to share your life with. I'm not going to let you back out of your coffee date with Denger. Even if he doesn't turn out to be the right one, at least you've taken that first step. It'll be easier when the next guy you get the hots for comes around."

"Who says I have the hots for Denger?" she asked with a chuckle.

"Oh, please. You have the hots for the man or you wouldn't be trying to run from him. Hell, if I wasn't a married woman, I would be trying to jump his bones. He's gorgeous and has a body any woman would love to have pressed against hers all night long."

Nyx laughed. "If only poor Pete could hear you now."



“He knows I’m all talk and that I’m all his. He also knows how to keep me well satisfied, if you know what I mean.” Janet winked.

“Too much information. The celibate in the store does not need to hear that.”

Janet rolled her eyes. “Well, hopefully the celibate won’t be celibate for too much longer. From the looks of Denger, I would say he would end your dry spell if you let him.”

Nyx did not need Janet to start on the subject of her nonexistent sex life. And she definitely didn’t need her putting any more ideas into her head when it came to Denger. She already had enough fantasy material inside her brain, all of it involving her jumping his bones, as Janet had so aptly put.

Luckily for her, a customer came up to the counter to make a purchase which had Janet dropping the subject. It would only be a small reprieve, but Nyx more than welcomed it. The closer the time came for Denger to arrive, the more uneasy she would get. Janet may have her best interests at heart but it didn’t mean she wasn’t making Nyx feel any less guilty than she already did.

\* \* \* \* \*

Three o’clock seemed to creep up on Nyx faster than she wanted it to. After her conversation with Janet, she had done a lot of clock-watching. Since she was still having doubts, her stomach became more knotted with each hour that ticked by. Every time the bookstore door opened, she found her gaze drawn to it, praying it wasn’t Denger coming early.

Nix was not good for much else so Janet had her putting out new stock. Since some of the shelves were out of her reach, Nyx had to use a tall step stool to get to the very top ones. Lost in her own thoughts, she stood on the stool with an arm full of books.

“Would you like some help with those?”

At the sound of Denger’s deep, slightly accented voice coming directly behind her, Nyx jumped and let out a yelp. In the middle of reaching for the top shelf, she lost her

balance. Falling, she was caught by a pair of strong arms that came around her waist and held her with her back pressed to an equally strong male chest.

She turned her head to look at Denger. "I'm not usually that clumsy. You startled me."

He gave her a sexy grin. "Apologies. I didn't mean to sneak up on you again, though I'm not going to complain about the outcome."

Nyx bit back a groan when Denger slowly lowered her to her feet, letting her slide down his front. He was hard in all the right places and there was no mistaking the large bulge in his jeans. A pounding ache formed in her pussy. It had been so long since she'd been intimate with a man that it didn't take much for her libido to kick into gear.

Shifting the books in her arms, she turned to face Denger. His pale brown eyes that verged on gold gazed down at her with longing. Nyx found herself staring back, unable to look away. An image of her and Denger in bed, his cock plunging deep inside her, appeared in her head. The image was so vivid she could almost feel his hard body moving against hers. The look of pleasure on his face while he took her made wetness pool between her legs. Then he opened his mouth to show her his extended fangs before he sank them into her neck at the same time his cock sank into her pussy.

Nyx shook her head and her heart raced in her chest. Damn, she did it again. She had to stop thinking about Denger as a vampire. And she had to stop having sexual fantasies about him while he stood in front of her. It was a good thing he couldn't read her mind.

Clearing her throat while she resisted the urge to fan her heated cheeks, she said, "I'll put these books aside and get my purse, then we can go."

Denger took the armful of books from her. "Here, let me carry those for you. Where do you want them?"

"On the counter for now. I'll finish putting them on the shelves after I come back from break."

She led him over to the counter and slipped behind it for her purse while he stacked the books on the end of it. Nyx had hoped to sneak out without Janet stopping them, but she had no such luck.

Janet walked up to Denger and held out her hand. "Hi, I'm Janet, boss and friend of Nyx."

He shook her outstretched hand. "I'm Denger. I promise to have Nyx back on time at the end of her break."

"No worries." Janet then turned to Nyx. "You can have an hour break today."

"I'm fine with the half hour," she said.

"No, you'll take an hour." Janet took Nyx by the arm and walked her around the counter until she stood next to Denger. "If you come back before the hour is up, I'll kick you back out of the store. Now go and enjoy yourself."

Knowing Janet would do just that, Nyx shook her head before she headed for the bookstore entrance with Denger at her side. Once they were on the sidewalk, her stomach felt as if it had butterflies in it. She'd never been outgoing with the opposite sex. Only with Derek had her shyness gone away. She'd felt comfortable with him right from the start.

She glanced at Denger from the corner of her eye. He was the total opposite of Derek. Her late husband hadn't been as muscular or as tall. He'd only been a few inches taller than her. Denger's six and a half feet made her feel positively short. In a perverse way, his largeness made her feel safe and a bit nervous at the same time. Then there was the whole sexual vibe he gave off. Testosterone practically oozed out of him. She could easily picture Denger taking a woman to his bed and making love to her until neither one of them could move. Sex with Derek had been nice. He'd been a gentle lover who had thought of her needs before his. He had never been as wild or desperate to have her like the heroes in the romances she read, but he had never left her wanting.

When they reached the coffee shop, Denger guided her to a table at the back of the room. After she told him what kind of coffee she wanted, he went to the counter to

place their orders. It didn't take long for him to return with two steaming cups of coffee in his hands. He placed one on the table in front of her before he took the chair across from hers.

Denger blew on his coffee then took a sip before he said, "I'm getting the impression that I'm making you nervous. You haven't said a whole lot since I arrived."

She gave him a small smile. "Maybe a little. I'm a bit out of practice when it comes to this."

"If it makes you feel any better, it's been a while for me as well."

Nyx chuckled. "I find that hard to believe."

"It's true." He took another sip from his cup. "I don't normally do dates."

"I thought this wasn't supposed to be a *date* date."

He grinned. "All right, I don't normally do coffee dates. Is that better?"

A smile tugged at her lips. "Yes. I bet you don't have problems when it comes to women. I can see them throwing themselves at you."

"Some do." Denger's suddenly heated gaze latched onto hers. "But I find I much prefer it when the woman knocks me on my ass in a parking lot."

Nyx's cheeks heated with the reminder of their encounter the evening before. "I got lucky."

"I think it was more than luck. It takes skill for a woman your size to get the drop on a man as large as I am."

"Well, I have taken a few karate and self-defense classes. You're the first person I've actually used it on outside of a classroom."

"In that case, you were taught well."

The conversation lapsed when they both drank their coffee. It wasn't an uncomfortable silence. Nyx glanced around the coffee shop and noticed that more than a few women were staring at Denger. With his long, waist-length hair, remarkable build and good looks, it didn't surprise her. She looked back at Denger to find him watching

her. If he noticed that he'd drawn some female stares, he didn't show it. He seemed to be completely focused on her.

After he gave her a long, lingering look that made her slightly breathless, Denger asked, "So, how long were you married to your husband before he died?"

Nyx took another swallow of coffee. "Five years," she said softly.

"I don't mean to pry. I'm just trying to get to know you better."

"It's okay. It has been three years. It doesn't hurt as much as it did when Derek first passed away."

"You were with him for a while then."

"Yeah. Derek and I started dating in high school. We married right after he graduated from college."

"Do you have any kids?"

"No. We were waiting until we could afford a house. Then Derek got sick and it just never happened."

"So you're completely alone."

"Not really. I do have family." Talk of Derek was only making Nyx feel guilty again. "Do you think we can change the subject? It's kind of hard to talk about my late husband while I'm out with a man for the first time since I lost him."

Denger swore under his breath in a language she didn't understand. "Sorry. I told you I'm not very good at this."

Not thinking, Nyx reached across the table and put her hand over his. "It's all right. No harm done. How about we talk about you?" She smiled. "It'll be my turn to put you in the hot seat."

He captured her hand in his and rubbed his thumb across her knuckles. "As long as you let me hold your hand like this, I'll answer any of your questions."

There it was again, that heated gaze of his that seemed to melt her insides. Her pussy clenched when he stroked his thumb across the back of her hand once again.

God, was it so long since she'd last felt a man's touch that simply holding his hand turned her on? Apparently so, because with each stroke, her nipples grew taut and wetness pooled between her legs.

Denger dragged in a deep breath through his nose and made a sound that suspiciously sounded almost like a groan. His heavy-lidded gaze skimmed along her face and down to the side of her neck. The expression of longing he wore intensified. Nyx's heart beat faster. She wasn't completely unaffected by his stare.

He jerked his gaze back to her face. "Ask away," Denger said in a voice gone husky.

Nyx licked her lips and nodded. "Okay. What do you do for a living?"

"I don't work."

*Stroke. Stroke.* Denger's soft caresses against the top of her hand were making the rest of her body stand up and demand attention. "You don't work?"

"No. I don't need to."

"As in you're rich?"

"Exactly."

"Okay." It figured that Denger would be good-looking and rich. "Must be nice."

"I earned it. Believe me."

"Does that mean you live in a big mansion somewhere in the suburbs?"

Denger chuckled. "No. The suburbs are too tame for me."

Yeah, she couldn't picture him in the burbs doing yard work on the weekends. "Then what do you do with your days?" She looked at his wide chest. "You obviously spend a lot of time in a gym working out."

"I like to train to keep on top of my game. As for what I do with my days, pretty much whatever I want."

Nyx didn't miss the wicked glint in Denger's eyes when he said that last part. She shivered and it had nothing to do with being cold. The meaning of his words wasn't lost on her. She could picture him lying in bed, his hard body naked and aroused,

waiting for his lover to join him. He'd reach down and take his hard cock in his hand and—

She gave herself a mental kick. She had to stop daydreaming about Denger like that. It was so unlike her. Maybe it was because of her age. Weren't women supposed to hit their sexual peak when they turned thirty? It didn't help that Denger still held her hand in his much larger one and with each breath the scent of his cologne filled her nose.

Picking up her coffee cup, she looked inside to see how much was left before she drained it. Fortunately, it had cooled enough so she didn't burn her tongue. "How about we go for a walk before I go back to work? Unless you need more time to finish your coffee?"

Denger tipped his cup back and emptied it. "A walk is exactly what I need."

They stood and he took her hand to lead her out of the coffee shop. Walking as they were, Denger brushed up against her side from time to time. Nyx fought the urge to lean into him. She'd hoped the walk would help to get her wayward body under control, but obviously not. More aware of Denger at her side than ever, she hoped he didn't try to kiss her. If he did, she had a sneaky suspicion she'd be all over him.

## **Chapter Four**

He was in trouble. His good intentions to take things slow with Nyx had already started to crumble. He'd almost screwed it up when he'd first arrived at the bookstore and had caught her in his arms when she'd stumbled. Before he realized what he was doing, he'd projected his thoughts to Nyx—thoughts of the pair of them in bed together. When she'd started to breathe faster and the scent of her arousal perfumed the air around them, he'd been hard pressed not to drag her to him and take her lips the way he ached to.

After that, he'd managed to keep his thoughts to himself. But sitting across from Nyx while he held her hand and the scent of her arousal grew strong once again, his cock had throbbed painfully inside his jeans. His fangs ached just as much.

The fresh air was helping him to keep himself under control, but not by much. The longer he spent with Nyx, the more he wanted her. And she wanted him. Her scent told him so. He purposely guided Nyx down the sidewalk in the opposite direction of the bookstore. He didn't want her trying to ditch him early if they got too close to it.

Denger jerked his thoughts back to his surroundings when Nyx said, "If I forget to say it later, I want you to know I enjoyed having coffee with you."

"Does that mean you'll see me again?"

She turned her head and smiled. "I think so."

"Can it be a real date the next time?"

"Maybe, since you made my first foray into the social scene easy."

A woman carrying a load of shopping bags stepped out of a store directly in front of them. To avoid Nyx banging into her, Denger pulled her tighter to his side. Nyx let out a small gasp when the side of her breast came in contact with his arm. Arousal and



blood hunger slammed into him. He couldn't take any more. He had to have just a small taste of Nyx before he went out of his mind with wanting her.

Having intimate knowledge of most of the alleys in Phoenix from all the years of hunting the undead, he ducked down the nearest one with Nyx in tow. He followed its length until he came to a dead end where there was a small alcove out of sight of the street. He pulled her into it, took her in his arms and claimed her lips with his as he backed her up against the brick wall.

At first, Nyx just stood there, but when he moved his lips over hers and swept his tongue across them, she let out a sigh and opened for him. Denger tangled his tongue with hers and deepened his kiss. His first real taste of her caused a loud groan to rumble out of him. Feeling her arms come up to grip his shoulders had him holding her tighter. He ground his erection against her while he slanted his mouth across hers, making sure her tongue didn't come into contact with his fangs.

The feel of her pressed against him was sweet hell. He slowly dropped his hands from her waist to her ass. Molding her jean-clad flesh in his hands, he lifted her so his cock came in contact with her pussy. Nyx moaned into his mouth, her fingers tangling in his long ponytail. Rocking his hips against her, he moved from her mouth, drawn to the side of her neck. He dragged his tongue across the large vein there, barely resisting the urge to drag one of his fangs along her skin.

The sound of her rapidly beating heart and the taste of her in his mouth had his fangs dropping. Trembling as he fought to bring himself back under control, Denger buried his face in the crook of her neck and held her tight.

"Denger?" Nyx asked in a breathy voice.

He squeezed her tighter. "Just give me a few seconds to calm down."

Once his fangs receded and he could breathe without panting, he lifted his head to look at her. The sight of her lips swollen from his kisses and her eyes dilated with passion made him want to continue what they had started. Instead, he slowly let her down on her feet, keeping his arms around her waist.

"I hope I didn't overstep," he said. "I've been dying to kiss you since I arrived at the bookstore."

Nyx shook her head and placed her palms flat on his chest. "No, you didn't. Truth be told, I hoped you would kiss me." She swallowed. "Since our coffee date has gone well, would you like to come to my place and have a late dinner with me? I get off work at six."

Denger wanted nothing more than to have dinner with Nyx but his nights were not his own. All of Ra's Chosen had to be out on the streets hunting undead, especially now. The month before they had managed to take out one of Apep's demons, Sek. They also figured it wouldn't be too long before Mot, the second demon Apep had unleashed on the world, would make his move against them.

He groaned. "I wish I could but I can't. I have something I have to do tonight."

"Oh. Never mind then. I understand." Nyx's gaze dropped to his chest.

Denger placed a finger under her chin and forced her to look up at him. "It isn't that I don't *want* to have dinner with you. Believe me, I would much rather spend my evening with you."

"All right. Then how about lunch? I don't have to work tomorrow."

He gave her a closed mouth smile. "Now that, I can do. You're not going to get rid of me that easily."

"I guess it's a date then."

Releasing Nyx, he took her hand in his and led her out of the alley. "And one that I'll be looking forward to." Back on the sidewalk, he turned them in the direction of the bookstore. "I better get you back to work before I get you in trouble with your boss for being late."

"Knowing Janet, I doubt she'll mind. She's happy to see me out with a man. At least now I don't have to worry about her pushing her cousin on me again, wanting me to go out on a blind date with him."

Denger definitely didn't like the notion of Nyx seeing another man, even though she hadn't. It was the whole idea of the unknown man being a potential rival that got to him.

When they reached the bookstore, he held open the door for Nyx then followed her inside. To give Janet the message that Nyx was taken, he put his arm around her shoulders and pulled her against his side as they walked to the back counter. He was pleased that Nyx didn't resist, even when Janet looked up from what she was doing and smiled at them.

At the counter, he turned Nyx so she faced him and captured her chin. He kissed her long and hard. After he released her, she stared at him with a glazed look in her eyes.

He started to back away then stopped when he remembered he had no idea where Nyx lived. "You still have to give me your address."

She blinked a few times. "My what?"

He bit back a smile. He'd really gotten to her with that last kiss. "If you want me to come over to your place for lunch tomorrow I need to know where you live."

"Oh... Oh, I guess that would help." Nyx quickly rattled off an address. "Do you know where that is?"

"I know exactly where to find it. I'll see you tomorrow at around noon."

Letting his gaze sweep across Nyx's face one last time, he turned and walked out of the bookstore. He chuckled to himself. Well, damn. Here he had spent a week walking up and down Phoenix's streets trying to find his mate and it turned out she lived only a couple streets away from the headquarters. Nyx lived in one of the loft apartments in one of the converted warehouses. She'd been practically under his nose and he hadn't known it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nyx stood frozen in place while she watched Denger's broad back disappear through the door. He'd just kissed her stupid in front of Janet and any customers who were in the bookstore. Her lips still tingled. She had to give him credit—the man knew how to use his mouth. It also made her wonder what else that mouth of his would be good at.

Her thoughts then flicked back to the kiss they had shared in the alley. Denger had kissed her as if he couldn't get enough of her. And she liked it. Derek had never kissed her that way. He'd always treated her as if she would break. Nyx had a feeling that if she ever slept with Denger, he would be just as demanding in bed as his kisses were. Her pussy clenched at the thought.

"Hello? Earth to Nyx. Anybody home?" Janet asked behind her.

With a deep breath, Nyx turned to face her. "Sorry."

Janet chuckled. "Hey, after a kiss like that, I'd be out of it as well. I take it your coffee date went well with Denger since you invited him over to your place for lunch."

"Yes, very well," she said.

