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Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

Voracious Vamps

Dark Prophecy

SACRED TALISMAN

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Kris Norris

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Dedication

* * * *

To my brother, Norm, for always being there. I'll always remember loose teeth, late night horror movies and brain eaters. I love you. You're a man made of iron with a heart of gold.

Thanks to Claire, Alexa and the great cover artists at TEB. I couldn't ask for a better publisher.

And a very special thanks to Chris. You're more than an editor. You're a mentor and a friend. Thanks for your wisdom, your ideas and for not gloating for always being right.

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Chapter One

* * * *

"Fuck, I hate Halloween,"

Rafe walked along the sidewalk, his collar turned against the late fall rain. He cursed the endless drone of humans parading down the street, dressed up as vampires and demons. The morons wouldn't recognise a demon if the fucking thing bit them in the ass. And their take on vampires...hell if he bumped into one more cape wearing, cliche sprouting, Angel wanna-be, he'd forgo his usual animal fare and suck the asshole dry.

He huffed and turned down an alley, needing to distance himself. The constant cheer only emphasised his own inhumanity, and he didn't need the reminder. The distant thrum of music vibrated through the air, as he stopped midway, shouldering up against the wall. He recognised the beat, familiar with the type of dancing that accompanied the song. Women, dressed in nothing more than bras and boy shorts, undulated across the dance floor, rubbing against any male body within reach. Then they'd follow their catch into the back rooms, fucking them against the wall or on any handy surface. The rooms were videotaped, but he doubted most of the lovers gave a damn.

A sharp clicking rang behind him, drawing his attention. He turned, pushing his back into the rough brick. A woman strutted along the pavement, dressed in what he guessed was

a black cat costume, sporting a bustier with a lace garter and matching thong. Her fake velvet tailed swished across her calves, the soft sound echoed by the light patter of rain. She stopped several feet in front of him, casting a long, seductive gaze back across her shoulder. Her lips twitched into a smile as she rubbed her leather flogger across the sensual curve of her ass, slapping it against her pale flesh. She shrugged at his indifference and continued up the alley, no less confident she'd be able to sell her wares inside the bar.

Rafe growled, letting the rain cool his skin. How long had it been since he'd felt any form of desire heat his body? Since he'd revelled in the feel of a woman's skin against his, her feminine scent surrounding him like a sensual fog? Breathed in the earthy sweet aroma of arousal until he could taste the flavour on his tongue? He loved eating a woman's desire, the warm, wet juice filling his mouth until the succulent essence was all he knew. There was a time he would've been more than willing to take the woman up on her offer. To watch her body beneath his, her hands bound in silk ties, stretched out in front of her. He liked to bind both arms to the same post, accentuating the play of muscles across her back as she fought to free herself. Her skin looked pale, and he couldn't help but wonder how dark the bands would contrast against her flesh, or how much it would flush as he brought her within reach of her climax.

Rafe cursed, slamming his fist against the wall. It'd been over a century since he'd indulged in pleasures of the flesh, his ability to couple fading along with his hope. He was a vampire, for fuck's sake. Yet one cursed like few others—an

Enforcer—destined to roam the earth searching for the sacred talisman he'd been created to protect.

"A vampire with a overactive conscience...who would have thought such a wretched creature existed."

He turned towards the street when a faint whimper vibrated the air. He looked over his shoulder when it sounded again. "Damn it." He glanced longingly at the street. He shouldn't care, shouldn't get involved. He was supposed to be a soulless, bloodsucking parasite...what the hell did he care if some woman was raped or killed? He'd saved his share of damsels in distress, and was just as likely to get a knee to the groin as a simple thank you.

"You fucking whore...that hurt!"

The words cut through Rafe like a knife. He shook his head, allowing his body to shift, giving the illusion he simply appeared at the end of the alley.

"You know. The more you fight, the more this will hurt."

The creep chuckled, trying to rip the woman's pants down. She countered his attempt, deftly connecting with the moron's cock when he opened his legs to get a better vantage point. The guy doubled over, cupping his shaft in one hand as the other locked around her hair, pulling her face even with his.

"You'll pay for that."

He jerked her hair back, twisting the auburn mass around his fingers, just as Rafe grabbed the guy by the scruff of the neck, and slammed his head against the wall. The man's hand fell to his side and his knees buckled. Rafe sighed and tossed the creep across the alley. The woman flinched as the body

bounced off the far building and fell heavily to the ground. She looked up, her gaze skirting the length of the alley. Her eyes were rounded, glassy and the most brilliant green he'd ever seen. A rough smile touched the edges of his mouth as he nodded at her.

"You're welcome."

He turned to leave when her hand skimmed his forearm, so light he almost missed it. He looked down, not sure how such a delicate touch held him captive, when a flash of heat seared up his arm and across his chest, coming to rest in the sweet spot between his legs. He bit back a groan when his cock stirred and lengthened, as if trying to see whose touch had brought it back to life.

"Thank you."

His head snapped up, his eyes drawn to hers. She stared at him, shifting on her feet, fear flickering in and out of her expression. She glanced up the alley.

"I'm alone," he said, stepping closer. "And I doubt your friend is in any shape to bother you."

"He's not my friend," she bit out, her soft voice trailing over his skin, stirring the fire growing inside him. "I'd merely stepped into the bar to get out of the rain when the bastard grabbed me and dragged me out the back door." She snorted and rolled her eyes, crossing her arms on her chest. "In case you hadn't noticed, I'd already kicked him...twice."

The smile that captured Rafe's lips caught him by surprise. "So you did. Though it looked like he was still eager to...play." He allowed his gaze to sweep the length of her body, pausing at her perky breasts and luscious hips. Damn if

she didn't have the kind of body he fantasised about. Not much upstairs, but her ass. Shit, it was a dream come true, with plenty of cushion to soften the impact when you fucked her hard from behind. He could only imagine what it'd be like to actually sample her ass. Had other men taken her like that, or would he be the first?

She cleared her throat, dragging his attention back to her face. "Then I guess I'm lucky you came along. Now if you'll excuse me..." She shifted slightly, a faint glimmer on her neck reflecting the eerie light. Rafe moved with her, focused on the small pendant nestled against her throat. It looked like a tiny tear shaped vial, adorned with a silver lid carved into a series of leaves. The fluid inside the pendant shimmered in the dull light, casting rainbow coloured dots across her skin. She stopped when he barred her way with one massive arm.

"Where did you get that?' he asked, nodding towards her neck.

The woman palmed her hips, glaring back at him. "What on earth are you talking about? Where did I get what?"

"The talisman around your neck."

"Talisman?" She looked at him as if he'd spoken another language. She lifted her hand, fingering the pendant. "You mean my necklace?"

He nodded, unable to speak. The air seemed charged, prickling the hairs on the back of his neck. He watched as she caressed the smooth glass, running her fingers across the vial. The liquid inside glowed against her skin, fading from purple into black.

"It's an heirloom."

Her breath hitched as he reached up, tracing the suede cord with the tip of his finger. A spark erupted along his skin, tensing the muscles in his shoulders as he neared the small object. The light in the fluid increased, burning brighter. He stopped just shy of touching it, his gaze darting to hers. Her eyes had darkened, the green hidden by the black. She looked aroused and scared, and he wasn't certain which outcome he hoped for. Her hand reached for his, grazing his skin as he touched the cool glass.

"Well I'll be damned," was all he said before a brilliant flash erupted from the pendant, knocking him back. A wave of energy flowed through him, rippling outwards like the wake of an earthquake. It prickled his skin, electrifying every nerve as it billowed out, filling the alley before finally dissipating.

Rafe staggered forward, bracing his weight against the building, trapping the woman between his arms. She mumbled something under her breath, splaying her hands across his chest. He forced himself to look up, cursing the decision the moment their eyes locked. It was *her*.

Terryn could only stare at the man who held her captive with nothing more than his eyes. Sure she was wedged between his arms, her hands palming his broad chest, but it was his gaze that held her spellbound. Heat blazed from his pale eyes, turning the blue a deep shade of red. She blinked, a tendril of fear coiling in her stomach, but the crimson glow vanished. Her heart fluttered, making the world dip and sway. He looked more dangerous than the man crumpled on the pavement, but in a different way. His eyes spoke of heat and desire, of sexual promise and dark secrets. They burned like a

man on the verge of discovering his greatest destiny, yet there was a sadness in them that tore at her heart.

He released a long, slow breath though his chest barely moved as the soft swirl of air danced along her neck, sending a shiver of anticipation down her spine. She fought the desire to feel his muscles contracting beneath her fingers, using the last of her strength to keep her hands still. The man lowered his face to hers, brushing his lips along the curve of her neck until his words feathered across her ear.

"Tell me your name."

His voice was dark, like a thick fog curling across the land, slowly cloaking the landscape. Another shiver shimmied along her skin, beading it beneath her clothes. She tilted her head, unconsciously exposing her neck to him and jumped at the raw, beast-like growl that rumbled through his chest and into her hands. She drew back, pressing her head against the hard brick.

