

SIREN PUBLISHING *Allure*

PACK

THE PACK SERIES

Teya Martin



Pack

Despite being different, Zacky has maintained a strict level of denial, although his inability to digest anything but meat, preferably raw meat, is impossible to hide or deny. His puritanical and violent father controls him with religion and fear, and he leads a quiet, lonely life.

After his twenty-first birthday, he starts to lose control of everything he's repressed, especially when he meets Tyler, a man who fascinates and terrifies him. Tyler and his friends force him to realize that he is not only gay but not quite human.

Now he can no longer digest anything but blood, and his growing desires for Tyler and for blood conflict with everything he's been taught is right. He fights it, even knowing that he's hurting himself and Tyler in the process, and even when he accepts that he has to leave his home when the time comes for them to move on.

Sensuality Rating: SEXTREME

Genre: Alternative (M/M or F/F)/Paranormal

Length: 88,801 words

PACK

Teya Martin

EROTIC ROMANCE



Siren Publishing, Inc.
www.SirenPublishing.com

ABOUT THE E-BOOK YOU HAVE PURCHASED:

Your non-refundable purchase of this e-book allows you to only ONE LEGAL copy for your own personal reading on your own personal computer or device. **You do not have resell or distribution rights without the prior written permission of both the publisher and the copyright owner of this book.** This book cannot be copied in any format, sold, or otherwise transferred from your computer to another through upload to a file sharing peer to peer program, for free or for a fee, or as a prize in any contest. Such action is illegal and in violation of the U.S. Copyright Law. Distribution of this e-book, in whole or in part, online, offline, in print or in any way or any other method currently known or yet to be invented, is forbidden. If you do not want this book anymore, you must delete it from your computer.

WARNING: The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by up to 5 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000."

If you find a Siren-BookStrand e-book being sold or shared illegally, please let us know at **legal@sirenbookstrand.com**

A SIREN PUBLISHING BOOK

IMPRINT: Erotic Romance

PACK

Copyright © 2010 by Teya Martin

E-book ISBN: 1-60601-824-8

First E-book Publication: July 2010

Cover design by Jinger Heaston

All cover art and logo copyright © 2010 by Siren Publishing, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED: This literary work may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, including electronic or photographic reproduction, in whole or in part, without express written permission.

All characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead is strictly coincidental.

PUBLISHER

Siren Publishing, Inc.

www.SirenPublishing.com

Letter to Readers

Dear Readers,

If you have purchased this copy of *Pack* by Teya Martin from BookStrand.com or its official distributors, thank you. Also, thank you for not sharing your copy of this book.

Regarding E-book Piracy

This book is copyrighted intellectual property. No other individual or group has resale rights, auction rights, membership rights, sharing rights, or any kind of rights to sell or to give away a copy of this book.

The author and the publisher work very hard to bring our paying readers high-quality reading entertainment.

This is Teya Martin's livelihood. It's fair and simple. Please respect Ms. Martin's right to earn a living from her work.

Amanda Hilton, Publisher
www.SirenPublishing.com
www.BookStrand.com

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Lyndsey, my sparkle, and Chandy, my babu, both of whom have always been my biggest fans and supporters. Thank you ladies, I love you both.

And thank you to everyone who has helped push me into doing something about my writing, my family, my friends; especially those at work who have had to put up with me and Kirstin for her steadfast support.

PACK

TEYA MARTIN

Copyright © 2010

Chapter One

"That freak is looking over here again."

Zacky looked up from his untouched, packed lunch, across the cafeteria, following the direction of Mark's disgusted nod. Dark brown eyes met his. Zacky shivered at the intensity of the gaze that somehow seemed to lay him bare.

He'd seen the other guy around campus. He was hard to miss. Zacky knew that his name was Tyler, that he was an English student, and that he and his friends had transferred to Zacky's school recently. Tyler's wide, thin mouth curved into a smirk, and he continued to stare. Zacky gasped and turned his head away quickly.

"What's his problem, man? He keeps staring at us like *we're* the freaks."

"Don't give him the satisfaction of getting a reaction," Zacky said quietly. "That's all he wants. Turn the other cheek, remember?"

"Yeah, I guess." Mark pulled a face, his blue eyes dark with disapproval. Annoyed, his freckles stood out against his ridiculously fair skin. A natural red head, he was almost as pale as Zacky. "They shouldn't let people like that into school, that's all I'm saying."

Zacky nodded uneasily, glancing surreptitiously at Tyler through his eyelashes. Tyler was tall and slim, though quite muscular. His tattoo covered arms were well built and strong. His hair was long and shaggy, dark with red streaks. His delicately boned, angular face was as pale as Zacky's own. Thick, black lines usually rimmed his eyes, making them seem even more intense. He had a habit of wearing tight, black clothes that clung and cupped in a way Zacky knew he shouldn't be noticing. It wasn't normal to notice

things like that on a guy, let alone one who had such a bad reputation and who wore make-up of all things.

Tyler and his small group of friends were, apparently, all homosexual, although Mark had used a much more offensive word to describe them. Whether this was actually true or not, Zacky had no idea, but they did nothing to repudiate the rumors. They never seemed to have any female company. He didn't understand how anybody could flaunt their differences so blatantly, flouting acceptance and normality. It scared him, especially since he'd noticed Tyler watching him more and more often. He couldn't help feeling a sense of guilty fascination.

His whole life, Zacky had tried to blend in; be normal, acceptable, *accepted*. He looked different, which was already bad enough. "Unnatural," his grandmother called him. His hair was too black, his skin too pale, and his eyes too green. She wouldn't have him in her presence, crossed herself and muttered prayers whenever his mother tried to change her mind. His father dismissed it as superstition, but somehow still managed to make Zacky feel guilty and ashamed about the way he looked. He felt the continuous urge to prove to his family that he wasn't different.

The only problem was that he *was* different. He always had been. Of course, he'd always been in denial. He had managed to suppress, repress and hide for twenty-one years. Lately, he'd found it harder to pretend, at least to himself. Coincidentally, it became harder to pretend about the same time he'd noticed Tyler watching him.

Feeling a sudden lack of pressure, he glanced round again. Zacky felt an inexplicable sick feeling in his gut as Tyler walked away, arm in arm with one of his strange friends- a tall, skinny man with spiky black hair.

"Can I have your apple?"

"Huh?"

"Earth to Zachariah," Mark said, waving a hand in front of Zacky's face. "Were you looking at the freaks?"

"No!" Zacky exclaimed hurriedly. "No, of course not. I was just thinking."

"About?"

"About going to the library later."

"You study too much, Zach."

"My father won't accept anything less than perfection, you know that."

"You know what they say about all work and no play."

"Maybe one day, Mark." Zacky stood and plunked his apple in front of his oldest friend. "Enjoy. I'll see you at service later."

* * * *

After class, Zacky spent several hours in the library, studying hard, trying not to think about anything other than theology and his thesis or he'd have trouble concentrating at the service. That would just get him into trouble. It was dark when he finally left. A faint chill in the air made him shiver, as he crossed the park and headed through the local cemetery. His shortcut home was normally quick, easy, and quiet, but for some reason, nothing felt normal that evening. He pulled his jacket tighter round his body, eyes glancing from side to side.

As he passed a large mausoleum, he thought he heard a noise, and his heart started to pound. He froze, listening carefully. There was a slight scraping sound, like someone shifting their feet behind him. He swung around, staring wide-eyed at... nothing.

Shaking his head, he carried on through the cemetery, breathing deeply to try and slow his heart rate. He'd obviously been imagining things.

Down the street from the cemetery, he let himself into his house and headed to the kitchen, where his mother was cooking and humming cheerfully. He spent his whole life in that house, never going farther than a few streets away, to church or school. Even his college was on the other side of the park behind his house.

"Hi, Mom," Zacky said softly.

"Hello, dear." She turned and held out her hands. He took them and leaned forward to kiss her cheek. "Go get washed up, Zach."

Nodding, he went downstairs to his room in the basement. He dropped his books on the bed and shed his coat before heading into the adjoining bathroom to wash his hands and face. He went back into his room to change his shirt, putting on a tie before going back upstairs to help his mother set the table.

"You look nice, dear," she said.

"Thanks, Mom."

"Flatten your hair, boy," his father said, stalking into the room.

"Yes, sir." Zacky hurriedly patted down his naturally unruly hair.

"Sit down."

"Yes, sir." He sat quietly, folding his hands and waiting for his parents to sit before bowing his head.

"For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful. Amen," his father said.

"Amen," Zacky murmured along with his mother. Waiting again, he watched his parents serve themselves and start eating.

"Well, Zachariah, eat something. Don't insult your mother."

"Yes, sir," he said, reluctantly spooning food onto his plate. It wasn't that his mother was a bad cook. He just couldn't stomach most of what she made. She cooked from scratch, healthy food that he never seemed able to digest or keep down. He learned at a very early age to hide the fact that he threw up most of what he ate. It would only worry his mother and earn him a beating when she couldn't hide it from his father. The only thing he could eat without throwing up was meat, the rarer the better. His teeth were so sharp that he could easily eat it raw.

He ate slowly, chewing methodically and forcing himself to swallow. He felt his stomach roil and protest with every bite. At the end of the meal, he cleaned up and washed the dishes, breathing deeply to control his nausea.

"Go get ready for service, dear."

"Okay, Mom." He ran downstairs and straight into the bathroom, dropping to his knees and heaving silently into the toilet until his stomach was empty. With a groan, he forced himself to his feet, spat into the sink, and quickly brushed his teeth. He smoothed his hair and put on a jacket. Picking up his bible on his way upstairs, he rejoined his parents.

Chapter Two

The service was even harder to deal with than usual because he was hungry. It was always hard to concentrate when he hadn't eaten. He started to imagine that he could smell meat and blood, that he could hear the rush of blood through everyone's veins. Ever since he could remember he had felt these sensations, and it was getting harder to control as he got older. Especially since he'd turned twenty-one only days earlier.

When the service was over, he barely took the time to shake the minister's hand and say goodbye to his parents. He hurried home ahead of them, claiming he had to study.

On his way past the cemetery, another small noise startled him, and he glanced around. For a moment, he couldn't see anything. But as he sniffed the air, he became aware of shapes moving around the large mausoleum, deeper inside the cemetery. They somehow smelled familiar, like he should know them. He detected four distinct scents, but one of them called out to him. One of them filled him with a lust for more than food.

He couldn't control it any longer, he was starving, and he wanted to know who the shapes belonged to.

Leaping the wall, he strode through the graves to the mausoleum. One of the shapes growled at him. He flinched, not sure what he was doing, or why he wasn't as scared as he probably should have been.

"Stop it, Matt." One of the shapes straightened and approached him.

"Just get on with it, Tyler."

"He's mine. No one touches him. Do you understand?"

"Stop talking about me like I'm not here," Zacky said, shocked by the gravelly, harsh tone of his own voice. Matt stalked forward, glaring at him. Zacky stumbled back, tripping over a tree root, and falling with a gasp.