The remembered feel of Denger's hard cock grinding against her pussy was going to assuredly give her nice dreams that night. He'd felt thick and long, big enough to fill her all the way up. And having his hard, muscular body pressed to hers had felt like heaven.

"I'm losing you again," Janet said with a laugh. "Are you sure you're going to be able to focus enough to work the rest of your shift, or do I have to send you home early?"

Nyx pushed her arousing thoughts about Denger out of her head. "No, I'm good."

She quickly picked up the books she'd been shelving before Denger's arrival. Going home was the last thing she wanted. At least at work she would be distracted enough to keep her mind off her lunch date with Denger the next day. Tomorrow couldn't get here fast enough.

\* \* \* \* \*

Denger followed the prickling of his skin, the sign that an undead was nearby, to the back of a closed clothing store. The closer he came in range, the stronger the prickling became. Drawing his *khopesh*, an ancient Egyptian-style sword the warriors still preferred to use, he silently made his way to the darkest corner of the building.

With his excellent night vision, he saw an undead had cornered a young male mortal. The kid looked no older than eighteen or nineteen. So far the undead hadn't bitten him, sometimes the bastards liked to play with their victims, which in this case was lucky for the kid. There was no cure for an undead bite besides death.

To draw the undead's attention, Denger shouted, "Hey, ugly. Why don't you come and play with me?"

The undead turned and hissed. As expected, when threatened by something as strong as him, the undead went on the attack. The dumb buggers always did that just before they tried to make a run for it. Ready, Denger waited until he got in reach to swing out with his sword. The blade caught the undead across the chest. As soon as the bronze cut into the skin, the undead jerked before he started to quickly decompose. In a matter of seconds, there was nothing but an empty pile of clothes on the ground to show where the undead had been.

Sheathing his sword, Denger turned to the kid. He hadn't moved from where he had been cornered. His eyes were wide with shock and his whole body shook. Luckily for him, he wouldn't remember any of what he'd just seen or the near-attack on him.

Denger closed the distance between them and caught the kid by the chin, forcing him to look into his eyes. The boy whimpered once but relaxed once Denger began the process of wiping his mind. When finished, he planted the idea of the kid going home to bed and for him not to hang out by himself in any more dark streets. The boy walked away, looking through Denger as if he wasn't there, and made his way out to the front of the building.

A few minutes went by before Denger hit the sidewalk to continue hunting. Saving someone before being bitten didn't happen all that often. Most times the warriors arrived too late and would have to put down the undead who'd done the biting and the newly turned victim, which sucked. This time, he scored one for the good guys.

As he walked, thinking about the undead attacking the boy, Denger found his thoughts drawn to Nyx. Being his mate, she stirred all his protective instincts. He didn't like the idea of her living alone. Ideally, he wanted her safely tucked inside the headquarters each night but that wasn't going to happen anytime soon. At least not until he was able to explain what he was and what he did with his nights.

Telling Nyx the truth about him was not something Denger looked forward to. He really had no idea how to go about it. With Blythe and Desiree basically being dumped into the Chosen's lives, Mehen and Set had had one less thing to worry about. Denger had to figure out when would be a good time to break the news to Nyx and then get her to accept what he'd told her.

And it wasn't as if he had a shitload of time to do it either. Since meeting Nyx, his blood hunger had increased to the point where it didn't bother him too much, but it made its presence felt. He knew soon his stomach would start to cramp, demanding the blood of his mate. And if he reached the stage of extreme blood hunger, his stomach would start eating itself and he wouldn't even be able to tolerate food. It wouldn't kill him but it would weaken him and would be damn well unpleasant to go through.

Having spoken to Mehen and Set, who had already gone through this, Denger had also learned his blood hunger would increase faster once he slept with his mate. The need to feed from her would be just as strong as his need to claim her body. Not sleeping with Nyx before he told her what he was wouldn't be an option. If the opportunity presented itself, he was not going to pass it up. He ached for her too much. He also hoped the closeness that would come from it would better help Nyx accept him for what he was when the time came.

Making the complete loop of the area he'd been given to hunt in, Denger got into his Mustang and drove toward the headquarters. On the way there he drove to Nyx's loft apartment. He pulled to the curb in front and stared up at the floor that was hers. It was late enough that most of the lights in the building were out. Satisfied that Nyx was safely asleep in her bed for the night, he continued on his way. Until he had her living with him in his quarters, he would be doing this drive-by at the end of every night.

## **Chapter Five**

Nyx awoke early the next morning with a mental list of things to do before Denger arrived at noon. First and foremost, she had to make a trip to the grocery store. About all she had in the apartment for lunch were some cans of soup. Given how large Denger was, she didn't think soup would be enough to fill his belly. She planned to make something more substantial—submarine sandwiches. She'd load Denger's with lunch meat, cheese and other toppings. Hopefully that would cut it.

After she showered and dressed, Nyx headed to the grocery store. Along with the fixings for the subs, she picked up a six-pack of beer and some soda. She wasn't much of a drinker but she decided to have the beer on hand to offer to Denger. He looked as if he were a beer man.

Not sure what he would want on his sub, she decided not to make them until after Denger arrived. So once she got home, she only had to put the beer and the soda in the fridge, which left her with not much to do until noon rolled around.

Nyx sat on the couch but soon found herself too nervous to sit for long. Her nervousness partly had to do with Denger coming over to her place and partly to do with the decision she'd made in her lonely bed the night before.

After the kisses she'd shared with Denger, Nyx craved more. Coming to grips with how she felt about him, she decided she was going to sleep with him. And if things went well this afternoon, hopefully she'd have him in her bed today. She wasn't going to blatantly try to seduce him, considering how he'd been with her the day before, she didn't think it would take much if she wanted to have him anyway. She was going to let nature take its course. But she wouldn't hesitate to let Denger know she was interested. When she made her mind up to do something she went for it.



At one minute after noon, her buzzer sounded. She used the intercom to tell Denger to come in as she buzzed him through the entrance to the building. She stood in the doorway and waited for him to appear at the top of the stairs to her floor.

The sound of his heavy footsteps echoing up the stairway preceded him. When he reached the top, she stepped out into the hall. "Over here, Denger."

He gave her a grin that made her think of naked bodies in bed as he made his way over to her. She stepped aside and motioned him inside the apartment. Once he walked around her, she shut the door behind them.

Denger held out the bottle of wine she hadn't noticed he carried. "This is for you. My friend's wife suggested I bring it since she said it would be rude to show up empty-handed."

She took it from him. "You didn't have to bring anything. Would you like something to drink? I can open the wine, or I have beer along with soda in the fridge."

"A beer would be great."

"One beer coming up."

She grabbed a can of beer and a soda for herself out of the fridge. Turning, she saw Denger had followed her into the kitchen. She handed him his drink and motioned for him to follow her into the living room. Since it was a loft apartment, the main area was basically open-concept with one room running into the next. The only area that was separate was her bedroom, which was on a balcony-styled upper level.

"Nice place," Denger said as he sat on the couch next to her.

"Thanks. I like it."

"Have you lived here long?"

"A few years. I bought it shortly after my husband died."

"You have lots of room."

Nyx watched Denger's throat work when he took a swallow of beer. She wondered what his skin would taste like if she leaned over and licked the hollow of his throat. Her

gaze dropped to the tight, dark gray t-shirt he wore and to the black jeans that hugged his legs and hips just right. With a silent sigh of appreciation, she lifted her gaze back to his face and found him watching her intently.

“Ah...would you like to eat now?”

Putting his beer on the coffee table in front of them, he inched closer and took her can of soda out of her hand. He placed it on the table as well. “I’m hungry, but I’d rather have a taste of you first.”

Nyx’s heart beat faster when Denger moved even closer. He turned and pulled her into his arms before he gently brushed his lips across hers. When he did it again, she sighed. With the parting of her lips, he pushed his tongue inside her mouth and tangled it with hers.

Wanting the kiss he had given her in the alley, she reached up and wrapped her arms around his neck as she increased the pressure of her lips. Denger obliged by angling his mouth across hers more fully. His tongue thoroughly swept the inside of her mouth only to tangle with hers once again.

While he kissed her hungrily, Denger lowered her so she lay on her back on the couch. He came down on top of her, resting his weight on his bent arms and with a leg between hers. He covered her breast with his hand through her shirt and plucked at her taut nipple. Nyx moaned as her pussy grew wet. This was what she wanted—Denger touching her, the feel of his mouth against hers.

She dropped her hands to the tops of his broad shoulders and squeezed, trying to pull Denger even closer. The feel of his engorged cock rubbing against her thigh made her pussy clench and wetness leak into her panties. Her hips lifted off the couch as she rocked into him.

The hand on her breast skimmed down her side to the bottom of her shirt. Moving from her mouth, Denger kissed a trail along her jaw to her ear while he pushed up the front of her top. He then undid the front clasp of her bra with a flick of his hand.

Brushing a cup aside, he rolled her nipple between his thumb and index finger before he gave it a tug. Nyx couldn't hold back the whimper of need that pushed past her lips.

Nuzzling the side of her neck, Denger said with a voice made deeper with arousal, "You like it when I play with your breast?"

She moaned again. "Yes."

He slid down her body a bit. "You should like this even more."

Nyx sucked in a ragged breath when Denger bent his head and circled her nipple with the tip of his tongue. He did it a second time then gently blew on it, which elicited a gasp from her. It wasn't until he opened his mouth and sucked the tight peak inside did she lift her hands to his head to hold him to her.

Denger shifted, giving her other breast the same attention. As he sucked, her pussy grew even wetter. She breathed in pants, becoming more excited. She wanted nothing more than to rip Denger's clothes off and then her own so she could feel him pressed against her with nothing separating them.

Releasing his head, Nyx put her hands on his back. She bunched the material of his t-shirt in her fists and yanked so the bottom of it pulled out of his jeans. With a grunt, Denger let go of her nipple, grabbed the back of his shirt and pulled it over his head. He dropped it to the floor.

Nyx dropped her gaze to the wide expanse of Denger's smooth chest. He was a work of art with his well-defined pecs and washboard abs. She wanted to lick and kiss every inch of them. For now, she settled for running her hands up and down his muscular arms.

Denger took hold of the bottom of her shirt that was still bunched to her chin. "I took off my shirt. It's only fair you do the same."

Once her shirt hit the floor, Nyx pulled her bra off. Denger settled back on top of her, chest to chest and went back to kissing her. With her breasts flattened against his warm skin, she kissed him back, sucking his tongue into her mouth.

Needing more, she squirmed under Denger, rubbing her pussy along his hard thigh. He placed a hand on her hip to still her movements then used it to open the front of her jeans. Breaking their kiss, he bent to suck at her breast as he shoved his hand inside her panties. The brush of a finger along her wet core had Nyx lifting her hips in invitation.

"Mmm, so wet," he said around her nipple.

Nyx felt a very sharp point of a tooth graze her skin when he'd spoken but when Denger pushed a finger inside her pussy, she soon forgot about it. She squeezed her inner walls around the digit as he moved it in and out. When a second joined the first, she rocked her hips in time with his movements. With him sucking at her breast while she rode his fingers, her orgasm started to build. It had been so long it wouldn't take much to push her over the edge.

Denger released her nipple and then buried his face in the crook of her neck. He pumped his fingers faster, angling them so his thumb brushed her clit. The extra stimulation was enough to send her flying. With a whimpered moan, she started to come. Her pussy rhythmically clutched at his fingers. He kept them moving in and out of her until he wrung every drop of pleasure from her.

Panting, Nyx pushed at Denger's shoulders, but he didn't budge. He pulled his hand out of her pants and kept his head in the crook of her neck. She ran her hands up and down his back, finding all the muscles there clenched as if he was trying to hold himself back. She didn't want him to. The feel of his hard cock against her thigh had her wanting it where his fingers had been.

She shifted beneath him. "That was nice, but we don't have to stop there."

Denger took a shuddering breath and clamped a hand on her hip. "Don't move. Just lie still until I get myself back under control."

Nyx didn't want him under control. She wanted all of him, no holds barred. With her libido jump-started, it had her body raring to go. Reaching between them, she

managed to brush her fingers along Denger's erection before he captured her wrist and pinned it on the couch over her head.

"If you touch me again like that, I'm going to lose the fight," he said in a strained tone.

"Maybe I want you to."

"No, you don't. Not yet anyway."

He threw himself off her and moved to sit on the edge of the couch with his face in his hands. His body shook as he took deep, cleansing breaths. Nyx sat up and stroked his arm, which was clenched, his biceps bulging.

"I thought—I thought we were going to—" she stammered. When she didn't get a response, she added, "I know it's been a while for me, but if I did something you didn't like you can tell me."

Denger's hand snaked out, landed on the back of her neck and pulled her to his mouth. He kissed her with what could only be described as pent-up lust. With each demanding slide of his lips, he had her body back into overdrive.

Pulling away, he met her gaze. "You didn't do anything wrong. The fault lies with me. I need to take things a little slower."

"Why? I thought we were getting on just fine."

He bent his head forward until their foreheads touched. "Better than just fine. And that's the problem."

To Nyx, she couldn't see that being a problem at all. To be honest, she didn't understand Denger's reluctance one bit. She'd thought for sure when things had started to get hot and heavy that it would have ended with them having sex. With him sitting beside her with his shirt off and a bulge in his jeans that made her pussy ache, she wanted more, so much more.

When Denger picked up his shirt and pulled it on, Nyx figured things were not going to progress to the pleasurable end she'd first thought they would. Feeling self-

conscious sitting shirtless with the button and zipper undone on her jeans, she scooped up her bra and shirt. She avoided looking at Denger as she put them on and did up her pants.

She stood, then said, "I thought we would have subs for lunch. You just have to tell me what you'd like on yours and I'll make it."

Before she could step around Denger, he stood in front of her and blocked her way. He put one arm around her waist to pull her against him as he placed a hand under her chin, forcing her to look at him. "I'm not rejecting you, Nyx. Believe me, I want you, badly. I just don't want to mess things up between us. If I rush this, I'm liable to do something that may upset you. I don't want that to happen." He ground his still hard cock against her stomach. "We will be together. For this to work, we'll take it one step at a time. All right?"

"Okay."

Now that some of the edge had worn off her arousal, she found she wanted to take things a bit slower as well. She didn't want a quick roll in the hay with Denger. She'd never been the kind of woman who could handle a one-night stand. If she slept with a man, she wanted a relationship with him. And she definitely wanted one with Denger.

"So are we good?" he asked with a grin.

She nodded. "We're good."

"Then subs sound great. I just need to make a quick pit stop in the bathroom, then I can help you make them."

After Nyx told Denger where he could find her bathroom, she went into the kitchen and pulled out the fixings for the subs. They still had the rest of the day and she intended to see just how far Denger would go before he put the brakes on things once again.

\* \* \* \* \*

Denger turned on the cold water and splashed some on his face. He then put his hands on the counter and let his head fall forward. He was still battling the aftereffects of what Nyx and he had done on the couch. Listening to the sounds she made as she'd come, the smell of her arousal filling his nose with each breath, had almost been too much. The need to sink his cock inside her pussy as he sank his fangs into her neck had clawed at him. He'd had to hide his face in the end so she wouldn't see his extended fangs. Just the thought of how it had felt to have her pussy clutching his fingers when she came had them punching down once again.

He lifted his head and looked at his reflection in the mirror above the sink. The tips of his fangs peeked past his upper lip. They were going to be a problem. He wanted to sleep with Nyx but he didn't want her to see them just yet. And if he slept with her, she would see them. His fangs extending was something that happened when he got turned-on. It was also something he couldn't control. Somehow he would have to work around them.

Turning off the water, Denger used a hand towel to dry his face. He finally got himself reined in enough that his fangs receded once again. With a couple hard tugs, he pulled out the piece of leather he used to tie his hair back. When Nyx had held him to her breast, she'd tried to bury her fingers in it. Smiling, he smoothed his hair back and retied it in a ponytail. Next time they came together, he'd wear it loose and she could run her fingers through it as much as she wanted.

## **Chapter Six**

Rejoining Nyx in the kitchen area of her loft, Denger came up behind her where she stood at the counter and put his arms around her waist. He pressed close and kissed the side of her neck.

"It looks as if you have everything to make a great-tasting sub," he said while he took in all the food Nyx had spread out on the countertop.

"I hope so," she said. "What would you like on yours?"

"Everything you have there. I can make my own."

She shook her head and pulled his arms from around her. "No, I'll make it. You're my guest. Take a seat at the table and I'll have these done in a few minutes."

Well trained by Blythe that when a woman said to go sit down while she was fixing a meal you did it or faced the consequences, Denger backed away. "Fine, I won't get in the way." He then remembered their drinks out in the living room. "I'll just go get my beer and your soda."

After he got them, he took a seat on one of the two chairs at the small kitchen table. He sipped his beer while he watched Nyx finish making their subs. He followed the line of her back with his gaze. She really was a tiny thing but she fit perfectly in his arms. He couldn't wait to get her in bed to see just how well they fit together.

Denger quickly pulled his thoughts away from the subject of hot sex with Nyx when she turned and brought over two plates. She set one in front of him before she sat in the other chair. He picked up half of the thick sub she'd made and took a big bite. He chewed, enjoying the taste of the meat, cheese, lettuce and tomatoes. His second bite didn't leave much of the half sub he held in his hands.

"Since you've just about inhaled it, I'm going to guess you like the sub," Nyx said with a laugh.



Once his mouth was empty, he gave her a sheepish smile. "It's very good. I do like my food. Blythe is forever complaining about us eating all the food as fast as she can get it in."