"Terryn." It was all she could say before the soft press of his lips against her skin robbed the rest of her breath. It wasn't quite a kiss, more like a gentle taste of her flesh, as if he wanted to categorise her very scent. He drew a deep breath, moaning at whatever aroma filled his head. She tried to move, but he inched closer, keeping her trapped between him and the wall.

"A very unusual name," he rasped, easing more of his body against her. The hard length of his cock pressed into her hip, and she contained all but a small whimper building in her chest. She'd never reacted this way to a man before and wasn't quite prepared for the sudden onslaught of emotion.

The man smiled against her skin. She felt every movement as his lips kicked up at the sides. While she couldn't see it, she knew it was more of a sexual promise than a grin.

"And you are?" she managed to rasp, wishing the scenery would stop spinning long enough for her to catch her breath.

"My name is Rafael, but I prefer Rafe."

The deep timbre of his voice seeped into her, warming a hidden pool of moisture she didn't know existed. She'd only had one lover in her twenty-five years, and he'd been more of a desperation fuck than a boyfriend. But Rafe evoked sensations bordering on orgasmic with nothing more than the sultry echo of his words. She met his gaze as he eased away, instantly missing his heat. He stared at his hand as he reached up and caressed the smooth pendant around her neck again.

"How long have you had this?"

She shrugged, bothered by the pesky details. She wanted him back against her, his body surrounding her as he sheathed himself inside her wet heat. Rafe chuckled as if he could hear her thoughts, brushing a single finger along her collarbone as he held the pendant in his hand.

"I—I don't know. Like I said. It's a family heirloom. It belonged to my grandmother."

"And many of her grandmothers before her," he added, releasing the necklace, allowing his finger to linger against her chest. "Your skin is so smooth, so soft." He closed his eyes, inhaling deeply. "And your scent...it's enough to drive a man insane with hunger." He opened his eyes and grinned at her. "Though I'm hardly a man."

Terryn furrowed her brow at the odd statement. Though there was something different about him, a strange hollowness she couldn't quite place, he was definitely all man. Judging from the size of his masculinity, she'd be hard pressed to fit him inside her. She started to speak when he silenced her with a cool finger across her lips.

"There is much we need to discuss," he began, backing away and claiming her hand in his. "But it's not safe to talk out here." He looked around as if he could see evil lurking in the shadows. "Come with me. We need to find a place more...private."

Rafe took a large step back, tugging her hand. Her body rejoiced at the thought of getting *private* with him, but her senses seemed to slam back into place once his body left hers. She pulled against his hold, freeing her arm. His eyes narrowed, but he remained still.

"Look, buddy. I appreciate your help, but I'm not the kind of girl who jumps into bed with every guy who throws a few punches and oozes charm. While I find the idea of sleeping with you intriguing, I-"

Her last word was still formed on her tongue when his body crushed her into the wall. God, he'd moved so damn fast she hadn't even seen him take the few steps separating them. His hands wrapped around her wrists, pinning them beside her hips as his lips brushed hers.

"Do you think this is about sex?" he rasped, liquefying the arousal just staring to cool. "Hell, if I only wanted to fuck you I'd have your legs wrapped around my back and my cock speared inside your hot little pussy already." He rubbed the

head of his erection across her hip, coaxing a husky moan from her lips. "There's far more at stake here than your pleasure." His voice softened for a moment and his hands seemed to cup more than clench. "But mark my words, my sweet. Before this night is through, you'll be so full of me you'll taste my release in your throat when I pump my seed inside you."

Terryn could only blink as he stepped back, grabbed her hand and led her up the alley, the dark promise of his words still echoing through the rain.

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Rafe headed for the street, his pace steady, commanding. Though he couldn't sense any of his brethren in the immediate vicinity, he knew it was just a matter of time before the hunt would begin. While he could more than hold his own in a fight, challenging an army of rogue vampires wasn't going to end well.

Fuck! Why the hell did he have to fulfil his prophecy tonight? All Hallow's Eve marked the one night where the boundary between hell and earth was at its weakest...the one night when evil would have the upper hand.

"Wait. Rafe! Where are we going?"

Terryn lagged behind him, looking back over her shoulder as if she expected creatures to crawl out of the shadows. He chuckled, wondering if she realised how close to the truth her thoughts were.

"What do you mean you're hardly a man?"

Rafe paused just long enough for her to stumble up beside him before he rounded the corner and headed for the bar. He needed to get her inside, buy a little time, before her damn pendant released another energy wave. His skin was still charged from the first ripple and he didn't need the necklace pulsing out their location like a bloody beacon.

He walked straight to the door, ignoring the line snaking down the street. A large man dressed as Batman stepped in front of him, the man's chiselled forearm blocking the entrance. He mumbled something lost to the beat of the music and motioned towards the end of the line. Rafe tamped down the need to crush the guy, baring his teeth as his human form faded, morphing into the beast-like features of the creature lurking inside him. The man's face paled as a shudder quivered through him. Rafe trailed his tongue along the two sharp points filling his mouth and nodded towards the door. A garbled whimper was his only reply as he opened the door and walked inside.

"Rafe. Stop." Terryn pulled against his hold again. "Do you know what kind of bar this is?"

He turned to face her, his hand curling around her waist. "I've got a pretty good idea," he said, holding back a curse when two guys knocked his back as they strutted past. "Just stay close and keep your body plastered to mine. We need to find a couple of empty seats."

"What we *need* is for you to explain what the hell we're doing in here."

"Just stay close," he repeated. "There's usually a few available at the back."

Fear and curiosity flared in her eyes before she gave him a curt nod, following him through the throng of people wedged inside the bar, her hip never leaving his. The sharp smell of sweat and lust assaulted his senses, lingering with the heady scent of sex. He passed the hallway he knew led to the private rooms and claimed two stools in the far corner. He motioned to Terryn, watching as she scanned the room once before settling on the seat. He slid in beside her, folding his hands on the bar.

"So you've been here before?" she asked.

"A few times."

He nodded at the bartender, tossing some money at the man, before locking his eyes on hers again. She was watching him, trying to picture what he looked like naked. He smiled, loving how a light flush laced her cheeks and down her neck when she realised he'd deciphered her thoughts.

"Are you going to tell me what's going on?" she mumbled, staring at her hands.

"As long as you make me one promise."

She met his gaze, not hiding the effort it took. "What's that?"

"To keep an open mind."

She snorted in a typically feminine way that made his cock peak against his jeans. Damn if she wasn't a tempting little witch he'd enjoy taming.

"Fine. I'll keep my mind completely open. So start talking."

Rafe nodded, pausing just long enough to probe the bar, ensuring they were still alone. They had time, though how much was yet to be determined. He met Terryn's gaze,

smiling at the way she worried her bottom lip between her teeth. It was full and a deep shade of pink. He wondered if her nipples matched them or if her pussy turned the same colour as arousal flooded it, engorging the lips until they parted in anticipation.

He forced the images aside, hoping his cock didn't burst the seam of his pants. After a century of sleep, it seemed determined to make its presence known. He pointed at her necklace. "We'll start with something simple. That pretty little pendant dangling against your neck is much more than just a piece of spun glass. It's an ancient talisman, crafted four thousand years ago, when the first of my kind walked the earth. The fluid inside is the very blood of the earliest lineage of my clan, and it holds more power than this world has seen in hundreds of centuries."

Terryn held up her hand, halting him. "The blood of your people?" She shook her head. "What are you trying to tell me? What are you?"

"We're known by many names, but you would call me a vampire."

Terryn's face paled and her eyes widened. Rafe dug into her thoughts, smiling at the images in her mind. Either she was into bondage more than he'd ever imagined, or she was picturing him strapped in a straight jacket.

"I'm not insane, nor am I lying. So get that straight jacket right out of your head. There's more and we don't have much time."

If possible her cheeks paled further, but she gave him a guarded nod.

"Good. Now listen carefully. Several of these talisman were created, each one unique. No one knows for certain why, but shortly after their creation, they were buried in a secret tomb. Five hundred years ago, the tomb was opened, and the pendants scattered across the earth. As a result, the remaining kin created creatures called Enforcers—vampires whose sole purpose was to find and guard each talisman until the power within was no longer a threat." Rafe reached over and caressed the skin just below the vial. "I've been searching for you...for this," he said, grazing his fingers over the smooth glass, closing his eyes against the rush of energy as the pendant glowed first purple, then black, "for centuries."

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Chapter Two

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Terryn stared at Rafe, heart pounding, fear making her head spin. He was claiming to be a vampire. A vampire! Sure he was hot, with pale skin and a dark, dangerous voice, but he hardly resembled any of the vampires she'd seen on TV. Hell, with blond hair, blue eyes and a body to drool over, he looked more like a model than a blood-sucking bat.