"Matt," Tyler said warningly. Matt was taller and bigger than Tyler, with dark hair shaved almost to his scalp. His gold-green eyes were dark and

angry. He, too, was covered with tattoos, and his lip was pierced with a small ring. He snarled at Tyler, who stared back at his friend steadily. Finally, mouth twisted with annoyance, Matt nodded and backed down. Zacky felt like he could breathe again.

Tyler turned to him and approached slowly. Zacky breathed in sharply, rearing back as the tall, tattooed man crouched in front of him and reached out.

"I'm not going to hurt you."

"Why not?"

Tyler looked surprised. "Because I don't want to."

"I'm not yours," Zacky said defiantly.

"Yes you are." Tyler smiled at him and touched Zacky's thigh. "You just don't know it yet."

Zacky flinched away from the touch that seemed far too hot and burned his skin. He growled. Tyler's smile softened and saddened.

"You're hungry, aren't you?"

"How did you know?" Zacky whispered, staring in confusion.

"I know the signs. Come here."

"What?"

"Zacky, come here." Tyler yanked him forward. "You need this."

He watched with a dream like sense of horror as Tyler knelt back, lifting his wrist to his mouth, tearing through his skin with teeth as sharp as his own. Blood spurted, and Zacky's heart started beating so fast he thought it might burst. As his mouth watered, his groin tightened, and the sweet, coppery smell started to overwhelm him with hunger. Licking his lips, he leaned forward slowly, eyes glued to the blood dripping from Tyler's wrist.

"Feed," Tyler whispered. The word snapped Zacky out of his daze, and he reared back, gasping and shaking his head.

"No, no, I can't."

"Zacky, you must."

"No, it's wrong." He scrambled to his feet and started to back away. "It's wrong."

"It's not wrong," Tyler said. "It's just you."

Zacky ran home as fast as he could, hunger tearing through his gut. He heard Tyler calling after him and he shivered, the lust he felt confusing him.

He stumbled down to his room, scrabbling under the bed where, years before, he'd hidden a mini-fridge to store meat. Yanking out a steak, he tore open the packaging and ate ravenously, even though it made him feel a little ill. The smell of Tyler's blood had been so good, all he wanted was to go back. The meat was barely making a dent in the hunger that the scent of blood had precipitated.

What was going on? What was he that he wanted to taste another man's blood? What was Tyler that he would offer it? Why did the thought turn him on so very badly? He barely even thought of himself as sexual. No one had ever made him feel like that before, and that in itself was terrifying.

Determinedly eating through his entire supply of raw meat, he prayed for help. He was obviously sick. There was obviously something very wrong with him. Maybe his grandmother was right, and he just wasn't natural.

* * * *

He woke up with the taste of cow's blood in his mouth and gagged. Crawling across the floor to the bathroom, he leaned over the toilet just in time to throw up meat and blood. Cold sweat trickled down his temples and tears burned his eyes with every helpless retch.

"God, please," he whispered, leaning back and wiping his mouth. "Help me."

After a desperate prayer, he forced himself to his feet. He brushed his teeth, stripped, and showered. It was still dark, so he wrapped a towel around his waist, went into his room, and checked the time.

At four o'clock in the morning, he wasn't tired. He was hungry. Sitting on his bed, he stared at all the empty packages. If he couldn't stomach meat anymore, what in heck was he going to do? He needed guidance, but there was no one he could turn to. No one could possibly understand. How could they when *he* had never understood?

To make things worse, he suddenly realized that he'd left his Bible in the cemetery.

He shivered at the thought of going back. What if Tyler and his friends were still there? Tapping his knee for a moment, he sighed resignedly. He *had* to go and find his Bible. If he lost it, his father would beat him.

He got dressed, grabbed a flashlight and slipped out through the basement window. He'd never used it to sneak out at night before. He'd never needed to. It felt oddly good, somehow, knowing he was breaking his father's rules. He'd be punished if he was caught, and he was scared, but he was doing it anyway.

He padded down the street and slipped into the cemetery, clicking on the flashlight to see where he was going. Reaching the large mausoleum, he cast around for his Bible, moving toward where he'd fallen, where Tyler had offered him blood. He groaned quietly. The memory made his stomach growl, and his groin tightened. He was *so* hungry.

There was a thud behind him, and he swung around. The beam of his torch hit Tyler square in the face.

"Zacky, watch it," Tyler said, lifting his hand in front of his face and squinting.

Zacky lowered the beam, shifting awkwardly. He wasn't scared exactly, but he was definitely nervous.

"Looking for me?"

"No," he snapped far too quickly. "And my name is Zachariah."

"The name you were given, maybe, but that's not the name you call yourself," Tyler said with a smile. Zacky stared in confusion. Why and how would the other man know that?

"What?" Zacky whispered. Tyler held up the Bible.

"So, I bet you convinced yourself you came back for this, huh?"

"I did."

"Sure you did."

"Can I have it back?"

"That depends now, doesn't it?"

Zacky frowned cautiously. "On what?"

"Come closer," Tyler said, his voice like silk. Zacky shivered with lust, taking two steps forward. He realized what he was doing and stopped abruptly. Tyler's scent filled his nostrils. He could hear the blood flowing in Tyler's veins, making his cock harden in his pants.

"Why are you resisting me?" Tyler said softly. "Come to me, Zacky. You're mine." He bit his wrist open again, and the smell of blood slammed need through Zacky like a whirlwind. He threw himself at Tyler, knocking

him to the ground and grabbing his wrist. Laughing, Tyler grabbed Zacky's belt with his free hand and hauled Zacky on top of him.

"Do it, baby."

"It's wrong," Zacky whispered, desperately trying to hold onto normality.

"Not for us," Tyler said, reaching up with his other hand to stroke Zacky's cheek. "You need it. Feed from me."

With a whimper, Zacky lifted Tyler's wrist to his mouth and licked up the slow trickle of blood. Pure, unadulterated pleasure bloomed inside his chest. He'd never tasted anything so good, never felt anything so amazing. He clamped his mouth over the wound, licking and sucking desperately as he rocked his hardened, aching cock against the other man's groin.

"Oh fuck yes," Tyler groaned. "Yes, baby, suck me hard."

As Zacky swallowed the sweet, warm blood, his hips jerked harder and faster, need consuming him, pleasure building till it was unbearable. Tyler rocked under him, panting and groaning, grabbing his other arm and lifting his wrist to his mouth. Teeth tore into his skin, and pain shot through his body, pushing him over the edge. Letting go of Tyler's wrist, Zacky tipped his head back and howled, coming harder than he ever had in his life.

Grunting and sucking hard at his wrist, Tyler jerked up against him, shuddering with release.

"Oh yes," Tyler whispered again, licking his skin gently. "You're mine."

Zacky scrambled back, horror overwhelming him. What had he done?

"No, oh no," he whispered. Grabbing his Bible, he quickly got to his feet and started to back away.

"Zacky, wait." Tyler sat up and reached out for him. He seemed so oddly distraught that Zacky almost paused, until he suddenly heard howls fill the air. He panicked, and ran home as fast as he could.

Diving into the basement, he locked the window tightly, ran into the bathroom, leaned against the sink, and stared into the mirror. The terrible sense of guilt and horror grew at the sight of his blood smeared lips. He wanted to throw up, but he couldn't. His stomach was settled. He wasn't remotely hungry.

What *was* he?

Stripping quickly, he got into the shower and scrubbed himself raw until tiredness overwhelmed him. He got out, dried off, and pulled on pajama

pants. He slid under his covers and clung to his Bible, trying to gain comfort from the tome somehow.

* * * *

He was always quiet, but the next morning, even his mother commented on how subdued he was. All he could think about were the lack of bite marks on his wrist. Had he healed, or had it all been some insane dream? He wanted to believe that, but he wasn't hungry. He was always hungry.

"Eat some breakfast, sweetheart. It's the most important meal of the day," his mother said, putting a plate in front of him. His stomach recoiled.

"Thank you, Mom, but I'm not hungry. I really need to go to the library before class."

"All right, dear. Don't be late for dinner."

"I won't." He stood and bent to kiss her cheek. "Goodbye, Mom." He picked up his books and wrapped his arms around them tightly. He needed their solidity to feel real.

It was a cloudy day, but he still needed to squint as he walked down the street. Everything seemed bigger, brighter, louder and more colorful somehow. It was freaking him out. There was a soft noise behind him, and he spun around, holding out a hand defensively.

"Whoa, Zach, it's only me."

"Mark," he gasped in relief.

"Who did you think it was?"

"I don't know," he said softly. "You're up early, aren't you?"

"Yeah, but I figured you'd be up. Thought you might like some company."

He stared at his best friend for a long moment, unsure if he wanted company. He stared until Mark started to look hurt, and Zacky sighed.

"That would be nice Mark, thank you."

"You're welcome." Mark grinned, and they started to walk again. "You ran home pretty quick after service last night. You okay?"

"I..." He paused, unwilling to lie to his oldest friend. "Just having some issues."

"What kind of issues?"

"It... It's nothing, really."

"Girl issues?" Mark asked with a little smirk.

"No," Zacky snapped, wincing at his hurried denial and his friend's raised eyebrows.

"It is a girl, isn't it?" Mark crowed. "Man, that's a relief."

Tensing defensively, Zacky stopped and stared at his friend. "What do you mean, 'relief'?"

"Zach, come on, all you ever do is study or go to church. I worry that you work too hard, that's all. You need a girlfriend."

"There's no girl," he said truthfully, cringing at the reality. What had happened the night before was wrong and could never happen again. *Never*. "Besides, I'm not allowed a girlfriend. You know that."

"Yeah, I know. It's just..." Mark sighed. "You're twenty-one now. Surely they want you to settle down, get married."

"They do. They want me to marry Ruth."

"Ugh, still?"

"Yeah." Zacky shrugged. Ruth was their age and went to their church. She was nice enough, but they had nothing in common except church. She took dedication to the Lord to a level that even Zacky found scary.

"Well, at least she's hot," Mark said, elbowing him with a small leer.

"If you say so."

Mark shook his head. "I need some breakfast. Come keep me company in the cafeteria."

"Okay." Zacky followed his friend across the campus to the student cafeteria, sitting with him after Mark got some bacon and pancakes. Mark was so used to Zacky not eating that he never questioned it.

"Oh man, freak alert," Mark whispered, pointing behind him. Tyler's scent filled Zacky's senses, and he looked around before he could stop himself. He met brown eyes and watched thin lips curl into a smile. They were the same lips that had pressed to his wrist and sucked on his blood the night before. Shivering with a mixture of guilt, horror, and lust, he turned away quickly, biting back a groan.

"Don't encourage them," Mark groaned. "Oh man, he's actually coming over."

Tyler stopped behind them and bent over, almost resting his chin on Zacky's shoulder.

"Hi, Zacky," he whispered in Zacky's ear.

"Hey, get lost, freak," Mark said with a sneer of disgust. Tyler ignored him and moved to the side of the table, putting his flashlight between him and Mark.

"You forgot this last night," he said with a low chuckle. He turned and walked away, over to his friends who were all watching. The tall, skinny one laughed manically.

"What," Mark blinked at him, "the heck?"

Zacky stared at the flashlight in horror. He'd forgotten it in his hurry to get away from the cemetery, and now there was no denying what had happened.

"Were you hanging out with the freaks?" Mark exclaimed.

