



ENSLAVED BY BLOOD

DRONE VAMPIRE SERIES

STEPHANI HECHT

Captured by his enemies, Drone Vampire Nolan, is enslaved in one the many dreaded Pure Born government prisons. Alone and without any allies, it's an everyday fight for survival as he finds himself incarcerated with some of the worst monsters in the paranormal world. While he knows his fellow Drones are fighting to rescue him, Nolan fears he won't survive in time for them do so. Then just as he's given up all hope, a dark, mysterious savior comes in the form of a warlock named, Donovan. A fellow prisoner, Donovan takes Nolan under his protection and soon after — into his bed.

Before long, Nolan finds himself falling for Donovan. But if there's anything Nolan has learned in his years of being a vampire, it's that nobody is ever as they appear to be. He soon finds that Donovan is harboring a devastating secret. One that could not only destroy Nolan, but all the Drone Vampires.

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ENSLAVED BY BLOOD

BY

STEPHANİ HECHT

CHAPTER ONE

The next blow would probably kill him, but Nolan was powerless to stop it. He couldn't see the punch coming. He couldn't hear the whish of air as the fist traveled toward him. Most of all, he couldn't even duck because he had no fucking clue where his attackers stood.

He'd heard that when facing one's own death, there would be a tunnel of light or a moment of peace, but neither of these transpired. Instead, he faced mind-numbing fear and more than a bit of anger.

It wasn't supposed to end this way. Not in some pit of a paranormal prison. Not at the hand of these vile, low-on-the-food-chain bastards. He was one of the highest-ranking soldiers in his Drone clan, for fuck's sake. Sure, it all had to do with his superior hacking skills and not because of his mad battle talents, but still, to die under the boots of a pack of revenants was not exactly how he pictured his death.

A large hand grabbed him by the throat and

pinned him to a wall. A stone wall, judging by the several jagged edges that dug into his spine. Nolan let out a gasp, both from pain and from the overpowering stench of decay that always accompanied revenants. Their reek had to be more potent than a roomful of zombies who'd been left out to stew in the heat all day.

Revenants were basically nothing more than bags of decaying flesh and normally Nolan would have been able to take them out without even breaking a sweat. That was before his kidnappers had blinded him and made him partially deaf. Now, he was fighting just to survive long enough so he could crawl away and find a hole to hide in.

In desperation, he flailed his feet and just as he'd given up hope, his right foot connected. It hit something, squishy and warm. Fighting back his gag reflex because he had a pretty good feeling it was the gut of one of the piles of decay, he kicked again, this time with more force.

The iron grip on his throat let up and Nolan fell to the ground. He hit hard and then quickly rolled to his feet. Baring his fangs with a hiss, he gave into his vampire side. While he'd always tried hard to keep the predator in him under control, at this moment, he didn't give a damn. In fact, he welcomed it because he'd grown sick of being someone's bitch and not just to the revenants either. That went for those who had enslaved him

in the first place—the Pure run Vampire Regulation Force or the VRF as they were more commonly called.

It had been over six months since his rebel Drone clan had been attacked and he'd been captured. Since then, Nolan had been to hell and back a few times.

First, they tried to break him with isolation. Then they tried to use physiological tactics before finally settling on some good old-fashioned torture. When even that didn't work, they threw him to the animals that existed in the paranormal prison.

Even with his hindered ears, he could hear the dim yells and cheers of the prisoners as they watched the poor blind vampire getting his ass handed to him. If they thought he'd go down easy though, they were in for a major disappointment. Blind, or not, Nolan vowed he'd take down as many of those rotted bastards as he could.

* * * *

“Look at that poor, blind vampire getting his ass handed to him,” Ian drawled as he slowly shook his head.

Donavan barely spared his brother a glance, too intent on watching the small vampire fight for all he was worth. This had obviously not been the

first time the vampire had been in a tussle either. The guy looked like he'd been on the receiving end of more than a few ass kickings. Dried blood and mud were so caked in the man's short hair that the true color was indiscernible. His dark gray, baggy clothes had rips and tears throughout them and were nearly as dirty as his hair.

The vampire's grey eyes were wide with terror and the unfocused way they moved would have let Donovan know the guy was blind if the way he flailed his fists around had not already announced the condition.

Even from across the prison yard, Donovan could see the reason for the loss of eyesight—a red, ragged oval shaped wound on the vampire's neck. “Does that look like a Bikor bite to you?” he asked his two companions.

Not only did he have Ian by his side, but also their cousin, Lachlan. Ever since they'd been placed in the prison, the three of them had fought to stay together. Not only for moral support, but so they could guard each other's backs. It wasn't easy either. This place housed some of the worst beings in creation. While the three of them were able to use their dark, brooding looks to scare off some of them, there were still plenty that didn't spook so easily.

“Yeah, it does look like a Bikor bite,” Lachlan agreed. When they had still lived at the coven,

he'd been trained as a healer. While he had the same dark hair as Donovan and Ian, he didn't share their deep brown eyes, instead inheriting bright blue ones like his father.

"That would explain the blindness and partial hearing loss," Donovan mused.

"How do you know he can't hear that well?" Ian asked.

"Look at the way he tilts his head to the side. It's his own desperate way of trying to pick up any amount of sound. I can only imagine how hopeless he must feel right now."

Yet the vampire didn't give up. No matter how many times they knocked him to the ground, the scrapper sprang to his feet and tried to fight back. He even did that hissing thing all vampires did when they were trying to intimidate their enemies. For with all the bravado though, it didn't take a genius to figure out the poor sap had, at most, five minutes left before they finished him off.

The vampire let out another hiss before he reached down and scooped some dirt off the nearly barren ground. He threw at the right height for the eyes of the revenants. Thanks to his diminished senses, the dirt ended up several feet to the left of the nearest attacker.

"Well, that was highly ineffective," Ian drawled as they all watched the dirt float harmlessly in the air.

"He has so much spunk, I almost feel bad for him," Lachlan added.

Yeah, so did Donovan. Before he'd even realized it, he'd started to make his way over to the scuffle. Behind him, he could hear Ian let out a loud curse. "No, you can't."

"I can't, what?" Donovan didn't even pause.

"You can't seriously be thinking of helping him?"

"Sure, why not? I'm bored. May as well entertain myself by beating on some revenants." He didn't even glance back to see if Ian and Lachlan were following. Ever since they'd been kids, they'd never gone into a fight alone. Their devotion to each other had kept them alive more times than not. It had also landed them in prison.

Out of habit, Donovan flexed his fingers as if to call up magic. As usual, he got nothing but a small fissure of energy. One of the first things the jailers had done when they'd come to this hellhole was bind his, Ian and Lachlan's magic.

He let out a low growl of frustration. If he had his powers, he could have easily thrown a few fireballs and finished the revenants off in a matter of seconds. Instead, they'd have to deal with them the old-fashioned way. With a few well-placed fists and kicks.

One of them tossed the vampire to the ground. His skull collided with one of the many rocks

littering the prison yard and this time the vampire didn't get back up. Enraged, Donovan rushed forward and gave the revenant a good kick to the head. When its face caved in with a sickening *thunk*, he had to work hard to hold his revulsion back. Damn, he'd seen some pretty fucked up things in his past, but revenants had never failed to set off his *ick* factor. Then things got to a whole new level of gross when the thing started to talk through its newly distorted mug.

"He's ours."

Ian cocked his head slightly to the side. "It looks to me like he's not happy with that idea."

"Fuck you," the revenant snarled. His decomposed buddies growled in agreement.

"Ewh!" Ian gave a mock shudder. "No way. Knowing my luck, your dick would snap off and get stuck inside my unmentionables."

Donovan barely suppressed shooting his brother an annoyed glare. Instead, he leveled a hard look at the revenants. "I'll give you one chance to back off and leave the vampire alone."

"And if we decide to keep him?" another revenant asked.

"Then we'll kick your stinking, rotting asses from one side of the prison yard to the other," Donovan replied calmly. He darted a quick look at the vampire who had remained unmoving during the entire exchange. His eyes were closed as his

chest moved in short, erratic bursts.

“Now that’s the option I always prefer,” Ian supplied in an overly happy voice.

Another revenant pounced on top of the vampire. The small male let out a soft gasp, but otherwise didn’t react. Donovan realized that they didn’t have much time left before they would all be fighting over a corpse.

He, Ian and Lachlan attacked as one. Again, he took the attacker that was on top of the vampire. For some strange reason, the sight of their slimy hands pawing up the poor guy enraged Donovan. Which was shocking since, next to Lachlan, he was one of the most levelheaded warlocks in the family.

Even without their magic, since revenants were piss poor fighters, it only took Donovan, Ian and Lachlan a few minutes to finish things. As the revenants ran off, he became grimly aware of the lecherous glances the other inmates were shooting at the prone victim. Letting out a soft grunt of aggravation, he bent down and picked up the vampire. Flinging the small man over his shoulder, fireman style, Donovan turned back to Ian and Lachlan.

“You can’t be seriously thinking about taking him to our cell?” Ian sputtered. He had no love for anything with fangs, vampires being at the top of his hate list.

"If I leave him, he won't survive five seconds before someone or something else tries to claim him." Donovan brushed past them and started back inside the large, grey stone building.

"Going by the looks of him, he may not survive five seconds, period. Even with our help," Lachlan observed as he reached over to gently feel the vampire's pulse. "Take him to the shower and start cleaning him up. I'll run back to our room to get what few herbs I have left."

Ian wrinkled his nose. "Make sure you grab some clean clothes for him, too. If Donovan is going to insist on keeping his pet, the least we can do is make sure he doesn't stink up the place."

"I think I have something that may fit him." Lachlan nodded before he split off into the direction of the small cell that they'd been calling home.

Once they reached the showers, a sense of relief went through Donovan when he realized they were empty. One never knew what they would find lurking in the large communal room. Just the other day, he'd stumbled across a centaur and fully shifted werewolf going at it. Another time it was a group of kobolds feeding on the corpse of a werejackal. Talk about things you couldn't unsee. Donovan still had nightmares over both encounters.

"Stay out front and guard the door," he ordered

Ian. Even though he could tell his brother wanted to argue, in the end, Ian gave a jerky nod before he positioned himself in front of the door and folded his arms across his chest. The movement made the sleeves of his shirt ride up and Donovan caught a glimpse of the tattoo bands on each of Ian's wrists. Thick and stark against his skin they were black scrolling with red lettering, twisted throughout. Since all three of them had them, Donovan knew each whirl and loop intricately. Those tattoos were their most valuable and hated assets. Valuable because the mere sight of them kept many hostiles at bay and hated because they represented a past that none of them were proud of.

CHAPTER TWO

Once he got into the shower, he gently set the vampire down. Somewhere along the way, the blind vampire regained consciousness enough to stand, but he still swayed unsteadily on his feet before leaning heavily against the wall. His head lolled lazily back as his mouth hung open just enough for Donovan to get a glimpse of his fangs. Ian's concerns over the guy not surviving much longer seemed to hold more validation as each second ticked away. Since he'd gone to all the trouble to save the guy, Donovan was going to be damned if the ungrateful bastard would die on him now. In a desperate attempt to keep him from slipping away, he decided to get the man talking.

"What's your name?" Donovan spoke directly in the vampire's ear so he could hear. All the while, he tried not to breathe in too deep. Ian hadn't been bullshitting when he'd said the guy reeked.

"Nolan," he replied in a heavily slurred voice.

"Try and stay with me. I can't clean and hold you up at the same time," Donovan ordered as he started to pull off Nolan's clothes.

Nolan let out a soft cry of distress as he started to weakly fight.

Donovan immediately pulled back and lightly cupped Nolan's cheeks. "Shhh...I'm not going to hurt you. I promise."

Nolan stilled, but none of the tension left his body. "Why should I believe you?"

At that moment, Donovan was struck by how beautiful the vampire's eyes were. A soft blue that had darker flecks throughout the iris, Donovan could have stared at them for hours—if he went for that kind of sappy activity. "No offense, but if I were going to molest somebody they would have to smell a lot better than you."

A crooked, embarrassed looking smile came over Nolan's face. "Sorry, they've been too busy torturing me to give me much shower time."

"Who? The VRF?"

Nolan's pressed his lips together in a tight line and refused to answer.

Not that it surprised Donovan. He'd learned for himself how it paid to keep some information close to the chest. If Nolan didn't want to share, Donovan wasn't about to begrudge him that one luxury.