She drew a deep breath, trying to still the tremors in her hands. The fact that he'd saved her from the creepy guy in the alley was enough to assure her he had no intentions of hurting her. But his claims left her questioning his sanity. How the hell had he tossed the creepy guy across the alley with only one hand, and how had he known she was picturing him tied up in a straight jacket?

She blew out her breath on a long sigh and met his gaze. His eyes were tinged red again, adding authenticity to his claim. He leant forward, a small smile revealing a set of white fangs, larger than life and just as convincing. Terryn pulled back, not sure what to say when a man stalked up beside them, placing his hand on the bar between them.

"You look like you need some company, sugar."

She pulled her lips tight just as Rafe grabbed the man's arm and pushed him back.

"Fuck off. The lady already has all the company she needs."

The guy glared, rubbing his arm. "Nice try, Rafe. But you've been in here a thousand times and never played with any of the ladies. So why don't you just go back to watching and let me show this pretty little thing what a real man can do for her."

Before the guy could smirk Rafe was in front of him, the guy's shirt fisted, his feet barely touching the floor. "I'm only going to say this one more time. Fuck off."

"Fine. She's yours. Relax, buddy."

A low rumble vibrated the air before Rafe lowered the guy and shoved him back. "Now piss off."

Terryn panicked. The feral look in Rafe's eyes, the dark energy that rolled off his skin in visible waves overwhelmed her desire and she took off running. A hallway only a few steps away marked salvation. She darted down it, a harsh growl shadowing her footsteps as she tumbled against the first door, shouldering it open and slamming it shut behind her. A loud click echoed through the room as she backed away, not sure how she'd locked it, but aware she'd succeeded in sealing her escape. She released her breath in an audible rasp, crossing her arms on her chest as she stared at the door, waiting.

"If this is your idea of keeping an open mind, I'm afraid we're at an impasse."

Terryn shrieked, pivoting towards the voice behind her, losing her balance when Rafe stepped forward. His fingers gripped her arm, preventing her from crashing to the floor as she stared at him, mouth gaped open, breath stalled in her chest. "But...the door...how?"

Words collided in her head, a surge of fear dipping the room. Rafe's chest connected with her cheek as he pulled her against him, cradling the back of her head with one hand as the other snaked around her waist.

"Breathing might help," he said.

She took his advice, noting how his equally hard cock pressed against her stomach as her chest pushed into his. "Oh. My. God." It was little more than a whisper, but it sounded loud in the stillness.

"I've been called many things, but God isn't one of them." His smile greeted her as he pulled back. "And before you ask, no, I can't fly. Not in the sense you're thinking. It's more of a shift through time. But it's equally effective."

She could only nod, her throat too dry to speak. He was a vampire—a blood and flesh vampire. The undead. She let her head fall back, intending to close her eyes, but what greeted her stopped her cold. Three large mirrors decorated the ceiling, casting a clear reflection of the room. A large bed she hadn't noticed took up most of the space, with only a chair visible in another corner. But it was her image that shocked her, because it was just that—her image. Just her. Her arms curled around an invisible force, her chest pressed against nothing, as her hair swayed across her shoulder, the result of Rafe's hand stroking the length. He sighed as her gaze met his.

"Convinced?"

"Yes," was all she managed when he released her, cursing as he surveyed the room.

"Of all the places you could've run, sweet thing, this was by far your worst choice." He moved to the door—or did he just appear at it—and tried the handle. "Fuck." He turned to face her. "Do you know why the door locks behind you?"

She glanced at it, shaking her head.

"Because it prevents the clients from leaving until they've given the owner a good *show*."

She stared at him, completely confused, before following his gaze towards the bed. What she hadn't noticed in the reflection was the set of restraints chained to the headboard, the shinny leather dark against the white frame. She looked back at Rafe.

"That's right. It's a sex room. This one tends towards bondage, though I don't think it's a requirement." His lips kicked up into a sly grin. "There are cameras mounted throughout the room, just in case you were thinking we could sneak out."

"So the only way to get the door unlocked is..."
"To fuck," he finished.

Terryn was sure her mouth dropped open as she focused on the restraints. The leather was black and smooth, and she had a fleeting image of it wrapped around her wrists, her naked body splayed out across the bed. She could see her hair tussled across her shoulder, her back flexing in pleasure as Rafe mounted her from behind, his shaft piercing her wet flesh as the muscles in her ass jumped from the impact of his groin against hers.

A soft moan trembled across her lips and she dipped her tongue out to moisten them. She went to turn when Rafe

pressed his body against her back, his hands capturing her waist.

"I can see your thoughts. The way you imagine your body moving beneath mine, your hands bound in front of you. It's not the first time you wondered about how it'd be between us. How well I could pleasure you. You can try and fight it, but in the end, our mating has already been foretold."

She tried to shake her head, but the images returned. Rafe driving into her, one hand stroking the tiny knot of nerves in her slit as the other spanked her ass until it turned a deep shade of red. She tried to free herself, but could only take what he gave her, the bands around her wrists and feet immobilising her.

Terryn squeezed her eyes shut, hoping to drive the erotic pictures from her head, as Rafe's warm breath feathered across her nape, dampening her panties with her slick dew. Her head lolled to one side, loving the feel of his lips across her skin, his tongue hot against her neck. Again she felt like he was tasting her, gathering her essence on his tongue so he could identify each individual element that mixed together to form her unique feminine scent. A calm settled inside as the pendant grew warm on her skin, matching the heated feel of Rafe's tongue. She leaned into him, one word whispering from her lips.

"Yes."

Rafe groaned into her ear, feeling her body melt against his. Desire pounded through him, and for a moment, it felt as if his heart thundered in his chest. He drew a deep breath, drinking in the faint aroma of rain on her skin, mixed in with a

soft floral scent. But both paled next to the sweet, earthy tang of her arousal. It hung in the air like a fine mist, drenching his senses until her flavour was etched into his memory. He closed his eyes, willing the beast within him to stand down. Ever since the first pulse of energy had doused his skin, he'd felt submersed in a red haze of desire. Every moment her body trembled against his seemed like an eternity of waiting until the instant he could strip her down and feel the soft press of skin on skin.

Centuries had passed without this type of wanting. Hell, he'd never desired a woman with such single-minded intent. He'd had his share of lovers, but it'd always seemed hollow, desolate, like he was trying to fill a vessel full of holes.

Not Terryn. Everything about her healed the spaces in his withered heart, bringing back a sense of humanity he'd lost on the eve of his death. One he'd never expected to feel again, especially from a woman brimming with innocence. The very scent of her skin enthralled him, drawing him into a mindless craze, begging him to bind her soul to his.

He clenched his jaw, inching one hand up to cup her breast. It swelled at his touch, the nipple pebbled against the thin lace of her bra. He could picture it clearly in his mind, and knew the tip would turn a pale shade of purple as she neared her climax. A low gasp filled his head as he tweaked the small bud between his fingers.

He growled, spinning her in his arms, pushing the wet jacket from her shoulders, smiling at the sound of if dropping on the floor. Her shirt went next, followed by her pants. She

stared at him in shocked surprise as the last of her clothes joined the others, and she stood before him perfectly naked.

Rafe pulled her body against his, fisting her hair as he tilted her head back, exposing the sleek line of her neck. The pendant pulsed against her skin, the purple hue reflecting along her throat. He watched the quick flutter of her heartbeat throb below her skin, the rhythmic movement making his head spin. His conscience warned him this wasn't to place to indulge in even a fleeting taste of her blood, consent or not, and he reined in the beast once again.

He locked his eyes on hers, noting how black they looked in the harsh light. "I'm but a breath away from making your fantasies a reality." He moved in closer, drawing his lips over hers, licking at their fullness. "If this isn't what you want, say it now. For once I start, I'll be powerless to stop." He dragged his tongue along her collarbone, ending with an opened mouth kiss on the tip of her shoulder. His fangs twitched, but he kept control, calming the creature with the knowledge he'd be licking her sweet pussy all too soon. The beast pouted, but stayed hidden.

Terryn moaned, arching into him. "But what about the cameras? I thought..."

"They'd only be able to see you?" His lips kicked up into a bemused smile. "I happen to know they don't use film, sweet thing. They only watch. And with today's technology, they'll get an eyeful...of both of us."

A beautiful shade of pink hued her skin as her eyes darted around the room. He could feel her nervousness. Not at the thought of having him bind her to the bed, but at the

realisation others would be watching them. He leant forward, dropping another hot kiss at the base of her neck. "I could break the door down, but it'll bring more trouble than we need, and I have a feeling I should save my strength. They'll be plenty of fighting before the night is done, and I don't want to weaken myself with mere mortals." He pulled back one last time. "And I can't shift us out of here. Despite what myths are out there, I can't move through walls. So answer my question. Shall I stop?"

Terryn cried out as he wedged his thigh between her legs, rubbing her clit against his muscles. She closed her eyes and tilted her hips, increasing the contact as her teeth clenched tight. He brought his lips down on hers, a low growl warning her to answer. She opened her eyes, catching his gaze. "Don't stop."