"No!" He shook his head violently. "No, I... I ran into them. I must have dropped it, that's all."

"Ran into them where? When?"

"I went for a walk last night," he said with a shrug. He really *didn't* want to lie.

"You left the house? At night?" Mark gasped and grinned. "Are you sure there's no girl?"

Chapter Three

Zacky was unbearably hungry again. It had been a week since the night in the cemetery, and while he'd been hungry the day after drinking Tyler's blood, it seemed to have given him more control. He'd managed to avoid Tyler since he'd returned the flashlight, but Zacky hadn't been able to avoid thinking about him. It seemed like every time he closed his eyes, he saw that smile. Dreams filled with blood and sex came every night, and he was reluctant to sleep. Somehow he knew that Tyler was watching him. Always watching him.

After a terrible church service, he managed to leave quickly again. He ran past the cemetery to try and get home before he could give into temptation and find Tyler. He got straight into bed, shivering with need.

What did he do? He couldn't eat anything anymore, and he was getting desperate. Especially as his friends and family smelled of blood.

Closing his eyes, he tried to force himself to relax and get some sleep.

* * * *

Hazy pleasure filled his body. Warmth and lust slowly took him over. A strong body, solid and hot, pinned him down. The hard length of an erection was digging into his hip and soft, moist lips moved over his neck. He didn't struggle, he didn't want to. He wanted to come and, with it, to feed.

The body above him jerked harder against him, lifting up from his chest. Zacky opened his eyes, meeting Tyler's dark brown gaze with a gasp.

"Mine," Tyler growled, baring his teeth. Tyler dived in, biting down on Zacky's neck. Pain shot through him, and he screamed.

* * * *

Bolting upright, Zacky gasped for breath. Shaking with fear and lust, shivering as sweat trickled down his neck and back, he couldn't stand it any longer. The hunger was too strong and overwhelmed him.

Almost in a trance, he got dressed and climbed out the window, walking silently to the cemetery.

Before he could even jump the wall, a strong hand grabbed him by the scruff of the neck, and hauled him into the cemetery, over to the mausoleum. He struggled helplessly until he was slammed against the large tomb.

"Matt, don't," Tyler snapped.

"For fuck's sake, Ty, just get on with it," Matt snarled, glaring at Tyler. "This is taking too long."

"It'll take as long as it needs to, Matt."

"But you-"

"I can wait," Tyler said firmly. "He's strong. That's a good thing, remember?"

Zacky groaned quietly, every sense filled with Tyler's presence. His need grew desperate. He could barely focus on what they were saying. His eyes locked on Tyler's face, and his cock twitched with lust. He was disgusted with himself, but he couldn't help it. He didn't want to be there, didn't want to need what Tyler could give him. His fingers itched with the need to reach out. Lust curled in his belly, more powerful than anything he'd ever felt before. It was painful.

"Easy, baby," Tyler whispered, approaching slowly. "Guys, fuck off."

"Hey!" The short, pudgy, pretty blond Zacky recognized as Johnny, looked offended.

"I need you gone," Tyler said firmly, gesturing at his friends.

"Tyler," Zacky whispered, almost hating himself for sounding so plaintive. Need pulsed through his veins, taking him to his breaking point.

"Go away," Tyler reached him and touched Zacky's arm. Electricity streaked through him, and Zacky shuddered, knees weakening.

"Fine," Matt snarled. "Johnny, Jimmy, let's go hunt."

The other three men left, and Zacky couldn't control himself any longer. He was desperate. He grabbed Tyler, spinning around and pushing him against the mausoleum.

"Oh yeah," Tyler said with a gasp, arching his body against Zacky's.

"Shut up," Zacky whispered, pinning him to the wall and inhaling deeply. The pulse of blood was so close, so tempting, it made his mouth water. "I'm not yours," he sighed. He leaned in to lick the sweet, salty sweat from the other man's neck, moaning at the feel of Tyler's pulse under his tongue.

"Whatever you say," Tyler groaned, gripping Zacky's hips and yanking him hard against his body. "Just bite me already."

"God forgive me," Zacky whispered, opening his mouth wider and biting down. Blood spurted into his mouth, hot and thick, making him gag until the sweet flavor hit his tongue, and he swallowed eagerly.

"Fuck," Tyler grunted, his fingers clenching Zacky's hips. A solid erection pressed against Zacky's, rubbing quick and hard. "Harder, baby."

Zacky lifted his head with a gasp, licking his lips and swallowing hard. "I said shut up."

Tyler's eyes flashed at him, and he spun them around, pressing Zacky against the wall, rocking harder and faster. Heat and tension built quickly in Zacky's groin as Tyler bent his head, nuzzling Zacky's neck and licking his skin.

"No," Zacky breathed, self-loathing and horror starting to take over again.

"Shh," Tyler whispered against his skin. A gentle hand cupped the back of Zacky's head and pulled him to Tyler's neck where the scent of blood overwhelmed him again. Thrusting helplessly, Zacky sucked hard. The thick slide of blood down his throat felt and tasted so good, that pleasure swept through Zacky's body until he felt like he was going to explode.

Zacky felt Tyler's lips parting over his neck and the other man bit down, tearing his skin. The pain was agonizing, shooting through every nerve of Zacky's body. He dropped his head back, screaming as he came, jerking helplessly. He heard Tyler moan against his neck, his lover's hips thrusting faster against him until Tyler froze with a sudden whimper, arching into him, back rigid, hips pumping.

"Oh fuck," Tyler gasped, leaning heavily against Zacky.

"Get off me," Zacky whispered, turning his head away. Disgust and horror were returning full force now that his hunger had been slaked.

"Let me get my breath back."

"Get *off* me!" he snapped, shoving Tyler.

"What the fuck is your problem?" Tyler glared and looked almost hurt.

"You have to ask?" Zacky gasped, gesturing at his neck.

"Yeah, I do," Tyler said, eyes narrowing.

"How can you act like this is normal?"

"Because, it is for us."

Zacky shook his head, starting to back away. "I'm not like you."

Tyler held out a hand, expression softening. "Yes you are. You're just like us. You've never been normal, and you know it."

"That makes me a freak."

Stiffening and yanking back, Tyler glared. "If that's what you think I am, then that's exactly what you are."

Flinching, Zacky turned and started to walk away.

"Zacky, wait, don't go."

Zacky paused mid step, not looking around.

"I don't *want* this," he whispered.

"So why did you come back?"

Shaking his head, Zacky didn't reply. He ran home as fast as he could. He climbed back into his room and locked the window carefully, stripping his clothes as he crossed the room. He needed a shower. He needed to scrub away all evidence of that night, that he'd drunk blood, that he'd come. That he'd done it with a man.

He wasn't like that. He couldn't be. It wasn't natural, normal, or right. It couldn't happen again. He couldn't *let* it happen again. He would just have to try and find something else he could eat, so he could resist temptation.

"Lead us not into temptation," he muttered over and over. He washed his already healed skin, once again, until he was red raw.

* * * *

Waking up not hungry was a guilty relief. Zacky got up, dressed slowly, and walked upstairs lost in thought. He sat at the kitchen table, acknowledging his parents with a polite nod.

He didn't want to go to school, didn't want to risk seeing Tyler or his friends, but what choice did he have? If he missed a lecture, his father would hear about it, and Zacky would get punished. Maybe he could hide in the library.

"Are you listening to me, boy?" His father smacked him hard on the back of the head and glared.

"Yes, sir," he breathed fearfully. How could he have allowed himself to get so distracted around his father? That could get him into serious trouble.

"Well? Get to school."

"Yes, sir." He grabbed his books and walked slowly down the street. At the entrance to the cemetery he paused, sniffing the air instinctively. When he didn't catch the scent of Tyler or Tyler's friends, Zacky quickly quashed a surprising wave of disappointment. He was *not* disappointed that he didn't see Tyler. He couldn't be. Why would he be? He was not going to let a couple of lapses of control affect his life. It wasn't natural, and he wasn't gay.

Taking a deep breath, he stepped into the cemetery and hurried down the path to the park. Despite being empty, the graveyard felt strangely oppressive. A sense of foreboding gave him the feeling of being watched. Speeding up, he hit the park with a sigh of relief. It lasted until a noise behind him made him freeze, and the very scent he'd searched for hit his nostrils, making his heart stutter and his groin twinge.

"Zacky."

He wouldn't turn around. He would not. His feet overrode his brain, and he turned to face Tyler who hovered at the edge of the cemetery, as though trapped within it.

"What?" Zacky whispered.

"Your control won't last as long this time," Tyler said, his dark brown eyes soft and sad. "My blood won't help you stave off hunger for as long this time. I just wanted to warn you and tell you I'll be waiting."

"Don't bother," Zacky said, finally managing to turn away. "I won't be back."

"Yes you will," Tyler said quietly. "You need it."

"No I don't!" Zacky yelled, spinning around to glare at him. "I don't want it, I don't need it, and I don't need *you*."

Tyler's brown eyes widened with hurt for a split second before darkening angrily. Tyler strode forward, grabbing Zacky's arm and yanking him against his body. Zacky gasped and struggled, but the other man was too strong. An arm slid around his waist, and pulled him close. The heat of

Tyler's body felt good, and Zacky bit back a groan as his mouth watered, and his groin tightened in spite of himself.

Tyler bent his head, mouth hovering tantalizingly close, warm breath brushing Zacky's skin. Desire pulsed through Zacky's body. His muscles ached as he fought his impulses and tried desperately to stay still. But as Tyler gently inserted a thumb under his shirt, stroking his bare skin, Zacky couldn't take it any longer. Every nerve moved him to lean up and press his lips to that teasing mouth.

Kissing Zacky back for only a second, Tyler shoved him away abruptly, lips curling into a cruel smirk.

"Tell me again how you don't want it."

"You son of a," Zacky gasped. Shock, hurt and a continuing desire to kiss Tyler confused him. "You stay away from me."

"I'm not the one who came looking," Tyler snapped.

"I hate you," Zacky yelled, turning and starting to walk away.

"Yeah? Well, fuck you. When you come back, you'd better crawl to me on your hands and knees."

"I won't be coming back," Zacky shouted over his shoulder, speeding up to get away as quickly as possible.

"You keep telling yourself that."

Shaking with anger and confusion, Zacky ran to the campus and straight to the nearest restroom. He locked himself in a stall, leaning against the wall and breathing deeply to try and calm down. Slowly, he parted his lips and slipped the tip of his tongue over his top lip. The taste of Tyler exploded on his tongue, and he whimpered, back arching helplessly to press his hardening cock against his zipper. He licked his lips harder to try and taste more. It was so similar to the taste of Tyler's blood that Zacky's craving started to grow unbearable. He wasn't hungry, but no matter how much he tried to deny and repress it, he *did* want Tyler.

Wrenching his pants open, Zacky forced them down and wrapped a hand around his shaft. He stroked hot, and tight, and fast, panting for breath as pleasure curled down his spine and settled deep in his groin. He'd never had feelings like this before. He had rarely felt the desire to touch himself, and had been far too conscious of sin to give in to the desire, even in his own room. The fact that he was doing it in a public bathroom just made him feel worse, but he couldn't control or stop himself. His balls tightened, and

he bit back a groan as he exploded into orgasm, shooting hard over his hand and onto the floor.