Nyx frowned. "Blythe?"

"Blythe is my friend's wife. The one who suggested I bring you the wine."

"Oh. You eat over at your friend's place a lot, I take it."

Knowing Nyx would have to find out who he lived with, Denger decided to tell her the truth. "Actually, I live with Mehen and Blythe."

"So they're your roommates?"

"Yeah, I guess you could call them that. I like to think of the eight of us more as an extended family."

Nyx's eyes widened. "Eight of you? You have that many roommates? Isn't it a bit crowded at your place?"

He chuckled. "Where I live, we have a ton of space. And yes, there are eight of us. There is Mehen and Blythe, Set and his wife, Desiree, Akori, Kysen, Takan and myself. Except for Blythe and Desiree, we all came to the States together."

"I wondered at your slight accent. Where did you immigrate from?"

"Egypt."

"I've always wanted to go there to see the ancient ruins. I guess you've seen the pyramids, the Sphinx and some of the tombs?"

"Yes, I've visited them." He'd visited them when they hadn't been ancient ruins. He'd also watched the pyramids at Giza being built.

"You must have immigrated a while ago. Your English is perfect."

"It has been a few years."

Ra's Chosen had been in the States for the last thirty years. They had followed Sek and Mot to Phoenix, though why the two demons had picked a place where it had sunshine eighty-five percent of the time was beyond them. The sunlight was as much

an enemy to the demons as the Chosen were. As for the warriors' ability to speak English, Ra had gifted them with that language shortly after their arrival in the States.

Nyx and Denger fell silent while they ate. Even though they didn't speak, he was all too aware of Nyx sitting across from him. Before he lost himself in his longings to have her under him again, he forced himself to concentrate on his food.

After they finished eating, he got up with Nyx and took his plate to the sink. He came up behind her and reached around her to put it inside. At the same time, she backed up and turned. They ended up plastered together from chest to knee. He slowly lowered the plate into the sink and stiffened, clenching his jaw while he fought to tap down the surge of intense need that washed through him.

She tilted her head back to look him in the face. "Sorry. I didn't realize you were that close behind me."

Denger's gaze fell to Nyx's mouth when the tip of her tongue came out and licked her lips. He groaned. That was it. He couldn't take any more. His good intentions of taking it slow so he could keep better control of himself flew out the window.

He cradled her face in both his hands and took her mouth in a heated kiss. Nyx put her arms around his waist, kissing him with equal fervor as she rubbed up against him like a kitten. Just like that, they both went up in flames. It was as if they were continuing what they had started on the couch with no break in between.

This time, Denger didn't know if he had the strength of will to pull away. Blood hunger and arousal pounded at him, blocking everything else out. He sucked her bottom lip into his mouth and gently bit down on it, careful not to nick her with his fangs. She whimpered, dropped her hands to his ass and squeezed. His cock went instantly rock hard.

When he released her mouth and moved to nibble at the side of her neck, Nyx said on a sigh, "I thought you wanted to take things slow."

"I changed my mind. You're a temptation I find I can't resist."

"Good, because right now all I can think about is getting you out of your clothes."

He groaned again. "Keep talking like that and I'll end up taking you on the kitchen floor."

"The floor is clean. I don't mind."

"But I do."

Scooping her up in his arms, he kissed her feverishly, hoping to distract her as he moved faster than any mortal could up the flight of stairs that took them to Nyx's bedroom. When he reached the queen-sized bed, he put her back down on her feet, letting their bodies slide together.

Denger released her lips and pulled her shirt off before he rid himself of his own. He undid the front clasp of Nyx's bra and with his hands, smoothed the straps down her arms. Once she was free of it, he bent his head and laved a taut nipple with the flat of his tongue. Putting his arm around her waist, he bent her over it slightly and sucked the tight bud inside his mouth.

Nyx arched her back and tried to bury her fingers in his hair. Keeping her held against him, and without breaking the suction of his mouth, Denger yanked out the piece of leather that held his hair gathered at the back of his neck. When it fell around his shoulders, she sank her fingers into it and roughly held him to her.

After paying the same attention to her other nipple, he lifted Nyx and placed her on the center of the bed. He followed her down, coming to lie on the mattress next to her, propped up on one arm. "I want to see all of you, Nyx," he said, his voice deepened by his arousal.

Her hands went to the top of her jeans and slowly undid them. "I'll show you mine if you show me yours," she said with a playful smile.

He gave her a closed-mouth grin, his fangs on the verge of dropping down. "I'll show you mine, but first I get to have my way with you."

Making short work of pulling Nyx's jeans and panties off, he stared down at her curvy body. His cock jerked inside his jeans, straining against his zipper. He wanted to hold on to her flared hips, holding her in place as he moved inside her. But he made no

move to do that. Instead, he settled between her legs and moved lower down her body. He kissed the underside of her breasts before he licked and kissed a path across her ribs and down to her flat stomach.

Inching even lower, he placed featherlight kisses from one hipbone to the other. Nyx moaned and shifted beneath him, lifting her hips. Denger used his shoulders to spread her legs wider apart. The smell of her arousal had his fangs dropping. He could hear the sound of her rapidly beating heart, her blood surging through her veins. Though his fangs ached to sink into her skin, he ignored his clamoring blood hunger and concentrated on what he was doing—pleasuring the woman who was to be his mate.

Careful not to look up at Nyx, he said, “I want to feel you come against my mouth before I take you with my cock.”

“God, yes,” Nyx moaned.

Needing no further encouragement, he licked her pussy from bottom to top. The taste of her juices on his tongue made a bead of pre-cum leak from the tip of his cock. Denger fought the urge to rip off his jeans and sink deep inside her. Before he did that he wanted her to come, to hear her cries of pleasure filling his ears.

With his mouth on Nyx’s pussy, he alternated between lapping at the opening of her body and swirling his tongue around her clit. Her whimpered moans grew louder as she lifted her hips to grind against his mouth. He doubted it would take much for him to send her into an orgasm. Aching to be inside her, he pushed a finger and then a second inside her core while he stimulated her clit with his tongue. He pumped them in and out, then sucked her clit into his mouth. Nyx cried out as her pussy rhythmically clamped around his fingers while she climaxed.

Keeping his lips pressed tightly together, he shucked off his jeans and settled his hips in the cradle of her thighs. Nyx reached between them, fisting his cock in her hand. He closed his eyes and groaned as he fought not to come when she pumped it up and down his full length.

Unable to take any more, he pulled her hand off his shaft and brought the tip to her moist entrance. Surging forward, he sheathed his cock to the hilt. The feel of her pussy closing around his length had him fighting not to lose it. Being deep inside Nyx felt even better than he'd thought it would. Even though he was on the large size, her pussy took every inch of his cock, squeezing him tight.

Arching his back, he pulled almost out and then surged back inside. He set a steady rhythm in and out. Nyx held on to his biceps and wrapped her legs around his waist, taking him even deeper. His climax built and built until he thought he would explode. Sex with Nyx wasn't like any of his other sexual encounters. This was no quick joining just to scratch an itch, or when he needed to feed.

Pumping his hips faster, Nyx's inner walls fluttered with another orgasm. As her pussy clutched at his cock, clamping down in a tight fist, Denger let out a bellow of pleasure as his climax took him over. He continued to ride her, filling her with his cum.

He collapsed on top of her, mindful to rest most of his weight on his arms so he wouldn't crush her. When Nyx's arms came up and started to stroke his back, his blood hunger surged to the fore. The need to bite her, to have her blood filling his mouth had him fighting a battle inside himself. It was one he came damn close to losing. Instead of burying his fangs in her neck, he shoved his face into one of the pillows and sank them into it instead. He didn't release it until he once again had his blood hunger well under wraps.

Rolling to his side, Denger shifted Nyx in his arms so she lay with her head pillowed on his chest. It was a special kind of torture to have her lying naked against him, his blood hunger clawing at his guts, wanting to feed from her to be absolutely certain she was indeed his mate. But it was a torture he wouldn't give up for anything.

Now that he'd slept with her, he couldn't put off telling Nyx what he truly was for too much longer. Already, his blood hunger had increased to the point where it was more than just a minor nuisance. And eventually, the chances of him slipping up and

giving her a good flash of his fangs were good. Having to hide what he was from the rest of mortal kind, Denger hated that he still had to keep it hidden from Nyx.

He looked at her when he felt her body go lax against his. He smiled. Her eyes were closed and her chest rose and fell with each even breath she took in sleep. He'd give her a week to become closer to him, then he'd tell her about him being one of Ra's Chosen warriors.

## **Chapter Seven**

Nyx slowly came awake when the hard, warm body she snuggled against shifted out from under her. She blinked open her eyes in time to get an excellent view of Denger's muscular chest before he bent over and picked up his jeans from the floor. Still facing her, he stepped into them and did them up. She sighed with regret.

At the sound, Denger smiled when their gazes met. "You're awake."

She lifted her head and rested it on her hand. "Sorry. I didn't mean to fall asleep on you."

He bent and gave her a quick kiss on the lips before he picked up his t-shirt. "You don't have to apologize. I didn't mind."

She followed his movements with her eyes as he pulled his shirt on and tucked his long hair behind his ears. His gaze then went to the floor as if he were searching for something. "You're leaving already? You don't have to, you know?"

Obviously spotting what he was looking for, Denger bent to pick it up. Nyx saw it was the piece of leather he'd used to tie back his hair. He pulled his hair into a ponytail and retied it, which caused her gaze to follow the flexing of his large biceps.

Denger nodded. "Yeah, I have to go. I wish I could stay longer, but I can't."

"When will I see you again?"

"Do you work tomorrow?"

"No. Since tomorrow is Sunday and Janet doesn't open the bookstore, I'm off again."

"All right. Then how about I take you out for lunch tomorrow?"

Nyx pushed herself up to a sitting position and took hold of a couple of belt loops on Denger's jeans. She used them to tug him closer to the side of the bed. "How about

instead you come and take me out for supper, then we can spend the rest of the night together?"

He brushed a lock of hair out of her eyes. "I wish I could, but my nights are usually not my own."

Nyx let go of his belt loops and trailed her hands around his sides and down to his muscled ass. "I thought you said you didn't work."

Denger bit back a groan when she kneaded his ass with her fingers. "Ah...I don't, but I have a commitment I have to keep. Something I do every night."

She inched closer to the edge of the bed and rubbed her cheek against Denger's abs. "Are you sure I can't convince you not to do whatever it is you have to do tomorrow night. It's only for one night."

"I'm positive. By the gods, Nyx, if you don't stop touching me like that I won't be able to leave."

Nyx lifted her head to look at him. "I said you didn't have to leave. I'm sure we can find lots of things to do to pass the time."

Denger gently pried her hands off him and took a step back. His chest rapidly rose and fell and there was an impressive bulge in his jeans. He shook his head while his heated gaze ran over her naked body. "With you sitting there like that, I'm tempted to say the hell with it and stay, but I really can't."

"I can't even tempt you stay just for an hour longer?" She locked her gaze with his. "I don't think once was enough."

His hands fisted at his sides and a muscle jumped along his jaw. "I can't. If I touch you again, I would want you for longer than an hour. I'd make love to you until neither one of us could move. So that being the case, I'm going to leave while I still can." He pulled a cell phone out of the front pocket of his jeans. "Give me your phone number. I'll call you tomorrow before I pick you up for lunch."



Nyx sighed as she admitted defeat. She rattled off her phone number and Denger programmed it into his cell. "I guess I'll have to wait until tomorrow then."

"I'll make it up to you. I promise." He swooped down, kissed her until she was breathless before he pulled away again. "Don't get up. I'll let myself out."

From the high vantage point of her balcony-styled bedroom, Nyx watched Denger walk out the door. A wide smile spread across her face as she let herself drop back down onto the bed. Making love with Denger had been as intense as she'd thought it would be. He'd given her two mind-blowing orgasms. The man knew how to use his hands, lips and tongue. She hated to admit it, but sex with her late husband hadn't been nearly as satisfying. Derek had been more of a sweet, gentle lover. Not like Denger, who took as good as he gave.

Stretching her arms up toward the headboard, Nyx then lowered them so the back of her hands rested on either side of her head on the pillow. She rubbed them back and forth against the material. Her baby finger ended up getting snagged on a small hole.

She sat up and pulled the pillow onto her lap. Her small apartment-sized washer and dryer were getting up there in age. She hoped the washer hadn't decided to eat pieces of her laundry the last time she used it.

Upon closer inspection, Nyx noticed there wasn't one hole but two equally spaced apart. *Strange*. They were perfect small circles. Even stranger, when she pulled the pillowcase off, she saw the exact same holes. Whatever had made the holes in the pillowcase had gone right through.

Nyx used her thumb and index finger to measure the space between the holes. They were two clean puncture marks. To her fanciful thinking, they looked as if a vampire had taken a bite out of her pillow. She smiled and shook her head at her overactive imagination. First she pictures Denger as the vampire hero in the book she was reading and now this. As if a vampire snuck in her room while she and Denger were in bed and tested his fangs on her pillow. Yeah, sure. And she doubted Denger went all dental on it either. Aside from the time when they had first bumped into each other and she

thought she saw fangs peeking between his lips, she hadn't seen any indication of him having any. And from the amount of kissing they'd done, she would have noticed. Not that she really expected Denger to have fangs. Vampires were only real in books and in movies.

She put the pillowcase back on before she returned the pillow to the bed. Looking over at her bedside clock, Nyx saw it was late afternoon. She gathered up her discarded clothes and carried them down the stairs to the bathroom. Since Janet had known about her lunch date with Denger, she'd wrestled a promise out of Nyx to call her as soon as the date was over. Deciding she needed to talk to her friend about what had happened with Denger, Nyx dressed and then settled on the couch to have a long conversation with her friend.

\* \* \* \* \*

The demon Sek watched his undead warriors train deep inside his lair. Mot, the other demon Apep, the demon god, had unleashed on the mortal world stood at his side. Ever since Ra's Chosen warriors had almost destroyed Sek the month before, Mot had been dogging his heels. It wasn't out of any concern on the demon's part. No, Mot was looking for any weakness to use against him.

"We need more undead warriors," Mot said without looking at him.

"I'm adding to their numbers."

Unlike the regular undead, the warrior kind were harder to create. For a mortal to be turned into an undead warrior, certain parts of his soul had to remain. It was a delicate task and one only Sek or Mot could accomplish. Then there was the training each one had to go through to learn how to master a sword. It all took time and couldn't be rushed.

Mot bared his fangs. "You must work faster. The number of your undead warriors doesn't match mine." The demon turned his head to look at Sek. "If your run-in with

the sun god's warriors has left you too weak for the task, I'll gladly take over doing all the turning."

Sek bared his own fangs and hissed. "Apep fully restored me."

There was no way he was going to let Mot amass the majority of their undead warriors. Whoever turned them was ultimately their master, who they obeyed without question. If he didn't keep Mot in check, the chances of Sek finding himself on the receiving end of an undead warrior attack were great. It was something he wasn't about to let happen.

Mot gave him a stare that said he didn't believe him. "Time will tell. I'll leave you now. Night will fall soon. When it does, I'll leave to my own lair, but I'll return tomorrow night to see if you have put this one to good use."

Once the other demon left the training chamber, Sek went back to watching his warriors. The pressure Mot was putting on him he blamed fully on Ra's warriors. And one in particular—Denger. It was that particular warrior who had staked him with a long dagger, pinning him to the ground to burn in the sun. If not for Apep telling Mot where to find Sek, he would have been destroyed. Mot took great relish in reminding him how the sun god's Chosen had bested him to the point where it almost cost him his life. The only reason Mot had saved him was because Apep had demanded he do so.

"If only I could get my hands on Denger. I'd make him pay for what he did to me," Sek grumbled quietly. The undead warrior he'd sent to infiltrate their headquarters had been destroyed before he could tell Set where they were actually located.

*And what exactly would you do to that warrior?* Apep asked him.

Sek gasped in pain. The sound of Apep's voice filling his head was just as grating as if someone ran their fingernails down a blackboard, only more painful. "I would take Denger's head and mount it on a pole."

*If I was to give you that opportunity, would you truly be up to the task?*

Sek clutched his head as blood dripped out of his nose. "I would be, master. That warrior is no match for me."

*You have failed me twice now, Sek. I have begun to think you are starting to wear out your usefulness.*

"I would not fail in this. I want the revenge I deserve. I will only settle for Denger taking his last breath."

*Then prove yourself worthy. The place I send you, go there tonight and every night until you have learned all that you need to know to defeat your enemy. If you are patient, all will be revealed to you.*

Sek then sank to the floor gasping in pain as Apep sent the address of the place he was sending him directly into his brain. It felt as if someone was taking a meat grinder to it. Once Apep's presence receded, Sek wiped the blood from his nose and his ears and stood. He now knew what he had to do. The address the demon god had given him wasn't too far from the place Ra's Chosen had almost taken him down permanently. He would do as bidden and patiently wait to see his revenge realized.

\* \* \* \* \*

Denger stepped into Ra's Chosen's headquarters and found Desiree standing in the hall. Suspiciously, it suspiciously looked as if she'd been waiting there a while, near he door that joined the docking bay to the main headquarters, by the way she'd been leaning against the wall.

Seeing him, she straightened with a smile. Then she just about deafened him when she yelled almost at the top of her lungs, "Blythe, Denger's back!"

Blythe came rushing out of the kitchen and hurried over to him and Desiree, who now stood in front of him blocking his way. "Well? How did your second date with Nyx go?"