This time, when he began to undress Nolan, the smaller man didn't resist. As he slowly peeled away the filthy clothes, Donovan let out a low hiss of displeasure at the vampire's condition. Bruises and several cuts covered a too-thin torso and abdomen. The Bikor bite appeared to be the worst though. Red and oozing with puss, just looking it, was painful. Donovan lightly ran a finger along it. "Does this hurt?"

"Not nearly as much as it did when they tied me down and let the demon have a go at me."

Nolan sucked in a breath as Donovan pulled down his pants. For a second Donovan thought Nolan would start fighting again. In the end, he just took in a couple shaky breaths and balled his hands into tight fists.

Donovan threw the clothing to the side before he turned on one of the several showers lining the wall. Once the water was on, he tested the temperature with his hand before he guided Nolan under the spray. Even though Donovan's clothes almost immediately got soaked, the look of pure bliss on Nolan's face made the small bit of discomfort worth it.

"This feels so good," Nolan moaned as he tipped his face back into the water.

The movement made him sway a bit, so Donovan reached out to steady him. "Lachlan will be back soon with some herbs to help you feel

better," Donovan promised. He became painfully aware of how close he had to stand to Nolan so he could still talk in his ear. Their bodies now pressed together, flush, chest-to-chest. Even though Donovan still wore his clothes, they were so wet and plastered to his skin, he may as well have been as naked as Nolan.

"Who's Lachlan?" Nolan opened his mouth so some of the water trickled in.

"He's my cousin. The grumpy one is Ian, my brother."

"I take it he doesn't like vampires."

"He had his mate killed by one a few years ago," Donovan reluctantly admitted. While it didn't feel completely right for him to share his brother's personal info like that, if Nolan did end up staying with them, he had a right to know the reason behind the hostility.

Nolan frowned. "I'm really sorry about that. I've never had a mate, but I hear the bond can be very strong. It must have been very hard on him."

Some of the dirt had already washed away and Donovan could make out the *D* branded onto the vampire's forearm. Even though it was overly large, Donovan knew it had to have hurt like a son of a bitch. Before the rebellion, the VRF had marked all Drones that way so they couldn't try to pass themselves off as Pure Born.

"I thought you were a Drone," Donovan

observed as he rubbed the area. "I mean it was a given that you were a vampire because of your fangs, but you didn't seem as pompous as the Pure Born vamps."

Nolan jerked his arm back. "Yeah, I've been one for a while now."

Well, that wasn't vague. After Donovan had opened up about Ian, too. "What clan do you belong to?" Almost all Drones lived in large groups called clans. With so many enemies in the paranormal world, it was a necessity if they wanted to survive. While many paranormals would never consider such living conditions, Donovan related, since as a warlock, he'd grown up in a coven.

Nolan shook his head, refusing to answer that question, too.

Donovan tried not to let it bother him too much. Another thing he knew about Drones were that they were fiercely protective of their clans. So he could almost expect the secrecy over that topic.

"Okay, you don't have to tell me," Donovan soothed. He realized he was having to support more of Nolan's weight and that the vampire's blue eyes were beginning to roll back into his head with alarming frequency. *Where in the hell is Lachlan?*

As if he'd heard Nolan's silent question, his cousin came rushing into the room. He had his

medical sack slung over his shoulder. "Sorry it took me so long. Since my stash is so low, I had to scrounge up some supplies."

Which mean that he either had to trade or pay more than top dollar. He tossed a bottle at Donovan who caught it neatly with his free hand.

"Here's some shampoo, too, and don't be afraid to rinse and repeat," Lachlan said dryly.

"What did he say?" Nolan asked, tilting his head to the side.

"Nothing, just that's he's very happy to see you up and talking," Donovan replied as he shot a warning glare at Lachlan.

"Get your new pet cleaned up so I can get a better look at his injuries," Lachlan ordered. He'd already turned his attention to his medical pouch. Unlike Ian, he was usually content with just delivering one or two zingers before getting back to business.

Donovan used one hand to clean while keeping a firm hold with the other so Nolan didn't slide to the floor. He could have easily asked Lachlan to come over and help, but for some odd reason, Donovan didn't like the idea of anyone touching Nolan this intimately but him.

As more grime was away, Donovan found the vampire all the more appealing. Under all that dirt lurked short, dark blond hair along with slightly rounded cheekbones and the fullest set of lips

Donavan had ever seen.

He moved on from Nolan's hair, running his hand over the vampire's body. Even in his emaciated state, Nolan had a nice build. Donovan got so caught up in exploring the dips and ridges that he forgot about anyone else being there until Lachlan loudly cleared his throat.

Donavan jerked back so quickly, he almost dropped Nolan. *What in the hell had that all just been about?* It must just be that he needed to get laid or something. Otherwise, why would he be this turned on by a half-starved, half-dead vampire? He nodded to the Bikor bite. "Are you going to be able to heal this?" he asked Lachlan.

"I'll be able to stave off further infection and maybe restore his hearing, but unless I have the antidote, I won't be able to reverse the blindness." Lachlan started mixing some of his herbs into a small wooden bowl.

"Is there any way can get our hands on the antidote inside here?"

"I doubt it since this situation doesn't come up much because Bikor demons are so rare. This is only the second time I've even seen a bite."

That said a lot since Lachlan had to be one of the best warlock healers in the States. Donovan looked back over at the vampire and sucked in a breath. Now that all the dirt, grime and blood had been cleaned away, he could truly see how young

Nolan looked. If the rest of the prison population caught a glimpse of him in his improved state, revenants were going to be the least of the guy's problems. He glanced back over at Lachlan to see the same concern echoed on his cousin's face. "How old are you?" Donovan had to lean forward once more to speak in Nolan's ear.

"I was eighteen when they transformed me into a vampire," Nolan replied, his voice growing even more slow and slurred.

"How long ago was that?"

"Five years ago. Before the rebellion started." Nolan tilted his head a bit until he'd buried his nose in the crook of Donovan's neck. "You smell really good."

All the air seemed to leave the room as Donovan stilled. Then he felt it—the gentle scrapping of Nolan's fangs against the tender flesh of his throat. All of Donovan's life, he'd been taught that a warlock should never lower himself by allowing a vampire to feed from him. It was considered the lowest acts a magic could commit. A dishonor. But at that moment, it was all he could do not to cup the back of Nolan's head and urge him on.

"Uh...when was the last time he fed?" Lachlan stammered.

Donovan repeated the question into Nolan's ear.

"I don't know exactly how long. After the first week, all the days seemed to blend into each other. It's been a long time though. When they did feed me, it was just barely enough to keep me alive," Nolan replied before his tongue darted out to lick Donovan.

He jumped as the velvet touch sent lances of desire shooting through his body. Goddess, it would be so easy to allow this. To let himself give over to the sensation of Nolan's fangs piercing his skin. A vampire had never bitten Donovan before, but he had heard that it could be a very pleasurable experience.

With a reluctant grunt, Donovan pulled back. Now wasn't the time or place for him to be satisfying his primal needs. Maybe, once Nolan healed and was actually able to stand without aid, they could take things further. Instead, Donovan offered up his wrist. Holding it just inches from Nolan's mouth, he ordered, "Here, you can feed from me."

Lachlan let out a slight gasp of shock, but didn't voice an argument. No doubt because his calling as a healer overruled the warlock revulsion to carrying a vampire bite.

Nolan's fangs had grown so large they protruded over his bottom lip. In the past, Donovan had always looked at that as a sign of aggression from a vampire. Now, it turned him on

like nothing ever had. Nolan's tongue darted out to caress the sensitive flesh of Donovan's inner wrist, but he made no move to bite. "What are you waiting for?" Donovan demanded.

"It's been so long that I'm afraid I'll lose control and take too much." Nolan made another pass with his tongue, eliciting a shiver from Donovan.

"Don't worry. I'll stop you if you get carried away. Plus, Lachlan is here." Just as he felt sure Nolan would take him up on the offer, the vampire gazed up with his sightless eyes.

"Why are you helping me?"

If that isn't the question of the day? It would have been so much easier had he just left Nolan with the revenants. Now, not only was he stuck with a handicapped liability, but so were Ian and Lachlan. This was the last place where they needed any kind of burden, too.

"Because it's the right thing to do," Donovan replied simply as he stared at that hated tattoo defiling his upraised wrist. If Nolan could see the markings there, he would have scoffed at Donovan's claim since his former coven was known for everything but being helpful or compassionate. The familiar feelings of self-loathing and hatred filled Donovan and he almost pulled back in shame. Then he didn't have to think anymore because Nolan finally gave in and bit him.

White-hot lances of pain shot through Donovan, soon to be followed by lazy tendrils of pleasure. Fuuuuuck...all the rumors about vampire bites had been true and then some. With each greedy drag Nolan took in, the higher Donovan's arousal shot. A low moan filled the shower and Donovan was only partially shocked to realize it came from him. Just as he was about to pin Nolan to the wall and grind against him, the vampire pulled back with a satisfied sigh.

"Thanks," Nolan whispered before he licked the wounds on Donovan's wrist closed.

"Any time." And by that, Donovan meant, *any fucking damn time*.

"If you want, he can feed from me, too," Lachlan offered casually.

"No," Donovan snapped quickly. The thought of Nolan drinking from anyone, even Ian and Lachlan, made Donovan want to rip something apart.

Lachlan raised a brow, but otherwise let the denial go by uncommented on.

"You didn't tell me you're a warlock," Nolan said, cutting into Donovan's troubled thoughts.

"How did you figure that out?" he demanded.

"Vampires can taste the magic in our blood," Lachlan interjected.

"Yeah, it's kind of like a buzzing feeling," Nolan added.

"You heard Lachlan talking just now?" Donavan couldn't help but grin.

"Yeah, it's still muffled some, like I'm underwater, but it's much better than before." He turned his face in Lachlan's direction. "Does this mean my sight will come back, too?"

Lachlan explained the whole antidote situation to Nolan who seemed to be taking the situation a lot calmer than expected.

"So, I'm pretty much still a sitting fuck then," he surmised.

"Don't you mean sitting duck?" Lachlan asked.

"No, fuck was the word I was looking for. Why do you think those revenants were trying to get their slimy hands on me?"

Donavan and Lachlan exchanged troubled glances. Once everyone got a good gander at the new and cleaned-up version of Nolan, it would cause a feeding frenzy. The younger man had such an innocent sensuality about him that no predator would be able to resist the temptation. "You won't have to worry about that anymore because you'll have us three protecting you," Donavan promised.

Lachlan gave a short nod to show his agreement.

Nolan's brows drew together suspiciously. "Why would you do that for me?"

He no doubt thought that he'd have to be *friendly* with all three of them in return for their

protection.

Donavan didn't take the assumption as an insult. After all, in this place, that is often how things went down. "We have some atoning to do, so it may as well start with you," Donovan replied as he started to briskly towel off Nolan.

Deep down, Donovan knew it was a whole lot more than hat, though, and judging by the expression on Lachlan's face, he did, too.

CHAPTER THREE

Ethan stared down at the large map laid out on the conference table as he let out an ineloquent curse. Another day of hard work and another day of only failure to show for it.

“You’re being too hard on yourself,” Zeke gently chastised as he came up and embraced Ethan from behind.

Ethan allowed himself to sink back into the comfort of his mate. “I can’t help it. Every hour that passes without me finding them makes it more certain that they aren’t going to survive.”

He ran a hand through his blond hair in frustration. Six months. That’s how long ago it was that one of their teams was ambushed and two members, Nolan and Jonas, had been captured. Since then, the entire Drone clan plus Ethan’s coven have been doing everything in their power to find their two missing friends.

He looked down at his scrying pendulum in

dismay. "Maybe it's because I'm half-vampire now. What if I just don't have enough magic left in me anymore?"

Zeke tightened his grip. "That's bullshit and you know it. There's a reason why the coven named you their leader."

"Because I look great in a pair of Prada slacks?" Ethan quipped.

"No, because you're the most powerful warlock that's come along for centuries. Don't forget, it was you who took out the Ninth. You did it without anyone's help, too"

"Then why in the hell can't I find two lost vampires?"

"Probably, because the VRF has their own magics cloaking the location," Zeke replied calmly.

Ethan craned his neck so he could gaze up at his mate. With dark hair and simmering brown eyes, he had to be the best looking male in the clan. Not for the first time, Ethan wondered how someone so great could be interested in someone like him.

"You don't get it. When I first came to the clan and I was just some angry warlock with a chip on his shoulder, Nolan and Jonas were one of the few who still reached out to me. They were my friends when nobody else wanted to be even seen with me." Ethan took in a deep breath as he looked

back at the map. "They were even part of the team that rescued me when the VRF captured me, plus they came along to help protect my coven when the Ninth attacked. I owe them so much."