Squeezing his eyes shut against a surge of nausea and self-disgust, he sniffed back tears. He couldn't bear to look at himself. He cleaned up quickly and flushed the tissue away, doing his pants up before leaving the stall to wash his hands. He caught a glimpse of his face in the mirror and gasped. His eyes seemed even brighter than usual, and the light pink flush of his cheeks somehow made his skin look more translucent and porcelain.

His bottom lip was reddened and a little swollen from biting it. It made him look like he'd been kissed and, shockingly, he wished he had been. No matter how wrong it was, how bad and dirty it made him feel, he wished Tyler really had kissed him.

What had Tyler done to him? Why was he losing control of everything he'd kept buried for years?

What was he?

Chapter Four

Zacky had avoided everyone, particularly his family and Mark, for several days after seeing Tyler. He'd awakened even hungrier than before, the day after feeding from the other man. He knew Mark was concerned and a little hurt, but at least his friend thought it was something to do with a girl. Mark would never suspect what was really happening. Not that *Zacky* had any idea what was really happening either, but he refused to risk contaminating his family and friends. He couldn't risk losing control around them. He seemed to be losing his grip far too quickly. No matter how much he fought, he'd been heading toward the cemetery, without even realizing it, far too often.

He was desperate and needed to find some other way to feed himself. He would *not* go to Tyler. He *could* not. After finding himself wandering toward the cemetery yet again, he forced himself to walk the other way to the store. He grabbed a basket and started filling it with meat—as many different kinds as he could find—trying to ignore the scent and pulse of blood all around him from the other customers.

"Hey, you having a barbeque or something?"

He jumped, barely holding back a screech of surprise. "Mark!"

"That's me. You remember. I'm glad."

"Mark, I..."

"Where you been, man?"

"I just... Things are a bit complicated right now." He turned and picked up another pack of meat.

"You just picked up ostrich steaks, Zach. Are you nuts?"

"No! I mean, I mean no. Just feeling..." He sighed and shrugged.

"What's complicated, Zach? Why aren't you talking to me?" Mark followed him as he continued along the meat aisle.

"It's not that I'm not."

Mark raised an eyebrow at him.

"Okay, you're right. I'm not talking to you, and I'm sorry." Zacky sighed, seeing his friend's hurt expression. "I want to, but I can't, Mark. I don't even know what..." Stopping again, he dropped his chin to his chest. Mark reached out and put a hand on his shoulder. The sudden heat made his hunger flare. He could hear his friend's heartbeat and the sound of blood, pulsing thickly through the veins in Mark's wrist and arm. The smell was sweet and strong, not even close to how amazing Tyler's blood smelled but enough to make him sway, lightheaded with hunger.

"Zach? What's wrong with you?" Mark gasped, snatching his hand back. Zacky suddenly realized he was growling low in his throat. Rearing back, he dropped the basket, not hearing the clatter it made, horror swelling and tightening in his chest and throat. He'd almost. He'd nearly...

"I have to go," he breathed, turning and pelting out the store towards the cemetery. He didn't want to give in, but what other choice did he have? He'd come so close to attacking his best friend in the middle of a store.

There was no one there, and he bit back a howl of frustration, sniffing the air for a trace of Tyler's scent. When he found it, he followed it back towards campus, heading for the dorms and somehow maintaining his control, so he didn't attack any of the students he ran past. He was just *so* hungry.

Inside a dorm building, he loped down a corridor, following the strengthening scent to a door. He knocked hurriedly, desperately, almost falling into the room when Tyler opened the door. Slamming it shut, he grabbed Tyler, and pushed him back toward the bed.

"Hey! Zacky, hey!" Tyler shoved him back, glaring at him.

"Tyler."

"I thought you weren't coming back."

"Tyler!" Zacky started toward Tyler again. Tyler smacked him, sending him flying across the room. Zacky hit the wall hard and slumped to the floor, gasping in pain.

"You don't get to do this," Tyler snarled. "You don't get to come here just take from me. Not after saying that you hate me and that you don't need me."

"You said you'd be waiting for me," he started, trying not to sound desperate.

"You waited too long."

"Tyler, I-"

"You need me."

Dropping his gaze in humiliation, Zacky nodded. "I need you."

"Say please."

"Tyler, don't," he begged. It was bad enough he was there at all. Now he had to admit he was weak? Tyler sat on the bed.

"Say it."

Swallowing back bitter resentment and pain, Zacky looked up again.

"Please," he whispered.

"Crawl to me on your hands and knees, and you can have what you need."

"No!"

"Do it."

"Why are you doing this?" Zacky whispered. Tears of shame, desperation, and most horrible of all, lust, pricked his eyes. He could smell Tyler. Smell his body, his musk and arousal, and his blood. He could taste the tang of his sweat in the air, and he wanted it all despite the guilt and self-loathing. "You said you didn't want to hurt me."

"Fuck!" Tyler suddenly jumped to his feet. "Fuck, Zacky."

Zacky gasped as Tyler crouched next to him.

"Come here," Tyler whispered, taking Zacky's hand and drawing him to his feet. He followed Tyler to the bed, only a little reluctantly, and sat next to him.

"You're right. I don't want to hurt you," Tyler said softly, unbuttoning Zacky's shirt before tugging off his own t-shirt. "You're mine."

"Stop saying that."

"Shut up," Tyler snapped, pushing him gently back onto the bed.

"What are you doing?" Zacky whispered, watching long, slender fingers unzipping and tugging his pants open.

"Giving you what you need," Tyler said softly, sliding a finger up Zacky's rapidly hardening shaft and making him shudder. "You are mine, Zacky, but what you fail to realize-" Tyler stopped and knelt on the bed, pulling Zacky's pants and underwear down his legs before unbuttoning his own pants and shoving them down his thighs. Tyler's cock jutted out, long and hard. Somehow, Zacky couldn't quite resist reaching out to touch.

"Ah Zacky," Tyler groaned, eyelids fluttering as his hips jerked. Tyler's skin felt silky soft under his fingertips, and Zacky gasped. What was he doing?

Tyler crawled over and dipped down to kiss Zacky's neck. His lips were warm and moist, and Zacky shuddered, need slamming into his gut. He arched up helplessly and moaned, legs lifting to wrap around Tyler's hips and drag him down. The slide of a hard cock against his own was amazing, and Zacky couldn't help rubbing up against the other man.

Tyler's mouth opened against his neck, tongue lapping over his pulse point. Zacky shuddered, hunger building with his lust. It was hot, and good, and so very wrong. He was so hungry, and not just for blood, that he almost didn't care anymore. He thrust up harder, urgently lifting his head. Burying his face in the crook of Tyler's neck, he nipped at the other man's skin.

"Fuck!" Tyler gasped, bucking harder against Zacky as pre-cum eased the slide of their dicks against each other. "Yes, Zacky. Bite me."

"Say please," Zacky whispered. Tyler yanked himself back with a growl.

"Fuck you," Tyler snapped, shoving his erection back in his pants and zipping up.

"What?"

"You heard me. Fuck you. You came to me because you need *me*. Don't fucking play games with me."

Zacky blinked, shock tempering his need enough to realize that Tyler was hurt.

"What were you going to say?" Zacky asked softly.

Tyler glared at him.

"You said, 'what you fail to realize'. What do I fail to realize?"

"Nothing," Tyler whispered, turning away. Sitting up, Zacky reached for Tyler and swallowed his shame.

"Tyler, I need you. Please? I nearly attacked my best friend. I can't risk that happening again."

"Fine." Tyler turned back but didn't meet Zacky's gaze. Tyler tore his wrist open with his teeth and held it out.

Control went out of the window, and Zacky lunged forward. Catching Tyler's wrist and clamping it to his mouth, Zacky sucked on his lover's blood, licking hard with a moan. Heady pleasure swept through him, making his cock jerk. Zacky dropped his other hand onto his lap, fisting his shaft

and stroking as he passed his tongue over ragged flesh. The pulse of blood flowed into his mouth. It wasn't right, but he couldn't help loving the taste, craving it desperately.

Somehow the lack of physical contact with Tyler made him feel almost as bad as what had driven him there in the first place. Lifting his hand from his groin, he reached out to touch Tyler's shoulder, tapping gently.

"What?" Tyler sighed. "You got what you wanted."

Meeting Tyler's darkened brown eyes, Zacky held out his wrist in front of the other man's mouth. Tyler held his gaze for a seemingly interminable moment. Then, he knelt between Zacky's legs. Eyes widening in confusion and question, Zacky watched as Tyler forced a smile, lowering his head until hot breath caressed the sensitive skin of Zacky's erection. Zacky whimpered against the flesh in his mouth and arched up in a silent plea.

Murmuring quietly, Tyler licked up the length of Zacky's shaft and over the head, sucking it into the heat of his mouth. Spine tingling pleasure started to overwhelm Zacky. He'd never felt anything like the hot, wet suction on his dick as Tyler's tongue slid up and down, swirling and licking hard. Zacky moaned, rocking his hips, trying not to thrust too deeply, and moving faster as he was driven to the brink of ecstasy. Dropping his head back, he licked his lips and groaned.

"Tyler, bite me."

Tyler lifted his head, removing his mouth from Zacky's cock with a noisy slurp. Tyler replaced his mouth with his hand, fist twisting up and down the length.

"Say please."

Zacky groaned. He was too close to the edge and too needy to object. "Please!"

Grinning, Tyler licked a stripe down Zacky's groin and bit down on the soft flesh of his inner thigh, tearing through the skin and sucking hard. The pain ripped through Zacky's body, and he arched up with a scream. His orgasm was almost shocking in its intensity as he bucked and came all over Tyler's hand. Tyler dropped his cum-covered hand into his own lap, stroking himself quickly as he sucked harder on Zacky's thigh.

Looking down, Zacky shuddered. He had a sudden urge to stroke long, dark hair, to reach farther and take Tyler's cock into his hand. Instead, he bit his lip and looked away, covering his face with his arms.

Sucking and grunting noisily, Tyler jerked against him. Suddenly, Tyler froze and shuddered, crying out softly against Zacky's skin, wet heat splattering Zacky's leg. Tyler slumped on top of Zacky and panted for breath. Every so often, Tyler's tongue flicked out over Zacky's skin and it made him shiver.

"What am I?" Zacky whispered. Tyler shifted to sit on the edge of the bed next to Zacky's chest. Leaning over, he grabbed a pack of wipes from his bedside table, cleaning them both off gently. Afterwards, he pulled his jeans back up.

"You're like me."

"I'm nothing like you," Zacky said with very little fight. He was too confused, conflicted, and full of self-loathing. He couldn't even bring himself to cover up his shameful nakedness.

"You're not like anyone else though, are you?" Tyler leaned over him and pinned his arms to the bed. Zacky didn't struggle, but stared up into the other man's beautiful, deep brown eyes.

"No," Zacky whispered.

"I know what it's like you know," Tyler said softly. "Being alone. Scared. *Hungry*? We all know what it's like."

Zacky gasped, staring wide-eyed at the man holding him down. "You do know," he whispered wonderingly.