Terryn watched as Rafe's smile turned carnal, his eyes narrowing on her. He didn't wait on pleasantries, but scooped her up and moved swiftly to the bed, laying her across the thin sheet. Then he grabbed the restraints anchored to the headboard and bound her wrists, kissing her skin before buckling each one tight. A small quiver of fear coiled in her stomach, but it vanished with the lust in his expression. She held his gaze as he moved down the bed, shackling one ankle, then the other, before he straightened, taking her in one inch at a time.

"You're sexy as hell," he rasped. "Now be a good girl and spread your legs wide. I'm not the only one who wants to see your sweet pussy."

She cringed at the thought, but obeyed his command, shivering when he adjusted the chains, giving her little room to move her legs. She waited, snagging her lip, when the bed dipped against his weight.

"Very nice," he praised, drawing a finger up one thigh then down the other, skirting past her throbbing core. "Do you know how long it's been since I've been able to enjoy the pleasure of a woman?" he asked, pain flickering in his eyes before lust replaced it. "I've waited a lifetime for this moment," he whispered, though it sounded more as if he was talking to himself. He smoothed his hand up her thigh this time, pausing on the fullness of her mound. "This is what I'm going to do, Terryn. I'm going to pleasure you. Touch every inch of your body, lick every drop of your juice, feel your sheath part for my fingers as you climax around me. I might even allow you to taste my cock after, if you behave. Would you like that?"

She nodded her head, but a quick, hard tweak of her nipple told her he wanted to hear the words. "Yes, Rafe. I'd like that."

He smiled his praise, soothing the slight hurt with a soft brush of his fingers. She arched into the caress, wanting him to press harder again.

"Once I've allowed you to have some fun, I'll rearrange the restraints so both your arms are together and you're on your hands and knees," he continued, the deep resonance in his voice caressing her skin. "I have every intention of spanking that beautiful ass of yours. I want to hear you beg me to fuck you."

She uttered a hushed yes as his fingers descended a fraction at a time, smoothing her skin until they stopped at the tip of her narrow slit. He gave her one last smile before easing his finger inside, drawing it through her drenched folds.

Terryn moaned, tilting her hips, trying to force his penetration. His chuckle was the only warning before both his hands engulfed her nipples, tugging on them just enough to cause a slight sting. Her cry vibrated the air and she pulled her knees closer in an attempt to ease the burning need rooted in her sex. Rafe came down over her, his lips hot against the shell of her ear.

"I suggest you open your legs, my sweet, or I'll move straight to the spanking. And I'm betting the men watching us would love to see me fuck your tight ass."

Her eyes snapped open. She'd never had anal sex, and just the thought that her first time would be accompanied by an audience sent a shiver through her body.

"Is that fear or anticipation?" he asked, circling her nipple.

"Either way, it'd be best if you obeyed me."

"Yes," she rasped, opening her legs, groaning when he hooked his thumbs behind her knees and spread her even more.

"Like that. Now since you've been so good, I'll give you a reward."

Rafe bent down, laving her nipple, nipping at with just the right pressure to gush the liquid from her sex. Fire erupted beneath her skin, coiling tight inside her as if waiting for the perfect moment to explode. She chanted his name, gasping

when he switched sides, loving how he could bring her to the brink of pleasure and pain, without fully crossing over. She'd never realised a twinge of pain would make the pleasure hotter, more intense, and almost wished he'd hold true to his threat and take her anally. Rafe raised his gaze to her, and she knew he'd read her mind.

He released her nipple and brought his face even with hers. Here she was, stripped, bound, the moisture from his mouth dotted on her breast, the remnants of her honey clinging to his fingers, and yet, he hadn't kissed her. His lips brushed over hers, but didn't linger.

"I know what you want and I promise I'll have your ass before the night is over."

She moaned at his words, his breath warm against her skin. Her eyes locked on his as he hovered over her, staring at the fullness of her mouth. She parted her lips, inviting him to taste her, to dip his tongue into her velvet heat. He lowered a bit more, drinking in her frantic breath, touching just the tip of his tongue to her lip. She froze, acknowledging his position as master. A small smile caught one corner of his mouth before his lips touched hers, the contact so light it felt like a soft breeze.

Terryn bit back the moan clogging her chest and forced herself to wait. He was testing her. Watching to see if she was truly willing to submit. Several seconds passed with their lips joined in a fleeting caress, his body suspended above her. He inhaled, humming in pleasure, and for the first time, his breath mixed with hers. She arched under the attack, needing to taste the dark essence of his mouth and was rewarded with

the hard press of his lips on hers. She let the moan break free, accepting his tongue as it dipped inside, swirling around as if blending their scents together. She traced his tongue, savouring the dark flavour of his mouth. He tasted as dangerous as he looked, and the combination of restraints and savage need sent a punch of lust to her sex.

Rafe plundered her mouth, pausing briefly for her to suck in a quick breath before kissing her again. Their tongues danced together, his lips cool against hers. A flutter erupted in her stomach, quivering over her as he lowered his body. His clothes were rough compared to the silky feel of his tongue and she wanted to rip the damn things off. He chuckled as she pulled against the chains, a frustrated huff following his retreat.

"Soon. But first I need to taste you." He held her gaze as he slithered down her body, licking her nipples and peppering kisses across her ribs and stomach as he veered to her weeping sex. He mumbled something she didn't understand as he stared at her pouting flesh, her open legs parting the smooth lips to reveal the tip of her clit. She glanced in the mirrors, looking away from the absence of his reflection, the stark image too close to convincing her this was all just a dream.

"You're so wet. Do you respond like this for all your lovers?"

His voice seized her attention and she shivered when he traced the length of her sex, probing the end of his finger into her channel. "I—I don't know. I've only had one."

Rafe licked his lips at her admission, removing his finger as he brought it to his mouth. He watched her as he sucked the digit clean, moaning in delight. "Your confession pleases me. So I'll please you in return. Now keep your thighs spread wide while I eat all of this delicious cream."

Terryn's face flushed as he dipped between her legs, stroking her mound as he had her hair. He seemed enthralled by the fact she kept herself bare, teasing the smooth skin with his nails. She arched as he drew her engorged lips apart, staring at the tight nub beneath.

"I knew they'd be the same shade as your mouth," he whispered, blowing a hot breath across her clit, making it pucker in response. "So small and pretty. Flutter it again."

She tensed her inner muscles, making her clit pulse. His moan made it clench again.

"So damn beautiful." He lowered his mouth, shooting her a quick glance across her torso, warning her not to look away. Then he distended his tongue, trailing the tip through her thick cream, humming against her flesh, adding another sensation to her already tortured body.

"Yes. Rafe. Please, so good."

He chuckled, his face still buried between her lips, the husky sound pushing her closer to the edge. He dipped his tongue inside her passage, filling her with firm strokes, but never enough to send her over. Tears pooled, threatening to fall, as he drew the slick juice up to cover her clit, flicking it.

"Fuck, you taste delicious," he said, lapping at her, sliding one hand to her sex, probing just the knuckle inside. "And tight." He moaned. "How does it feel to know I'm going to

make you come while several men watch from behind the lens? Know that they'll see your body thrash, your arms pulling against the restraints, your legs bound open? How they'll watch me drink your creamy release, my fingers wedged inside your sweet pussy, pumping it mercilessly?" He growled and pushed her knees wider, opening her until she thought she'd break. "Does that excite you?"

Her answer was torn from her chest as he sank his finger deep inside, parting her tight walls, making them quiver on his retreat. He plunged again, two this time, spreading them apart, working her virgin-like tissues in preparation for his cock. She tilted her hips as much as the ties would allow, sinking him deeper, pressing his mouth hard against her mound as he engulfed her clit, suckling it into his mouth, nipping at it with his teeth.

"Come, Terryn. Come now and show these men how my woman orgasms."

His name became a strangled wail as the coil inside her snapped, whirling outwards, tearing a path straight to her sex. She squeezed her eyes in an attempt to stop the sharp flashes across her vision, but they followed her into the darkness, fading into spires of purple and red. She arched her back up, momentarily suspended by the chains and Rafe's hands cupping her ass, massaging it, preparing it as his tongue danced lazy circles through her flesh, licking the last remnants of her release. Her breath heaved through her chest, the sensation slowly ebbing, sending only occasional tingles skirting along her skin. She opened her eyes, ignoring her solitary reflection as she met Rafe's heated gaze.

"Nice," was all he said, licking his finger clean. "Now let's move on."

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Chapter Three

* * * *

Rafe pushed to his feet, jerking off his shirt. His cock was long and hard, suffocating in the confines of his jeans. He shoved the offending garment down, kicking it across the floor, wanting nothing more than to feel her feather soft skin against his. He'd come close to creaming his shorts twice while eating her, and knew if he didn't sate some of his hunger, he'd do something rash...something sinister.