"You'll find them. I have all the faith in you, babe," Zeke soothed as he started to massage Ethan's shoulders.

"I just keep worrying the VRF will find out that Jonas and Nolan were on the team that manufactured the Sunlight Grenades. Those bastards have wanted to get their hands on the details of how to make those weapons ever since we started using them."

Zeke's hands stilled, but he didn't say anything.

Ethan spun around so he could look at the vampire. "What aren't you telling me?"

"Did Nolan ever tell you how he became a vampire?" Zeke asked.

"No, just that he's been one for five years."

"When he was still human, he got himself into some trouble."

"What kind?" Ethan demanded more than a little exasperated that Zeke kept hedging around the topic. "Did he rack up a gambling debt? Borrow money from the wrong person? Rip the tags off some mattresses?"

"He hacked into the VRF computer system."

Ethan's body turned cold as the implication of those words hit home. "But you said he was still

human so he shouldn't have even known about the VRF."

"True, but while Nolan was playing around some of the human-run government sites, he stumbled across data about our world. Curious little brat that he was, he kept digging until he managed to find out all about our existence."

Nolan's chest pounded as the fear over his friend grew tenfold. "Let me guess, the VRF found him snooping and paid him a visit."

"Yeah, and since they were so impressed with his computer skills, they *recruited* him. After they arrested him, they put the fear of God into him, then punished him for his crimes."

"How?" Ethan felt weak in the knees since he already knew it wasn't going to be a pretty answer.

"The same way they punish any Drones who piss them off. They hung him up and whipped him within an inch of his life."

"Was he a vampire when they did that?"

"No, they didn't transform him until after," Zeke's voice caught a bit.

"The pain must have been unbearable."

"From the way he describes it, it was." Zeke held him tighter.

Ethan rested his cheek on his mate's chest. "So after they transformed him, they made him work for them," Ethan surmised.

"Yeah, that was until he managed to escape a couple years ago. Since he knew all about Eric's clan because they'd rebelled against the VRF, he sought them out. Eric took him in and Nolan's been with us ever since."

"Until now. Shit, what will they do to him if they discover who he really is?"

"I'm sure they already have. They're going to try to wrutch every last bit of information from him and when Nolan has nothing left to offer, they're going to make an example out of him to all others who may be tempted to escape."

A shiver went through Ethan as he wondered just what tactics the VRF would use to get that message across, too. "Why haven't you told me all this before?"

"Because I didn't think you needed the added pressure."

Ethan closed his eyes as he thought about how small Nolan was. How he'd never really gotten a good handle on fighting and defense. "So why are you letting me know now?"

"Because I've been having this gut feeling that he doesn't have much more time. I know I'm just a vampire and we don't have the gift of being able to predict the future like some magics do, but something just tells me that if we don't rescue Nolan soon, he's going to be in for a bunch of hurt."

"I may not be a magic who can see the future either, but I'm inclined to agree with you." Ethan pulled away from Zeke and went back to work.

* * * *

Now clean and with his stomach full of blood, Nolan wanted nothing more than to curl up into a ball and sleep. Unfortunately for him, the warlocks had other plans. First, was getting his wounds covered in some foul smelling paste before they dressed him in some clean clothes.

Never before had Nolan cursed his blindness more than he did at that moment. He'd have given anything to know what his rescuers looked like. Especially Donovan. One thing Nolan did know for sure was the warlock had the build of a god. When they'd been pressed together in the shower, Nolan had been very aware of how solid and muscular the man's body had felt. For the first time, Nolan had actually been grateful for his weakened condition or else he would have sprouted a hard-on just from the contact.

Despite the blood and medical treatment, Nolan found it increasingly difficult to stay awake. Ever since he'd come to the prison, he'd been too terrified to allow himself to sleep at night. That, coupled with his lingering injuries had left him to a point of exhaustion.

"Come on. Let's get you back to our cell and you can get some rest," Donovan said as if reading his mind.

Nolan found himself growing more and more fond of the warlock's voice. It sounded warm and smooth, kind of like the warm brandy Alonzo, the zombie bartender, used to serve Nolan when he was patrolling on cold nights.

Don't let a nice voice and a great set of pecs fool you into complicity. Remember, you can't trust anyone here.

Nolan would take the warlocks up on their offer for now, but that didn't mean he trusted them. When he'd drank Donovan's blood, not only had there been the lingering zing that came from magic, but there had also been the bitter aftertaste that marked those who practiced the dark arts. "Why are you in here?" Nolan asked as he leaned heavily against Donovan.

"Just like you, I pissed off the wrong people," Donovan replied as he started to guide Nolan from the room.

Nolan made it a few feet before he stumbled. Scrambling for purchase, he still managed to keep up the questions. "What was the name of your coven?"

"I'll tell you that as soon as you share the name of your clan," Donovan returned easily.

Ouch! The warlock had him there. Nolan

stumbled again, this time almost falling flat on his face. Normally, he would have been okay, having adapted enough to his blindness to get around, but the added tiredness had left him clumsier than ever.

A sigh of aggravation was his only warning before a set of strong arms grabbed him and scooped him up. "What in the hell are you doing?" he demanded.

"Carrying you over the threshold," Donovan drawled sarcastically.

"I don't need you to carry me. I can manage on my own," Nolan protested as he tried to squirm away. That earned him a hard slap on the ass.

"Relax. Nobody is going to take away your man-card for being swept off your feet this one time."

"It makes me look weak."

"Surprise, pup, you are weak."

Nolan jerked in indignation. "What did you just call me?" He tried harder to get away only to find in his weakened state it was a lost cause. So he just settled in for the ride, all the while praying to everything that was holy that nobody saw this scene. That hope got dashed the second they left the privacy of the shower.

"Isn't that just utterly fucking adorable," came a snide voice that he'd come to associate with Ian.

Quick as gunshot, Nolan whipped one hand up

so he could flip off the jackass.

A wry chuckle filled the air. "Looks like somebody can hear better now."

"Yes, and I'm fluent in asshole," Nolan snapped as he let his arm flop down. Shoot! He was in trouble if he couldn't even flip someone off properly.

"Awh, look. Under all that crap laid a cute little twink," Ian continued to jab.

Even though he couldn't see the moron, Nolan still opened his eyes long enough to deliver a glare. "Fuck you."

"No, thanks. Unlike my brother, I don't get a boner for neck suckers."

Nolan bared his fangs and hissed although it sounded weak even to his own, rapidly improving ears.

"That was almost cute," Ian snarked.

Nolan lunged in the direction of the voice only to have Donovan tighten his hold.

"Easy there. You can have a go at Ian, but not until you're completely healed. Lachlan tends to get grumpy when his patients take things too fast and ruin all his hard work."

"No offense, but your friend is an asshole," Nolan snarled, but he did relax once more in Donovan's arms.

"He's my brother, remember?"

Oh crap! He would have to insult his rescuer.

Nolan swallowed nervously. "Sorry."

"Sorry that you just called him a name or sorry that he's my brother?" Donovan asked in an even tone that didn't do anything to reveal his emotions.

"Uh..." Nolan hesitated only a second before going with his gut. "Both?" The lethargy had started to take over again and he couldn't help but slump against Donovan's chest. Nolan took in a deep breath and had to refrain from letting out a happy sigh. He hadn't been kidding earlier when he'd said the warlock smelled good. A blend of herbs, smoke and musk, Nolan could have inhaled it all day.

"Don't worry, I happen to agree with you on both accounts," Donovan replied.

The light tone to his voice let Nolan know he was teasing. Donovan shifted his hold before starting to walk somewhere. Nolan winced as the now familiar rank of the main prison area hit his nose. A mixture of excrement, rot and garbage it could have been used in chemical warfare. He shifted his face some and buried his nose deeper into Donovan's chest.

"That's odd," Lachlan mused.

"What?" Donovan demanded.

"The guards are talking to the group of revenants we just beat up. From the looks of it, the conversation is real friendly and up close, too."

Nolan winced as Donovan's fingers dug deeper into his flesh.

"Is there something you want to tell us, pup? Why do I get the feeling their discussion involves you?"

He debated a second before deciding they deserved, at least, to know a kernel of truth. "Because the guards had sort of given me to the revenants as a reward for good behavior."

Ian cursed. "And now we just pissed off both groups by taking away their new boy toy. Perfect!"

"Hey, I didn't ask to be the prisoner-of-the-month award," Nolan protested.

"Of course you didn't," Donovan agreed, his death grip softening.

"How come I'm getting an omen that this little vampire is going to be more trouble than he's worth?" Ian asked, his voice dripping with venom.

Because I probably am going to be. Aloud Nolan lied, "I'm sure they'll soon forget about me and move on to someone else."

They shifted directions and the air cleared up considerably. Even if he hadn't already cohabitated with a coven, Nolan would have known immediately by the pungent scent of herbs and oils that they were in a room owned by magics. Donovan set him down on a soft mattress

and Nolan couldn't hold back a moan of gratification.

"Wow, it's been so long since I had a real bed to lie down on." He snuggled his face into the pillow, noting how it carried Donovan's scent. He jumped when fingers softly caressed his cheek. Then as he realized it was Donovan's touch, Nolan turned his face into the touch. Whether it was from the blood he'd drunk, a sense of obligation or something else deeper, Nolan found himself quickly growing more attached to the warlock. "Thank you," he whispered, sleepily.

"For what?"

"For saving me."

"No problem. Like I said, it was the right thing to do."

CHAPTER FOUR

Donavan gazed down at the vampire curled up next to him and wondered how someone could look so beautiful, even while sleeping. If Donavan had to use one word to describe Nolan's current appearance, it would be angelic. His plump lips were slightly parted and all the anxiety cleared from his face, making him look even younger. Even though he knew he should pull away, Donavan found himself repeatedly reaching out to stroke the soft skin covering Nolan's rounded cheekbones. It was as if he couldn't get enough of touching the man. So caught up in the moment, Donavan lost all track of time until Nolan finally shifted, then opened his eyes.

"What time is it?" Nolan asked before he yawned.

"Around three in the morning. You've been sleeping for over a day." Donavan pulled back his hand, a warm heat coming over his face because

he'd been discovered basically molesting Nolan.

"Where are the others?"

"They went to get some food. I told them to bring some back for us." Donovan glanced around the small area that had become their home—basically, a cave carved into one of the stone walls of the prison, it barely fit their makeshift beds.

"How long before they get back?"

"At least a half hour. Why?"

Nolan shifted so they were facing each other.

Donovan sucked in a breath as he spotted the unmistakable flare of desire on Nolan's face.

"Because I want you to start touching me again."

Donovan had to bite his bottom lip to hold back a moan of desire. "You don't owe me anything."

Nolan took Donovan's hand and pressed it to his hard cock. "Does this feel like I'm doing this out of obligation?"

No, it felt like Nolan wanted this just as much as Donovan did. Yet, he knew it would be wrong to take advantage. "You're still too injured."

"So you'll just have to take it easy on me." Nolan ground his erection against Donovan's hand. "Please, I know you want this, too. I felt how hard you were in the shower."

Nolan tilted his face up in a silent offering and that proved to be Donovan's undoing. Dipping his head down, he captured those plump lips into a

soft, tender kiss. Donovan had kissed plenty of others before, but none of them could begin to compare to the sweetness he found with Nolan. The kiss managed to be hot and carnal, yet almost innocent at the same time. Even the way the vampire's tongue darted out to tentatively trace Donovan's lips was a turn on.

"You taste as good as you smell," Nolan observed.

Donovan laughed. "Are you always this hung up on scent?"

"Now that I can't see, it's one of the few things I can go on," Nolan explained as he slid his hands under Donovan's shirt. "I don't even know what you look like."

"I'm a total troll. Children run in fear when they see me coming."

Nolan laughed. Truly laughed without an ounce of hurt or bitterness to it.

Donovan grinned in return.

"Somehow I doubt that's true," Nolan said.

"I have dark brown hair and eyes. Nothing special."

"Hmm...somehow I have trouble believing that, too." Nolan ran a fingertip around Donovan's nipples. "You feel fantastic to me."

"You probably say that to everyone who saves you from a bunch of revenants," Donovan teased.

"No, I mean it. Not only do you feel hot, but

you're so caring and kind. Plus you're voice is sexy as hell, that's an even bigger plus."

Guilt slammed into Donovan as he thought how Nolan wouldn't be saying those things if he truly knew everything about his past. A part of him wanted to spill the truth before things went further. Then Nolan's hand drifted down to cup Donovan's cock and all rational thought disappeared. All that mattered was that he was about to fuck the hottest man he'd ever met.