"I told you. You're like me." Zacky shook his head. His disgust and hatred, combined with his shame and insecurities, made him feel ill.

"I'm sick," Zacky said.

"No, you're not."

"I'm unnatural, a freak. It's not right." He cried out, starting to struggle hard and feeling hysterical.

"No!" Tyler shouted, grasping Zacky's chin. "You are not. We are *not*."

Zacky laughed hysterically. "It's not right!"

"Just shut up." Tyler's fingers dug into Zacky's face. Tyler lunged at him. His mouth crashed into Zacky's painfully hard, tongue pushing at his lips until he parted them with a moan. Tyler's kiss gentled suddenly, and his lips moved slowly, tongue sliding between Zacky's lips, licking delicately. Tyler cupped Zacky's cheek and kissed him harder again, twining their tongues, and sucking on his bottom lip until Zacky was gasping and needy all over again.

"Well, isn't this all candy and roses?" A menacing voice interrupted them.

Tyler broke the kiss with a sigh and twisted to sit in front of Zacky, shielding him from Matt's penetrating sneer. Panic, nausea, and a sense of fear filled Zacky as he scrabbled for his clothes and dressed hurriedly.

"What do you want, Matt?"

"Why the fuck is he here?" Matt asked.

"Why do you think? He needed me," Tyler replied.

Matt stalked across the room and towered over the bed, looking furious. "And you brought him to the fucking dorm? Do you want us to get caught?"

"He found me."

Matt's glare found Zacky, making him shiver and quickly button his shirt.

"How did you find him?" Matt asked.

Zacky blinked, trying to find the right word. "I tracked him I guess."

"See, I told you, Matt. He's strong." Tyler smiled brightly. "He's mine."

"I'm not yours," Zacky snapped automatically, despite the doubt that was starting to settle in his mind. He pushed Tyler aside, standing up to shove his feet back into his shoes.

"Where are you going?" Tyler asked, his expression frozen.

"Oh, come on, Ty. What were you expecting? Post-coital kisses and cuddles from *him*?"

"Enough, Matt! Zacky, we need to talk."

"There's nothing to talk about," Zacky sighed. "I can't keep doing this."

"No," Tyler whispered. "You can't."

He stared at Tyler in shock. "What?"

"You can't keep doing this, and we need to talk about it."

"Maybe I don't want to talk about it," Zacky snapped, heading for the door. A large, muscular, tattooed arm shot out to keep the door shut.

"Who said you could leave?" Matt growled.

"Who said you could interfere?" Tyler yelled.

Matt spun around to face Tyler. "I'm not interfering. I'm reminding you what needs to be done."

"He is *mine*. It is not your place," Tyler snapped, glaring at Matt.

"Are you challenging me?" Matt spat, baring his teeth as he took a step closer to Tyler.

"No, of course I'm not challenging you," Tyler sighed. "I'm telling you to back the fuck off."

"And I keep telling you, we don't have time for this shit," Matt yelled, lashing out a fist and smashing it into the wall. The noise resounded loudly around the room, and Tyler pulled Zacky away quickly.

"You can't stop me from leaving!" Zacky said defiantly, peering at Matt from over Tyler's shoulder, managing not to flinch from the big man's glare.

"You don't get to speak to me at all, cub," Matt said, baring his teeth.

"Matt, leave him be. I'm dealing with it, okay?"

Matt turned to stare at Tyler, his eyes suddenly full of sorrow. "You'd better, or I will."

Tyler inhaled sharply. "You don't mean that."

"You've got a week." Matt yanked the door open and stalked out, slamming it shut behind him.

"What was that?" Zacky asked.

"Matt exerting his dominance."

The thought made Zacky want to snort with amusement, and he raised an eyebrow. "But he's not dominant to you. Is he?"

Tyler glanced at him. "Technically no, but I run with *his* pack."

"Why?"

"I lost my pack." Tyler's face fell.

"What's 'pack'?" Zacky repeated, still not quite understanding.

"Our families and our mates." Tyler swallowed, starting to look very upset.

"I already have a family."

"But they're not your real family, Zacky. Our kind, we have to find our family, like you found me."

"Whatever you think I am, it's not me," Zacky said, torn between the desire to stay and find out what was going on, and the desire to run away, back to denial and desperation. "I'm not your family."

Tyler stared at him, eyes dark with pain. Zacky wanted to look away, but he couldn't. Tyler slowly got up and walked over to stand in front of him.

"Not just my family, Zacky."

"I don't want you," Zacky whispered.

"Yes, you do," Tyler said, letting go of his arms. "You're my family, my pack, my mate."

"No," Zacky gasped, confliction ripping him apart. Tyler's pain hurt him, calling him to comfort. Yet, everything he'd ever been taught to believe told him what he was doing was wrong, unnatural, sick, and dirty. His father would kill him if he had even the slightest idea what was happening.

"You know it's true," Tyler whispered, reaching out.

It was getting harder and harder for Zacky to deny it, yet he still didn't know what was happening.

"Don't you want to be happy?"

Zacky snorted. "Are *you* happy?"

"I run with a pack that's not mine, and my mate says he doesn't want me," Tyler said with a bitter laugh. "What do you think?"

If Zacky stayed any longer, he'd give in, and he couldn't let that happen.

"I think I have to go," he whispered. Tyler's expression hardened.

"Fine, go, see if I care."

Turning, Zacky opened the door and stalked out. He slammed the door shut behind him and leaned against it, taking a deep breath. He heard something smash into the door behind him. Then, a loud sob came from inside, and his throat tightened with regret.

Tyler was lying. He did care, and the terrible thing was, Zacky couldn't deny that he cared too. He hurried away before he gave into the urge to go back inside. He sped up when he saw Matt farther down the hallway, lounging against a wall, arms casually slung around Johnny and Jimmy. All three men stared at Zacky as he passed- Matt glaring, Johnny looking strangely sympathetic, and Jimmy leering.

Zacky wasn't scared, but they made him feel nervous, awkward, and inadequate. It was like being in high school again. There it hadn't just been his looks that had made him abnormal, but his plain, formal clothes, politeness, hard work, and religious denomination. His only friends at school had been other kids from his church, particularly Mark. Even if he *was* like Tyler and the others, he still wouldn't fit in. He hated that.

Maybe Tyler was right, and they needed to talk. Maybe if Zacky understood what was happening, he could fight it. The trouble was, he didn't know if he could go anywhere near Tyler without needing to do more than talk.

It had to stop. Somehow, he needed to stop before he couldn't or didn't want to.

Shuddering, he hurried home and talked to his parents for as short a time as he could get away with before escaping to his room. He got ready for bed and climbed under his covers as quickly as possible. Lying back, he stared at the ceiling, arms crossed behind his head. The only positive thing at that moment was that he wasn't hungry and could actually concentrate enough to think.

Tyler still hadn't really explained anything. Zacky didn't understand. 'Their kind'? What were 'their kind'? Why did they have to find each other? How did packs work, and what did they hunt?

Zacky shivered. He didn't want an answer to the last question, though he was pretty sure he already knew what it was.

Why did his hunger return more quickly and urgently each time he fed from Tyler, and how long would he be able to control it this time? These were the most important questions of all. He just prayed he would get through tomorrow. After Sunday service, there was going to be a church picnic, and there was no way he could miss it without incurring his father's wrath. Turning over, he curled up into a ball and prayed for some sort of guidance.

Chapter Five

It had been a hard morning. Zacky's father had smacked him twice already- once for not eating breakfast, and once for taking too long getting ready for church. His parents were dressed in their formal best, his mother's head covered, as usual, by a plain scarf. He followed them along the street, and they filed into church silently. Mark stared at him, giving him a slightly nervous looking smile, and Zacky sighed with regret. He hadn't had a chance to apologize or attempt to explain what had happened in the store.

They sat in their regular pew, next to the aisle, his mother between him and his father. She patted Zacky's knee as if she knew how agitated he felt. The church fell silent as the preacher greeted the congregation and started his sermon.

Suddenly, Zacky became aware of an incongruity in the scents he was so used to, and he barely held in a gasp when he realized what it was. Slowly, he turned his head and looked around, biting his lip when he spotted Tyler sitting at the very back. Those brown eyes were startling in Tyler's pale face even without their usual rim of black. Tyler's hair was slicked back neatly, and he was dressed in a smart, black shirt and tie.

Tyler saw him looking, smiled and winked. Eyes widening, Zacky mouthed, "What are you doing here?"

Tyler shrugged and mouthed back, "It's a free country."

Biting his lip Zacky turned back around. Fighting for control, he listened to the minister, who'd chosen that day to preach about the sins of the flesh. It only made Zacky feel guilty. Especially since all his senses seemed to be focusing on Tyler. He could smell him, even above the multitude of other bodies around him. He could hear the ebb and flow of blood through Tyler's veins and arteries. Zacky's mouth watered with the memory of Tyler's taste. His skin tingled with desire. It was all he could do to not turn and look

at Tyler's beauty. He groaned quietly, squeezing his eyes shut and biting on his bottom lip until he could taste blood.

Zacky's father leaned over and punched him hard in the leg, snapping him back to attention.

"Sorry, sir," Zacky whispered. His father grunted, glaring at him.

The rest of the service was a struggle to concentrate, guilt and shame fought against need and desire to simply know why the other man was there.

As Zacky and his family filed out toward the exit, he started to get nervous. Tyler was leaning against a bench, staring at him far too blatantly. Then, Tyler slipped out into the aisle next to him. Zacky jumped, startled by the slide of fingers against his knuckles.

"What are you doing?" he whispered from the corner of his mouth.

"What? I can't go to church?"

"Not *my* church!"

Tyler touched him again, and Zacky flinched.

"I'm hurt. Anyone would think you didn't want to see me."

Twisting his head, Zacky stared at Tyler in confusion, drawing him to the side before they reached the door. Had he forgotten what was said the day before?

"I *don't* want to see you," Zacky said through gritted teeth.

"You don't mean that, baby."

"Are you insane? What is wrong with you? Go away."

"No." Tyler's expression turned serious, and his eyes darkened. "I needed to understand you better. Now I do. Did he hurt you?"

"Who?"

"Your father."

"What?"

"He *hit* you, Zacky."

"Oh, that. That was just a punishment. I deserved it."

Tyler blinked incredulously and said, "And you think I'm insane? Come here." Grabbing Zacky, Tyler dragged him into the restroom before stopping at a stall, and locking the door behind them.

"What are you doing?"

"Shh," Tyler breathed. He clutched Zacky's face gently and tipped his head up. Bending, Tyler pressed his lips gently to Zacky's mouth, tongue lapping over the small gash where Zacky had bitten through his lip. Zacky

couldn't hold back a moan. He couldn't resist kissing back either, despite feeling a sense of terrified nausea that they might get caught, and that his *father* might catch them.

Suddenly, the restroom door opened, and they froze, lips still pressed together in a soft kiss.

"Zach? Are you okay?"

Zacky pushed Tyler back and cleared his throat. "Yes, Mark, I'm okay. Just not feeling great."

"Your father looks pretty mad. I'd get out there quick."

"Okay, thank you, Mark."

"You're welcome... Zach?"