He shook the thought from his mind, trailing a single finger along her side as he returned to the bed, watching her muscles contract against his gentle caress. Her body amazed him. The way her skin gave beneath his touch, leaving small indentations where his fingers gripped her. Or how the colour changed hue with every new sensation, fading from a pale white into a flushed pink. His skin was lighter than hers and he knew the contrast would fascinate him.

Terryn whimpered as he circled her breast, grazing her nipple as he continued to her shoulder, tracing the sleek line of her neck. Again her fluttering pulse beckoned him, inviting him to dine on her sweet nectar. He held back a snarl, touching the smooth flesh of her lips instead. They felt so similar to her vagina he dipped down for one deep kiss, allowing her to taste her juice on his tongue.

She groaned as he pulled away, her gaze dropping to his crotch. He watched her, smiling at the twitch of her lips as

she studied his shaft, moaning when he made it rise then descend, hovering just above her mouth. She shifted her attention to his face, moistening her lips before returning her heated gaze to his cock.

"You want this?" he asked, fisting his erection, pumping the hard length, making it weep more fluid from the slit. He eased forward, waving the crown above her lips as he continued to stroke the length.

Terryn lifted her head, the tip of her tongue flicking across the hood, bathing the underside in fleeting strokes. Rafe groaned and threaded her hair through his fingers, tilting her head back as he tugged on the strands, wrenching a hungry cry from her lips.

"Answer me, sweet. Or I'll make your little fantasy come true right here."

A flash of heat burned in her eyes as she pressed her lips together, laying her head back against the bed. "Yes, Rafe. Please, let me taste you."

Rafe's blood warmed at the sultry sound of her voice, so full of submission and desire he couldn't help but grant her request. He released her hair, moving forward until she could blow a soft breath across the hood. Pleasure lighted along his skin, drawing his balls tight to his groin. He gazed down at her, smiling at the way she bathed the head, licking the sticky fluid off his skin, humming as she closed her eyes, savouring his flavour. He reached out and traced where her lips stretched across his shaft, drawing small circles on the taut flesh as she slipped the crown inside her mouth and devoured his cock in a hungry plunge.

"Oh, my sweet. Your mouth is so warm and moist." He groaned as she moved up his length, pausing with the bulbous head lodged in her mouth before taking him deep again. "I can't wait to feel how hot and wet your pussy is."

She moaned at his words, adding a slight vibration. He clenched his jaw, the beast in him flickering across his features before he dragged the damn thing back. He felt Terryn pause, her jumbled thoughts flashing through his head, but he lost track when she hummed again, sending another tingle through his sac. He cursed, fighting the urge to spew his seed into her mouth. But he didn't want it to end that way. Their time was limited and if he didn't move things along, he'd have to wait to claim her.

No fucking way.

He nodded at the thought, allowing a few more passes of her hot mouth along his cock before pulling it free. Terryn huffed at his retreat, not hiding her frustration as she pouted at him, her eyebrows following the downward line of her mouth.

"Time for you to get ready," he said, reaching for the chains holding her wrists. He lifted them off the posts keeping them on either side of the bed and arranged them in the centre, leaving her arms crossed. Then he released her ankles, flipping her over before strapping them on again, giving her just enough slack so she could tuck her knees under her hips.

"Knees, sweet thing."

A flash of bumps beaded along her skin as he lifted her hips, aligning them over her knees. More tremors racked her

body when he smoothed his hand along the generous curve of her ass.

"So soft and round. Damn I love your ass. I can already imagine the way it'll shimmy when I slam my hips against you, my cock buried deep inside. This is going to drive our audience wild." He lowered his chest along her back, wanting her to feel his body surround her. "Get ready to beg."

Terryn whimpered as he backed away, massaging her cheeks with both hands. "Looks like someone was a naughty little girl tonight. Running away from me. Making me chase you when I'd already won the right to claim you. Now you'll see what happens to wicked witches who disobey their big, bad vampire."

Rafe raised his hand, holding it in the air, giving her time to anticipate his next move. Terryn moaned beneath him, tensing a moment before he connected with her flesh, loving how the muscles in her back flexed from the impact. It was even more erotic than when he'd pictured the black cat wanna-be stretched out beneath him, and his only regret was the lack of the woman's flogger.

Terryn cried out, tugging against the restraints, when his hand landed again, flushing her skin, building the cream between her legs. Her scent grew stronger, filling his senses, straining his cock until he thought he'd explode. Terryn bucked beneath him, her words mumbled against the bed. Rafe stilled, probing her mind. He hadn't given her a safe word, but she didn't need one. He could tell her true wishes, and based on the images swirling in her mind, his actions were more than welcomed.

"So pretty, Terryn. So pink and hot against my hand." He smoothed the skin he'd spanked a deep rose. "Have you had enough?"

She sobbed a harsh yes, trying to sink his finger inside her channel when he drew it threw her slit.

"Tell me, my sweet. Tell me what you want."

"Now. For the love of God, Rafe, fuck me!"

He chuckled. "Not the words I would've chosen, but they'll do." He tucked his knees between hers, wedging them further apart, moaning when the simple act opened her cheeks, exposing just a hint of her anus. He dipped his finger inside her pussy, smiling at her cry of pleasure as he drew it along the cleft of her ass, circling the tight pucker before probing the tip inside. Terryn stilled beneath him, her uncertainty marked by the sudden hunching of her shoulders.

"Relax," he soothed, easing his finger inside the tight, hot passage. "I just want you to feel the sensation of what it's like to have something inside your beautiful ass. I won't go any further than this, for now."

He accentuated his last words, making sure she realised he had every intention of taking her there later. Terryn's muscles clenched at his intrusion, but relaxed as he worked her channel with slow steady strokes.

"See. It feels good when you relax." He nudged her sex with the head of his cock, dousing the crown with her juice. She was all but dripping it on the bed and he howled in his head at the thought. "Ready to feel more."

It wasn't a question and her answer was little more than a mumbled groan. Rafe rimmed her sex, pushing the flared

head an inch inside. Sweet pressure bombarded his shaft, squeezing it from all sides. He threw his head back, a primal plea passing his lips as he pushed against the snug confines, burying himself another inch inside her wet heat.

"Damn you're tight. So tight I'm not sure I can wedge you apart." He groaned as more of his length pressed inside, parting her flesh, making her walls quake. Terryn arched under him, fisting the bed, begging him to take her. He removed his finger from her ass, needing both hands on her hips to drive the rest of his cock inside. He pulled back, moaning at the hot grasp of flesh on flesh as his shaft raked through her tissues, her slick juice seeping out to cover his sac. He bent over her, shielding her back, scraping his fangs along her shoulder. She tilted her head, granting him access. He fought the urge to sink them into her pulsing vein, to taste the warm fluid pumping just below the surface.

Rafe cursed as the beast in him roared, demanding satisfaction. He reared back and drove into her, arching under the pressure of her channel gloved around him. Terryn cried out, rattling the chains, making his need soar. He dragged his shaft back, giving her one last pull of his cock through her flesh before pounding into her, claiming her channel in deep filling strokes, using all his weight to slap his sac against her pussy, knowing the movement rubbed her clit, adding more stimulation. Hushed sobs echoed every thrust, but he knew they were cries of ecstasy. Her feelings mixed with his, spinning the room, making him question his motives. Was it just sex? A way to scratch an itch that had been dead for too long? Or was it more?

Her emotions filled his head, and in that instant he knew the answer. She was his destiny, the reason for his existence. And he'd give his immortal life to keep her safe and prevent the talisman from destroying her and her world.

"Now, please. Yes!"

Her words were disjointed, a jumbled mix of syllables and grunts. He picked up the pace, tunnelling back and forth, angling his hips to rub her G-spot. She screamed his name, tossing her head back as her orgasm raced over her, clenching his shaft so hard he stopped, unable to move through her contractions. He groaned, fighting the fire snaking down his spine until she relaxed and he came, shouting her name, growling at painful pleasure of his cock exploding into her, purging his demon seed into her quivering body. He slumped over her, feeling their sweat grease his chest as he fought for breath he didn't need. He dropped a kiss across her shoulder, hearing her sigh, as she sank into the bed, the chains holding her in place. He waited until her breathing settled before pulling out, loving the breathy little moan she made when his cock slipped free. It was the same sound she'd made at the bar and he cursed the need to have her again. Hell, her release still clung to his cock, glistening in the bright light, but the damn thing thickened regardless, and he had to turn to keep from exploring the tight little pucker he'd touched with his finger.

"Now that was a show."

The man's voice sounded behind him, but Rafe was dressed with his hand curled around the man's neck before the guy could snicker.

"Easy, Rafe," he rasped, grabbing Rafe's arm in an attempt to loosen it. "I don't want any trouble. Not from your kind."