"I think we're way overdressed for this." Nolan smiled.

Donovan sat up and slid off his clothes, then gently helped Nolan remove his. The bruises and other wounds were still there, but thanks to Lachlan's skills, they had faded quite a bit. Donovan made sure to take great care, so as not to hurt Nolan though.

Once they were both naked, Nolan gave him another soft kiss before asking, "How do you want me?"

While he would have loved nothing more than to flip Nolan over and pound him into the ground, Donovan knew that the vampire was too weak for that yet. "Go on your side," he commanded instead.

The way Nolan immediately obeyed, so trusting and innocent, ratcheted up Donovan's guilt. That was until Nolan stroked his own cock

and whispered, "Please, fuck me now."

Donavan swallowed back his last bit of self-loathing, then grabbed a small vial of oil and climbed in behind Nolan. He took a few minutes to slick and stretch Nolan's hole before slowly sliding in his cock.

Nolan felt so hot, so tight, so perfect. Donavan allowed his eyelids to flutter closed as he gave over to the bliss. Nolan let out a low moan as he arched back against Donavan's chest, the movement showing off all the best features of his lithe body, from his trim, taunt belly to his long, thin cock. His lips parted just enough to show off the the tips of his fangs and Donavan's own cock twitched in response.

At first, Donavan had thought it would be hard to take things slow, but as he began to move, he found himself enjoying and savoring each thrust and caress. This had to be heaven. Before all his fucks had always been hard, yet efficient. They were a way to get off or complete a magical ritual. Never before had it been tender. What's more, never before had someone been so loving with him, like they actually gave a damn.

That's what Nolan did, too. He reached behind so he could gently caress Donavan's sides and legs, his touch leaving behind a heated path. One that Donavan was sure he would remember forever. Nolan even allowed his head to loll back

against Donovan's chest, his neck exposed in a gesture of pure submission. At the same time, he softly rocked back against Donovan's cock.

"Please tell me it's never been like this for you before," Donovan shocked himself by begging.

"It hasn't. I promise," Nolan panted. His fangs had dropped.

Donavan knew what he needed. "Do you want to feed from me again?" He prayed the answer would be in the affirmative. The thought of Nolan's fangs sinking into him, had Donovan nearly coming.

"Of God, yes," Nolan declared before letting out the cutest of whimpers.

Donavan brought up his wrist and this time, Nolan didn't hesitate in the least before he struck, his sharp incisors slicing into Donovan's flesh. Donovan let out a loud cry as he came, his cock emptying into Nolan's ass. At the same time, Nolan gave a muffled yell as he shot off, too, cum painting his thin stomach and chest. The entire time he kept his mouth firmly sealed on Donovan's wrist.

"That's it, pup. Take as much as you need," Donovan urged, his tone thick with leftover passion.

"Jumping Moses on a pogo stick. If you've fucked up all my healing, I'm going to kick both your asses," Lachlan bitched as he and Ian came

into the room, totally interrupting the intimate moment.

Donavan expected Nolan to jump in embarrassment. Instead, he took in several more drags of blood before lazily licking the wounds closed on Donovan's wrists.

"Don't worry, Donovan just gave me a light fucking. Nothing to get your panties in a twist over."

Ian gave a stifled laugh.

Donavan just glowered at them both as he pulled a blanket over his and Nolan lower halves. Only then, did he slide his cock out and sit up. "What did you bring us?" he indicated to the tray in Ian's hands.

"The usual. Crap stew with three week old bread."

"Gross," Nolan bitched before he buried his face in the pillow.

"You're still going to eat it," Donovan ordered as he tugged on Nolan's shoulder to make him sit up. He noticed the cum still covering the vampire's chest and stomach. Trying to be as casual as possible, he reached over, grabbed a dirty t-shirt from the ground, then wiped him clean.

"What for? I already had blood. In case you didn't know, vampires can live on a liquid diet for a long time." Despite his protests, Nolan still took

the spoon Donovan thrust in his hand.

"You're going to need more than that if you want to survive," Donovan urged.

"He's right," Ian agreed. "Especially after the nice conversation Lachlan and I had with one of the prison guards."

Donovan stilled, heart pounding at the ominous look on his brother's face. "What conversation?"

"The one where he told us that we can play with Nolan all we want, so long as we don't kill him. Seems the VRF wants your little pet broken, but still breathing."

Nolan paused, the spoon halfway to his mouth as he got the classic oh-shit expression on his face. "He really said that?"

"Yeah, you have any idea why that may be?" Ian snapped, his eyes dark with fury.

"Maybe," Nolan hedged.

"Shit!" Ian cursed. "Didn't I tell you he was going to be more trouble than he's worth?"

"Calm the fuck down," Donovan warned.

"No, he has every right to be angry," Nolan cut in softly, "now that I've dragged all of you into my mess."

The look of pure hurt and defeat on Nolan's face broke Donovan a bit. He reached out and lightly stroked the vampire's hair. "You can tell me anything. It's not like we don't have our own skeletons to deal with, so we won't judge you."

Nolan sighed and hesitated for a bit, as if he didn't know quite where to start. Finally, just as Donovan had begun to lose his patience, Nolan asked, "Have you ever seen that Angeline Jolie movie *Hackers*?"

Ian surprised Donovan by nodding. "Yeah, I saw it a few times."

Donovan turned to give his brother an incredulous look. "You actually watched a human movie?"

"Sure. I even used to have a Netflix account. So what does Angelina and her computer movie have to do with why they want us to break the vampire?"

"While I was still human, I used to dabble in computers a bit myself." Nolan set down the spoon and started to nervously finger up the edge of the tray.

"How much do you mean by dabble?" Donovan asked.

"A lot and it wasn't just any systems either. The bigger and more challenging, the better. It would give me such a high. Better than any drug I could take. That was until I started poking around in the wrong place."

"What place is that?" Donovan demanded, although he already had a sinking suspicion.

"The VRF's main computer system," Nolan mumbled.

Ian's eyes grew wide. "No fucking way! Maybe this kid isn't so much of a loser after all."

Nolan tossed a rude gesture his way before he continued. "They came looking for me and I think you can all figure out the rest."

"Not quite. Obviously, you got away at one point and set down roots somewhere else. What happened after they turned you and what clan were you living with when they caught you the second time?" Donovan pressed. If Nolan thought he could get away with leaving out a huge chunk of his life, then he had another think coming.

Again, Nolan hesitated for a few beats. "After the VRF turned me, they forced me to do their dirty work for a few years before I managed to escape. I eventually joined a clan led by a Drone named Eric. You ever hear of him?"

The three warlocks exchanged glances. They'd all heard of him all right. "Yeah, he's the one that teamed up with the coven led by Ethan," Donovan said, his stomach clenching as he spoke the name.

Nolan's face brightened. "You know Ethan? Isn't he the best? Not that I like him in *that* way or anything since he already has a mate, but Ethan has always been so nice to me."

Ian mimicked putting a finger down his throat. "Yes, Ethan is just the bestest."

Nolan made a face. "Nice sarcasm there. I guess I should have known better than to expect an ass

like you to be buddies with one of the most powerful coven leaders.”

“You still haven’t told us why the VRF is still gunning for you,” Donavan interrupted before things got even more ugly between the pair.

“I’m sure you’ve heard about the Sunlight Grenades Eric’s clan has developed?”

“Sure,” Lachlan said. “They’re like human explosives only they let off a burst of UV light instead. I understand the weapon is capable of taking out whole buildings of vampires.”

“More than that,” Nolan corrected. “It fries them right where they stand. It’s not a pretty sight either.”

“So what does the weapon have to do with you? Just because you’re from the same clan doesn’t mean you can produce the grenades for the VRF.” Donavan reached out and took Nolan’s hand. Despite the thorough fucking they’d just shared, he found he still couldn’t seem to get his fill of touching the man.

“Ah, but if I happened to be on the team that developed the weapon in the first place, that changes things completely.” Nolan gave a tight smile.

“You know how to make Sunlight Grenades?” Lachlan cocked a brow.

Nolan wrinkled his nose as he shook his head. “Not really. I was just more of a helper since

computers are my thing. My team leader, Brenden, is the one who did most of the work. He's a frigging genius, too. So much so that the VRF haven't been able to duplicate the weapon, no matter how hard they try."

"So now we're back to why the VRF has a hard-on for you," Ian cut in oh-so-helpfully.

Donavan almost called his brother out for being such a dick, but held back because he found himself interested in the answer.

"Because while I can't tell them how to make the weapons, I can hack into my clan's computer system and pull up all the information the VRF would need to finally be able to successfully make the weapon themselves."

"I don't buy it," Ian argued. "If that was the case, then why would they throw you in here where you could get killed at any time? You're not worth anything to them dead."

"The guard went out of his way to make sure that we didn't murder Nolan. Remember?" Lachlan pointed out.

"He's right." Nolan lowered his head. "They didn't put me in here to die. When they first got me, they interrogated me. When that didn't work, they moved on to torture, but I still refused to betray my clan. So they decided that maybe if I spent some time in here, I would be willing to do just about anything to get out."

"That's why they blinded you. So you wouldn't be able to fight back." Donovan felt sick to his stomach as he wondered what could have happened if they hadn't gotten to Nolan first.

"Yeah, they said maybe after I'd been beaten and raped enough times I would be more amicable to their demands. Which means it's only a matter of time before they come to get me. When they do, they'll want me to betray my clan and if I refuse this time, they'll kill me."

Donovan reached out and pulled Nolan into a protective embrace. "No, they won't. I'll protect you." As he held Nolan tightly, Donovan wondered if that was one promise he'd be able to keep.

CHAPTER FIVE

“Keep your head down. No, lift it up a bit. Damn, just lower it again.”

Nolan tried hard not to get annoyed with Ian, but when he acted like this, it made it difficult. “Are you trying to make me look like a bobble head or something?”

“Sorry, it’s just if anything happens to you in here, Donovan will have my ass.”

In here happened to be the cafeteria in the center of the prison. A dangerous, often deadly place, under the best circumstances, Nolan didn’t relish being there. Even with Ian and Lachlan playing the role of bodyguards. They didn’t have a choice though. Not when the guards had ordered them out of their cell. The biggest bitch of the situation, however, was that the warden had called Donovan into his office. Since only half of the people summoned there made it out alive, Nolan was nearly sick with terror.

Wedged between Ian and Lachlan, he tried to make himself as invisible as possible. He had the fingers of one hand hooked into the belt loops of Ian's pants. He stretched the other one out a bit for protection in case Ian got any funny ideas and walked him into something. Over the past week, they'd grown a little more amicable toward each other, but not enough for Nolan to totally trust him. "How long until Donovan comes back?" he asked. His stomach was tied into such a tight knot of worry he doubted he'd be able to eat anything.

"I'm sure it will be soon," Lachlan assured him.

"Yeah, if the fucking warden doesn't eat him first," Ian cracked.

A jolt of panic shot through Nolan. "That's just a joke, right?"

"The warden is a werewolf, so not really."

"Oh God, why did you guys let him go then?"

"Because we're prison inmates and we don't get to practice free choice anymore," Ian drawled.

"How can you be so blasé about this?" Nolan demanded harshly.

"Keep it down, fang boy, you're starting to attract attention," Ian warned.

"Ian's not blowing this off," Lachlan added. "Whenever he gets upset or nervous, his mouth starts going on overdrive. So just ignore the attitude"

"There you go again, giving away all my

secrets. Next you'll be telling everyone my true age and weight."

As they walked deeper into the cafeteria, the noise level increased. All around them came the buzz of conversation mixed in with the various unique noises that came from the many creatures imprisoned there. Unfortunately, there were also a myriad of scents, too, and not many of them were good.

"Gah, no wonder you guys always get your food to go. This place is awful." Nolan barely held back a gag.

"Just be glad you can't see," Lachlan said

"Yeah, otherwise you'd be getting a gander of two gorgons fucking. That's sick enough to even make me want to hurl."

The shudder in Ian's voice made Nolan smile. "I saw three zombies going at it once," he shared.

"You are such a liar," Ian accused.

"No, I really did. It was back in Detroit at some bar we always went to. I had to use the can and when I walked to the back of the bar, I found them, naked and having a great time."

"What did you do?" Lachlan laughed.

"I very quietly backtracked and got the hell out of there."

"That must have been a disgusting sight," Ian said.

"You have no idea. I still have nightmares over

it.”

Ian stopped abruptly, making Nolan run into his back. “This table looks good. Lachlan, why don’t you get the food while I watch over Fangs?”