Zacky bit back a sigh, holding a finger to his lips warningly, when Tyler opened his mouth to speak.

"What is it, Mark?" Zacky asked.

"I'm sorry. About yesterday, I mean."

"Why?"

"I guess I just haven't been supportive enough."

"Mark, no," Zacky said softly, ignoring Tyler's eye roll. "It's not you at all. There are just some things I'm dealing with right now that I can't explain."

"Okay," Mark sighed. "I'll pray for you."

"Thank you." Zacky pressed his lips together and squeezed his eyes shut, jumping slightly in surprise when Tyler gave him a gentle hug.

"I have to go," Zacky whispered, even as he clung to the other man.

"Why?" Tyler asked.

"My father. I have to."

With a sigh, Tyler let go and unlocked the stall. Zacky headed towards the church exit, far too aware of Tyler's presence and scent behind him. A blonde girl darted over and thrust her hand at Tyler.

"Hi, my name's Ruth. I haven't seen you here before. Are you new to town? How do you know Zachariah?" She babbled rapidly, barely taking a breath. "Oh my gosh, Zachariah, why haven't you introduced your new friend before?"

Frozen to the spot in horror, Zacky tried to speak, his mouth open, his throat dry.

"I'm Tyler." The other man said, shaking Ruth's hand and inclining his head in a slight bow. "And *Zachariah* likes having me to himself. Don't you *Zachariah*?"

Ruth blinked, a small frown of confusion creasing her brow. "Huh?"

"Just a private joke, right, *Zachariah*?" Tyler said, smiling and winking.

"Funny," Zacky said, glaring. "Stop saying my name like that."

"Like what, *Zachariah*?"

"Isn't it time you were leaving, Tyler?" Zacky said, trying to restrain anger and guilt.

"Oh no, you can't leave now, Tyler," Ruth said enthusiastically. "We're all getting together for a picnic. You must come."

"It sounds wonderful."

"Tyler, can I speak to you in private for a moment?" Zacky said as he took Tyler's arm. "Excuse us, Ruth."

"You can't come," Zacky whispered fiercely. "It's invitation only."

"Uh duh, Zacky," Tyler snorted. "I just got invited."

"Well, I'm uninviting you."

Tyler's eyes darkened, and he leaned close to whisper in Zacky's ear. "You can't uninvite me, Zacky, not ever, and you don't even want to. If you'd just let yourself admit it, you'd know that you're mine."

"Stop saying that. It's not going to make it true just because you keep saying it," Zacky whispered.

"Don't you get it yet?"

"Get what?"

Tyler shook his head. "You'll need me tonight. I'll wait for you, and don't bother denying it, Zacky. You and I both know you'll be there." Tyler returned to Ruth. "I'm afraid I will have to decline your kind invitation this time, but thank you."

"Oh, you're welcome," she said, smiling brightly and hanging onto Zacky's arm as he watched Tyler leave. "He seems nice, *Zachariah*. Where did you meet him?"

"School. Ready to go, Ruth?"

"Oh yes."

* * * *

Spending time with Ruth at the picnic earned Zacky a slight reprieve from his punishment for his distraction in church- six lashes of the belt instead of his usual dozen. However many lashes he received, he always took them willingly, knowing just how often his mother had taken them for him when he was a child. When he'd been old enough to realize what she was doing, he realized he had to protect her.

Nonetheless, he shivered with fear and anticipation as he knelt in his father's study, removing his shirt and tie and folding them carefully into a neat pile in front of him. He unbuckled his belt and slid it out of his belt loops, presenting it to his father with a bowed head. His father moved around behind him, and Zacky gritted his teeth.

The first lash was always the worst, and he bit back a cry with difficulty.

"Thank you, sir," he said. Each blow pierced his skin with pain, but he kept silent other than to give thanks for each blow. The fifth and sixth lashes drew blood, and he felt his stomach lurch with sudden hunger.

Horried, he hurried to his room as soon as his father dismissed him and took a shower. He let the water rinse away the blood before getting out and patting himself dry carefully. He stumbled into his room and collapsed naked on his bed. His hunger and the beating seemed to have sapped his strength. He felt so terribly weak that he couldn't move or put on some clothes. Closing his eyes, he felt himself drift.

* * * *

The scent of blood assailed him, bringing him out of his slumber. He was still lying naked on his bed, and he frowned in confusion.

"Feed, baby, come on. Wake up."

"Tyler?" He whispered. As he became more aware, he licked at the torn wrist under his mouth and groaned. The bed moved under him and, suddenly, Tyler's warm, solid, naked body was lying on top of him. Soft skin slid over his, Tyler's hard cock pressing against the crease of his ass, and he groaned again. Inflamed with lust Zacky sucked harder on Tyler's wrist and rocked his own growing erection into the mattress.

"Ah, Zacky," Tyler murmured, nuzzling the back of his neck. "I can't feed you anymore, baby."

Tyler's cock slipped between Zacky's cheeks, sliding over the entrance to his body. The sudden, desperate need that surged through Zacky was distracting. The sense of emptiness made him shake because it was so intense. He lifted his head up with difficulty.

"Tyler?"

"Yeah?"

"Are you going to..."

"I'm going to fuck you, Zacky," Tyler whispered, licking along Zacky's shoulder, across his neck, and over to the other side.

"No, I- Oh," Zacky said with a whimper. The soft, wet touch of tongue lit his nerves with desire, and heated his blood.

"The last step," Tyler said, kissing Zacky's shoulder, nipping at his skin gently. It was a tease, making need flutter through his stomach.

"Oh my!" He gasped as Tyler slid lower, tongue running the length of his spine. Sharp teeth nipped Zacky's ass as wet fingers pushed between his cheeks to stroke the entrance of his body.

"No, Tyler, this is... Oh. *Please*," he groaned. The most insanely ticklish pleasure swirled through his groin as Tyler stroked over and around the tight muscle of his ass.

"Feels good, huh, baby?" Tyler said with a chuckle. It shouldn't have been, but it was quite possibly the hottest thing Zacky had ever felt.

"Yes," he whispered, burying his face in his pillow, so he wouldn't make too much noise. He shouldn't be doing this, any of this, especially in his room with his parents just upstairs. It was insane. Maybe he *was* insane. All he could do was arch his back and moan with helpless pleasure. His cock was rigid with desire, pressed into the mattress just enough to torture him.

"Tyler," he whispered. He'd given up protesting and objecting. By now, he knew that no matter what he tried, he would only give in eventually.

"You ready for me, baby?" Tyler whispered, feathering his lips over Zacky's ass.

"Yes," Zacky said in a soft, pleading tone.

"Mmm, Zacky, I've wanted this for so long." There was a snapping noise and a sudden, strong smell of something slightly chemical that Zacky couldn't place. He lifted his head, looking at the other man. Tyler was holding a small tube and coating his fingers in a clear gel.

"What are you doing?"

"I told you before, I don't want to hurt you," Tyler whispered. He stroked slickened fingers down the crease of Zacky's ass to probe the entrance. Zacky bit his lip. Tyler's words were strangely reassuring and warming.

"What if I want it to hurt?"

Tyler paused. "That depends on if you want it to hurt because it feels good or so you can pretend that it doesn't feel good." Tyler pushed a finger into Zacky's body, hard. Zacky groaned at the strange, almost uncomfortable feeling. He felt like he wanted to push against the intrusion, but it started to feel good. He moaned helplessly, thrusting his hips back to force Tyler's finger deeper.

"Don't lie to me. I can smell when you're lying."

"Oh, Tyler," he gasped again. A second finger invaded his body, stretching him wider. "Feels good, Tyler. Feels good when it hurts."

Tyler withdrew his fingers, bending to kiss Zacky's back before squeezing more gel into his hand. Tyler used the gel to slick his cock thoroughly. Before he could position himself, Zacky moved, turning onto his back and spreading his legs wide. He couldn't explain it, but he wanted to be face to face when Tyler took his virginity.

"Zacky?"

"I want you like this."

"Are you sure?" Tyler looked uncertain, and Zacky frowned.

"Yes, of course," he whispered, drawing Tyler on top of him.

"Why are you giving in so easily?" Tyler asked. He shifted his weight onto one arm, pushing his cock down Zacky's ass with the other.

"I'm not," Zacky said, tugging urgently at Tyler's hips. "I'm just not denying what I need. I don't like it. I wish I didn't want it, but I do."

Tyler's eyes dropped as he plunged into Zacky's body, tearing him open. Pain and pleasure surged and mingled together through every cell in Zacky's body. His cry was swallowed as Tyler kissed him, tongue thrusting deep into his mouth. He rocked up, pressing his erection into Tyler's hard stomach, wrapping his legs tighter round the other man's waist. Tyler shifted, burying his face in Zacky's neck. Tyler's hips rolled back, quickly easing his length from Zacky's body, then he thrust back inside him in another hard stroke.

Zacky choked back a scream. He felt full, burned, stretched, yet, somehow amazingly good. He rocked his hips up urgently as Tyler started to

stroke his cock hard and deep into his body over and over. Tyler's hips slapped into his ass, his fingers clutched Zacky's shoulders, teeth digging into his neck. It was an overwhelming and agonizing ecstasy. Zacky wanted more, needed more. He couldn't deny it anymore.

"Bite me."

Grunting, Tyler lifted his head and shook it. "Bite your tongue."

"What?"

"Do it." Tyler stuck his own tongue out and dragged it over his teeth, hissing quietly as blood trickled over the edge and onto his lips. Realizing what Tyler intended Zacky hesitated. It was almost too intimate, and he wasn't sure he wanted to give in. It would be another step down his path to damnation.

"Please," Tyler whispered. It was the first time Tyler had come close to begging for anything, and Zacky couldn't resist. He bit through his tongue and tugged Tyler down, kissing him, groaning at the taste of their blood mixing together.

Lips and tongues kissed and licked as they moved faster, fucking each other harder. Zacky was driven to the brink, cock throbbing painfully, ass full and burning with pleasure. He panted hard into Tyler's mouth, digging his fingers into Tyler's back and clenching his ass muscles around Tyler's cock. Tyler whined into Zacky's mouth. Hips jerking, Tyler froze and arched up, head lifting, lips drawing back to bare his teeth. Heat blasted inside Zacky's body.

"Mine," Tyler growled, dropping on top of Zacky and kissing him hard, rocking his stomach down against Zacky's cock. Zacky cried out against lips and tongue, bucking hard as he broke apart with pleasure, coming over their bellies in a hot, liquid mess. Tyler eased out of Zacky's body and lay down. Zacky turned onto his side, facing away from Tyler. Sighing loudly, Tyler stroked Zacky's back, gently touching the lash marks.

"What happened?"

"Nothing."

"You've got four welts and two lacerations on your back, and you were far weaker than you should have been when I found you. Don't tell me nothing happened."

"Punishment for not paying attention in church. It was nothing."

"Bullshit," Tyler snapped.

"It's not bullshit. How dare you." Zacky gasped, pulling away.

"Are we going to argue again?"

"What do you mean *again*? We only argue."

"I don't want to argue with you, Zacky. Don't you get that? You make me crazy sometimes."

Zacky couldn't help a snort. "Only sometimes?"