Rafe snarled, exposing the long points as he released the man's neck. "Then what do you want, Sirus?" he asked, releasing Terryn from the restraints before the guy could blink. "Or didn't you see enough already?"

A wicked smile spread across Sirus' face as his gaze darted over to Terryn. Rafe stepped sideways, blocking the man's view. Sirus sighed, shifting back to Rafe. "Never enough." He nodded at Rafe. "I didn't know you had such stamina, my boy. You put all my regulars to shame. I'm curious, is it just you, or do all vampires have a panache for fucking?"

Rafe took a calculated step forward. "I suggest you get to the point of this conversation before I decide to quench my thirst."

The man laughed and crossed his arms. "From the rumours I've heard, you indulge in that habit even less than this one." He held up his hand when Rafe barred his fangs even more. "Relax. I'm not one to tempt the beast. I just thought you might like to know a number of your...brothers...are gathering outside. They seem very interested in your whereabouts."

A new tension bunched Rafe's shoulders. He looked over at Terryn, pleased to find her slipping on her jacket, her pendant swinging against her neck. The colour had deepened into a fiery red, and he could feel the energy starting to build. He turned back, resisting the urge to rake his fingers through his hair. "How many?"

"A dozen or so. It's hard to tell." Sirus motioned to the Terryn. "Is it you, or the girl they want?"

"Does it matter?"

"That depends on whether you want my help or not."

Rafe cursed. He'd known Sirus for years, even helped the guy out with a mob problem he'd been having, but Rafe knew better than to trust the man. "They want something that belongs to her."

"Her necklace perhaps?" Sirus didn't flinch when Rafe appeared an inch from the man's face, teeth extended, his humanity gone. "Easy, lad. I've been around vampires long enough to know the stories, and the consequences if one of those monsters gets possession of your trinket. That's why they're still outside. They seem to be having trouble tracking you, which explains why you brought her in here." He waved his hand around the room. "All my technology must interfere with the energy signature. But it won't fool them forever. If you use the rear exit, you should be able to get a fair distance away before they realise you're gone." Sirus turned and walked to the door. "I've got a few tricks to keep them distracted. I suggest you get moving. I can give you about an hour. No more."

Rafe bit back a curse as Terryn curled in behind him, her soft, warm body hugging his. He could smell her fear and the scent of it sickened him. He'd screwed up...literally. A simple fuck against the wall would've sufficed, but instead he'd indulged in her pleasures until their mutual release was his only coherent thought.

He sighed. He didn't regret his impulsive decision. This might have been the only chance he'd get to experience anything close to true passion, and he didn't want to die knowing he'd passed on the opportunity. Forgone the one chance to love the woman he'd been created for.

"Rafe? What does he mean they're gathering outside? Why do they want my necklace?"

Rafe turned, ignoring the strange feeling in his chest, as he hugged her close, inhaling the combined aroma of her sweet essence and his dark seed. Separate, they were complete opposites, but together they formed the perfect balance between heavy and light, innocence and sin. "I tried to explain before, but..." His voice trailed off as he traced his fingers down her side, cupping her ass. "I guess you had other plans."

She snorted, pulling out of his embrace and crossing her arms on her chest. The movement was intended to make her look imposing, but it only succeeded in exposing more creamy skin from the top of her shirt. Rafe rumbled his approval, trying to focus on her face.

"This is serious. What do we do now?"

"Move." He extended his hand. "I can only take you along if you're either willing, or unconscious. The choice is yours."

She shivered at the dominance in his voice, glancing one last time at the dishevelled bed, before meeting his unyielding stare. "Just don't drop me. I don't like heights."

Rafe smiled picking her up in his arms. "Like I said. I can't fly. But hold on tight, just the same."

Rafe stopped at the entrance to what looked like an old mine shaft, placing Terryn on the hard ground. She stumbled to the broken door, bracing her hand to regain her balance.

"I thought you said you couldn't fly!" she rasped, her stomach still lodged in her throat.

"That wasn't flying, my sweet." He moved behind her, wrapping his fingers around her arm. "We best get inside before that damn talisman pulses again."

She nodded, not sure if she walked in or Rafe carried her. The room was black until Rafe vanished from her arm, reappearing before her next breath, a bright light blazing near the back. The room was really a cave, with a few rugs tossed down to soften the stone floor and a large bed wedged in the rear.

Terryn moved to the centre, noting a scattering of trinkets Rafe must have collected over the centuries. Antique lamps, wooden chairs and a number of paintings decorated the small space, giving it a more lived-in feel. She looked at him as he brushed past her, wondering how long he'd called this place home.

"About three hundred years," he answered, making her jump. "Though I don't live here all the time. It's more like a retreat."

Damn. The reading minds thing was a pain in the ass.

"I wouldn't mention the word ass if I were you, sweet. Or I might forget you need to rest."

She glared at his sinful smile and settled onto one of the chairs. "So are you going to finish your story about my

necklace, or do we just wait here for the hordes of undead to arrive?"

"Whether I tell you or not won't stop the hordes from coming. But I assume you'd prefer to know."

She nodded, not trusting her voice. She was still trying to come to terms with the fact she was sitting in some ancient cave, talking to a vampire who'd just chained her to the bed and fucked her senseless. Though, if she were honest, it was the last part that frightened her, because it didn't feel like he'd simply fucked her. It felt more like he'd possessed her, binding part of her soul to him as if he needed the connection to soothe the demon inside him. She'd noticed how his face had blurred into something more gruesome when she'd been feasting on his cock before he'd physically pulled it back, and, once again, questioned if this talisman was some type of cure.

"I wouldn't call the pendant's power a cure," he replied, gazing at her with hot desire curling his lips. "More along the lines of a new beginning."

"So what exactly does it do?"

Rafe shrugged, walking back to the entrance. "To be honest, no one knows for sure. Only one of the seven talisman has been claimed, and it didn't end...as hoped."

When she frowned at him he sighed, gazing out at the darkness.

"The prophecy has a lot of mystic mumble jumble, and quite frankly, doesn't say much else. All I know is that I'm supposed to stop my kind from claiming it."

"And if one does?"

"Then they'll become a demonic creature the likes of which Hell has never seen. And when this demon is finished devouring every living creature, the place you call earth will be nothing more than another Hell dimension, inhabitable by only the most wretched creatures. Even vampires will parish in its wake."

"Then why would they want it if they know the fate that awaits them?"

A knowing smile lifted the corners of his mouth. "Because, like humans, there are those among us who are tempted by absolute power."

"How do we defeat them?"

"Simple. We don't let them get it. If we can keep it hidden until dawn, the power will dissipate with the rising sun, and you'll be left with nothing more than a pretty piece of glass."

"And if they show up before then?"

"That's where I come in. All you have to do is stay hidden. I'll do the rest."

"But-"

Rafe stopped her with a cool finger. "We can talk more later. Right now you look like you're about to collapse." He motioned to the bed. "Rest. I'll wake you in a few hours."

Terryn nodded, her eyes suddenly heavy. She sighed as Rafe picked her up, carrying her to the bed. Her last memory was the soft press of his lips on hers, then darkness.

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Chapter Four

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"Rafe?" Terryn jolted awake, her voice echoing off the walls.

"Here."

He was standing at the door, staring into the darkness. He didn't turn to her, but she could sense the tension hanging between them. She swung her feet to the ground, padding across the floor.

"They're coming," he said.

"How do you know?"

He shrugged as he darted a glance her way. "I can feel them. We've got a couple of hours before they'll be able to track us down, but that's still another two before sunrise."

"Maybe we should move again, keep running..."

"You're safer here," he interrupted. "We're staying."

Terryn watched as he moved past her, his head bowed low. He stopped beside the bed, but didn't sit.

"If this talisman holds so much power, why do only some vampires want it?" she asked.

Rafe chuckled, meeting her gaze for the first time.
"They're what you'd call rogues, but that's not your real
question. What you're really asking is why don't I want it? Am
I so different?" He paused and she drew a harsh breath as his
expression intensified. "Do I have a soul?"

She shuffled her feet, not sure she was prepared for the answer. "Do you?"

"The question is impossible for me to answer, just as it's impossible for you. What's a soul? Is it consciousness? Knowing right from wrong? Possessing the ability to love without concern for your own life?" He walked over to a small table and held up a mirror, staring at the empty glass. "Is it as simple as a reflection in a mirror?" He cursed and threw the thing across the room, meeting her stare when the mirror shattered against the wall. "What I do know is that I remember the man I once was. That I feel guilt over the choices I've made. That I'd rather die than ever hurt you."

He sighed and turned away. "It doesn't matter. I was created to protect it, with my life if necessary. Whether that makes me different or just programmed, I'm not sure. But I'll fulfil my promise."

Terryn moved in behind him, brushing her fingers along his shoulder. "That's more than most men." She smiled as his eyes snapped to hers. "Are you tired?"

A sexy grin touched his lips and she felt the heat gather in her womb when he looked at the bed.