Although Nolan didn’t relish the idea of spending some alone time with Ian, he didn’t argue. Instead, he reached his hands out until they found the back of a chair. Pulling it out, he managed to sit down without making a fool of himself. He waited, fully expecting Ian to start in on him. Ian didn’t disappoint.

“So you and my brother seem to be getting awfully close,” Ian mused.

Nolan worked hard to keep his face expressionless. “What makes you say that?”

“Because, unlike you, I’m not blind and that thin blanket he uses to cover you two up does little to hide the certain activities you guys participate in.”

Nolan blushed as he thought back to some of the compromising positions his body had twisted in. While he’d known that Ian and Lachlan had been in the same room, Nolan had always assumed that he and Donovan had some sense of privacy.

“Is Donovan just a casual fuck to your or do you actually feel something for him?” Ian probed.

“What business is that of yours?” Nolan snapped. Ian would be the last person he’d ever

confide in.

"Because he's my brother and I want to protect him. It's what we've been doing for each other ever since we were kids," Ian replied simply. "I reckon it's the same way you feel about the members of your clan."

Since Nolan still carried some of the marks from his torture for not turning against his clan, that remark struck hard. "Donavan is very important to me," Nolan begrudgingly admitted.

"Do you love him?"

Nolan gave a short laugh. "We've only know each other a week."

"Sometimes that's all it takes."

Nolan thought about denying his growing feelings for Donavan before deciding he owed the warlock better than that. "Okay, I'll admit, he's starting to mean a great deal to me."

"If it's any consolation, I can tell he feels the same way about you."

Nolan shook his head. "What's up with this serious conversation? The entire time I've know you, the only deepest talk I've ever heard from you is whether Britney's boobs are real or fake."

"It's because I take all things that may affect Donavan seriously. The last thing I want is to see him get hurt."

"Well, you don't need to worry because I have no plans on doing so."

"Even if you found out something troubling about his past?" Ian pressed.

"If this is about him practicing dark magic, you can save it. I already know."

"You do? How?"

"I could taste it in his blood. When you live alongside a coven full of magics like my clan does, you learn how to taste the difference," Nolan admitted.

"So you used to go around sucking the necks of a bunch of magics?"

Ian would have to hone in on that one point of the conversation. "I wasn't a saint, but I wasn't a slut either," Nolan replied flippantly. In truth he'd had more than his share of offers, but he'd been very picky about who he'd hooked up with. Getting back on track, he said, "Besides, what's the big deal if he went dark side a few times? It's not like other magics haven't done so. Ethan used to live with the Ninth and they were the worst coven ever. Thank God, he managed to get out before he got too corrupted, but he still did a few things he wasn't proud of."

Ian grew so silent that Nolan thought he'd snuck off or something. It wouldn't have been the first time Ian had pulled that prank. The last time, Nolan had talked to an empty room for nearly five minutes before he realized he was alone.

Finally, the warlock said, "So I take it your clan

doesn't like the Ninth."

Nolan shrugged. "Well, there's not much left to hate since Ethan killed off most of them. But before then, they were our biggest enemy next to the VRF."

"What would you do if you found out Donovan was part of the Ninth?"

The question was so ludicrous that Nolan smirked. "He's not though. There is no way someone as great as Donovan would associate with that slime."

"But what if he were? Would that change how you feel about him?" Ian persisted.

"Please, Donovan part of the Ninth? There is no fucking way that could ever happen. I've heard about some of the things that coven is known for—sanguinary rituals, human sacrifices, blood orgies. Donovan would never get himself involved in stuff like that. He's too honorable."

"What if he did though?"

Nolan made a face, wondering why Ian insisted on continuing with the stupid what-if game. "Then I guess I would have to ask him why he'd agree to that kind of life, because I could never see him willingly being that way."

"So you wouldn't break things off with him?"

Nolan didn't even have to think over his answer. "Of course not. Nothing could ever change how much I care about him."

* * * *

They had put both leg and arm shackles on Donovan so he had to shuffle as he walked into the warden's office. He knew he probably looked like some comical version of a penguin and it did little to improve his already foul mood. Then when he found some asshole vampire waiting for him instead of the warden, Donovan got good and pissed. He so was not in the mood for mind-fuck games.

"Who the hell are you?" he demanded, in a rude, blunt way that would have made Ian proud. He could already tell by the smooth way the jerk styled his blond hair and the high-end black suit he wore, the vampire was a politician. If there was one thing Donovan hated, it was that type. He would rather deal with a den of kobolds than spend one second in the same room as one of those self-serving, assholes.

"I'm sorry. I should introduce myself," the stranger said, flashing his perfectly white fangs.

"Actually, it's really not necessary since I could give a damn."

The vampire went on as if Donovan hadn't spoken. "My name is Corbin and I'm the head of the VRF."

Yippi, doodle, doo! Did he expect Donovan to be

impressed? "So?"

The vampire's nostrils flared slightly, but the toothpaste smile stayed in place. "Why don't you take a seat? There is much that we must discuss?"

Donavan cocked a brow at Corbin's formal language, but didn't make a move to take the chair in front of the desk. Two guards from the back of the room rushed forward and forced Donavan into it. As he gave in and sat, he couldn't help but notice that Corbin remained standing so the change in position had him towering over Donavan.

"I've heard that you've taken an interest in a Drone named Nolan?" Corbin asked.

Since he knew that the guards had already reported that fact to the vampire, Donavan saw no reason to deny it. He just decided to add his own twist to the truth. "I needed a fuck toy, so I thought why not take on a weak Drone for that purpose."

Corbin made a soft scoffing noise. "Nice try, but the guards have already told me how protective and gentle you are with him. Not that I can say I blame you. Nolan is such a sweet piece of ass."

Donavan forced his anger back, knowing that would only hurt the situation. "If you say so."

"Oh, I know so. Can I ask you a question?"

"Since I'm the one in chains, the answer to that

one is pretty obvious," Donovan grunted.

"Does Nolan still make those tiny whimpers when he's taking it up the ass?"

"What? The guards didn't fill you in on that one?" Donovan retorted as he balled his hands up into tight fists. Anger and more than a bit of jealousy slammed into him as he thought about Nolan being intimate with this prick. Donovan would have loved to wrap his fingers around Corbin's neck and give a good, long, hard squeeze. If for nothing else than to wipe that arrogant, smug look from his face.

"No. All they said is how Nolan loves to scream your name when he comes." Corbin gave a tight smirk. "And thereon lays the problem. I didn't send Nolan here to willingly fuck, I sent him here to be broken."

Rage coursed a hot path through Donovan's body. He'd never wanted his magic back more than at that moment. He'd love to blast the very breath from Corbin's body for even thinking about harming Nolan.

"Did you know I broke him before? When he first became a vampire." Corbin leaned against the desk and crossed his arms over his chest

Donovan ground his teeth together so hard that had he been a vampire, he would have snapped off a fang. "No, I didn't."

"You think he's beautiful now, you should see

him when he's completely submissive and groveling. I've never had anyone lick my boots better than him. I'm getting hard just thinking about it. I keep remembering that one time I strung him up in my office and used my best whip on him. Near the end I even got him to make those same little whimpers we talked about earlier."

Some of Donovan's self-control slipped. "How could you? He was just a kid."

"Maybe, but Nolan has skills that I've never seen matched. I put him to good use when he was still under my control." Corbin's upper lip curled up on one side. "That was until he actually grew a set and escaped. I've been trying to get him back ever since."

"And you finally did," Donovan cut in. "Only he's not so complacent anymore." Never had he been prouder of Nolan for that either.

"You know how Drones are when they get involved with a clan. Nolan, fool that he is, actually believes he would die before turning on them. If he weren't so talented, I would be inclined to humor his belief. However, I need him alive and complacent. That's where you come in."

Donovan didn't respond, the lump of horror in his throat too big to allow for speaking. Just the mere thought of Nolan being in the hands of this maniac made his skin crawl. Corbin uncrossed his arms, walked forward, then leaned down so his

lips were inches from Donovan's ear.

"I don't care how you do it, but I want Nolan to come back to work for me."

"How am I supposed to do that? You said so yourself that he refused, even after he'd been tortured," Donovan bit out.

"I'm sure you'll find a way." Corbin reached down and fingered one of Donovan's wrist tattoos poking out from the edge of the shackles. "After all, you trained under the best. You must have plenty of resources. Even with your magic bound."

"What if I don't cooperate and tell you to fuck off?"

"Then it will be your brother and cousin who pay the price. Find a way to make Nolan come back to me or I'll kill all three of you and make him watch while I do it."

CHAPTER SIX

By the time Donovan made his way back to their cell, he felt sick from worry. Both over what would happen if he agreed to help Corbin and over what would happen if he refused. How in the hell could he chose between family and the man he'd grown to care so much about? He walked in to find all three of them sitting on one of the mattresses, Nolan wedged between Ian and Lachlan. Both his cousin and brother let out relieved breaths as they spotted him.

"Thank Goddess you're back," Ian said.

"Donavan?" Nolan tilted his face hopefully in the direction of the door.

"Yeah, it's me," he replied, his stomach doing strange things at the sight of the younger man.

Nolan sprang to his feet and rushed over to Donovan. "I was so worried about you."

He threw himself into Donovan's arms, giving him a fierce hug. Donovan returned the embrace

with the same intensity. He even buried his nose in Nolan's hair so he could take some comfort in the familiar sweet scent. Corbin's horrible words came back to Donovan and, as he thought about how much his man had suffered through, it took all Donovan had not to break down right there.

"What's the matter?" Nolan demanded, pulling away.

"It wasn't the warden who wanted to speak to me. It was Corbin," he told them. On the way over, he'd decided the best bet would be just to lay everything out in the open. That way they could all come up with a way for *everyone* to get away unscathed. Nolan grew so pale that for a second, Donovan feared he was going to pass out.

Finally, Nolan put one hand to his gut and gave a simple, "Oh."

"Oh?" Ian echoed. "The head of the VRF pays Donovan a visit and that's all you can come up with?"

"What else to you expect from me? A fucking tap dance," Nolan snapped back.

Ian rolled his eyes before returning his attention to Donovan, "What did he want?"

"Me," Nolan cut in, his face growing paler.

The protective side of Donovan made him reach out and pull Nolan into another tight embrace. "Yeah, he wants me to somehow convince you to go back to work for him."

Nolan snorted. "It was more like slavery. I didn't get paid and I sure as hell didn't get a choice in what tasks I completed for him."

"Shit," Lachlan breathed, horror etched on his face. "What happens if you can't get Nolan to agree?"

"Then he'll kill you, me and Ian," Donovan replied bluntly.

"Well, that sucks," Ian replied.

Nolan pulled away from Donovan's embrace and took several steps back.

The vampire's expression was so bleak and devoid of hope, it let Donovan know that he'd already accepted the fact that he'd be back in Corbin's hands by the end of the evening.

"What's with the long face?" Ian asked. "You don't honestly think we're going to let you go back to that prick do you?"

"Huh?" Nolan's brows creased in confusion.

"Ian's right," Lachlan added. "We've just gotten used to having a vampire in the family. We're not about to hand you over to the VRF."

Nolan shook his head. "I can't allow you guys to do that. It's too much."

"Who the fuck said we were asking?" Ian bitched. "It's already a done deal as far as we're concerned."

Donovan couldn't remember a moment when he'd loved his brother and cousin more. Even

though they knew what they could possibly be facing, they were still willing to stand by his side and protect Nolan. "Thank you," he said, making sure to meet each of their gazes so they could see the appreciation he felt.

"So, that oh-so-perfect-we-are-family clan of yours, do you think they're still looking for you?" Ian asked.

"Yeah, if I know them, they probably have magic scrying for me," Nolan answered immediately.

"Then it's no wonder they haven't found you yet. All the paranormal prisons have anti-scrying spells on them." Donovan felt a wave of hopelessness.

"If there was only some way we could help them find me. Then they could rescue all four of us before the VRF takes me," Nolan said.

Donovan, Ian and Lachlan all exchanged knowing looks, since they highly doubted Eric's clan would welcome them into the fold. They'd be more likely to arrest or worse try to kill them. It was still a risk they had to take. Better to face Nolan's clan than the Pure Born government.

"Why don't we help them out by ripping a small hole in the shield," Lachlan suggested.

"How are we supposed to do that?" Ian demanded. "With our magic bound, we'd be lucky enough to pull a rabbit out of our asses.

Even if we combined our powers."

"Now that's a real interesting visual," Nolan muttered.

"How about the espy ritual," Ian suggested. "It may just be enough for them to lock onto Nolan's location and it doesn't take much a magical boost. If we merge our powers, it would be enough."