Sighing, Tyler urged him around, hugging him gently.

"Okay, most of the time, but I've never seen anyone resist like this before. You have no idea how badly that makes me feel."

Tyler's quiet pain hurt Zacky, called to him for comfort again, and again he was torn. He felt sick and dirty, like he should crawl up the stairs and beg for more lashes from his father, use the pain to drive away his guilt and shame. He'd had sex, real, actual sex, in his room with a *man*. He'd let a man fuck him and he'd enjoyed it. What hope was there for him now? He shouldn't have even felt conflicted. He shouldn't have been thinking that it felt good. Tyler made him feel good and accepted. It just showed how little hope was left for him.

"What do you mean?" Zacky whispered.

"Our kind are usually happy and relieved when they find their pack, find out they're not alone anymore."

"I'm not alone."

"You really think your family, Mark, and Ruth can accept who you really are?"

"I am not like you," he said slowly and firmly. Tyler glared at him. "I can't be like you. It's wrong and now..." Zacky bit back a sudden gasp of realization. Tyler had said he couldn't feed him anymore. Surely that meant, "I don't need you."

Tyler stared at him wide-eyed. "What?"

"You said you weren't going to feed me, so I don't need you anymore, right? I have to try and find redemption. You have to understand." He hadn't meant to do this to either of them. It hadn't occurred to him until he said it, but maybe he *could* finally push the other man away before it was too late.

"No, that's not." Tyler's face hardened suddenly, and he glared, eyes dark with anger. "You just wait and see," he snapped, leaping from the bed and yanking his clothes on. Pain and anger radiated in waves from Tyler as he

dressed rigidly. It made Zacky feel ill. The urge to take his words back, apologize, was overwhelming, so he bit the inside of his lip.

He had to get Tyler out of his life. He *had* to or he wouldn't be able to resist any longer.

"You are such a--" Tyler stopped and shook his head. He opened the basement window and started to climb out. "Well, you just wait and see." He gave a humorless laugh and disappeared into the darkness as tears pricked Zacky's eyes.

Why did it hurt so much? Watching Tyler walk away, seeing his pain, made Zacky feel like his heart had been ripped out of his chest.

Curling up on the bed, he wrapped his covers tightly around himself and tried not to cry. It was better this way. It was his chance for salvation.

Chapter Six

For almost a week, Zacky was a dutiful son, friend, and student, studying hard, meeting up with Mark and attending service every night. His life looked right. Everything was as it should be except for one thing. Nothing felt right anymore. While he was hungry, he wasn't out of control. He didn't know what he was going to do if the hunger kept growing. The thought of feeding on someone other than Tyler nauseated him. That wasn't a problem yet though. It was him. He felt empty and cold, like a part of him was missing. Instead of hunger, need was building and growing uncontrollable. Just like before, he caught himself walking towards the cemetery far too many times.

His dreams were once again full of blood and sex, torturing him every night. It was unbearable. He needed Tyler, wanted Tyler, *craved* Tyler, and he didn't know what to do anymore.

Tyler had avoided him since the night in his room. He hadn't seen him, but he'd caught his scent several times. It had filled his heart with sorrow and regret to know that after the way he'd treated him, Tyler was still watching.

By Saturday, he couldn't take it anymore. He was desperate, his need urgent. He escaped from morning service and ran to the cemetery.

There was no sign of Tyler, but he could smell the presence of the other three men. Swallowing back nerves, he climbed over the wall and approached the mausoleum. Johnny and Jimmy stared at him, their expressions dark. Although, Johnny once again looked oddly sympathetic.

Matt grabbed Zacky's shoulder and flung him against the wall.

"*You*. What the fuck do you think you're doing here? You got a fucking death-wish?"

"Leave him alone."

Zacky gasped, the scent of misery assaulting him. "Tyler."

"Why are you defending him?" Matt snarled.

"You know why," Tyler said quietly, stepping into view. He looked terrible, gaunt, and unshaven, his eyes red rimmed and bloodshot, like he hadn't changed clothes the whole week.

"But--"

"But nothing, Matt. You'd do the same if it were Johnny, and you know it. Don't make me fight with you. I'm not in the mood."

Growling loudly, Matt let go and backed off.

"Fine," Matt said, glancing between Tyler and Zacky. "But you'd better sort this out right now, Ty. I mean it."

Tyler nodded curtly, and Matt beckoned to the other two. They disappeared, and Zacky stared at Tyler.

"So, you're back then," Tyler snapped, his voice ragged and tired.

"You told me... You said I wouldn't need--"

"No, I didn't. I said I couldn't feed you anymore, that's all."

"You lied to me," Zacky shouted, suddenly upset, angry, and terrified. "I still need you. I need *you*." His voice broke, and he clapped a hand over his mouth to hold back a sob. Tyler moved to stand in front of him and slid a hand under Zacky's chin, lifting his head.

"You're my mate, and I'm your mate, and we need each other," Tyler whispered. "I didn't lie to you. You misunderstood me, and you hurt me so much I didn't try to explain. I just let you see. You did nothing but delay the inevitable."

"Which is?"

"You need me," Tyler said quietly, his eyes dark and dull as they fixed on him. It was like he'd broken Tyler. He wanted to cry. How had it come to this? It was too much and, despite how wrong he knew it was, he knew he couldn't be without Tyler anymore. He needed him, wanted him.

"Yes, I need you," he whispered, leaning up to kiss Tyler gently. Tyler shook his head and pulled back.

"Don't."

"And you need me," Zacky said, tugging Tyler forward to kiss him harder. Tyler groaned, his lips parting for a split second before yanking back.

"Don't!" Tyler snapped. "You can't keep doing this to me, Zacky. I can't take it. This is supposed to be easy. Finding your mate is supposed to be

joyful. Finding you has been nothing but pain." He turned away, wrapping his arms around his chest and bowing his head.

Zacky swallowed painfully, feeling regret and guilt for hurting the other man. Tyler's pain was his pain, and he suddenly realized that in denying himself, he'd also been denying Tyler. He put his hands on Tyler's shoulders, gently turning him around. He slid his hands down Tyler's arms, drawing him forward. Tyler leaned against him, dropping his head onto Zacky's shoulder.

"What are you doing, Zacky?" Tyler sighed. All the fight seemed to have drained out of him.

"I'm sorry," Zacky whispered.

"Do you even know why?"

"Apart from hurting you? Not really, no. You've hardly explained anything to me, Tyler."

"You're usually too busy denying me or running away from me," Tyler said bitterly.

"I'm here now." Zacky eased them both to the ground, wrapping his legs around Tyler's hips and holding him tightly. "What are we?"

"We're not quite human."

"I was starting to realize that." Zacky was less shocked than he probably should have been. It made more sense than anything else. "What are we then?"

"We call ourselves Pack. We're not werewolf, vampire or demon, but we are different. Near as we can tell, it's a genetic mutation, a recessive trait of some sort. Our mothers and sisters are the carriers but only boys are born Pack. We're strong and fast, our senses are enhanced. Daylight and crosses don't affect us. A wooden stake to the heart or a silver bullet won't kill us. Actually they will, but only because we're not immortal. Any kind of stake or bullet will do, if it hits a vital organ."

Zacky shuddered at the dull, resigned pain that thickened Tyler's voice.

"What happened to your pack?"

"Our pack," Tyler whispered. "They would have been *our* pack."

"I'm sorry."

"We weren't careful. *I* wasn't careful, and the pack paid for it."

"You blame yourself?"

"Yeah."

"But why?" Zacky whispered, pulling Tyler closer.

"I was alpha. They were my responsibility. I should have protected them, but all I cared about was finding you. Then, when they died, all I had to look forward to was finding you."

Tears pricked Zacky's eyes. Tyler's guilt and hurt was palpable. It filled the air and tasted bitter.

"I'm sorry I wasn't what you wanted," Zacky whispered, his voice husky from unshed tears.

"What?" Tyler lifted his head and stared, dark brown eyes wide and surprised. "I never said that."

"But I--"

"You're everything I wanted, baby. Why do you think it kills me when you fight so hard to resist?"

"But I hurt you."

"And I hurt you right back, don't forget." Tyler sighed. "You are the most beautiful Pack I have ever seen, Zacky, and I don't just mean outside. I just wish..."

Zacky flushed, shaking his head. "Wish?"

"That you could accept it. It's not unnatural or wrong. It's just who we are."

"It's not, Tyler, you have to understand. This is so hard for me."

"I know."

"No, you don't. Everything we've done I was taught is a sin. I was a *virgin* Tyler, don't you see? Sex before marriage is bad enough, but sex with a *man*? That damns me to hell."

Tyler lifted a hand to cup Zacky's cheek. "Zacky, you don't think just being yourself is enough to damn you to hell in your family's eyes?"

Zacky flinched, pulling away and hunching over his knees. Tyler moved behind him, wrapping his arms around Zacky's chest to kiss his cheek.

"How can you put so much stock in something that damns you simply for being another of God's creatures?"

"Are we though?"

"Yes," Tyler said. "We're born of human parents. Just because we're different, why do we have to be wrong?"

"What we *do* is wrong," Zacky said softly as he leaned against Tyler.

"What do you suggest we do, Zacky?" Tyler snapped, shoving away. "We feed on blood because that's all we can digest. I don't know why, but do you want to starve to death?"

"No," Zacky sighed, trying to resist reaching out to touch the other man again.

"There is no female Pack. We are drawn instinctively to our mates. You know that. You've felt that. Can you tell me that you can live without me? Without--" Tyler's eyes closed, and Zacky shivered. Now Zacky knew what it was like to be so close to someone and feel so good. He couldn't imagine living without Tyler, and he shook his head, flushing with shame at his feelings.

"Without what?"

Slowly, Tyler moved closer. The solidity and heat of Tyler's chest pressing against his back made him sigh happily, and he leaned against the other man. He seemed to crave contact with Tyler.

"Love," Tyler said softly. "Do you want to live a life without love?"

"Love?" Zacky was angry again, and he wasn't even sure why. "What has any of this got to do with love?" He yanked himself away from Tyler, ignoring the pang he felt from the loss of contact, and he scrambled to his feet.

"What?" Tyler stood and grabbed his arm, spinning him around. "Don't you think two men can love each other?"

"No, I mean... No." Zacky frowned in confusion. "It's not--"

"If you say it's not natural one more time, I swear I'll--"

"What? You'll what?" Zacky shouted. "Hit me again?"

"That's not fair," Tyler whispered, moving closer. Zacky backed up until he hit the wall of the mausoleum, not resisting when the other man pressed up against him.

"I hit you once," Tyler said softly. "Because you--"

"Because I deserved it," Zacky interrupted, turning his head away.

"No, damn it!" Tyler exclaimed. He slid a finger under Zacky's chin, pushing his head up. "No one deserves to be hit, and I'm sorry."

"Really?"

"Yes. I shouldn't have hit you. You're my mate, my pack. I'm supposed to protect you."

"I can protect myself."

Tyler snorted. "That's why you let your father beat you I suppose?"

"That's punishment. I bring it upon myself," Zacky whispered, trying to look away again. Tyler wouldn't let him.

"You're twenty-one years old, Zacky. You're a grown man. Don't you think you can make your own decisions and be responsible for yourself?"