"It went well," he said. Denger tried to walk around the two women, not really wanting to get into the intimate details of his date with Nyx, but they both moved so he couldn't.

"Just well? Not spectacular?" Blythe asked.

"She made us subs for lunch. They were really good subs."

"Come on, Denger," Desiree said. "We want the juicy details. And what she made you to eat is not one of them." She leaned in toward him. "I think you got some. What do you think, Blythe? Are those little strain lines on his face? As if his blood hunger is starting to claw at his guts? I don't think they were there before he left for his date."

Blythe gave his face a closer inspection. "You know what, Desiree? I think you're right. Those are new."

Denger rolled his eyes. "You two can assume whatever you want. I'm not going to give you the intimate details of my sex life."

He pushed past them and started to walk down the hall toward his private quarters. Blythe and Desiree were obviously not done with him yet, because they fell into step on either side of him.

"Ah ha," Desiree said rather loudly. "You said your *sex life*. You *did* sleep with Nyx. And the strained look must mean you managed to do it without feeding from her. I guess the countdown has begun."

They had just reached the door to Kysen's quarters. He must have heard them talking, because he stuck his head out into the hall and laughed. "Giving you the third degree, are they? Poor Denger. I'd offer you some advice on claiming your mate, but I think Blythe and Desiree will have that covered better than I would."

Without stopping, Denger flipped Kysen off. The sound of the other warrior bellowing with laughter followed him down the hall. It was bad enough he had to put up with the women bothering him. He didn't need Kysen yanking his chain on top of it all.

Reaching his door, he opened it and stepped through. Blythe and Desiree would have followed him inside if he hadn't turned and braced his arms across the opening. "Enough of the twenty questions already." When they made no move to leave, he sighed. "I take it you two aren't going to leave until I at least tell you something."

Both women gave him large smiles, giving him a good view of their fangs. "Nope," Blythe said. "We aren't going to let you get off that easily."

He gave a pained sigh. "All right. I slept with her, and no, I didn't bite her. I haven't told her what I am yet. I'm going to see her again tomorrow for lunch."

Desiree narrowed her eyes. "For someone who slept with the woman who more than likely is his mate and didn't feed from her, you look awfully, how should I put this?, not agitated. The first time Set and I slept together and he didn't get to sink his fangs into me right afterward, he barely managed to keep himself in check."

He groaned. "Please, I do not need to hear about you and Set in bed. And it was hard. Okay? Especially since I had to keep it hidden from Nyx. I ended up giving one of her pillows a new set of holes. Now go away. And Blythe, don't you need to start cooking dinner?"

Blythe chuckled. "Fine, I'll take the hint. We'll leave you alone. Just remember, if you need any advice, or if Nyx has a hard time understanding all this once you tell her what you are, Desiree and I are here for you."

"I'll remember."

Once he closed his door, Denger leaned back against it and took a deep breath. He hoped to hell he wouldn't have to run that gantlet every time he returned from a date with Nyx. Those two would drive him crazy if they pounced on him every time he came home. He knew they meant well, but damn, a man could only take so much before they started to drive him insane with their well-intentioned questions.

Denger pushed off the door and chuckled to himself. He could just picture what it would be like once Nyx moved into the headquarters. With three women living under the same roof, they would more than likely take strength in numbers and try to keep all the warriors in line. Of course the males of the place wouldn't stand a chance against them, most especially their mates. After so long living without women among them, having them here was like a breath of fresh air. Denger couldn't wait to add Nyx to the mix.

## **Chapter Eight**

Denger followed the prickling of his skin to the side alley of an empty store that had a large “for lease” sign in the front window. This would be his third undead he’d encountered that night. Rounding the corner to the back of the building, he looked right and left, searching the dark shadows as the prickling grew stronger. The undead was close. Damn close.

He’d just drawn his sword when a solid mass slammed into his side and body-checked him into the brick wall closest to him. Grunting when his shoulder connected with the immovable building, he quickly recovered and kicked the undead away before he could sink his fangs into his neck.

The thing hissed and bared his fangs as he circled around him. Denger shook his head. “Is that all you got?”

The undead hissed again and tried to take him down in another body check. Denger easily sidestepped out of the way. The undead pulled up short and in a flash, changed direction for another run that Denger easily avoided.

“What do you think you are? A football player?” he taunted. “To take down one of Ra’s Chosen you have to be a lot quicker than what you are.”

That didn’t seem to stop the undead from making another attempt. Growing bored with it all, Denger lifted his sword and struck out so the blade caught the undead across the stomach as he ran by. Stepping back, waving the stench of decomposing flesh out of his face, he watched the undead turn to dust.

That one taken care of, he headed back around the building to the front. It was late, only a few hours before dawn. The time had come to call it a night. The undead would soon be returning to their lairs where they literally slept like the dead during the daylight hours. Once the sun broke over the horizon, they dropped into their unnatural

sleep wherever they happened to be, which was the reason why the undead hid themselves away well before dawn.

Before returning to the headquarters to catch a few hours of shut eye, he drove to Nyx's apartment building. Denger pulled over to the curb and parked his Mustang before he got out. He stood out on the sidewalk outside and looked up. No lights shone from her windows. He could picture her lying in her bed soft and warm in sleep. Her lips would be slightly parted as she breathed, just as they had been that afternoon.

He'd watched her sleep in his arms for an hour, just content to hold her. A surge of longing washed through him. He didn't want to go back to his quarters and get into his cold, empty bed. Denger wanted to flash himself, Ra had gifted all his warriors with the ability to bend time and space, into Nyx's apartment and slip into bed with her. He'd pull her close, so he could feel her heart beat against his chest.

On the verge of doing just that, Denger quickly reined himself back. He had a feeling Nyx wouldn't be unhappy to have him back in her bed, but he didn't think he could come up with a plausible enough excuse as to how he managed to get into her locked apartment. And it wasn't as if he could say he climbed the outside fire escape and jimmied a window open since the converted warehouse didn't have one.

Giving Nyx's floor one last look of longing, Denger turned and headed back to his car. He couldn't stand out here all night mooning over her. He needed to get some sleep before he saw her again. Until he told her what he was, he needed to keep his wits about him or he'd slip up. He wanted to do this right.

\* \* \* \* \*

Stepping out of the shadows, Sek watched Denger's black Mustang pull away from the curb and drive off. Once it disappeared around the corner, he turned back to the converted warehouse the warrior had been standing in front of for so long.

It was the address to this building Apep had given him. After hours of watching but seeing nothing but mortals come and go, Sek had thought Apep had purposely sent



him on a wild-goose chase. He'd been about ready to return to his lair for the night. Cursing all the time he'd wasted when he could have been using it to create more undead warriors, the roar of Denger's Mustang reached his ears. The sight of the warrior had definitely perked up Sek.

Looking up at the building just as Denger had done, Sek now had to figure out exactly what the warrior had found so interesting about it. Now that he knew Apep had indeed given him some useful information, all that was left to do was watch and learn as the demon god had commanded him to do. No matter how many nights it took, Sek felt sure all would be revealed to him soon. He just had to be patient and when the opportunity presented itself, he'd get his revenge and Denger would learn what happened when you fucked with a demon.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nyx stood in front of the mirror above her dresser and looked at herself. She gave her hair another swipe with the brush, making sure the ends fell to her chin just so to frame her face to her liking. Satisfied with her hair, she put the brush on the dresser and swept her gaze down her body. Not sure where Denger was going to take her for lunch, she'd opted for a pair of black jeans and a cream-colored silk, short-sleeved blouse. And since she felt positively short around him, she was wearing a pair of black high-heeled sandals. A few squirts of perfume, and she was done.

She took the stairs down to the main floor carefully, making sure she held on to the banister. Nyx wasn't really a high heels kind of gal. She much preferred her runners, or a nice pair of flats. All she needed was to trip on the stairs and fall, breaking her leg in the process. She wanted to look sexy for Denger and a cast was the farthest thing from it.

Stepping into the living room, Nyx glanced at the clock on the wall. She had about fifteen minutes before Denger would arrive. Her feet already starting to protest the high heels, she went and sat on the couch. She jumped when the phone started to ring.

Quickly picking up the cordless on the end table, she said, "Hello?"

"Don't you sound chipper today," her mom said on the other end. "Usually when I call you on a Sunday you're a bit distracted because you have your nose buried in one of those romance novels you love so much."

Nyx chuckled. "I'm not that bad, Mom."

"Well, maybe not but you're getting there. I bet you're still in bed in your pajamas reading."

"For your information, I'm dressed and sitting in the living room."

"That works out well then. How about I pick you up and take you out for lunch? I feel like spending the afternoon with my favorite daughter."

Even though her mom couldn't see it through the phone, Nyx shook her head. "I'm your only daughter. Unless Evan had a sex change operation without me knowing about it."

Her mom chuckled. "No, your brother didn't have a sex change operation. So? Are we on for lunch?"

Nyx swallowed. She had known she would have to tell her parents about Denger eventually, but she'd hoped to wait until she'd been seeing him a little bit longer.

"Ah—well," she stammered. "I can't. I already have a lunch date."

"With a man?" her mom asked expectantly.

"Yes, with a man." Nyx then had to quickly pull the phone away from her ear when her mother let out a loud whoop. "Thanks, Mom. I think I lost the hearing in one ear."

"Sorry, but it's about time you got back into the dating world. So what's he like? Am I going to get to meet him soon? Why don't you bring him over for dinner next Sunday?"

"Whoa, slow down there. I just started seeing Denger. I don't think I'm ready to do the whole meet-the-family kind of thing with him yet."

"Denger. That's a different name."

"I guess it's Egyptian since that's where he immigrated from."

"Have you slept with him yet?"

Nyx's face heated as she blushed. "I don't think I have to answer that question."

"I'm going to take it that you have."

"Mom!"

"What? If you have, there is nothing wrong with that. You're a healthy, young woman who should have an active sex life. Maybe now that you have a real man in your life again you can stop making do with the ones in those romance novels."

Her face felt even redder. Even though her mother could be counted on to sometimes say the most outrageous things, she still could catch Nyx unawares when she least expected it. "Okay, I'm so not going to walk into that one." Just then, the sound of her buzzer filled her apartment. Denger had arrived. Nyx walked over to the intercom and buzzed him into the building.

"Is that your date?"

"Yes, it is. So I'm going to hang up now. Tell Dad I said hi."

"All right. I guess I've tortured you enough. I'll call you sometime during the week. Love you."

"I love you too, Mom."

Nyx disconnected the call just as Denger knocked on her door. Putting the phone on the small hall table, she undid the locks and pulled it open. He took her breath away. Instead of a t-shirt, Denger wore a black button-down shirt and a pair of dark blue jeans.

She smiled and stepped back into the apartment for him to come inside. "I guess I picked the right outfit."

His gaze ran up and down the length of her body. "And you seem to be a bit taller as well."

Nyx lifted a foot off the ground and wiggled her bare toes at him. "Given how tall you are, I figured every little bit helps."

"You look beautiful, Nyx." He wrapped an arm around her waist and brushed her lips with his. "The heels are sexy. I think I'll enjoy removing them when we come back here."

Hearing the sexy timbre of Denger's voice, and seeing the way he looked at her as if he wanted to gobble her up, Nyx found herself short of breath. "Or we could just skip lunch and you can take them off now."

Denger released her and moved away so there was quite a bit of space between them. "Nope. I'm taking you out to eat first. And no trying to change my mind, because it won't work."

"In that case, let's hurry up and go. I'll just grab my purse and keys."

Snatching those two items off the coffee table, Nyx hurried back to Denger. After they stepped out into the hallway and she had locked the door, he took her hand and linked their fingers together as they headed down the stairs.

Out on the sidewalk, he led her to a flashy black Mustang. It was exactly the type of car Nyx figured Denger would drive. The muscle car suited him to a T. He opened the passenger door and helped her get seated before getting in. The engine roared to life and they were off.

"So where are you taking me?" she asked as they headed for the downtown core.

"There's a nice Italian restaurant I've been told is really good."

"You've never been there?"

"No. I don't eat out at a lot of restaurants. Desiree, my other friend's wife, told me about it. To quote her, the food is to die for."

Nyx let out a little laugh. "It seems as if you have two women giving you a lot of advice."

Denger shot her a quick look of disgust before he turned back to the road. "Too much, if you ask me. Having to live with them makes it harder to avoid them. And it doesn't help that their husbands think it's hilarious."

"It's nice that you're all so close."

"What about you? Do you have a big family?"

"No, not really. Besides my mom and dad, I have an older brother two years my senior."

"And are you close with them?"

"Yeah. I talk to Evan, my brother, at least once a week, along with my parents. I was actually talking to my mom when you buzzed up to my apartment. Just a word of warning, I told her about you and we've been invited over to my parents' place for dinner sometime. Don't worry, I won't subject you to my family yet. My mom is a bit of a character and likes to say things that would shock a normal person."

Denger let out a burst of laughter. "I should introduce her to Kysen. He has that nasty habit as well. They would get along famously."

"He's one of your roommates?"

"Yes."

Pulling into the parking lot of a mid-sized Italian restaurant, Denger swung into one of the empty spaces and shut off the engine. Before Nyx could open the car door, he was there doing it for her. Holding her hand again, he guided her into the restaurant. The hostess quickly seated them at a table when Denger gave his name for a reservation for two.

It didn't take them long to decide what they wanted. Once the waitress arrived, Denger ordered for the both of them and they were alone again. Nyx found she had a hard time not running her gaze over Denger's face and what she could see of his body where he sat across from her. He was so good-looking, Nyx noticed more than one woman in the restaurant stared at him with longing. She felt like telling them they

could look all they wanted, but Denger was hers. She knew what it felt like to make love to him, to have his cock moving inside her.

And just like that, Nyx's mind went straight to the gutter. She found herself mentally stripping Denger's shirt off, already knowing what lay underneath. How thickly padded his chest was with muscles and how his wide back narrowed down to a trim waist. And how his stomach muscles would jump when she ran a hand down them to take hold of his thick cock.

Denger cleared his throat loudly. In a voice for her ears only, he said, "If you don't stop staring at me like that I won't be able to resist dragging you across this table and into my lap. Then I'll give the rest of the customers a show they won't soon forget."

Nyx's face flushed and she bit back a groan. The images of what Denger would do to her flashed through her head, causing her libido to kick into high gear. Her nipples grew taut beneath her blouse and an ache built deep inside her pussy, eager to have Denger fill it with his cock.

He said in a gruff, low voice, "By the gods, if you want me to make it through this meal without jumping on you, you're going to have to help me. Think about something that won't turn you on."

Pulling in a deep breath of air, Nyx nodded. "Sorry. I'll try."

This was the second time she'd heard Denger say *by the gods* instead of using the singular. Perhaps it was a cultural thing?

Their waitress then arrived with their meals. Nyx was more than thankful she hadn't ordered something large. She was hungry, but it wasn't for the food sitting in front of her. Her hunger was all for Denger.

They finished their meals in record time and Denger was signaling their waitress for the check. He drummed his fingers impatiently on the table while they waited. When she came with it, he gave it a cursory glance and shoved a wad of cash into the waitress's hand, telling her to keep the change. He then had them out of the restaurant

at such a fast pace Nyx had a hard time keeping up with his much longer legs. By the time they reached the car, she was out of breath from the mad dash.

Denger pulled her to him, kissed what remaining breath she had left out of her and put her in the car. He then proceeded to show her just how fast his Mustang could go.

## **Chapter Nine**

They'd just cleared the top of the stairs to her floor when Denger spun her into his arms and his lips slammed down onto hers. Holding Nyx tightly while he licked and sucked at her lips, he walked her backward to her apartment. Just as desperate for him as he seemed to be for her, she clung to his shoulders, eagerly kissing him back for all she was worth.

She gasped when her back suddenly hit the hard surface of her apartment door. Letting go of Denger, she blindly reached inside her purse and pulled out her keys. Reaching back for the doorknob, she tried to put the key into the lock. After her third failed attempt, Denger took it from her and she heard the tumblers in the lock disengage a second later.

The door swung open and Denger backed her inside. With a kick, he shut it. Nyx thought she heard the door lock once it closed but doubted it since Denger had already started them toward the stairs to her bedroom. It was proven she had misheard when they went by the couch and he threw her key ring onto it.

At the bottom of the stairs, Denger dropped his hands to her ass and lifted her off her feet. "Put your legs around my waist," he said against her mouth.

Nyx did and let out a moan when her pussy came in contact with the hard bulge in his pants. When he started up the stairs, she locked her ankles at the small of his back. His erection rocked against her pussy with each step up. She ground herself against him, increasing the delicious friction.

Denger's steps slowed. He released her mouth and kissed a path to her ear. "I don't know if I'm going to make it to the bed," he said huskily. "You're killing me here."

"Then I suggest you move faster." She tightened her legs around him and rubbed her pussy against his cock.



With a burst of speed that had Nyx clutching at him, Denger got them up the rest of the stairs. He brought her to the bed and put her on her feet so the back of her legs hit the side of the mattress. Before he could get her onto the bed, she put a hand on the center of his chest and pushed so there was some space between them.

"Not so fast," she said. "You got to have your way with me yesterday. It's my turn now." Nyx undid the first button on his shirt and made her way down. "I think I want to do a little exploring."

Denger groaned, but didn't stop her when she parted the material of his shirt, pushed it over his shoulders and down his arms. "I'm not going to promise you that I'll be able to stand for too much of that."