"Vampires require very little sleep," he said. "But I'd hate to waste the opportunity to see your pale skin against the red sheets. If it's what you want."

She leant forward and nipped at his lip, raising her eyebrow as she eased back. "I thought vampires could lure a woman into their bed with nothing more than a smile?"

"I already have."

Terryn grinned, spreading her arms, allowing him to remove her clothes and lay her across the bed. The sheets felt cool against her skin, a distinct contrast to the warm pressure of his lips against her ankle. She looked down, mesmerised by his predatory expression as he straddled her, bathing her body with licks and nips. She arched into each one, moaning at the erotic feel of his skin on hers. It was smoother, stronger, a constant reminder he was more than what he appeared.

"Is it true you can turn me into a vampire with only a bite?" she asked as he lowered over her, licking at her breasts as if they were mounds of ice cream.

He paused to look at her, one nipple captured in his mouth. "It's more complicated than that, or there'd be nothing but vampires roaming the earth. Turning involves vampire blood as well." He smoothed his fingers along her pulse. "Though I'd be lying if I didn't confess you'd be a tasty treat."

His warm laughter gathered the cream building inside her and she moaned at the way he inhaled, knowing the exact moment her juice moistened her labia, preparing for his invasion. "How often do you have to feed?" she rasped, spearing her fingers through his hair as he settled on her breast, pulling her nipple into his mouth with steady sips.

"It's similar to humans. But I live mostly on rats and other animals," he mumbled, switching to the other side. "I only drink human blood when my strength starts to wane. It does more than quench my hunger. It increases my abilities." He glanced at her again. "Now would you rather talk or scream?"

Her voice broke the silence as he kneed her thighs apart and plunged home, burying his shaft in a single stroke. She gasped at the sudden penetration, closing her eyes against the rush of pleasure as the head of his cock forged through her tight tissues, brushing her womb as he hilted himself inside.

"Like a warm welcome," he whispered against her neck, retreating an inch at a time, groaning in her ear with every tiny movement of his shaft through her channel.

She squeezed, forcing a husky growl from his chest. His head snapped up and he devoured her mouth, his tongue tangling with hers, stealing her breath as he drank in every murmur. She arched under his assault. The way he powered into her, then slowly withdrew only to slam home again. The coil curled inside her, drawing tighter with every thrust until she begged him to end the torture.

His voice sounded dark in her head, his words unrecognisable, as he gave one last retreat before claiming her. She released a soundless scream locking her ankles behind his back and her hands around his shoulders. Her channel rippled, hanging on the edge until he reached between their bodies and pinched her clit.

Fireworks exploded in her head, shattering her hold on reality. Terryn screamed Rafe's name, burying her head against his neck as her orgasm drained her energy, leaving her sagging in his arms. He kissed her head, holding her close, smiling down at her when she finally found the strength to open her eyes.

"I love watching you come," he said, dropping a chaste kiss on the tip of her nose. "Let's do it again."

Before she could register his words, he'd flipped her over, knees tucked under her hips as she rested her weight on her elbows. The slow progression of his hand across her ass had her tensing, memories of his promise still vivid in her mind.

"So beautiful. The perfect pleasure." He caressed her skin, trailing a single finger down her cleft to circle her anus. "Did you enjoy my touch before?"

She could only nod, her mind too locked on his hand to form words.

"I promised you I'd fulfil your desires," he rasped, gathering some of her release on his finger before pushing it past her tight muscles and sinking it inside her anal channel. The sensation was strange, but hot, bringing a different kind of satisfaction. It was darker, more forbidden, and felt more intense than when he'd touched her pussy.

"Try to relax. If you give me complete control, you'll only feel pleasure."

He was asking her to trust him.

Terryn closed her eyes and gave herself over to him.

Rafe stared at Terryn, feeling her surrender as surely as if she'd screamed the words. He choked back the tight feeling in his chest, overwhelmed by her trust in him. He was a creature of the night, yet her faith in him was absolute. He closed his eyes, pushing the new feelings away. Their time was limited and he wanted her to experience everything he could give her before the battle began.

She sighed as he smoothed his fingers along her curves, caressing her pale skin, watching it mould to his hands. He kept a small flask of oil on the table beside the bed, and he reached for it as he probed her pucker with the tip of his finger.

"So pretty," he said, drizzling the liquid across her skin, chuckling at how she twitched at the cool sensation. "Don't worry, it'll warm up soon enough."

She moaned as he worked the oil inside her, coating her channel, spreading his fingers to ease some of the tension. Low, raw sounds filled the air, spiking his need, making his cock pulse against his stomach. He poured more oil on his hands, spreading it across his shaft, groaning in anticipation.

"Take a deep breath, sweet, and blow it out slowly."

Her chest expanded, her exhalation timed with the press of his cock against her anus. Her muscles quivered, a deep moan bubbling from her chest as he pushed through her tight ring, sinking the crown inside.

Pleasure surged through him, clenching is thighs, making the room fade at the edges. Damn, she was so tight, so hot, he wondered if he'd be able to move. Terryn whimpered and pushed back, impaling herself on half his length, crying out at the sensation. Rafe, lowered his head, scrapping her shoulder with his fangs as he sighed his defeat and hilted his cock in her ass.

"Yesss!"

Her voice was shrill, but the pleasure in it cascaded over him, extinguishing the last of his reservations. He pulled back, growling at the immense pressure, wondering if his

shaft would simply explode under the strain, before surging back in, claiming her anal canal in a long, deep thrust.

The beast in him roared in triumph, contorting his features, shattering his fragile hold on humanity. His fangs stretched to their full length, filling his mouth, brushing over his tongue as he twisted under the assault. He looked down at Terryn, seeing her body shuffle on the bed with each thrust of his hips against her ass. Juice from her pussy covered his sac as it slapped against her clit, making her writhe. He came down over her, licking the vein threading from her neck into the sleek muscle of her shoulder. He could hear the blood pounding through her, beckoning him.

Terryn turned at the rough scrape of his teeth along her skin, catching his gaze, snagging her lip at the creature she realised was fucking her. He waited, expecting her to scream, to demand he stop. Instead she closed her eyes, stretching her arms out in front of her as they'd been in the bar. Then she tilted her head, exposing her neck.

"Now, Rafe."

Her words bounced around in his head as he stared at her, certain he'd heard her wrong. She looked back at him again, hissing as he pummelled her ass, filling her hard and fast. Her face twisted in pleasure and pain and he revelled at the sight of it. "Terryn. No. I can't..."

"Damn you. Either bite or get off, but do it now!"

His roar filled the room this time, his cock echoing the claim. It flared in anticipation, increasing the pressure, making her scream with delight. He covered her back with his chest, licking her skin, tasting the spot where her pulse

throbbed below her skin. A hot breath prickled the hairs on her neck, making the skin bead.

"Mine," he growled, threading his fingers through her hair, holding her head further to the side. "Close your eyes, my sweet."

She obeyed and as his cock erupted, filling her ass with his fluid, he struck, sinking his fangs into her flesh, feeling the sweet warmth of her blood fill his mouth. Her body stiffened, a wail of pure ecstasy vibrating the air as she climaxed around him, locking him inside her tight canal. Beat after beat of blood flowed into him, giving him strength, forever binding him to her. He took as much as he could before pulling back, laving the marks with his tongue, sealing the wounds with his saliva.

She collapsed beneath him, and he followed her down, his cock still locked in her ass, her blood a sweet bounty on his tongue. Her breath came in frenzied gasps, her hair damp against the back of her neck. He rolled them over, curling her into him, tracing small circles across her skin. The beast in him purred, pulling back, hiding behind his human facade. He leant down, dropping a wet kiss on her shoulder.

"Terryn? Are you okay?"

She mumbled a sleepy yes, her mouth curving into a tentative smile as she drifted off. He closed his eyes, praying he hadn't just condemned her to death, as he waited for the warriors to arrive.

* * * *

[&]quot;Terryn!"

Her eyes flew open, the rough sound of Rafe's voice staking fear through her chest. She bolted up, staring at the door, cringeing at the lethal expression on his face. "What's wrong?"

He looked out the door, cursing under his breath. "They'll be here soon. Get dressed."

She nodded, wondering why he continued to stare at the darkness, as she pulled on her clothes, shuffling to the middle of the room. "What now?"

He turned, his face no longer that of the man she'd come to cherish. But she didn't look away. He might bear the looks of a monster, but she knew his heart was pure. She held his stare as he stalked over to her, his fingers gripping her arm.

"Listen carefully. I want you to stay inside. Under no circumstances are you to lay one foot outside this cave, understand?"

His voice was harsh, and she whispered her agreement.

He nodded, reaching up to finger her pendant. "If I can't stop them, I'll come back inside. You'll have to throw me the pendant. It's the only way I'll be able to destroy it."

"But how?"

"I'll drink the blood." He cut her off when she tried to question him. "I told you. I was created to protect it. The power doesn't have the same effect on me. I'll try to hold them off, but..." He tilted her chin up so she was staring into his demonic eyes. "Promise me."