Donavan let out a low growl of anger. "No fucking way. Think of something else."

"Why not? What's the espy ritual?" Nolan asked.

"A goddamn bad idea."

"It would require we use your blood to complete it," Lachlan explained. "Personally I think the plan has some merit."

"Correction, it would require a *lot* of your blood, which is why it's not going to happen." Donavan glared at Lachlan. He expected crazy ideas like this from Ian, but he'd never dreamed his normally, levelheaded cousin would be on board.

"That's okay," Nolan persisted. "It's not like it will kill me, unless you bleed me completely dry. If it means that we can save all of us, then I'm willing."

"I don't know. It's a huge risk and if something goes wrong, we could lose you," Donavan hedged.

"If you don't do it, then you'll lose me for

sure." Nolan stepped forward and put a hand on Donovan's chest. "Please, let me do this for you. After all you've sacrificed for me, it's a small price to pay."

"I couldn't take it if something were to happen to you," Donovan confessed.

"I feel the same way about you. So we're just going to have to trust Ian and Lachlan to help us through this."

Nolan tipped his head back and Donovan took the bait, going in for a heated kiss. Once they broke apart, Donovan pointed out one other kink in the plan. "We need eudialyte stone for the ritual. How are we going to find some in this place?"

"Leave that to me," Lachlan said as he got up and started for the door. "I have some contacts who owe me favors. You guys just get everything else ready."

Once he left, Nolan leaned forward and whispered in Donovan's ear. "Take me to the shower room. Make sure it's empty, too."

Donovan's cock immediately swelled to life at the invitation. "Why? Are you feeling dirty?"

Nolan let out the sexiest laugh. "Yes, I am and I need somebody to wash me up. Do you know of anyone who might be interested?"

"Maybe." Donovan reached out, grabbed Nolan by the hips and jerked him closer so their hard

cocks could rub together. "Are you sure you just don't want to do it here?"

"No, I want to be totally alone this time." Nolan rolled his hips forward, a small moan slipping past his lips.

"Sheesh! You two aren't going to start up with that again, are you?" Ian griped. "Don't you ever give it a rest?"

"You're just jealous," Nolan accused with a mischievous grin.

"Yeah, because doing a blond, twink vampire has always been on the top of my bucket list," Ian shot back.

Donavan caught the brief look of longing that went through his eyes. "Will you guard the door of the showers for us?" he asked his brother.

Ian let out a martyr's sigh. "Fine, but you so owe me for this."

"How about I promise to hook you up with your own vampire once we get to the clan?" Nolan offered as Donovan took him by the hand and started to lead the way.

"Knowing you, it will be a real fugly one," Ian groused.

"I wouldn't do that to you. Just tell me what turns you on and I'll try find it for you."

"Who needs *Match.com* when we have Nolan?" Ian cocked a brow.

Donavan wasn't fooled a second. For all his

bitching and snide comments, he knew Nolan had managed to squirm his way under Ian's tough exterior.

"What would you rather have? Warlock or vampire?" Nolan gave that endearing grin of his.

"Neither."

Nolan pressed his lips together thoughtfully. "Hmm...that makes it a bit tougher then. I know a few werewolves, but they're just as cranky as you are. Plus, they usually like to top and something tells me you wouldn't be up for that."

"Plus, I hate the smell of wet dog."

They reached the shower and Donovan almost shouted a *whoo hoo* when they found it was empty. Leaving Ian at the entrance, he guided Nolan inside.

"You know what excites me most about being rescued?" Nolan asked as he started to pull off his clothes.

"Finally getting some decent food?"

"No, having my sight back." Nolan reached up to cup Donovan's face. "I can't wait to see how you look."

Donovan's breath hitched as he glanced down at the hated tattoos. He knew he should tell Nolan the truth. It wasn't like he wouldn't find out once the Drones came to rescue him. It would be the right thing to do. Nolan deserved to know what

Donavan really was. Yet, every time Donovan tried to work up the courage, he would take one look at the trust in Nolan's eyes and chicken out. "What if you don't like what you see?" he asked, still staring at the markings.

Nolan's lips curled up into a smile. "There's no way that can ever happen."

Damn, he was so innocent...so clueless. "Are you always this trusting?" He finished getting undressed and turned on the shower.

"No, I'm usually the biggest cynic out there. There is this chick named Raven at our clan. Even though Eric formally accepted her and everything, I can't stand the bitch."

Donavan grabbed the soap and started to work it over Nolan's body. "Why not?"

"There's just something off about her. I can't pinpoint exactly what it is, but I just know never to turn my back on her. I have a human friend named Toby and ever since he came to the clan, Raven has had it bad for him."

"You have humans in your clan?" That had to be a first since most paranormals went by the theory that the less humans knew about them the better.

"Just a few. But getting back to Raven. I just have a feeling that if she could, she'd do something really bad to Toby."

"Like what, kill him?"

"Or worse, turn him." Nolan moaned when Donovan started to soap his cock.

It hardened under Donovan's hand, so he kept it up, the soap making for a smooth glide. "Why wouldn't he want to be a vampire? He gets to stay young forever, be immortal."

Nolan made a face. "Yeah, take me for example. I can live for the next few centuries, but I'll forever look like an eighteen-year-old kid. Lucky me."

There was no mistaking the bitterness in his voice. Donovan leaned in for a kiss, hoping the distraction would wash away the bad feelings. "I happen to think you're perfect," he declared, his mouth still pressed to Nolan's plump lips.

"Do you really mean that?" Nolan asked, his tongue darting out to tease.

"Of course I do."

"Because I was going to ask you something, but it's pretty big." He took Donovan's bottom lip between his teeth and gave a light love bite.

"Anything," Donovan promised. Nolan had him so jacked up with passion, he'd give the vampire the remaining wealth of his family if asked.

"I want you to bond with me."

Donovan stepped back in shock, his hand automatically going to his neck. Last he heard, in order to bond with a vampire, said vampire had to leave a deep bite on their mate's neck. So deep,

that it actually left behind a scar. Not an easy thing to do with any immortal since they healed so quickly.

If Donovan agreed to it, it would make him a pariah amongst most magics. They considered it a dishonor even to let a vampire feed from them, let alone permanently mark them. He'd never be able to go back to what was left of his home and childhood coven.

He glanced over at Nolan, indecision making him speechless. Did he care about Nolan? Yes, there was no doubt about that. Did he want to spend the rest of his life with the vampire? That answer he didn't know. Strong feelings aside, they'd only known each other a week.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Nolan held in a breath as he waited for Donavan's response. While he tried to tell himself that it didn't matter to him one way or another, Nolan knew that simply wasn't true.

He wanted Donavan to accept this—to accept him. After they got out of the prison, Nolan didn't want the warlock out of his life. What he yearned for was for them to make a future together, like so many of the other happy couples he'd seen at the clan.

How he would have given anything to see the expression on Donavan's face. Were his eyes stormy with anger? His mouth twisted up in disgust? His mouth hanging open in shock? When the silence continued, Nolan couldn't stand it.

"If it's because you're a warlock and I'm a vampire, that's no big deal. There are plenty of mixed couples at my clan. There are even some triquetras that have two magics and one vampire,"

Nolan blurted.

Donavan finally spoke. "This a huge step and we've only known each other for a week. How do you know that you won't regret this?"

"Because I know you. That's all that matters."

"That's just it. You don't know me," Donovan argued raggedly.

"I know that you saved some scrawny, filthy, desperate vampire when most others would have walked the other way. Just like I know that you would die for Ian and Lachlan. Both of those show me what a good man you are."

"I'm still not sure if we're ready for this," Donovan continued to argue.

"Please, if not for anything else, then so you will be protected when my clan comes. If they see my mark on you, they'll do everything they can to make sure that you get out of the prison unscathed. Plus, as mine, they will immediately accept you into the clan," Nolan reasoned. Maybe it made his come off sound desperate, but at this point, that's what he truly was.

"How can you be so sure of that? They could take one look at me and tell me to go fuck myself."

"They won't do that," Nolan replied without an ounce of doubt. If there was one thing he could say about his clan, it was that they never turned away someone in need. As a result, they were the most eclectic clan around. They had werewolves,

magics and even a half-breed werejackal living with them. "Please?" Nolan persisted. "After everything you've done for me, let me give you this."

After several, heart-pounding moments, Donovan finally said, "Okay."

Relieved, Nolan trailed his fingers down Donovan's slick chest. "We have to be fucking while I do it. Is that going to be a problem?"

Donovan's strong hands reached around to cup Nolan's ass. "Not at all."

Nolan laughed. "Somehow I didn't think it would be."

They started kissing, Donovan's tongue plunging inside Nolan's mouth. At the same time, his fingers slid into Nolan's crack.

Nolan let out a moan as he felt a gentle pressure circling his hole.

"I'm going to fuck you so hard that you'll feel me for days," Donovan promised as he thrust one finger inside Nolan.

"Yes," Nolan hissed as he thrust back against Donovan's hand. The hot water from the shower cascaded down the slope of his back, adding to the already erotic sensation of Donovan finger fucking him.

The pressure increased as Donovan added another finger. "Wrap your legs around me."

"Are you sure? I don't think it would be too

sexy if you dropped me in the shower.”

“Trust me,” Donovan whispered, his breath hot against Nolan’s ear as he used his free hand to pick Nolan up.

Nolan obeyed, his legs going around Donovan’s trim waist. He barely got settled before Donovan slammed him into the wall. Nolan let out a muffled cry as Donovan removed his fingers only to replace them with his cock.

“Is this how you want it? All hard and messy?” Donovan asked as he started to pound into Nolan.

“Fuck, yes,” Nolan slurred, his fangs fully out and ready to use.

He could smell the blood humming through Donovan, and for once, Nolan didn’t hold back. With a low hiss, he bared his fangs and struck.

Donovan let out a sharp cry, but never wavered in his thrusts, not even when Nolan sank his fangs in even deeper into his neck.

Mine! The word quickly fired through Nolan’s brain as he let out a feral sounding growl. He’d heard before that the bonding process could be intense, but nothing had ever prepared him for this.

It wasn’t just the fact that he was consuming Donovan’s blood. Nor was it that Donovan would forever wear his bite mark. No...it was the way Donovan completely gave over and submitted to Nolan. How he trusted him so implicitly. Now

Nolan understood why mates lived and died for each other. How they could actually kill to protect each other.

Love you. I fucking love you more than anything in this world. As those words rushed through his head, Nolan's cock shot off, hot streams of cum covering their stomachs. At the same time, Donovan let out a guttural roar as he found his own release.

"That was fucking amazing," Donovan declared as Nolan's legs slid back to the ground.

Nolan sealed the wounds closed before giving a teasing reply, "It was okay."

Donovan laughed before lightly cuffing him on the head. "Smartass. We better get back. I'm sure Lachlan has already found the stones."

"That fast?" Nolan couldn't help but be impressed.

"He's good with others." Donovan turned off the water.

"Unlike Ian." Nolan swept his hands out until he found one of the towels they brought with them.

"Yeah, Ian's skills are in other areas."

While Nolan could have named off a few, he kept his trap shut. Despite himself, he'd found himself growing to like the hardass warlock. Even more so, after he refused to give into Corbin's demands.

They quickly dried off, got dressed, then met Ian outside the showers. As soon as they crossed the threshold, Ian gave a low whistle. "You let him gnaw on you?"

"Yeah, got a problem with that?" Donavan challenged.

After a heated pause, Ian replied, "Nope. Not so long as you're happy."

Nolan blinked, shocked that such a tender reply could come from the usually snarky warlock. Before he could comment on it though, Ian came running up.

"I got the stones and have everything set up. All I need is you guys and Nolan to—Holy fuck! Is that a bonding bite on Donavan's neck?"

"I thought it would help protect you guys when my clan shows up," Nolan rushed to explain.

"If you say so," Ian replied, before getting back to business. "We need to get started. The sun set an hour ago, so we're already working on a short timeline since vampires can't go out in daylight."

"I just hope we're not too far from the clan dwelling," Nolan fretted. While the clan soldiers did have UV suites, they could be cumbersome in certain fighting situations.

"I just hope they really are scrying for you like you said," Ian countered.

"Of course they are. My clan doesn't leave anyone behind." Of that, Nolan had no doubt

since he'd participated in more than one rescue mission himself. "I wonder if they found Jonas yet?"

"Who's Jonas?" Donovan demanded.

Nolan couldn't help but smile at the hint of jealousy he detected in the question.

"He was with me when I got captured. They separated us right away and I haven't seen nor heard anything about him since."

Donovan grabbed Nolan's hand and began to lead him back to their cell. "Are you and this Jonas close?"