Meeting his gaze, Nyx saw something desperate and wild lurking behind his light brown eyes. It made her pussy clench and wetness leak into her panties. "You're a big, strong guy. I think you'll be able to handle it."

Nyx dropped Denger's shirt to the floor, then stepped closer so she could press her lips to the side of his neck, grateful for the added height her high heels afforded her. He stiffened as she made her way down to the top of his shoulder. She put her hands on his chest and caressed down to his flat nipples. Kissing along his collarbone, she brushed the hard little nubs with her thumbs.

Stepping to her right, she licked and kissed her way across his chest to his biceps. Nyx gave a gentle nip before she moved around Denger to stand at his back. She ran a hand through his long ponytail all the way to the ends at the top of his waist. She reached for the leather tie he'd used to pull it back when she spotted the large tattoo that spanned the width of his upper back.

Brushing his hair aside, Nyx traced the tattoo with the tips of her fingers. It was a detailed work of body art. In the center, it had a red sun with the eye of Ra colored red and blue. Facing outward on either side of the sun were two cobras in striking position. Attached to them were two large wings, the tips touching the edges of Denger's shoulders, outlined in black and colored a vibrant peacock blue.

Nyx found his tattoo more than a little sexy. It also suited the man. She leaned in and pressed her lips to it as she worked the leather tie out of Denger's hair. Dropping it onto his shirt, she worked her way back to his front.

"I never would have guessed you had such a large tattoo on your back. Somehow I must have missed seeing it yesterday. I guess I was too busy ogling more interesting parts of you."

Denger reached for her, but she batted his hands away. He groaned as if he were in pain. "Nyx. How much longer do you intend to torture me like this?"

A smile played across her lips. "I've only just begun." That elicited another pained groan out of him.

Reaching for the top of his jeans, she undid them and pushed them slowly down his hips until his cock sprang into view. Just as yesterday, Denger didn't wear any underwear. Obviously he was a commando type of guy, which Nyx found arousing. She traced a finger around the head of his cock and down his shaft to the base. It jerked in response to her touch.

Pushing his jeans down even farther, she wrapped her hand around his cock and pumped it up and down. Nyx kept her gaze fastened on what she held. She already knew what she wanted to do even before she slowly went down on her knees in front of Denger. Keeping a tight hold on him, the tip of her tongue flicked out to lick off the bead of pre-cum that appeared on the very tip of his cock. His hips jerked, butting the head against her lips. The harsh sound of Denger's breathing filled the room.

Liking how he was so hard and thick in her hand, Nyx swirled her tongue around the tip before running it down the length of him. A loud moan punched out of Denger. Encouraged by the sounds of pleasure he made, she opened her mouth and took as much of his cock as she could handle inside. Denger gasped and panted, his shaft growing even harder.

Sucking, Nyx moved her mouth up and down his cock. She stroked the sensitive spot under the flared head with the flat of her tongue. Denger rocked his hips into her,

pushing more of him inside. He tunneled a hand into her hair while he did it, holding her just where he wanted her.

"You're making me so horny," he panted. "If you're not careful, you'll make me come this way."

*That* she didn't want. At least not yet. She wanted his thick cock buried deep inside her pussy when he found his pleasure. Sliding most of his shaft out of her mouth, leaving just the head inside, Nyx swirled her tongue around it and gave it one last hard suck. Denger's breath hissed out between his teeth.

Releasing him, she stood, threaded her fingers through his long hair and brought his mouth down to hers. Aroused by what she had done to him, she kissed him hard, pushing her tongue into his mouth. She swept the inside, tasting every part of him. After she stroked a tooth that felt particularly sharp and long, Denger shuddered then used his tongue to push hers out of his mouth.

With hands that shook, he took control. Her blouse and bra hit the floor in a matter of seconds. Denger cupped a breast in each hand before he bent his head and sucked on first one and then the other. Skimming his hands down to her waist, he guided her onto the bed and squatted down in front of her. Lifting one foot onto his hard thigh, he undid the buckle on her sandal. His fingers massaged her instep before he put her foot down and shifted the other to his thigh to do the same.

After he dropped the second shoe to the floor, he rose slowly to his feet, toed off his own shoes and climbed on the bed, leaning over her. Crowding her so she reclined on the bed, Denger hovered over her. He kissed her greedily while he worked on opening her jeans. With a few hard tugs, he had them, along with her panties, down past her hips and over her legs. Nyx kicked them the rest of the way off.

Wanting him as naked as well, she reached between them and pulled Denger's pants over the hard curves of his ass. He balanced on one hand and then the other as he worked them all the way off. His cock bobbed with his movements, the tip brushing along her stomach.

Denger pulled away from her mouth and urged her to the center of the bed. He put one knee between her legs, forcing them wider apart. He settled his weight on top of her. The head of his cock probed the outside of her slick pussy. More than ready for him to take her, Nyx lifted her hips in offering. With one thrust, he sank his cock to the hilt inside her core.

He took her in hard thrusts, filling her over and over again. She tightened her inner muscles around him, glorying in the feel of his thick cock stretching her to the limit. Nyx planted her feet on the mattress on either side of Denger's hips, meeting him stroke for stroke. Her pussy squeezed him tighter as her orgasm inched ever closer.

Reaching between their joined bodies, Denger stroked her clit. "Come for me, Nyx. Now."

As if her body followed his command, she came and cried out while her inner walls clutched at his shaft, milking him in a tight fist. After the last tremor hit, Denger pulled out of her and urged her onto her stomach. He positioned her on her hands and knees, then moved to kneel behind her. He gripped her hips, licked up the indent of her spine and thrust back deep inside her.

This way, she took him deeper. She swore she could feel him at the back of her throat. His cock butted against her womb each time he pushed inside her. His balls slapped her pussy as he pumped his hips faster, his cock growing even harder. Nyx rocked back, meeting each of his strokes, another orgasm already building.

With a guttural groan, Denger thrust one more time, sending them both into climax. His cock pulsing deep inside her, he leaned his upper body over her, linking their fingers together as his chest came to rest on her back.

Thinking their lovemaking couldn't get any more intense, Nyx tried to shift out from under Denger but he tightened his grip on her hands. His body went stiff and he shook against her.

"Just stay still," he said through clenched teeth.

He sounded as if he were in pain. "What's the matter, Denger? You sound funny."

"I'll be fine." His forehead came to rest on the back of her head, his panting breaths hitting the back of her neck. "I think the worst has passed."

Before she could question what he meant, he wrapped an arm around her waist and lowered them to their sides. His now-soft cock slipped out of her body and came to rest between the cheeks of her ass. Concerned, Nyx tried to turn her head to look at Denger but he kept his head buried in her hair.

"Are you sure you're all right?" she asked. "Are you sick? Is there something you're not telling me?"

God, she hoped there wasn't anything seriously wrong with Denger. She'd already watched one man she loved waste away to nothing, living in constant pain before succumbing to cancer, she didn't think she could do it a second time. Not that she thought she was in love with Denger. Her heart wasn't ready to make that kind of leap again just yet, but that didn't mean she wasn't starting to have real feelings for Denger.

He stroked the underside of her breast with his thumb. "No, I'm not sick. I have everything all under control now."

Nyx turned in his arms to face him. This time he let her. She searched his face, looking for answers for his strange behavior, but found none. "Seriously, Denger, there is something you're not telling me. I heard the pain in your voice. I felt you shaking. You don't look sick, but there *is* something not quite right."

Denger took her chin in his hand and kissed the tip of her nose. "I'm fine. Really, I am."

"But..."

Her words fell away when Denger's gaze latched intently onto hers and her eyelids grew heavy. Sleep rushed up to catch her.

\* \* \* \* \*

Denger breathed a deep sigh and tucked Nyx closer to his chest. He ran his hand up and down her back. Damn, what a fucking chickenshit he was. Nyx had given him the

perfect opening to explain what he was and he put her into a deep sleep to avoid doing it. He was an idiot. He couldn't keep her in the dark forever. For one thing, his blood hunger wouldn't allow it. Even now, he could feel it clawing at his guts enough to be irritating. He'd really had to fight it back after he'd come. His need to feed from Nyx had almost overwhelmed him. Buried in her sweet body, he wanted the taste of her blood filling his mouth at the same time. He didn't think he could make love to her again without biting her. His blood hunger just grew stronger and stronger each time he took her.

Snagging the cover that had gotten pushed to the bottom of the bed with his foot, he pulled it over them. Nyx would probably sleep until late in the afternoon. Out hunting the undead late each night, and not being able to find a restful sleep because thoughts of Nyx filled his head, Denger felt tiredness starting to catch up with him. His body satiated, but not his blood hunger, was enough to have him start to appreciate the bed he was lying on.

With a leg thrown over Nyx's, he let his eyes drift shut as he settled deeper into the bed. He'd just catch up on some of the sleep he'd missed. Holding Nyx in his arms seemed to relax him more than if he'd been in the bed alone. Giving her forehead one last kiss, Denger let sleep claim him.

## **Chapter Ten**

Slowly coming awake, Nyx made note of the delicious wall of heat at her front. She snuggled closer to the source, a very large male body, and smiled against the smooth skin of Denger's chest. She could get used to waking up like this, being held in his strong arms, listening to the steady beat of his heart.

Nyx jerked fully awake when she realized it really was Denger lying next to her on the bed. She looked around the gloomy room. Crap, she must have fallen asleep after she and Denger had made love. And she'd slept for hours given how dark it was getting inside the apartment. What a fun date she must be.

Looking at Denger, she could just barely make out his features in the darkness. His eyes were closed in sleep. At least he'd fallen asleep with her. She didn't feel so bad now.

Wanting nothing more than to lie next to Denger for the rest of the night, Nyx made herself do the right thing and nudged him. He had told her the nights were not his own.

When he only grunted and held her tighter, she pushed at his shoulder again. "Denger. We fell asleep."

"What?" he asked sleepily without opening his eyes.

"We fell asleep and must have slept the day away. It's already starting to get dark."

That seemed to do the trick. He jerked upright and looked around the room as if he were trying to remember where he was. Then, with an "Oh shit" he jumped out of bed and hurriedly started to pull on his clothes.

Bending over to pick up his shirt, he mumbled just barely loud enough for her to hear, "I know I'm late, you braying ass. I'll be there soon."

Nyx blinked. "What did you just call me?"

Denger spun toward her. "Shit. Did I say that out loud? I didn't mean to, and I wasn't talking to you."

She lifted a brow. "You weren't? Then who were you talking to?"

He quickly buttoned his shirt. "The nagging voice inside my head? Seriously, just ignore what I said. I'm really late for something. I didn't think I would sleep that long."

Nyx got out of bed and pulled out a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt from her dresser. She quickly yanked those on as Denger sat on the edge of her bed and put on his shoes. "Obviously you needed it."

He crossed over to her and gave her a hard kiss. "I want to see you tomorrow. I'll give you a call sometime in the morning."

Denger clomped down the stairs with Nyx following closely behind him. "I have to work tomorrow afternoon again but I'll be here until around noon."

At the door, he gave her another quick kiss. "I'll call before that."

He opened the apartment door and practically ran out. Nyx stood out in the hallway and watched him disappear down the stairs. She bit her bottom lip as she thought of something, then quickly ran into the apartment and grabbed her keys. Turning the lock on the doorknob, she slammed the door shut and took off after Denger.

Running barefoot down the stairs, she hoped she could catch him before he left. Since she'd slept most of the day away, she didn't think she'd be able to go to bed that early. Really not sure how late Denger would be with whatever he had to do, she decided to ask if he wanted to come back afterward and spend the rest of the night with her. That way they would have the whole morning together before she had to go to work.

Pushing open the entrance door, she looked down the sidewalk and saw Denger walking hurriedly. She was about to call his name when he all of a sudden drew up short and turned his head to look down the small alley that ran along the side of her building. When he changed direction and went down it, she ran after him.



She slowed as she drew even with the corner of the building and heard what sounded like a fist hitting flesh. Not making a sound, Nyx poked her head around to stare down the alley. It was only partially illuminated since the super had a hard time keeping up with the number of light bulbs that were smashed and needed replacing. But what she could see had her holding on to the brick corner.

Denger was beating the crap out of some poor guy who was half his size. Surprisingly, the guy remained upright, his head snapping back after each solid punch Denger delivered. After another couple of punches, the guy opened his mouth and hissed before he launched himself at Denger. Nyx caught a flash of what looked like fangs as he tried to sink them into Denger's neck. They never connected. Denger tossed the other guy away as if he were a rag doll.

"You think you're the only one with fangs, undead?" Denger asked, following the guy as he circled him. He opened his mouth, flashing his own impressive set.

Nyx quickly pulled her head back from around the corner, her heart trying to beat out of her chest. *Denger had fangs?* They couldn't possibly be real. If they were, that would make him a vampire. And a vampire he was not, even if it were truly possible. She'd walked with him in the bright sunlight more than once, and he ate food.

Peeking back around the corner, Nyx held her breath at what she saw. Denger had the other guy by the throat with one hand, lifting him literally off the ground. With the other hand, he dug into the front pocket of his jeans. He pulled something out. With a click, a blade snapped open on what had to be a switchblade.

"Time to put you out of your misery, undead," Denger said with a snarl. He then stabbed the knife into the man's stomach.

The other guy jerked in his grasp before Denger opened his hand and let him drop to the ground. What Nyx saw next had her holding her hand to her mouth to stop herself from making a sound. It looked as if the guy was decomposing before her eyes. It all happened so quickly and then there was nothing left but a pile of clothes at Denger's feet.

Whipping back around, Nyx took off at a run for the apartment entrance. Afraid to look back to see if Denger had seen her, she pumped her arms and ran the fastest she'd run since she was a teenager. She didn't stop until she was safely inside her apartment with all the locks thrown in place.

With her back to the door, she gasped for breath as she slowly sank down to the floor. She really had no idea what she'd seen, but she knew one thing for sure—she could never see Denger again. Whatever had happened, he was obviously a killer. Not able to go to the police, since she couldn't very tell them she'd seen him stab a guy that instantly decomposed right afterward, without them questioning her sanity, Nyx would stay clear of Denger from here on out.

\* \* \* \* \*

Denger's head shot toward the entrance of the alley when he heard a jangle sound as if someone were shaking a set of keys. He didn't need a mortal to stumble across him and what had been an undead. He was already late enough and didn't need to be held up any more by having to wipe a mortal's mind of what he or she may have seen. He relaxed when he didn't spot anyone.

Kicking the pile of clothes that were the only evidence of the undead's existence against the wall, Denger closed the bronze blade on his switchblade. He put it back in his pocket and made his way out of the alley. He never left the headquarters without some kind of weapon on him that would take out an undead. He'd had the switchblade specifically made with bronze for that very purpose. It was small enough that he could carry it unseen in a pocket. It had come in handy on more than one occasion.

And tonight had been one of those occasions. Rushing out of Nyx's apartment with Kysen riding his ass in his head about being late for hunting, he'd almost missed the prickling of his skin. Luckily by that point he'd gotten Kysen to shut up.

Not liking an undead so close in Nyx's vicinity, he'd quickly moved in to take it out. Back on the sidewalk, Denger started to jog toward the headquarters. The night

wasn't getting any younger. Thinking of why he was late brought a smile to his face. Sleeping with Nyx in his arms was something he would gladly give up a night of hunting the undead for any day. Very soon, he intended to make sure he slept with her like that every night.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sek moved out of the shadows and watched Denger run down the sidewalk. Well, well. He hadn't expected that. From his hidden vantage point he had watched the whole scene take place—Denger coming out of the apartment building, the mortal woman following closely behind him and her watching him take out an undead. Then horror-stricken, she'd run back inside the building without Denger even knowing she was there. The woman was exactly what he'd been waiting to discover. Obviously she meant something to the warrior. She had to be who Denger had been with inside the apartment building.

Sek gazed up at the converted warehouse when a flash of light appeared in one of the upper floor windows. The woman stood in the middle of it holding onto either side of the drapes she'd just opened and looked down at the street. After a few seconds, she snapped them closed once again.

He now had what he needed to hurt Denger where it counted. The warrior must have found his mate, just as Mehen and Set had. Walking away, Sek had an evil smile on his lips. The warrior's woman would be the tool to take him down, permanently. Now all Sek had to do was wait for the right time to make his move.

\* \* \* \* \*

Returning to his quarters after having had his breakfast the next morning, Denger closed the door behind him and took his cell phone off the dresser. He scrolled through his saved numbers until he got to Nyx's then hit call.

The phone rang and rang until her answering machine picked up. Thinking she just couldn't get to the phone right then, he said, "Hi, Nyx, it's me. I must have caught you

in the shower or something. Give me a call when you get this message.” He told her his cell phone number and hung up.

When a half hour went by and Nyx still hadn’t called him back, Denger phoned her again. Same as the first time he’d called, it rang until her answering machine picked up. Denger hung up without leaving a message.

He stared at his cell phone as if he could look right through it into Nyx’s apartment. Her not answering didn’t sit well with him. He didn’t have the feeling she was in any kind of trouble. No, it was something else that started to nag at him.

*Could Nyx be giving me the brush-off?*

Denger didn’t want to think that was possible. Yesterday, she’d been just as desperate for him as he had been for her. And what she’d done to him after they had gotten back to her apartment—his cock throbbed with the remembrance of her mouth closing around it. Maybe something had come up and she hadn’t had time to call him and let him know.

That had to be the answer. He refused to think it could be anything but that. He’d just have to keep trying. She’d said she had to leave for work around noon. Hopefully she would return to her apartment before she left for the bookstore.