"Rafe, please. There has to be another way. I—"

She stopped as he turned to the door, his low growl resonating through the air. He released her arm and moved away, grabbing two wooden stakes as he stalked past a table.

"They're here."

Rafe darted outside, Terryn's heartbeat fading into the night. Ever since sharing her blood, he'd felt the steady rhythm as if it were his own—an incessant throbbing that was both familiar and new. It'd filled his head, ringing in his ears until he'd been forced to leave the bed in an effort to dampen the sound. Now it drummed in the distance, soft, but not forgotten.

He cursed, hating the beast inside him. He hadn't intended to bite her. But when she'd looked at him, love in her eyes, accepting the monster as easily as she had the man, he'd lost control and allowed his instincts to take hold.

He sighed, hoping he had the strength to save her, when the first vampire stepped out of the night, shifting into view. A cruel smile twisted his face as he bared his teeth, hissing at Rafe.

The guy was outmatched, his corpse flaming into dust around a stake on the first strike. Rafe didn't give him a second glance, watching for the next bastard to materialise out of the mist. Two came this time, eyes red against the darkness, fangs coated with blood. They played off each other, attacking in tandem, lunging through the air with a cry of fury. Rafe waited, body primed, muscles tensed, until they descended over him, opening up their flank. Rafe dove, rolling to his feet, plunging both spikes through their backs, turning away as their bodies exploded, spraying a cloud of ash into

the air. He howled, releasing his beast in all its glory, eager for the next round of prey.

* * * *

Rafe staggered back, bracing his weight on a large rock. It'd been over an hour since the first vampire had reached his home, and the constant fighting had drained him. He chanced a glance at his door, but was greeted with only dark shadows. Terryn had stayed inside, just like he'd ordered. He turned away, not sure why his chest ached. He knew he'd tan her hide if she poked so much as a hair through the doorway, but a part of him longed to see her. See her easy acceptance, her sexy smile. Draw strength from the love that flickered in her eyes, even if she didn't know it was there. He cursed, hating the part of him that longed to be human. He'd left that behind, choice or not, and second chances didn't apply to demons.

A strong charge prickled the air, raising the hairs on his arms. He forced himself up, sensing the hoard just moments away. Twelve had appeared last time, and he knew this round could well be his last. He glanced at the horizon. A thin grey line snaked along the landscape, but sunrise wasn't close enough. He stood his ground, squinting when the mass of vampires wavered into sight, eyes shining like beacons, teeth gleaming against the darkness.

One of the creatures stepped forward, smiling at the piles of dust littering the ground. "Ah, Rafe. It's been a long time."

Rafe snarled, keeping himself positioned between the door and the men. "Not long enough, Alexander." He nodded at

the men standing behind him. "Still need your minions to fight your battles, I see."

The vampire laughed. "Still serving the righteous, *I* see." "Why don't you and your children just leave? You won't find what you're looking for here."

"That remains to be seen." Alexander motioned towards the door. "Is she hiding in there? Guess it's time to find out."

Rafe shifted just as two vampires appeared at the door, their silhouettes blurring amidst the shadows. Rafe lunged, catching them across the chest, slamming them into the stone. Howls filled the air as he tossed them back, grabbing another when he was attacked from behind. Sharp nails pierced his flesh, tearing him open, erupting pain through his arm. He twisted his spike, grazing his side and slicing open his skin, as he plunged the wood into the creep's heart. The demon flared into ashes, but not before Rafe's blood sprayed across the stone, dropping him to his knees. He turned, unable to move fast enough to stop the vampire poised on his doorstep. The bastard grinned at him, stepping inside before bursting into flames, his charred dust scattering in the wind. Rafe pushed up, when Terryn appeared through the smoke, a wooden spike in each hand.

"Damn it, Terryn. I told you to stay back." Rafe joined her at the door, ripping off the head of the next vampire trying to gain access.

"You can't stop all of them by yourself. There're too many." She spiked the next creep when Rafe tossed him to the ground beside her. "Besides, I've seen enough Buffy reruns to know even a child can stake one of these fuckers."

"Too bad there isn't one around when you need it," he mocked. He nodded at her neck. "Make sure you keep that hidden, or all Hell will break loose."

She glared at him. "I'd say Hell's already here."

"Sweetness, this is just the appetiser." He pushed her behind him when Alexander appeared at the entrance, the remainder of his hoard crowding behind him.

"What's this, Rafe?" he asked. "Need a woman to fight your battles?"

"That's right. And I can't wait to see her stick a fucking stake through your heart."

Alexander chuckled. "An amusing thought." He leaned against the doorframe, surveying the room. "Nice place. It'd be a shame to die here. I'll make you a deal. Hand her over, and I'll forget all about this misunderstanding."

"Fuck you."

Alexander shook his head in feigned disappointment. "A preacher's son 'til the end. How very human of you, Rafael. Too bad your faith wasn't strong enough to save you before." He waved his hand down the length of Rafe's body. "A vampire who hates to kill. And you call me a monster." He took a step inside. "It's nearly dawn. I'll give you one minute to choose before we rip you apart in front of your lover."

She felt Rafe tense, the muscles in his jaw twitching. He turned to her, his decision written in his expression.

Terryn shook her head, fingering the pendant. "No. There has to be another way."

"None I'm willing to risk." He touched her hand. "Just stay back. This won't be pretty."

Rafe reached for her necklace when Alexander grabbed his ankle, tripping him to the ground, pulling him to the door. Terryn screamed his name, watching as the two vampires wrestled, Rafe's weakened body losing the fight. She backed up, cupping the talisman, watching as Rafe extended his hand, begging her to throw it to him. She shook her head, unwilling to be a part of his death, praying for a miracle, when the pendant grew warm against her skin, the purple hue sparking to life.

Turning involves vampire blood as well.

She stared at it, finally understanding her role as keeper.

Rafe's voice thrummed in the distance, but all she heard was the pounding of her heart as she removed the small lid, holding the liquid to her lips. The vampires stopped, the brilliant light from the vial drawing their attention. She heard one of them growl a moment before she tipped the glass, consuming every drop of blood.

Rafe watched Terryn stagger back, his hand still stretched towards her. She blinked, staring at the empty vial before falling in a heap. The pendant slipped, shattering on the ground, spraying bits of glass across the room. The other vampires howled in pain, the tiny shards burning their flesh, driving them back. He pushed up, leaping at Terryn, scooping her off the cold stone.

"Damn it, Rafe. Do you know what you've done?"

Alexander cursed him. "You'll pay for this. Until next time, preacher."

Rafe growled as Alexander vanished, his evil smile fading with the first hint of sunrise. Rafe looked at Terryn. Her eyes

were closed, her mouth turned down in a slight grimace. He placed her on the bed, laying his head on her chest, sighing at the steady rhythm of her heart.

"Rafe?"

Her eyelids fluttered, slowly opening. The green was brighter than before, the edges rimmed in red. He leaned back as she sat up, gazing around the room before settling on his face. He tensed his jaw, not sure what was staring at him.

"Is it over?" she asked, looking at her body as if she expected it to start changing.

"For now." He inched forward. "Are you...okay?"

"If you call being somewhere between human and vampire okay, then yes."

He shook his head as she walked across the floor, picking up a piece of the broken mirror. She stared at it, holding it so he could see the blank surface.

"But, your heartbeat?"

She smiled, joining him back on the bed. "Like you said...a new beginning."

"So does this mean you're..."

"Immortal? That we can have children? That I'm the start of a new breed? I don't know. It's all still swirling around in my head. But there's one thing I'm certain of."

He raised his eyebrow at her.

"You definitely have a soul...one we both share." She wrapped her arms around him, laughing when he pushed her down, stripping them both in the space of a heartbeat. "I love you, Rafe. I think I always have."

He smiled down at her. "Like I told you in the bar. It's already been foretold." He dipped his head for a long, slow kiss. "Thank you, my love."

"You're welcome. But there is one problem," she whispered, licking the side of his neck.

"What's that?"

"You owe me a new necklace."

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About the Author

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Kris sees herself as somewhat obsessive and feels she tends to push the limits sometimes. But her friends graciously see her as passionate and adventurous. After all, speed limits are only guidelines and shouting is just her way of rising above the chaos. Besides, she thinks the air is cleaner out there on the edge.

Kris started writing erotic stories a few years ago, but didn't try putting them out into the real world until recently. She loves penning independent leading ladies who aren't afraid to kick a bit of butt, especially when it only fuels the desires of their men. But of course, it wouldn't be any fun if the men didn't get to play... Most of her stories involve elements of suspense and quite often have a downright creepy villain lurking in the shadows. But all the better to get the hero's protective instincts going. After all, Kris still loves having a knight ride to the rescue...

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Kris loves to hear from readers. You can find her contact information, website and author biography at www.total-e-bound.com

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