"Just friends. Since he helped with my training, he's more of a mentor than anything. The whole reason he got captured was he came back to help me."

As they entered their room, the overly strong scent of burning sage clogged Nolan's nostrils. "Damn, Lachlan, what have you been doing in here?"

"Cleansing the area of negative energy."

Nolan wrinkled his nose. "It smells like a hippie commune in here."

Donovan led him to the center of the room before placing a soft kiss on his lips. "Are you still sure about this?"

"Of course I am. I don't know about you guys, but I'm sick of this place." He could hear Ian circling them as he muttered some incantation

under his breath. Donovan gave Nolan one last kiss, before going to join him. Then Lachlan joined in so all three of them were chanting. Nolan started to feel kind of foolish, just standing there.

"It's time to cut you," Ian said, startling Nolan since he hadn't heard the warlock approaching.

"Okay, I'm ready," Nolan's voice quivered a bit though.

"Hold up your wrists," Ian ordered. When Nolan did, Ian said, "I'm sorry."

Before Nolan could assure him that he wouldn't hold a grudge, Ian sliced through both his wrists. Nolan let a hiss of pain. "Fuck, that hurts."

"I know. Normally I would have used a better dagger, but you know how it goes—beggars can't be..."

"Pain free," Nolan finished blandly. "It's a good thing I can't see since I probably don't want to know how dirty that thing is."

"What's the big deal? It's not like vampires can get infections from everyday objects. Just odd things like Bikor bites." Ian grabbed both of Nolan's wrists and squeezed hard.

"Damn it," Nolan yelled.

"I need as much blood as possible for the ritual to work."

Already, the metallic, sweet scent of blood saturated the small room. Even though it was from his own body, the vampire in Nolan

responded and his fangs dropped. A pleasant hum settled over his body as the blood steadily dripped from his wrists, the smacking sounds it made as it hit the ground mixing in with the chanting from Donovan and Lachlan.

Ian leaned in close to whisper, "Do you love him?"

Even though he'd just admitted that fact to himself, Nolan nodded, "Yes, I do."

"Then make sure you do everything you can to protect him."

"I would give my life for him," Nolan whispered back. His heart thudded as he realized how true those words were, too. In the short span of a week, Donovan had become the most important thing in Nolan's life.

"Let's just hope it doesn't come to that," Ian replied ominously.

CHAPTER EIGHT

As they approached the prison, Ethan gave out some last minute instructions to the small team of warlocks crammed into the back of the van. "Okay, we should be there within a couple minutes. The cloaking shield we put over our vehicles isn't going to last much longer so we need to strike hard and fast. Intel says it's a lower level prison so the security shouldn't be that difficult to breach."

"Why is it so low level?" one of his warlocks, Blaine, asked.

"When I asked around I was told because this prison houses the dregs that nobody gives a damn about anymore. The VRF just throws them in there and if the inmates wind up killing each other, so be it."

He swallowed hard as he thought about how someone as young looking and small as Nolan would fare in a pit like that. While the scrying had let Ethan know the vampire lived, it didn't let him

know what condition the guy may be in.

"We're here! Everyone get ready. Use magic first and if that fails, then use the weapons the Drones gave us." Ethan pulled out a small scrying stone. In the shape of a triangle, it would point him toward the direction of Nolan. Kind of like an amped up, magical version of a compass.

The lead vehicle in the convoy crashed through the tall, chain-link gate of the prison. The other cars and vans making up the attack team followed and they all pulled into a large clearing that looked like it served as a prison yard. While any other time the gate would have been able to withstand a blow like that, thanks to enhanced magical shields, Ethan had disabled them prior to them arriving.

"Just like a hot knife through butter," another warlock named Parker, crowed.

Ethan worked hard not to roll his eyes. Sometimes Parker had more clichés in him than an eighties romance novel. The team got all their weapons at the ready before they burst through the back doors.

The smell was the first thing that hit him. Rank with garbage, rot and sewage, he wondered how anyone could survive in it. Then the horrors surrounding him took over and he forgot all about the stench.

They hadn't been kidding when they said some

of the worst dregs of the paranormal society lived there. All around him was a potpourri of baddies—ghouls, revenants, kobolds, werejackals. Some had attacked the guards while others were going after each other. Some were even foolish enough to try to charge the Drones or warlocks. They quickly gunned down those saps.

Ethan pushed those horrifying images aside and focused on the stone in his palm. “Come on, Nolan, show me where you are.” As if responding to his plea, the stone shifted and pointed to the inside of the forbidding building. Ethan yelled for the others to follow him, then took off at a neck-breaking pace. Along the way, the warlocks and Drone soldiers flanking him had to shoot their way through some attackers, but Ethan hardly noticed, too focused on the stone.

They finally turned a corner and that’s where they found him. Three warlocks surrounded him and Ethan immediately recognized the tattoos marking their wrists. Horror clawed up his spine as he realized his good friend was in the clutches of some members from the Ninth. He then noticed that blood covered Nolan’s arms and hands. Even more of it pooled on the ground around him.

Ethan didn’t even hesitate, yelling out a stunning spell he knocked out all three of the warlocks. Before any of them could react, they all fell, unconscious, to the ground. Nolan let out a

cry of distress as his hands swept the air in front of him in a wild manner.

“What’s going on?” Nolan screamed. “Donavan? Where are you?” He tried to take a step forward and tripped over the bodies of one of the warlocks. Reaching out, he started to pat the body. “Donavan? Oh fuck, what did they do to you?”

Ethan’s gut clenched as he realized that Nolan was blind. What in the fuck had those bastards done to him? Was it the VRF that had done the damage or those sick-as-shit Ninth pricks? He moved forward to help only to come up short when Nolan bared his fangs and let out a snarl.

“Hey, Nolan, buddy, it’s me Ethan. We’ve come to take you home,” he soothed as he took one step forward.

Nolan shifted his body until he was crouched over the warlock in a protective gesture. Snapping his teeth, he growled, “Don’t you fucking touch him.”

Cherish, one of the female Drones from Ethan’s team, rushed forward. “Ethan, stop! Nolan is only trying to protect his mate.”

Dismayed, Ethan finally noticed the bonding bite on the neck of the warlock Nolan crouched over. No wonder Nolan was wiggling out. Any vampire would react the same way to their mate being attacked.

Cherish inched forward. "Nolan, sweetie. Nobody meant to hurt him. We just want to help you."

Nolan cocked his head to the side. "Cherish? Is that really you?"

It didn't surprise Ethan that Nolan would calm down at the sound of Cherish's voice. While she may look like a small, petite, girly-girl, with her mass of curly brown hair, in the end, she commanded the respect of her entire team and they adored her.

She spoke in low, soothing tones. "Yes, honey. It's me. I brought the rest of the team and we want to take you home."

"You'll help Donovan, too?" He dug his bloodied fingers into the shirt of the warlock. "And Ian and Lachlan? I promised them."

Ethan couldn't hold back his anger. "How in the hell can you even ask that? Don't you know who they are?"

Cherish shot him an annoyed glare that clearly said, *not helping!*

Nolan gave a low snarl. "They were the ones who kept me alive the past week. Without them, I would be dead or worse. Plus, they were the ones who helped you find me."

"They're also from the Ninth," Ethan countered. As soon as he saw the look of utter shock on Nolan's face, Ethan wanted those words

back. "You mean they didn't tell you who they were?" he asked, feeling like the biggest jerk to ever exist.

Nolan slowly shook his head. "They never said a word, but it doesn't matter. They still go with me."

"Nolan—"

"I mean it! Either you take all of us, or you can just turn around and leave. I'm not going anywhere without my mate," Nolan shouted as he dug his fingers even deeper into the warlock's shirt.

"Just take them already," Cherish whispered. "We have to pull out of here before reinforcements come. Plus, Nolan is losing more blood. We need to get him to Dahlia so she can heal him."

One of the other warlocks moaned as his eyelids cracked open. As he blearily focused on their direction, he let out a moan. "Ah, fuck! I died and went to hell. I was right, too. Ethan really is Satan."

"It's okay, Ian," Nolan said. "You're not in hell. We're just getting rescued, like I promised you."

Nolan shot Ethan a glare that dared him to defy that statement. Even though he knew Nolan couldn't see it, Ethan returned the look with the same amount of anger. "Fine, we'll take them to the clan, but just until I decide what in the hell I'm going to do with them. I can't make any promises

to you.”

That seemed to placate Nolan. He gave a weak smile as he laid his head down on the chest of his warlock. “Thanks, Ethan. I knew I could count on you.”

Then Nolan passed out.

* * * *

Soft whispers woke Nolan up. With a soft moan, he opened his eyes and blinked several times before he realized that he was in an infirmary of sorts. The lights were dim, but he could tell it wasn't the same one from the clan dwelling in Detroit. Then he blinked a few more times as he realized that he had his sight back. For the first time in weeks, he could make out his surroundings, from the several beds that lined the large, white tiled room, to the numerous IV poles and other various medical equipment.

Then one of the most welcome sights in his life walked over to his bedside, the clan doctor, Dahlia. She wore her same white lab coat and, as usual, had her dark hair fashioned in a tight bun. Even though Nolan didn't go for women, he'd never seen a more beautiful vision.

“Hey you,” she greeted, her red lips curling up in a smile.

“Where am I?” he asked, his voice raspy from

his dry throat.

"The new clan dwelling in Pontiac," she explained as she handed him a glass of water.

"Pontiac?" Nolan echoed as he took the cup. "What happened to the one in Detroit?"

"Right after you were captured, Detroit fell under the control of the VRF. We had no choice but to evacuate."

"Oh," Nolan replied, saddened by the loss of their former home. Then another thought occurred to him. "Where's Donovan and the other warlocks that were with me?"

Dahlia nodded to a group of beds several feet away. He could barely make out the three large men who seemed to still be unconscious. Then one detail caught his eye and set his blood boiling.

"Why are they handcuffed to their beds?" Nolan demanded, outraged.

Dahlia arched a brow. "Because they're from the Ninth."

"So? They protected me."

"Sorry, kiddo, but that was Ethan's order. I'm not allowed to unlock them."

"Is he...are they okay?" He honed in on one figure. Even without being told, or being able to see very well because of the dim lights, Nolan knew it was Donovan.

"Yeah, they're just sleeping off the latest blast Ethan gave them."

Nolan jerked in shock. “*Latest?* Just how many jolts has he given them?”

“A few.” She frowned sympathetically. “He didn’t want them to wake up until we had them here and secure. If it’s any consolation, I can assure you as a physician that it hasn’t done any lasting damage to them.”

“I’ll make sure to tell them that when they wake up to find that they’ve only traded one prison for another. I’m sure it’ll cheer them right up,” Nolan spat out with a heavy dose of sarcasm.

His attitude didn’t seem to ruffle Dahlia in the least. She just went about taking his vitals before checking the bite. “Your Bikor wound is healing up nicely.”

Nolan hardly heard her, his attention focused on Donovan. All he wanted was for Dahlia to scam so he could go over and check on the warlock. His intent must have been obvious because she let out a long sigh.

“Go ahead. Just don’t overdo it. While I gave you a blood transfusion, you’re still not one hundred percent.”

As soon as she walked away, Nolan got out of his bed and padded his way over to Donovan. Once he reached the bedside, he finally got to take a good look at the man he’d grown to love.

Donovan had so been lying when he said he was a troll. If anything, he had to be the sexiest

man Nolan had ever met. His raven hair may have been a bit long, the ends curling around his ears and the nape of his neck, but the color accentuated his tan skin just right. His face was as handsome as Nolan had imagined, with high arched cheekbones and a strong jawline. Nolan licked his lips as he recalled all the times he'd traced those features with his tongue. Even before he'd gotten his sight back, Nolan now realized he'd known just exactly how Donovan had looked—like pure and utter perfection.

As if sensing Nolan's presence, Donovan's eyelids fluttered open to reveal the warmest, brown eyes. Nolan continued to stare, making no attempt to hide the desire he was pretty certain lurked in his gaze.

"It's a good thing I couldn't see before. Otherwise I would have never made a move for you because you are so out of my league," Nolan breathed as he allowed his gaze to travel down Donovan's body.

Even with the thin, white sheet covering him, Nolan could see that Donovan had a build that would rival any of the Drone soldiers. While Nolan had carefully mapped each ridge and dip with his fingers and tongue, he couldn't wait to examine those areas carefully with his gaze.

"Are you kidding me?" Donovan rasped. "Have you looked in a mirror lately? You're a

fucking wet dream come true."

"You're just saying that because you're stuck with me now," Nolan scoffed.