When the minutes turned into a half hour and then a full hour and Nyx still didn’t answer after he tried calling a third time, Denger started to feel like a caged animal as he paced inside his quarters. Needing something to take his mind off not being able to get ahold of Nyx, he grabbed his sword and headed for the old part of the warehouse they hadn’t converted into living space.

On the way there he passed the small temple they’d built for Ra. Denger paused at the entrance, thinking about asking the sun god if he knew what was up with Nyx, but he shook his head and moved on. Ra had better things to do than snoop on a mortal for no other reason than to make one of his warriors feel less out of sorts.

Reaching the old warehouse, he saw Kysen was already there with his sword. The other warrior smiled at Denger. “You look as if you could use a good thrashing.”

Denger snorted. "Hardly. I think it should be me giving you the thrashing since you had so much fun riding my ass about being late last night."

Kysen smiled. "I have to admit that I never thought I would see the day where a mere woman would make the mighty Denger forget about his favorite pastime – taking out the undead."

Pulling his sword out of its scabbard, Denger walked to Kysen. "Nyx is no mere woman. She's my mate. So watch what you say about her or I'll have to wipe the floor with you."

"You can always try."

Kysen swung at Denger's head. He easily blocked it with his own sword and took a swipe at Kysen. They soon got into the easy rhythm of block and parry. As always, whenever he had his sword in his hand, Denger found himself only focusing on the pull of his muscles as he swung it and the strikes of his opponent. All else seemed to fall away.

"Hey, dumbasses," Akori shouted from the door that connected the old warehouse to the living quarters. "Blythe wants to know if you'll be ready to eat lunch soon. Her exact words were, 'I will not feed you if you come to her kitchen smelling like sweaty pigs'."

Denger lowered his sword and turned toward Akori. "What time is it? It can't almost be lunch time."

"It's five to twelve," Akori said.

With a loud string of curses in their native language, Denger sheathed his sword and whipped out his cell phone. When Nyx's end started to ring, he said under his breath, "Be there. Pick up." He swore again when he got her answering machine. "Shit. I'll have to go see her at her work and apologize."

He crossed the warehouse and brushed past Akori who then fell into step behind him with Kysen hard on his heels. "Were you supposed to go see Nyx?" Akori asked.

"Yes, damn it."

Akori laughed. "I'm sure she won't be mad at you for standing her up. Much."

Denger turned on Akori. "I'm glad you can find yourself able to laugh at my expense. Just wait until it's your turn and you've found your mate."

Visibly blanching, Akori said, "Now that was a low blow. You know if I ever find the woman who is supposed to be my mate I'll run in the opposite direction as fast as my legs will carry me."

Thinking of how strong a pull Nyx had on him, it was Denger's turn to burst out laughing. "You won't stand a chance of escaping your fate, Akori. Ra has decreed we all will find our mates. What Ra decrees always comes to pass. So you're basically screwed."

Akori scowled. "Aren't you late or something?"

Having reached his quarters, Denger shook his head at Akori while he and Kysen continued down the hall without him. He went inside and headed for the bathroom. He'd take a quick shower then go to the bookstore. He could only hope that Nyx wouldn't be too pissed off that he hadn't shown up.

## **Chapter Eleven**

When Nyx arrived at the bookstore, she immediately went in search of Janet. She found her at one of the bookshelves close to the back of the store. The smile her friend gave her when she first spotted her faded. Nyx knew what Janet saw. She'd seen what a sleepless night had done to her face when she'd looked at her reflection in the bathroom mirror that morning.

"You look like hell, Nyx," Janet said with concern. "When I told you to take Saturday off, I thought you would have enjoyed your weekend with Denger. What happened? Did he stand you up?"

"No. I spent Saturday with him as planned, and most of Sunday."

"For someone who spent that much time with her new hottie, you don't look like a woman who enjoyed herself. Did you sleep with him and he turned out to be crappy in bed?"

Her cheeks heated with a blush. "No, it wasn't that." She had nothing to complain about where Denger's skills in bed were concerned. She just had a problem with him being a homicidal killer. Not that she was going to tell Janet that.

Janet gave her a knowing smile. "So he knocked your socks off. Then why do you look as if you've been to hell and back?"

"It's not something I really want to get into. Just do me a favor. If Denger happens to show up, tell him I'm not here."

Janet frowned. "Let me get this straight. You're going to hide from the man who gave you great sex and you want me to lie to him?"

"Please, Janet. Just do this for me. All right?"

After she searched Nyx's face, Janet nodded. "Fine. I'll do it. I don't understand why you want me to, but I'll do it. It's not about you feeling guilty about sleeping with him? You can't let the memory of Derek come between you and the next man in your life."

"It's not that. I know Derek wouldn't want that. Why I don't want to see Denger anymore has nothing to do with Derek."

"I won't push," Janet said. "Like I said, I still don't understand but I'll do it."

"Thanks. Hopefully Denger will take the hint the first time and you won't have to do it again."

Janet waved what Nyx had said away. "Don't worry about it. Why don't you work at the front of the store so you can keep an eye out for him in case he does show up?"

With a nod, Nyx left Janet and went to where she'd suggested. She took a look out the front window. So far the coast was clear. Nyx had a really strong feeling that Denger *would* show up. After all the calls he'd made to her this morning, and her letting the machine get each one, the chances were really high that he would try the bookstore next.

Her fears soon came to be realized when Nyx caught sight of Denger way down the sidewalk on the opposite side of the street headed her way. Running to the back of the store, she called Janet's name to give her the heads-up, then ducked into Janet's office and slammed the door shut.

\* \* \* \* \*

Stepping inside the bookstore, Denger swept the inside with his gaze. He couldn't see Nyx anywhere. Spotting her boss, Janet, he walked over to her.

Janet gave him a friendly smile. "Hey, Denger. How are you?"

"Good, thanks. Is Nyx around?"

"Sorry, she isn't. She called to say she couldn't come into work today. There was some sort of family emergency. Have you tried leaving a message on her machine at



home? I know when she's out she'll sometimes call from wherever she is to pick them up."

"Yeah, I already did that."

"Well, I can tell her you stopped by if she happens to call in later."

"That would be great. I guess I'll see you around."

Turning on his heel, Denger headed out of the store. Janet was lying. Nyx was there hiding from him. He'd smelled her scent as soon as he'd stepped into the bookstore. It was fresh, probably only minutes old. Obviously the other woman was helping Nyx avoid him. The big question was why.

The uneasy feeling that for some reason he'd scared Nyx off settled over him. Once when they'd been kissing the day before she'd swept her tongue over one of his fangs but she really hadn't reacted to it. So it couldn't be that.

Longing to be with Nyx, his blood hunger riding him, Denger forced himself to walk away and not look back. He'd leave her alone for now, but once he figured she'd be home from work, he'd stop by her apartment and see if she would see him then.

\* \* \* \* \*

After work, Nyx rushed home and locked herself in her apartment. She'd half expected to find Denger standing out at the front of the building waiting for her but much to her relief, he hadn't been. She'd then made a mad dash to the front entrance. Sometimes it sucked that her building didn't have underground parking.

In no mood to cook a meal for herself, Nyx threw a frozen dinner into the microwave. As she stood near it waiting, she found herself thinking the front entrance buzzer was going to go off at any minute. Feeling the muscles in her shoulders and neck tighten with strain, Nyx forced herself to relax.

She took the dinner out and slid it onto a plate. Forgoing the kitchen table, she took it to the living room and turned on the television. She put the dinner on the coffee table to wait for it to cool a bit so she could eat it.

Her gaze landed on the piece of leather that sat on the table. Nyx picked it up and ran it through her fingers. It was what Denger had used to tie back his hair. He'd forgotten the day before when he'd rushed out of her apartment. She'd found it on her bedroom floor that morning. Her first reaction had been to throw it out but she ended up not being able to.

She rubbed the leather against her cheek. Realizing what she'd done, she forced herself to move it away from her face. *He's a killer, Nyx. Don't ever forget it.* God, she was going to drive herself crazy. Even though seeing Denger take out that guy in the alley had scared the crap out of her, Nyx found herself unable to stop thinking about him. She all too clearly remembered how good it had felt to be held in his arms, to have him make love to her. Her traitorous body melted each time she thought about it. And it had been good thoughts about Denger that had made it so she didn't sleep a wink during the night.

About to put the piece of leather back on the coffee table and pick up her dinner, Nyx froze halfway when her buzzer went off. She fisted the leather in her hand as she went stiff as a board. It was Denger. She just knew it and some small part of her that had a death wish wanted nothing more than to let him in. Her more sane part had her staying exactly where she was.

The buzzer went off again. The noise seemed to reverberate inside her head. Nyx closed her eyes and took deep, even breaths. She'd ignore it and Denger would go away. He couldn't get inside the apartment even if he managed to get someone to let him into the building. She had her apartment locked up tight.

Five minutes, then ten, then fifteen went by and the buzzer didn't go off for a third time. Nyx got up and made her way over to the living room window that looked out over the front of the building. She took hold of the curtains and only opened them a crack, just enough for her to see outside. She glimpsed the sight of Denger's broad back as he walked away.

Yanking the curtains closed, Nyx went back to the couch and picked up her meal. A sense of disappointment washed over her. Denger really hadn't tried that hard before he'd given up. She then gave herself a mental slap. That was a good thing, not a bad.

She picked up the television remote and flipped through the channels while she ate. She really was pathetic. The first man she started to have feelings for after losing her husband and he turns out to be a murderer. And those feelings hadn't gone away yet. What kind of person did that make her?

\* \* \* \* \*

Denger walked away from Nyx's apartment and ducked around the corner of the building next to it. Not seeing anyone around, he flashed himself back to his personal quarters. The mood he was in, he didn't want to run into Blythe or Desiree. When he'd returned from the bookstore wondering what the hell he'd done to push Nyx away, they had taken one look at him and brought him to the kitchen to talk. Thinking maybe one of them could help him figure out what he'd done wrong, he'd told Blythe and Desiree how Nyx seemed to be avoiding him. Neither one of them had been able to offer him any good advice other than not to give up on Nyx, but also to give her some space if that was what she needed right now.

Denger still didn't have a fucking clue how he was to manage those two things at the same time. Knowing what Nyx meant to him, he couldn't exactly stay away from her. Her rejection was eating at him. Not giving up on her meant he had to somehow get her to either see him or talk to him. That required him not to give her the so called "space" Blythe and Desiree thought Nyx might need. By the gods, he was confused.

Weaponing up for another night of hunting the undead, Denger hoped like hell he ran into a whole shitload of them. Right about now, it was the only thing that would help him feel more like himself.

## **Chapter Twelve**

A week. It'd been a damn fucking week since Denger had last seen Nyx. She still hadn't returned his phone calls and going to her apartment got him nowhere. He didn't even bother to go to the bookstore. It didn't take a genius to know that would only end up being a dead end as well.

The forced separation from Nyx was eating at Denger, making him unfit company for anyone. He'd probably snapped at everyone at least once. And it didn't help matters that his blood hunger had reached the point where it was clawing at his guts. He'd held off finding a donor to feed from but he couldn't hold out for much longer. In another few days, he'd be feeling it bad.

He knew the risk he would be taking if he did feed from a donor. At this point in their relationships with their mates, both Mehen and Set hadn't been able to feed from anyone but them without suffering painful consequences. If Nyx was truly his mate, and he was starting to wonder if he'd been mistaken about her since she was having no problems shutting him out of her life, he would suffer the same kind of pain. But he had to do something.

Right after dinner, another meal he found he couldn't stomach, Denger left the headquarters and headed downtown. He still had a few hours before he and his fellow warriors would go out hunting. He decided now was as good a time as any to do what he had to do.

Once he parked his Mustang, he headed for one of the bars. It was a bit early for some of them to be open, but not all. Finding one, he stood out front until he caught the eye of a woman, a slim brunette dressed in a short skirt who had showed up at the bar with a bunch of other women. When she gave him an interested look, he quickly

slipped into her mind and planted the suggestion that she wanted to make a call on her cell phone and to tell her friends she would meet them inside afterward.

When the other women left her, he then planted the suggestion that she follow him. Without saying a word, he led her to the back of the next building. Once they were out of sight, he took her in his arms. She went up on her toes and pressed her lips to his. Denger kissed her back but got no enjoyment out of it. Her lips didn't feel right beneath his. He didn't even like the feel of her against him but he fought his aversion.

Leaving her lips, he settled his mouth on the side of her neck. He grazed her skin with his fangs but they refused to drop. He felt nothing. No anticipation of the feeding and no arousal that usually came with it. It just felt all wrong. When the woman shuddered in his arms and moaned, Denger came close to changing his mind.

He would do this. He had to. Nyx had left him no choice. Closing his eyes, he brought her image up in his head. He forced himself to pretend it was her he held, not an anonymous donor he'd picked up. That worked. His fangs extended and he sank them into the woman's neck. She cried out, rubbing herself against him while he fed.

The instant her blood hit his stomach, the cramping in his gut became three times stronger. Another mouthful and it had him gasping in pain. Denger released her neck and swiped his tongue over the bite mark to heal it. He then forced the woman to look at him. It took only a couple of seconds to wipe him and his biting her from her mind. Once finished, he sent her back to the bar to be with her friends with only the memory of her making her call.

In more pain than when he'd left, Denger returned to his car and drove back to the headquarters. He'd just fucked himself royally. He needed Nyx more than ever. He'd gone from painful but still manageable blood hunger to the extreme in a matter of minutes. Before finding his mate, that would have taken months to come about. Now only his mate's blood would appease it.

After parking his car in the docking bay, Denger went to the door that connected to the living area and punched in the code on the security pad. Then under that, he

pressed down on the piece of rock set in the wall. The door clicked open as Denger licked his finger to heal the miniscule wound Ra's gift had left behind.

He shut the door behind him. Denger let out a groan and held onto his stomach as a particularly vicious cramp gripped his guts. He leaned back against the closed door and shut his eyes, forcing himself to breathe through it.

"You fed from a donor, didn't you?"

Denger opened his eyes and looked at Takan who now stood in front of him. The warrior had moved so silently Denger hadn't heard him approach. "I didn't know what else to do. A whole week has gone by and Nyx still refuses to see me. I haven't got a fucking clue how to fix it."

"Look at me," Takan said.

Even though the other warrior perpetually had his hair hanging in front of his face, Denger met what of his gaze he could see. The sensation of falling into Takan's eyes alerted Denger to the fact that Takan was having one of his visions. He kept his gaze locked with him as Takan lifted his hand and placed it on Denger's chest over his heart. Just another thing he did when he had a vision. It supposedly helped him to see his visions better.

After a few seconds, Takan lowered his hand and stepped back. He shook more of his hair into his eyes. "If you leave things how they are now with Nyx, you will lose her. Go to her now and explain what you are."

Denger pushed away from the door. "Don't you think I would if I could? She won't let me near her."

Takan shook his head. "You're thinking like a mortal, not one of Ra's Chosen. A locked door is no obstacle for one of us. If she won't see you, then place her in a situation where she has no choice but to."

"Damn, Takan," Denger said. "Sometimes you can be as cryptic as Ra. But this time, I know exactly what you mean."

Takan seemed to stiffen at Denger comparing him to the sun god. "If you understand, then I suggest you do it." He then backed away. "I'll tell Mehen you'll be a little too busy to hunt tonight."

Denger watched Takan go. He hadn't realized that being compared to Ra would be a touchy subject for him. Pushing that bit of information away, more concerned with what he planned to do, he flashed himself outside to the front of the headquarters.

At a brisk run, it didn't take him long to reach Nyx's apartment building. He walked up to the front entrance and used his mind to unlock it. Stepping inside, he let the door close behind him before he took the steps two at a time to her floor.

Making no noise as he walked to her door, he leaned his ear against it. The sound of her television told him she was indeed home. Taking a deep breath, he used his mind to unlock the locks one at a time. He grasped the doorknob, turned it and pushed the door open.

Nyx stood in the middle of the living room, her face completely white. "What are you doing? How did you get in here?"

Denger frowned. This, he hadn't expected. Nyx wasn't just upset for some reason, she was scared of him. He took a step toward her. "You shut me out. You didn't leave me much choice."

She held her hands out in front of her to ward him off. With each step he took toward her, she took one back. "What do you mean? Are you going to kill me now?"

That brought Denger to an instant standstill. "Kill you? Of course I'm not going to kill you. Why on earth would you think that? I could no more harm you than I could rip my own heart out."

"I...I saw you kill that man. You stabbed him and then he just sort of disintegrated."

"Shit," Denger said under his breath. "I had no idea you saw that. It wasn't what you thought you saw."

Nyx shook her head. "I know what I saw. And what was with the fangs? I noticed you had fangs."

Denger scrubbed his face with his hand. No wonder Nyx had avoided him. To a mortal who had no clue as to what hunted them in the dark of night, seeing an undead being taken down would look like a murder in their eyes.

"If you give me a chance I'll explain everything," he said in a gentling tone.

"So you admit you have fangs. Show them to me."

"I don't think that would be a good idea right now, Nyx. You're already upset."

"And you don't think I haven't been driving myself crazy for this past week wondering if all I saw was actually real and not some kind of delusion? I need to see if I didn't imagine you having fangs. That I haven't been reading so many vampire romances that I have now lost my marbles and I'm picturing the man I had started to feel something for as one."

Denger gave her a closed-mouth grin. "You like vampires, huh? Even though I'm not one, I guess you'll like these." He opened his mouth and allowed his fangs to extend to his bottom lip.

"Oh God," Nyx said weakly. "You *are* a vampire."

When her face got even whiter and she seemed to weave in place, Denger crossed the remaining distance between them and caught Nyx before her knees gave out. He gathered her close and carried her over to the couch. Sitting, he arranged her so she sat across his lap.

"I guess that wasn't such a great idea after all," he said, rubbing his hand up and down her arm. He cupped her cheek and forced her to look at him. "I'm not a vampire."

"Then what are you?" she asked in a quiet voice.

"I'm one of Ra's Chosen. The Egyptian sun god picked me, along with my other fellow warriors, to protect mortals from the undead that would steal their souls. An



undead is what you saw me take out that night. They are what mortals first called vampire. They have no souls and are literally the walking dead."

"Mortals? You mean you're..." Nyx couldn't seem to finish the sentence.

"Immortal. I was once mortal like you until Ra picked me to be one of his warriors. He gifted me with immortality and a few other things."

Nyx's hand shook when she lifted it and placed it on his chest. "If Ra is real, a real ancient Egyptian god, then how old are you?"

"Centuries. Remember when you asked me if I'd seen the pyramids when I lived in Egypt? Well let's just say I was already one of Ra's Chosen when they were being constructed." When she didn't say anything but continued to stare at him, he said, "Talk to me, Nyx."

She swallowed. "So you're an immortal warrior protecting mortals from the undead."

"Yes."

"Why me?"

Denger blinked at the sudden change of subject. "What?"

"If you're this gifted warrior, why did you pick me to...date? I'll be the first to admit that I'm not all that special. I'm sure you could have found a woman who comes with a lot less baggage."

He brought up his other hand so he held her face in both his hands. "Oh, but you are special to me. And you will always be. Already you mean more to me than anyone else ever could. You're my mate, Nyx. You're the woman I've been waiting to find for thousands of years. I've been alone for far too long. You're the one who will make me feel whole."

## Chapter Thirteen

Denger could have knocked her down with a feather right then and there. *His mate?* This immortal warrior who had lived for thousands of years called her his mate. Her mind was still having a hard time digesting what he'd told her about his not being a vampire, and that an ancient Egyptian sun god had handpicked him to protect mortals from the undead, the real vampires. It was almost too much for her mind to take in. But seeing his fangs extend, that was something she couldn't explain away. Right now she couldn't see them but Nyx knew they were still there.

She ran her gaze over Denger's handsome face. He really was one of her vampire heroes who had walked off the pages of one of her romance novels. Only he wasn't a vampire, he was one of Ra's Chosen. It was all so surreal.

Being held in his arms again showed how much she'd really missed him. She wanted to snuggle closer, burrow her way under his skin and not come out. But she wasn't quite ready to let their relationship start up again where it had left off. She needed more answers.

"How do you know I'm your mate?" she asked. "We really don't know each other that well. Though I have the feeling you know more about me than I do you."

"At first, I knew I would find you soon when my blood hunger increased. That's the first sign. But I didn't know you were the one until I literally ran into you in front of the bookstore. I looked into your eyes and I knew."

"I'll admit you made an impression on me then as well. You're the first man to spark my interest in that way since Derek died. But that still doesn't mean we're meant to be mates. And what is your blood hunger?"

"It's my blood hunger that is saying you *are* my mate. Even though I'm not one of the undead, I still need to feed on blood to stay strong. Usually a once-a-week feeding

from a donor of my choosing would be enough. Now since I found you, my need for blood has increased. My need for your blood and only your blood."

Nyx swallowed. "And if you don't get my blood?"

Denger dropped an arm to her waist and caressed her cheek with a finger. "I can no longer feed from a donor. Only your blood will sustain me now. Blythe thinks it's her father's way of making sure mated pairs stay together. Feeding from a donor only increases my blood hunger. The more I try, the worse it will get until I have extreme blood hunger. Then I'll starve and my body will start to eat itself for the blood it needs. It won't kill me because I'm immortal, but it will weaken me and I'll be in pain until I get the blood I need."

It was starting to be too much again. *Blythe's father was Ra?* She stored that bit of information away for later to mull over and concentrated on what he described as his blood hunger.

"So since I'm your mate you can only feed from me?"

"Correct."

"And if you don't, you'll starve?"

"Correct again."

Nyx looked more closely at Denger. She didn't think it was her imagination, but he looked as if he'd lost some weight since the last time she'd seen him. "You're already starting to starve, aren't you?"

"I won't force you, Nyx, but I'm in the extreme blood hunger stage." He grew silent for a second, then said, "Don't get upset with me, but I fed from a donor before I came here."

She frowned. "Why would I get upset? Obviously all it did was cause you pain."

He gave her a guilty look. "Well, there is one thing I didn't tell you about what happens when I feed. We usually seek out women as donors for a good reason. The feeding is arousing for both the one being fed and the donor."

Nyx stiffened. "Are you telling me you had sex with a donor and then came straight here to me?"

"No! No, I didn't. The woman did nothing for me. She wasn't you. I couldn't even force myself to bite her until I pictured it was you I was holding. I may not have found any pleasure in it, but she did."

A surge of jealousy raised its ugly head inside her. With it came the knowledge of how strongly Nyx actually felt about Denger. No way would he be allowed to sink his fangs in anyone but her. As usual, when she set her mind to something, she never looked back or held off. Denger was hers, damn it and she was keeping him.

Sitting up straighter on his lap, she turned her head, pulled her short hair away from her neck and angled it toward him. "Bite me. Now. And if I ever find out you've bitten another donor, I'll hand your balls to you on a platter."

Denger burst out laughing. "Bloodthirsty, just the way I want you." He then turned her face back toward him and grew serious. "If we do this, I'm going to sleep with you. I want my cock inside you as well as my fangs. I'll also want it all—you as my mate for all eternity."

"How can we have an eternity?"

"Ra can give it to us, just as he gave it to Mehen and Set with their mates. Once we become mates, he'll grant you immortality along with your own set of fangs. You'll then have to feed from me as I have to feed from you."

A shiver of pleasure shot through Nyx. You would think she would be squicked out about having to feed from Denger but it didn't bother her. "How exactly do we become mates, other than sleeping together?"

"A blood exchange will form the mating bond. We'll then be able to feel each other inside us, hear our thoughts and we'll be able to communicate telepathically."

"Whoa," she whispered.

Talk about the ultimate commitment. She'd do it, though. She was a romantic at heart and always believed in love at first sight. She'd just never experienced it before. With Derek, they'd started off as friends before they'd become serious. How she felt about Denger had been different right from the start. And what had her wanting to make this giant leap even more was Denger being immortal. She would never have to worry about him getting sick and dying, leaving her behind. He would never grow old. He would be as he was now, strong and healthy, forever.

Nyx captured his face in her hands and kissed him. She then pulled away until there was a breath of space between their lips. "If you want an eternity with me, who am I to turn that down? How about we start it right now?"

Denger took her by the waist and turned her on his lap so she straddled it facing him. His eyes grew heavy with arousal and his fangs suddenly peeked past his upper lip. There also was an impressive bulge in the front of his pants.

"You don't have to ask me twice," Denger said with a growl before he kissed her.

His mouth moved over hers, devouring her. He sucked her tongue into his mouth. This time he let her sweep the inside thoroughly. She twined her tongue with his before she licked each of his fangs. His hips rose off the couch to grind against her pussy that already ached for him.

Desperate to have him inside her, Nyx sat back and yanked Denger's shirt over his head. She licked and kissed his chest as she worked on his pants. Once she had them undone, with his help, she pushed them down past his hips. Slipping off his lap, she stood and quickly stripped out of her clothes while Denger kicked his shoes and his pants off.

She licked her lips when she saw his thick erection jutting out from his body. "God, I need you inside me."

"And I need to be there. Don't make me wait any longer to have you."

Nyx climbed back on his lap. She put her hands on the tops of his shoulders and rubbed her pussy along the length of his cock, coating him with her juices. Once she

had them both moaning, she angled her hips just so and took him inside her. She sank down on his shaft until he impaled her to the hilt.

Lifting up on her knees, she started to ride him. She arched her back, sinking down on him over and over again. Nyx looked Denger in the face. His upper lip was pulled back revealing his extended fangs. Her pussy clenched at the sight of them. She leaned in to lick and then suck on one of them.

The moan that punched out of Denger was loud and long. He surged up into her, meeting her strokes, lifting her knees right off the couch with the force of it. Nyx's climax edged nearer.

Panting, she cupped the back of his head and led him to the side of her neck as she rode him faster, harder. "Now, Denger. Bite me now."

He licked her skin then sank his fangs into her. As he drew on her neck, the most intense orgasm Nyx had ever experienced rocked through her. A keening moan escaped her when Denger surged up into her one final time. His cock pulsed deep inside her and he filled her with his cum.

After a few more pulls on her neck, that caused delicious aftershocks in her pussy, he withdrew his fangs and licked where he'd bitten her. Feeling as if all her bones had melted, Nyx fell forward onto his chest with her head on his shoulder.

"I don't think I can move," she said against his skin.

Denger chuckled. "You can stay there as long as you want."

Once she regained her breath, she sat up. His softening cock was still inside her. "Do you want me to drink your blood now?"

He ran his thumb along her bottom lip. "Not yet. I want you to talk to Blythe and Desiree. They were once in your shoes. They'll be able to answer any questions you have."

Nyx brushed a kiss across Denger's lips, then slid off his lap. "All right, let's go."

"You want to go talk to them now?"

“Yes. There’s one thing you should know about me—once I set my mind to something I don’t back off until it’s done. I want you. All of you. So we’re going to do this tonight.” She bent over, picked up his jeans and threw them at him. “Get a move on.”

Nyx then got to see how fast one of Ra’s Chosen could get dressed when under pressure.

\* \* \* \* \*

Once Nyx was dressed with shoes on, he quickly ushered her out of the apartment and out the front entrance. With their fingers laced together, he started them walking at a brisk pace to Ra’s Chosen’s headquarters. Nyx’s blood had completely eased his blood hunger. His gut no longer pained him and he felt stronger than he ever had. That she had agreed to be his mate when he’d come so close to losing her, he wanted to shout to the rooftops that she was his.

Nyx yanked on his hand. “Slow down. Not everyone has super long legs as you do. And where are you taking me? I thought we were going to your place.”

Denger forced himself to walk a little slower. “We are. It’s just down on the next street.”

When they crossed over from Nyx’s street to his, Denger came to a stop in front of the headquarters. She cocked a brow in his direction. “This is it?” At his nod, she shook her head. “I drive past this building everyday on my way to work. We’ve been practically living on top of each other for years without even knowing it.”

At the chain-link fenced gate, he pulled her close and put his arm around her waist. “Hard to believe, isn’t it? You wanted to know how I got inside your locked apartment? Ra gave us warriors the ability to unlock any lock with our minds. Watch.” He threw the lock with his mind and the gate slid open on its own. Denger then guided her through it.

"I'll have to remember that little trick of yours," she said. "I guess if I ever get angry at you and decide to lock myself in a room it won't stop you from coming in if you want to."

He smiled. "I hope you never get that angry at me. If you think that was a nice trick, let's see what you think about this one."

Tightening his arm around her, Denger flashed them inside the headquarters, right into the main hallway. Nyx stumbled against him, looking a bit disoriented, but quickly recovered her balance. That was part of the reason he hadn't flashed them directly from her apartment to the headquarters — she'd already had enough on her plate right then to handle. He wanted to make the short walk to allow her time to have everything sink in better.

"Holy crap. What did you do?" she asked with awe.

"I have the ability to bend time and space. I flashed us inside Ra's Chosen's headquarters."

"Now that must come in handy."

He then watched her look around at the walls and floor that had been painted to resemble the stone used for the Temple of Amon Ra at Karnak in Egypt. The hieroglyphs and pictures, the telling of Ra's exploits, had been hand painted by Takan. The warrior had taken years to paint most of the walls inside the headquarters.

Nyx whistled. "Whoever did the paintings on the walls is a real artist."

Denger got her moving again, guiding her toward the personal quarters. He stopped in front of Set's. He heard Blythe and Desiree's voices on the other side. "Takan did them. He's the only artistic one around here."

Before he could knock, the door swung open. Blythe stood in front of him, her gaze shifting from him to Nyx and back again. She gave them a wide smile, showing them her fangs. "Since you no longer have a pained expression on your face, Denger and you have Nyx with you, I assume congratulations are in order?"



He kissed the top of Nyx's head. "You could say that."

Desiree who stood behind Blythe let out a whoop. "Congrats, guys."

Blythe cleared her throat. "Well? Aren't you going to introduce us?"

"Sorry," he said. "Nyx, this is Blythe, Mehen's mate, and Desiree, Set's mate." He pointed to each woman in turn.

"Nice to meet you both," Nyx said. "Denger figured you two would be able to answer any questions I may have about becoming his mate."

Blythe moved to stand to the side. "Come on in and we can talk."

Denger went to step inside, but Nyx's hold on his waist tightened and she remained where she was. He looked at her and she shook her head.

"Thanks for the invite," Nyx said to Blythe, "but I really don't have that many questions. I've already made up my mind to do this and what you two will have to say won't change it. I was all ready to finish the blood exchange at my place but Denger was the one who wanted to come here first."

Desiree burst out laughing. "A girl who knows her own mind. She's perfect for you, Denger."

"I second that," Blythe said with a giggle. "All right, Nyx. What do you want to know?"

"I know about Ra giving me fangs and immortality. I see both of you have your own set of fangs. Is there anything else I should know?"

"Not too much more. You'll have to drink my father's blood first, but don't worry about it. It won't be like when you drink from Denger. Ra will also mark you." Blythe turned and showed Nyx the winged sun marking on the small of her back. It was the same one Denger had but smaller.

"And don't forget to tell her about the sex, Blythe," Desiree said. "About how much better it is after the mating bond is formed."

"Better?" Nyx asked with a swallow.

Blythe grinned. "Way better. Once the bond is formed you'll be able to feel whatever Denger feels. And I mean *whatever* he feels."

Denger had forgotten about that aspect of the mating bond, mostly because he had no interest in learning about Mehen and Set's sex life. Way too much information for him. But seeing Nyx's face flush before her gaze locked hungrily with his, he suddenly found he couldn't get enough air into his lungs.

"I think that more than answers my questions," Nyx said in a hurry. "If you two will excuse us, Denger and I have a little matter of forming a mate bond." She then whispered to him, "Where's your room?"

Not bothering to answer, Denger instead swooped her up in his arms and practically took off at a run to his quarters. The sound of Blythe and Desiree's giggles followed them down the hall.

## **Chapter Fourteen**

Before he even managed to get them behind the closed door of his quarters, Nyx had the tie out of Denger's hair and her fingers buried in it as she greedily kissed him. He opened the door, bounced off the doorframe and somehow got them inside the room without doing any damage to either one of them. They both started ripping at each other's clothes as he let her down and directed her toward his bed. By the time they reached it, they were both naked.

He kissed her like a starved man, unable to get enough of Nyx. His cock, hardened to the point of pain, pressed against her soft belly. The smell of Nyx's arousal filled his nose, practically making him crazed for her. He needed to be inside her or surely he would die.

Lifting her, he ripped back the covers on the bed and placed Nyx on the center of it. She clung to him tenaciously and wrapped her legs around his waist when he settled between her spread thighs. Not waiting, Nyx took hold of his cock between them and led it to the entrance of her pussy. She pushed down until the head of it slipped inside her moist body. Flexing his hips, he thrust himself home.

Lying still atop her, Denger kept his gaze locked with hers as his fangs extended and he lifted the inside of his wrist to his mouth. He bit down. When his blood rose to the surface, he pressed his wrist against Nyx's lips. Her mouth closed over the bite mark and started to suck. Feeling each pull as she drank from him had his cock growing even harder inside her. He moaned, finding it just as pleasurable to have her feed from him as it was to feed from her.

After a few more seconds, he gently tugged his wrist away and licked it to heal the wound. "Do you feel any different?" he asked softly.

“Sort of. I think. It’s kind of hard to tell, because all I can think about it how good you feel inside me.”

Unable to lie still any longer, he pulled back and then pushed inside Nyx’s pussy. They both let out a loud gasp. He did it again and almost forgot to breathe. He felt his own pleasure but he could feel Nyx’s as well, doubling each sensation. From the rapt look on her face, she felt it too.

*Ah God, yes. Denger.*

*I heard that,* he replied back in her head.

Setting a faster pace, he rode her harder. He felt Nyx’s pleasure build, her orgasm just about upon her, as well as her pussy gripping him tight, making his cock feel as if it was going to explode.

*Yes, yes, yes,* chanted Nyx in his head.

Moving to the side of her neck, he sank his fangs as he pounded into her. Nyx’s cries of pleasure filled his ears when she started to come. He instantly followed her, emptying himself deep inside her.

After licking his bite mark, Denger rolled to his back, taking Nyx with him. She sprawled on top of him. Knowing he had no energy left to move, he wrapped his arms around her and gloried in the feel of his mate against him.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Are you sure you want to do this right now? We can wait until you’re really settled on the idea.”

Nyx shook her head. “No, I want to do this now.”

Standing on her tiptoes, she brought her arms up around his neck and brushed a light kiss across his lips. She didn’t understand why Denger was feeling hesitant about bringing her to see Ra to make them true mates. When they had talked about doing this during the night, he’d been all for it. And it wasn’t as if he didn’t have very strong

feelings for her. With their mating bond in place, she felt the love he had for her. Surely he had to feel how much she loved him through it as well?