"No, I mean it. You're beautiful."

The look of pure desire in Donovan's gaze let Nolan know the warlock meant those words. A heat came over Nolan's cheeks and he ducked his head self-consciously. 'I'm sorry that Ethan zapped you."

Donovan gave a one armed shrug as he glanced down at his cuffed wrist. "It's to be expected. I'm guessing they told you what I really am."

Nolan met his gaze again. "Yes, I know you're from the Ninth."

"And do you regret bonding with me?" the entire time Donovan asked the question he gazed down at the thick black and red tattoos marking his wrists.

In way of an answer, Nolan grabbed the edge of the privacy curtain and walked a slow half-circle around the bed, closing them off from the rest of the room. Next, he went to the foot of the bed and slowly peeled off his pajama top, bottoms and underwear. Kicking them to the side, he climbed onto the bed and slid up Donovan's body until they were face-to-face. "Do I look like I'm having second thoughts?" he asked before capturing Donovan's lips in a heated kiss that left both of them breathless.

"Not really," Donavan replied as he brought his free hand around to cup Nolan's ass.

"I fell in love you, not your past," Nolan said as he kissed his way down Donavan's jaw.

"Love you, too," Donavan moaned as Nolan roughly shoved up his top so he could lick a lazy path down his chest and stomach.

"Are you sure you're not saying that just because you want me to suck your cock?" Nolan teased as he lowered Donavan's pants past his hips. He let out a low hum of approval as he got his first look at his mate's erection. "What a nice cock it is, too. Thick and long, just as I like them."

Before Donavan could respond, Nolan took the warlock's dick into his mouth. Donavan muffled a cry by putting a fist in his mouth as he arched up into Nolan's touch.

Nolan smiled around the mouthful of cock, loving the response he'd elicited. Using one hand to cup the man's balls, Nolan increased the suction, his cheeks hollowing out as he pulled back.

Spearing his tongue into the slit in the crown of Donavan's erection, Nolan collected some of the pre-cum. Like his blood, there was the slight aftertaste associated with dark magic, but it didn't turn Nolan off. If anything, it ratcheted up his arousal. He could have sucked Donavan off all night long, but Nolan realized they only had

moments before someone came to check up on them.

He let Donovan's cock slide out of his mouth and reached over to the bedside medical cart. He knew from his various trips to the infirmary that they were always stocked with individual packets of lubricants. While they were there for medical procedures, Nolan figured they would work perfectly for the purpose he had in mind.

Ripping open one of the small foil packages, he squirted the contents on his fingers, then reached back and started to stretch himself out. The entire time, Donovan's heated gaze burned into him.

"Are we really going to do this in the middle of the infirmary?" Donovan asked as he reached up to caress Nolan's chest.

Nolan slowly impaled himself on Donovan's cock, both of the moaning in unison as he took in every inch. "I'm thinking that we are."

"We really need to learn how to do this in a more private setting," Donovan chuckled as his eyes fluttered closed.

"Now what would be the fun in that?" Nolan asked as he started to ride Donovan.

"It would be positively boring." Donovan gasped as Nolan picked up the pace.

"I love how it feels when you fill me," Nolan gasped as he used one hand to strip his own cock. He moved faster, the sounds of their groans

mixing with the noise of flesh hitting flesh. A tingling started to build up in Nolan's spine, letting him know that he wouldn't last much longer. He fought it, biting his bottom lip with effort. For some reason, it seemed imperative that he didn't come until Donovan did.

Just as he thought he couldn't hold out much longer, Donovan moaned his name and came, his cock shooting hot jets of semen up Nolan's ass. Nolan gave his cock two more quick strokes before he let his own orgasm wash over him. While he tried to catch his cum in with his hand, some of it still spilled out and dribbled onto Donovan's shirt. "Sorry," Nolan gasped, still out of breath.

Donovan gave it an unconcerned glance, an amused grin on his face. "Now everyone is going to know what we've been up to."

Nolan climbed off Donovan, then grabbed a towel from the counter by the bed and, using it to clean himself and Donovan as best as possible, he then got dressed and opened the curtain. As he pulled it back, he found that Ian and Lachlan had both woken up. They were sitting up in their beds, identical looks of shock on their faces. What's more, Dahlia stood a few feet away, her mouth partially open in stunned disbelief.

Nolan gave her a lazy wink. "Hey, Doc. The patient's awake if you want to examine him now."

CHAPTER NINE

Donavan had to hold back his laughter as he watched Nolan saunter back to the bed. Behind him, the vampire doctor looked like she didn't know whether to yell at him or give a chuckle of her own. In the end, she just settled for shaking her head.

"God save me from vampires and their overactive sex drive," she said as she grabbed a chart and flipped it open.

Nolan shrugged in response before he climbed back on the bed. Going to Donovan's uncuffed side, he snuggled in and let out a satisfied sigh. "So, have you called Ethan and Eric to let them know we're awake yet?"

"Yes, they should be here any minute." She made a few notations in the chart before putting it back up in the slot on the wall.

Donavan's heart thumped a little harder in his chest at the mention of the clan and coven leader's

names. He knew there would be a good possibility that they would ban him, Ian and Lachlan, if not worse. While the three of them had never taken up arms against the clan, the coven they were associated with had so that made them look just as guilty.

"It'll be okay," Nolan assured as he rubbed his face against Donovan's chest. "I won't let them hurt you."

Maybe not, but if they banished him from the city, then he might never see Nolan again—that would be even worse than death. He gently stroked Nolan's cheek, trying to burn every detail of the man's features in his mind. "I know you won't. I just don't want to lose you," Donovan confessed.

"That's something you'll never have to worry about. Where you go, I go."

Unwanted tears blurred Donovan's vision. In all of his miserable life, nobody, save for Ian and Lachlan, had ever given a damn enough to make a promise like that. "I don't deserve you."

Nolan sat up a bit and gazed down into Donovan's eyes. "Of course you do. You won me from those revenants, fair and square."

They shared a long, tender kiss that eventually someone interrupted by pointedly clearing their throats. Looking up, he saw Ethan and a tall, blond, male vampire standing by the bed.

"It's nice to see that you're feeling better, Nolan," Ethan said tightly.

Nolan gave an unabashed grin. "You have no idea just how good I'm feeling now."

Ethan rolled his eyes, but left that remark uncommented on. He turned his focus to Donovan. "As for you and your kin, I have no frigging idea what to do with you. Part of me just wants to kill you and be done with it, yet I'm holding back out of respect for Nolan."

"I can tell that you enhanced the spell binding our magic," Donovan replied evenly. "So if you were to try to strike me down, there would be no way I could defend myself."

"Much like so many of the covens that the Ninth attacked and decimated," Ethan countered, his blue eyes flashing with rage.

"Hey, we never had anything to do with that," Ian called from across the room. "Do you actually think that they would have turned us over to the VRF if we were all up for doing that kind of dirty work?"

Ethan flicked him a dismissive glance before returning his attention to Donovan. Nodding to the tattoos, he said, "Yet, you were in deep enough to go through the final ritual to earn those."

"Not all of us were as lucky as you and were able to escape before we had to take that last

step," Donovan countered. He knew he'd struck home when the warlock's nostrils flared slightly.

"Oh, why don't you just tell Pollyanna the whole story? Right before you tell him what he can do with his precious judgment," Ian spat.

Donovan debated for a second before he realized he didn't have any choice but to share. Not if he wanted to be able to stay with Nolan. "Before we were forced into the Ninth, we were part of the Doyle coven."

"I thought that coven was destroyed several years ago."

Donovan took in a shaky breath. Even after all this time, the pain still felt fresh. "Yes, they were one the first covens to fall when the Ninth started to gain power."

"He's getting a little ahead of himself," Ian butted in. "The story really starts eight years ago, when the Ninth initially attacked our coven. The first thing they did was force every able bodied male into their ranks. They murdered those who refused, along with all their family members. Since we didn't want that same fate to befall our sisters, the three of us had no choice but to go with the Ninth and become one of them."

"They had already murdered our parents, so our biggest fear was that we would lose someone else we loved," Donovan added bleakly. He clung tighter to Nolan for comfort, more glad than ever

he now had his mate to lean on.

Ian continued, "We trained under them for three years and I'm sure you know some of the horrible things that were done to us and the things they forced us to do. We didn't want to participate in their horror, but we knew that refusal would mean death to what was left of our coven. Then right after we graduated and got our final tattoos, they gave us our fist mission."

"What was that?" Ethan asked.

Donavan noticed his voice didn't carry the same sharp bite. "There was a den of werecats that had somehow pissed off the Ninth. Our orders were to go in and eliminate the whole lot of them – woman and children included." Donovan's stomach still curdled as he thought back to the day he received that dreadful mission.

"Only we couldn't do it," Ian added. "So they took all three of us to the center of the coven, strapped us up and flogged us."

"Then after they were done, they finally told us the truth," Lachlan said, his eyes bright with unshed tears.

"They had already killed your family, hadn't they?" Ethan surmised.

Donavan nodded. "They were dead all along. All those horrible things we'd done had been for nothing. After they delivered that news, they cut us down, then shipped us off to the prison."

Nolan hugged him tighter. "I am so sorry, babe."

"Not to be a prick, but how do we know that you're telling the truth?" Ethan pressed.

"Because Donovan would never lie about something like that," Nolan snarled.

Eric cleared his throat. "They've already helped the clan out by saving Nolan. If Corbin had managed to hack into our computer system and get information on how to build the Sunlight Grenades, it would have crippled the rebellion."

"So you should be thanking Donovan—not handcuffing him to the bed," Nolan pointed out as he sat up straighter.

"After so many years of dealing with the Ninth, you'll have to excuse me for not trusting three of their members to walk freely amongst our home," Ethan argued.

"You just heard for yourself that they're no longer members of that coven," Nolan argued. "Plus, you trained under the Ninth, too, and yet, we all trust you."

"I didn't go through the final rites like they did." Ethan waved at the tattoos.

"No, but you did go through the Death ritual," Nolan shot back.

All the air seemed to leave the room as everyone sucked in a breath. Ethan even paled a bit as he swayed on his feet. Not that Donovan

could really blame the guy. The Death ritual called for a living sacrifice and if Ethan had indeed participated in it, then his hat wasn't as white as he acted like it was.

"That's not fair, Nolan," Ethan finally said, his face twisted with hurt.

"I don't mean to be a jerk and judge you for something you had no control of, but you're doing the same thing to Donavan. He had no more power over what happened to him than you did."

Eric let out a low whistle. "I hate to say it, but Nolan has a point. If you won't take them into your coven, then they're more than welcome in my clan."

Ethan whipped his head to the side, his mouth open in outrage. "You wouldn't!"

"After the way they saved and protected, Nolan, I sure as hell would."

Donavan tensed as Ethan glared down at him, then the warlock's gaze shifted over to Nolan and his face softened. "Fine, they can come to my coven, but only if they agree to let me still bind fifty percent of their magic until they've fully proven themselves."

Ian opened his mouth, no doubt to tell Ethan where he could stick his conditions, but Donavan quickly spoke over him. "Deal. I promise you won't be sorry."

"I'm only doing it for Nolan," Ethan replied

before he waved a hand.

Donavan felt a surge as half his powers rushed back into his body and, at the same time, the handcuffs slipped from all three of their wrists. Donavan held up his hand in marvel as for the first time in years, the vibrant energy only magic could produce danced across his palm. "Thank you," he breathed.

"Don't thank me. Thank Nolan." Ethan started to walk away, then stopped and pinned Donavan with one final glare. "I'll be watching all three of you, close. Don't disappoint me."

"We'll be good, little warlocks," Ian chimed in as he got out of bed, a huge grin on his face.

Ethan just gave a sigh as he shook his head and then left the infirmary.

Elated, Donavan rolled over and pinned Nolan to the mattress. Giving his mate a hard kiss, he asked, "Have I ever told you how lucky I am to have you?"

"Maybe, but you can feel free to tell me again." Nolan grinned.

"You keep saying that I saved you, but it's been the other way all this time. Thanks to you and your love, I finally might be able to get my life and magic back."

"And thanks to your love, I finally have a reason to live, even if I'm still going to look like an eighteen-year-old kid for the rest of my life."

“You’re perfect the way you are and I wouldn’t change a thing.”

Donavan gave Nolan another kiss and for the first time in five years, he actually believed that he might have a future. Sure, he still had to prove himself fully to Ethan and the rest of the coven, but Donovan had no doubt that with Nolan by his side, he could succeed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephani Hecht is a happily married mother of two. You can usually find her snuggled up to her laptop, creating her next book.