And she did love him with all her heart and soul. The bond also gave her a better insight into Denger. While they'd talked in between making love, she'd used it to get to know him on a deeper level than she had her first husband. That was all she needed to fall head over heels in love with him.

"I don't want you to feel pressured, is all," Denger said.

Nyx sighed. "Look, I'll put it all out on the table. I love you and I want us to be truly mated. Starting today."

A large, beaming smile spread across Denger's lips. "What did you say? Did you just tell me you love me?"

She rolled her eyes. "Like you didn't know already. I've only been sending that emotion to you through our bond all night long."

He dropped his hands to her ass and rocked into her. "I did, but it's nice hearing those words spoken out loud." Denger bent his head and nibbled on her earlobe. "I love you too. How about we wait a couple hours before going to the temple to see Ra? I can think of something I would much rather be doing right now."

Considering the hard length of his erection was jabbing into her hip, Nyx knew exactly what Denger wanted to be doing. She smacked him on the shoulder. "Nope. You're not going to dissuade me. Show me where Ra's temple is."

Denger sighed dramatically. "All right. You're like a dog with a bone between her teeth when you want something."

She chuckled. "I told you."

He released her then took her hand. "If we're going to do this, we have to at least ask the others to join us at the temple. Blythe will be pissed if we don't. And you need to meet the rest of the warriors. They were all out hunting the undead when I brought you here last night."

"I was going to suggest that. They are like your family after all."

"I'm sorry your family can't be here as well," Denger said softly.

She waved what he said away with a flick of her hand. "It's fine. If given the chance, my mom would have wanted to have a huge reception for us, *if* she agreed to a small wedding ceremony. This way, I'll tell her we eloped and that was what I wanted."

"Then I'd better buy you a wedding ring before we go visit your parents."

Nyx grew serious. "I'm going to have to give them up eventually since I'll be immortal like you, aren't I?"

He nodded slowly. "Are you all right with that? It can't be any other way. Ra has forbidden mortals from learning about us."

"It'll be hard at first, I won't lie about it, but I'll still have you."

"I won't ever leave you."

Denger then walked her out of the quarters and to the kitchen. Nyx heard the loud male voices before they even reached that part of the headquarters. After they entered the room, Denger introduced her to the male members of the household she had yet to meet.

First seeing them, Nyx had to fight to stop her jaw from hitting the floor. Every one of Denger's fellow warriors were knockouts, especially Akori. His looks were just a tad handsomer than Denger's but not by much. They were all just as massively built as Denger and stood around six and a half feet tall. They also had the same straight black hair, in varying lengths, and the same light brown eyes that verged on gold. Denger had explained during the night that they originally had had brown eyes and that once they had accepted Ra's gifts, they had changed to the color they now were.

Nyx took an instant liking to all of the warriors, most especially Takan who seemed a little more reserved than the others. He was the strong, silent and shy type with his long bangs hanging in his eyes. Once introductions were over, Denger told them about their plan to go to the temple and have Ra make them true mates.

"Now?" Blythe asked. "Why now? Can't you at least give me time to plan a big celebratory meal like I did for Set and Desiree?"

Denger shook his head. "My mate is quite insistent that it be now. And I'm not going to deny her."

"Really, Nyx?"

Nyx nodded. "Yes, really. I'm stubborn that way."

"Then I guess we're all going to the temple to see my dad," Blythe said, shaking her head.

They all filed out of the kitchen and went to the temple. Admiring the wood pylons that were painted to look like stone ones that could be found in an ancient Egyptian temple, Nyx couldn't think of a nicer place to bond herself to the man she loved. The high glassed ceiling allowed bright sunlight to fill the temple, giving the impression of being outside while in it. The walls had also been painted by Takan with the same hieroglyphs that were found elsewhere in the headquarters.

As they all found places to stand, with Denger and Nyx in the center of the room, Blythe called out, "Dad, Denger has something to ask you."

Between one blink and the next, a man dressed in an ancient Egyptian-styled kilt appeared before them. Assuming this was Ra, the sun god, Nyx couldn't miss the fact that he was just as muscular and tall as his warriors.

Blythe walked over to him and gave him a hug. "Hey, Dad."

He hugged her back. "Daughter." Ra then released Blythe and turned to face Denger and Nyx. "So another warrior has found his mate."

Denger put his arm around her shoulders. "This is Nyx."

Ra smiled. "Nice to make your acquaintance, Nyx." He then turned to Denger. "I assume this question you want to ask me is about making her truly your mate."

"Yes," Denger replied.

"And apparently," Blythe added, "Nyx doesn't want to wait. Not even for me to plan a big meal for them."

"There is nothing wrong with acting on the moment, Blythe," Ra said with a chuckle. "Since this is what your mate wants, Denger, then so it shall be."

Ra motioned Nyx to step closer. Once she did, a knife appeared in his hand and he ran it across the inside of his wrist. He then offered it to her when his blood began to well. With no hesitation, she bent her head and closed her mouth around the wound. Unlike when she'd fed from Denger, she didn't become aroused. What she did feel though, was the sensation of sucking pure energy into her mouth. When Ra gently pulled his wrist away, she released him. His wound healed within seconds, not leaving a trace of it behind.

The sun god took her head in his hands and placed his lips on her forehead. A jolt of energy shot through her entire body, accompanied by a burning sensation in her upper jaw and lower back. When he released her, Nyx ran her tongue along her upper teeth and encountered her new fangs.

She looked over her shoulder when Denger lifted the back of her shirt. From the propriety look on his face, she could tell she had the same mark on the small of her back that Blythe and Desiree had.

Turning to face him, she met his heated gaze and her fangs extended. Denger's gaze went even hotter. Without breaking his stare, he said to the others in the room, "Nyx and I are going to be a little busy, so don't come banging on our door."

Denger and she left the temple with the sound of more than a couple of male chuckles. Obviously just as impatient as she felt, Denger flashed them inside their quarters once they were out in the hall.

He had her pressed up against the closed door with his hands under her shirt, caressing her breasts while he nuzzled the side of her neck. "Seeing you with fangs," he panted. "All I can think about is how they're going to feel when you sink them into me."



"You're making them throb," she gasped.

"I can feel it. They're throbbing just like mine. My cock as well. Sorry. I had thought to take my time, make you so horny that you would beg for me to put my cock inside you, but I can't wait."

"There will be plenty of time for that later."

"The bed is too far away," he said huskily as he undid her pants and pushed them, along with her panties, down her legs so they pooled at her feet.

"The door will work just fine," she said growing more aroused. Nyx stepped out of her pants and kicked them away.

Denger undid his jeans and pushed them down far enough that his cock sprang free. He lifted her in his arms and Nyx put her legs around his waist. With her back supported against the back of the door, he positioned her with his hands on her hips, then surged up inside her. The feel of his thick cock spearing in and out of her had Nyx moaning in time with his thrusts. Their pleasure bounced between them through their bond.

With each hard flex of his hips, her pussy coiled tighter. Her body screaming for release, she leaned forward and sank her fangs into Denger's neck. He pounded into her faster as his blood filled her mouth. He tasted like the most exotic of spices. It also threw her into an intense orgasm. Once the last wave hit, she released his neck and swiped her tongue over the bite mark to heal it.

Still buried thick and hard inside her pussy, Denger said, "My turn."

He pumped his hips, straining for his own release. Just as it hit him, he bit her, which only sent Nyx into another orgasm along with him. Denger licked her neck where his fangs had been, keeping his head buried in the crook of her neck.

"I can see having fangs is going to make life a lot more interesting," she said once she could talk.

Denger groaned and chuckled at the same time. "If this is how it's always going to be between us, you're going to wear me out."

"And we have an eternity of this too." She stroked her hand down Denger's long hair. "You won't hear me complaining."

He pulled his head back and gave her a soft kiss. "Good, because I'm never letting you go, mate. I love you, Nyx."

"I love you too, Denger." She gave him a wicked smile. "How about we see how many more times I can sink my fangs into you?"

Denger shivered then turned them toward the bed. With two long strides he crossed over to it and threw them both down. Nyx then found out how demanding in bed an immortal warrior could really be.

\* \* \* \* \*

The second night after Denger and she had become true mates, Nyx stood in the living room of her apartment. She sat in the middle of the floor going through her books. They were stacked around her. She hadn't realized how many she actually owned until now when she needed to pack them to be moved to Ra's Chosen's headquarters.

She pulled the box that held the keeper books closer and put the book she held into it. Denger had gone hunting with the rest of the warriors. After two nights off, he'd been itching to go back out. Now fully immersed in his life, Nyx knew how important what he did was.

Grabbing another book, she read the title. Denger at first hadn't wanted her to come here alone, especially at night, but in the end Nyx had been able to convince him that she'd be fine. After all, she'd lived here alone for years and nothing had happened to her. She also had the other argument, that the next afternoon they'd be moving her things to the headquarters. With Denger's help, they'd just about packed all her

belongings during the day. The last things left to pack were her books. Those, she wanted to do herself. The move was an excellent opportunity to thin them out a bit.

She'd been working for about an hour when the apartment door suddenly slammed open. Nyx jumped to her feet as a strange man walked inside. With a sweeping motion of his hand, the door shut behind him.

He stalked closer. "I'm so glad to see you're still alone. My plan would have fallen apart if Denger had showed up before I could get to you. I had to wait to make sure he was indeed out hunting my undead."

Nyx got up and tried to make a run for the bathroom, the only room in the apartment she could lock herself into, but the man was on her before she'd taken more than a couple steps.

"Who are you?" she asked, trying not to let the fear she felt sound in her voice.

The man's blue eyes turned a glowing red. "I'm insulted. I thought Denger would have told you all about me since you're his mate. I can smell him all over you."

Nyx's fear shot through the roof. This had to be Mot, the last of Apep's demons. Knowing there would be no getting away from the demon, she called out through her bond with her mate. *Denger! I need help. Now. One of Apep's demons has me.*

Denger answered her back within seconds. *Are you still at the loft? Has he hurt you?*

*Yes, I'm at the loft, and no, he hasn't hurt me. He knows we're mates. I think he wants to use me to get to you.*

*Try to stay calm. We're going to flash to you. Where exactly are you in the apartment?*

*In the living room.*

*Hold tight, Nyx. We're coming.*

Thinking to keep the demon distracted enough that Denger and the rest of the warriors could take him by surprise, she said, "You have to be Mot." She may have gotten the drop on Denger when he'd come up behind her in the parking lot but she didn't think she'd be able to do the same with this demon.

"So you do know what I am," he said with smile that held no warmth. "But sadly, you have the wrong name. I'm Sek."

"I thought you were dead," she said. When Denger had told her about the demons, he'd told her that Ra's Chosen had destroyed the demon named Sek when he'd tried to take Desiree and Blythe captive.

"Well, you thought wrong." He then frowned as he gazed at her mouth intently. His hand shot out and grabbed her bottom jaw painfully. "What is this?" He jabbed a thumb under her upper lip and pushed it upward. "Fangs? You have fangs." Sek drew in a deep breath. "And you no longer smell like a mortal. Ra has been a busy sun god, I see. Apep would love to have the immortal soul of the mate to one of Ra's warriors."

As Sek yanked her closer and opened his mouth to sink a large set of fangs into her throat, Nyx found herself ripped out of the demon's grasp and shoved behind Denger's much larger body. She looked around and saw the five other warriors stood surrounding Sek.

Peeking around Denger, Nyx watched a look of rage descend over Sek's face just as a large sword appeared in his hand. In response, there was a loud hiss as all of Ra's Chosen unsheathed the swords at their backs. Their *khopeshes* caught the light along their bronze blades. Sek's was similar in shape, only his was steel.

Denger pushed Nyx away from his back. "Don't get too close." He then turned to look at each of the warriors. "He's mine."

Sek laughed. "You owe me, warrior, for staking me out for the sun. I've wanted a piece of you ever since."

"I want to know how you survived, demon," Denger said as he circled Sek with the other warriors backing up to give him space.

"Apep told Mot where to find me. My master wouldn't leave me to perish in the sun. He needs me."

"Then I'll have to make sure you're dead this time."

With a snarl, Denger went on the attack. Sek moved to block his strike. The sound of their swords hitting rang through the apartment. Nyx barely felt Takan put his arm around her as she watched Denger and the demon fight. Denger moved with a skill and grace that left her breathless. She then gasped when Sek got a lucky hit. His sword sliced through the front of Denger's shirt leaving a line of red behind.

Takan held her tighter. "Don't worry. Denger will win. We don't call him the ultimate killing machine for nothing."

As the fight continued, Nyx squeezed her hands into fists, her nails digging into her palms, to stop herself from whimpering with fear for Denger. She couldn't lose him like this. She'd only just found him.

When she thought she couldn't stand to watch anymore, Denger let out a roar, his sword slashing out so fast the blade was a blur. Sek bellowed as cut after cut appeared on his body. Snarling with fury, he went on the attack. With one swipe of Denger's sword across the demon's neck, deep enough to separate it from Sek's body, the fight was over.

Nyx covered her mouth with her hand as she watched Sek's body turn to dust. Unlike when she'd seen Denger take out the undead, the demon's body didn't decompose first. It just went to dust.

Breathing hard, Denger turned to her and opened his arms. A small whimper bubbled out of her throat when she threw herself into them. Holding him tight, she buried her face into his wide chest.

"It's over, Nyx," he said, rubbing his hand up and down her back. "It's over. Sek is no more."

Mehen spoke up. "And with Sek's demise, we're finally one step closer to ridding the mortal realm of Apep's taint. I'd say the tide is definitely turning to our favor. Apep will have felt this loss."

Nyx pulled back and looked up at Denger. "Take me home."

"Look to your mate," Mehen said. "We'll take care of the cleanup here."

Denger nodded, then flashed them to their headquarters.

Alone, Nyx kissed the slash mark across Denger's chest. "Does it hurt?"

"No," he said huskily. "And it's nothing that a bit of my mate's blood and some loving won't heal."

Smiling, Nyx took him by the hand and led him to the bed. She got him to sit on the edge of it before she stepped between his legs and bent her head to the side. "Then come take what you need, mate."

Then Nyx spent the rest of the night taking care of her mate only the way she could.

## Epilogue

Mot sank to the floor holding his head. Blood gushed out of his nose and ears as Apep's roars of rage clawed at his brain. He knew what had angered the demon god so—Sek was dead. Mot had felt it the instant Sek's life had been ended, just as Apep had. And it didn't take much thought on his part to figure out it had to have been Ra's Chosen who had killed him. Mot had known Sek's plans to use Denger's mate against him. Mot had thought it was foolish at best. Hadn't Sek learned from his earlier attempt to take another warrior's mate? He wouldn't have survived that encounter if not for Mot and Apep.

Finally when Apep grew silent, Mot picked himself up. He could still feel the demon god's presence in his head. He waited for him to speak.

*I want Ra's warriors destroyed. Too long have they interfered with my plans. Send your army of undead warriors out to wipe them out of existence.*

"It will be too early, master. I need more undead warriors before I send them against Ra's Chosen." Mot then clutched his head and bit back a scream of agony.

*Your time is running out, Mot. I want this done.*

"It shall be done as you say, master. I'll work harder to get them ready."

*You'd better or you'll face the same fate as Sek, but at my hand.*

Once Apep's presence faded, Mot wiped the blood from his nose. Sek's death was a huge setback. He hadn't told Apep, but all of Sek's undead warriors had perished along with him. The tie to master and undead warrior were too strong to survive one without the other.

Cursing Ra's Chosen, Mot left his lair. He had some undead warriors to create.

\* \* \* \* \*

Akori sat in the back of The Oasis, the bar where Ra's Chosen sometimes liked to have a few drinks and unwind after a night of hunting. He pounded back a shot of Scotch then chased it down with a large swallow of beer. Catching the eye of his waitress, he motioned for her to bring another round of drinks. He was going to get shitfaced drunk then pass out in his bed. Draining the almost full bottle of beer in three swallows, he thumped it down on the table just as his waitress set another one and a shot of Scotch in front of him.

Before she left, he pushed some cash into her hand. "You might as well bring the bottle of Scotch and a couple more beers."

She gave him a strange look, but nodded. Akori watched her move off in the direction of the bar. He'd have to watch it. She'd be cutting him off soon if he wasn't careful. Unlike mortals, it took a shitload of alcohol for one of Ra's Chosen to get as drunk as Akori wanted to be. He probably would have been better off buying his own booze and taking it back to the headquarters. But the only problem with that was the others would notice. Living with that many people in such close quarters, nothing got missed.

Downing the Scotch, he thought over what had brought him to drinking himself silly. Why did it have to be him? Why did his blood hunger have to increase? Why couldn't it have been Kysen or Takan? Akori *did not* want a mate. Ever. Ra may have thought he was doing him a favor by decreeing he would have one but Akori thought otherwise.

After the waitress returned with a bottle of Scotch, Akori opened it, and forgoing the shot glass she'd brought with it, he chugged it. If he was lucky, he'd drink himself into a deep enough stupor that he could ignore the change in his blood hunger. He wasn't about to calmly accept his fate. Decree or no god decree, Akori was going to stay a free man whether Ra liked it or not.

*The End*



## 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.

After trying her hand at writing historicals, she now writes paranormals.

Marisa lives in Ontario, Canada, with her husband and four children. She would love to hear from you, so drop her an email.

Marisa welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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