"I don't know," Zacky whispered, feeling uncertain. He'd spent his whole life trying to live up to his father's expectations. It had never occurred to him that maybe he didn't have to. Tyler kissed him, just a soft brush of lips.

"You should never have been beaten as a child, baby, and you definitely should not be getting beaten as a man." Tyler kissed him again, harder, and Zacky couldn't help but moan, sliding his arms around the other man's waist to tug him closer.

"I know you're strong," Tyler whispered against Zacky's lips, flicking his tongue over them gently. "You can make your own choices without being punished for them."

Pulling back a little, Zacky leaned his head against the wall and breathed out heavily. He put his hands on Tyler's shoulders and squeezed gently.

"This is all a bit too much right now," he sighed. "Everything has happened so fast, Tyler. You've turned my whole life upside down, and I don't know how to deal with it."

"Don't try so hard," Tyler said, resting his forehead on Zacky's shoulder. "Just be."

"I don't know how," Zacky whispered. "Just kiss me, Tyler."

"Now that's a choice I like," Tyler said, bending to kiss him, his tongue sliding deep and licking into him with growing urgency. Zacky moaned quietly, curling his tongue around Tyler's and sucking.

"You fucking freak. Get off him!" A loud voice shouted.

Tyler was pulled back, and Zacky snapped his eyes open in horror, watching Tyler spin and hit Mark, throwing him back onto the path. Zacky grabbed Tyler before he lunged at the prone figure of his best friend.

"What the heck do you think you're doing?" Zacky shouted, hurrying over to crouch by Mark. His friend was unconscious, and he quickly checked him over. Mark was bleeding. Zacky could smell it, and his stomach clenched with sudden, urgent hunger.

"He attacked me," Tyler said from behind, a low growl in his voice.

"You can't just hit people." Zacky pulled his hand back from Mark's head, watching blood trickle down his fingers in a daze.

"He attacked me. He could have been attacking you for all I knew. You are my *mate*, Zacky. I can't help needing to protect you."

"You can't just..." Zacky started, stopping to lick his fingers and groan, the taste so sweet, the blood so warm it made him shiver. It wasn't as good as Tyler's, but almost. He sucked his fingers clean before scrambling to his feet, twisting and jumping on Tyler. Tyler caught him with a grunt, stumbling backward as Zacky kissed him. Zacky sucked Tyler's tongue into his mouth and bit down hard, moaning at the spurt of blood, swallowing eagerly.

Tyler kissed back, slashing into Zacky's tongue with his teeth, licking and sucking hard. His hands cupped Zacky's ass, squeezing and rocking him into his groin, the heat of his cock burning through layers of Zacky's clothing. Zacky bucked up, rubbing himself frantically against Tyler, moaning as he sucked and swallowed the sweet, thick blood that flowed freely between their lips. Tyler turned and slammed him into the wall of the mausoleum, biting Zacky's lip and rocking harder into him. Lifting his head with a gasp, Tyler stared at Zacky wide-eyed and licked his lips.

"You're so fucking sexy," Tyler whispered, bucking up hard and shuddering against him. "Come for me."

Head falling back, Zacky cried out as pleasure swept over him. His hips jerked as he came helplessly in his pants. His eyes slid closed, and he gasped for breath, holding onto Tyler tightly.

"That was--" He heard a groan and gasped, dropping his legs and pushing Tyler back. "Oh no, Mark!" His need for Tyler had overwhelmed him so completely that he'd totally forgotten his best friend was hurt. He ran back over to where Mark was starting to come around and knelt beside him.

"Tyler," Zacky said softly, regretfully. "I have to go. I have to take him home." He wasn't ready to think about the implications of having tasted Mark's blood. He lifted his friend into his arms, surprised at how easy it was, and stood. Tyler looked sad and angry but he nodded.

"Fine," Tyler muttered. "Just don't forget what we talked about, okay?"

"Like I could." Zacky snorted and started to walk back towards his street, carrying Mark. Then, he stopped, need clutching his chest. Swinging

around, he felt his heart flutter. Tyler looked dejected, thumbs hooked in his back pockets, shoulders hunched, head bowed, and hair flopping in his face.

"Tyler?"

"Yeah?"

"Come here."

With a sigh, Tyler walked over to Zacky a little rigidly, thumbs still deep in his back pockets.

"What?" He muttered.

Shifting Mark in his arms, Zacky leaned back and kissed Tyler softly. Gasping quietly, Tyler cupped his cheek, kissing him back for a moment before pulling away.

"Wow," he whispered.

Zacky smiled. "Yeah. Tyler, go eat and get some sleep. You look terrible."

"Oh gee, thanks," Tyler said with a soft snort.

"You need to look after yourself better."

"Since when do you care?"

Feeling a little hurt, Zacky shrugged. "I don't know, but I do care."

"You do?" Tyler's eyes widened hopefully, and it tore at Zacky's heart. His resistance had put Tyler through so much, but he couldn't help his feelings and beliefs. It was just as hard for him to accept everything as it was for Tyler to deal with his resistance.

"Yeah, I do."

"All right." Tyler smiled widely, and it warmed Zacky so much that he kissed him again quickly.

"When will I see you again?"

"You'll need me tomorrow, baby."

Zacky quirked a smile. "Don't you mean you'll need me?"

"You finally realized, huh?" Tyler said softly.

"You're my mate too, right?"

"Yes, I am. I'll see you tomorrow."

"Go, sleep."

Tyler kissed him once more and backed up, turning and heading towards the dorms.

Shifting Mark again as his friend groaned, Zacky left the cemetery and carried Mark home.

"My goodness, Mark! Zachariah, what happened?" Mark's mother exclaimed as she opened the door to them.

"He tripped in the cemetery and smacked his head. I think he's okay though." He didn't want to lie to Mark's mother, his own godmother, but he didn't see another option.

"Well, thank you for bringing him home, sweetie. Will you carry him up to his room? I'll get the first aid kit."

"Of course." Zacky climbed the stairs to Mark's room. He lay his friend on the bed, sitting next to him with a guilty sigh. Mark was finally coming to.

"I'm so sorry, Mark," Zacky whispered.

"What's going on with you?"

"Nothing."

"You were..." Mark's face screwed up in disgust. "You let that freak kiss you, Zach. Why would you do that?"

Zacky sighed. "It's complicated, Mark."

"How is it complicated?" Mark exclaimed. "You don't let another man kiss you. It's disgusting! Has he got something on you?"

"What?" he asked in confusion.

"Is he forcing you somehow?" Mark asked. "Come on, Zach, what's he got on you? You aren't like them." Mark's words hit home like a jackhammer, and Zacky gasped.

"You're wrong, Mark," he whispered with a sense of acceptance that lifted the weight on his heart. "I'm exactly like them." Zacky breathed out slowly. It felt really good to say it.

"What?"

"I can't explain it, Mark, but I am like them. I need him."

"You *need* him? What the heck does that mean?"

"He's my." Zacky couldn't say *mate*. It would only make him sound more insane. "I told you it's complicated."

"Too complicated to tell *me*?"

"Oh, Mark, don't do that," Zacky sighed, staring at his hands. "Don't act like I've wronged you in some way. Don't you think if I could, I would talk to you?"

"You haven't talked to me at all lately."

"Not through choice, Mark."

"He hit me hard enough to knock me out, and you still let him kiss you."

"You grabbed him, Mark. Tyler was just protecting us."

"I can't believe you're defending that sick--"

"Here we are." Mark's mother bustled into the room. Zacky moved over to the door so she could sit on the bed and tend to her son.

"I should go. My parents are probably wondering where I am," he said softly.

"I called them, dear, don't worry."

"Thank you, Aunt Jane, but I really should go."

"Thank you for bringing Mark home."

"You're welcome. See you tomorrow."

"You're coming to service?" Mark asked with a slight sneer.

"Of course I am."

"Of course he is. Why ever wouldn't he?" Jane said.

Zacky stared pleadingly at his friend, breathing a sigh of relief when Mark lowered his gaze.

"Fine, see you tomorrow," Mark said shortly. Zacky hurried home as quickly as he could.

* * * *

He managed to get through dinner without throwing up on the table. It was getting harder and harder to hold down food. Luckily, studying was more than an adequate excuse to escape to his room. He managed not to run down the stairs and headed straight into his bathroom.

He dropped to his knees to empty his stomach, sighing in relief when it stopped convulsing. Brushing his teeth, he got ready for bed and climbed under his covers, curling up into a tight ball. All he could think was that he felt lonely. He'd never shared his bed with anyone, and he'd never slept in anyone's arms before. How could he miss what he'd never had?

It was insane how much he needed Tyler, how much he wanted him all the time. He couldn't deny it anymore. It had felt *so* good to tell Mark that he was like Tyler and the others. It was a relief and gave him a sense of completion. Maybe he didn't have to be who his father wanted him to be. Maybe he could actually be himself for a change. It would be nice to find out who that was.

With Tyler, he felt normal and accepted, like he *could* be himself. The question was, could *he* accept himself? And wasn't it too late anyway, since he couldn't be without Tyler anymore?

Chapter Seven

Zacky dressed more carefully for church than usual, and he didn't even know why. How likely was it that Tyler would show up again? Then again, knowing Tyler as he was starting to, he thought it was very likely.

He followed his parents down the street, flinching when he suddenly smelled Mark nearby. His friend and his Friend's parents caught up with them.

"Hi, Mark," he said nervously. Mark grabbed his elbow, pulling him back so they walked behind their parents.

"I haven't said anything."

"Thank you," Zacky sighed.

"Let me finish," Mark snapped. "I haven't said anything yet, but I will if you don't stop this perversion. I will tell your father."

"You can't," Zacky said, aghast and scared. "He'd kill me."

"Yeah? Good."

"How can you say that? You're my best friend."

"I'm not your friend anymore. Stay away from me from now on. You got me?"

"But, Mark, I'm still me," Zacky whispered painfully.

"I don't know who you are. Stay away from me." Mark pulled away and sped up, catching up with his parents. Zacky sighed heavily with pain and regret. He shouldn't have been surprised at his friend's reaction, and yet, he'd hoped Mark would handle things differently. Mark had been his best friend his whole life. A friend who'd never questioned Zacky's differences. He'd hoped Mark would manage to accept this one. It was a bit much to ask though, considering his own reaction.

He filed into church and sat next to his mother, waiting and hoping for the scent of the room to change. When it did, he blinked in shock, turning slowly and staring in horror at the entire pack seated at the very back,

thankfully in the shadows. He met Tyler's gaze, raising both eyebrows questioningly. The other man shrugged helplessly and gestured at Matt. Zacky slid his gaze to the large pack leader who stared hard at him. Why did they all have to be there? He was going to get into so much trouble.

Looking away again, he tried to concentrate, but all he could feel was the weight of Tyler's gaze on the back of his neck. The smell of Tyler's sweat and blood was driving him mad. He turned his head, helpless in his need to fill his gaze. His jaw dropped in surprise as he watched Matt nuzzle and kiss Johnny's cheek. The kiss looked sweet and soft, a complete contrast to everything he'd seen of Matt so far. He suddenly understood what Tyler meant when he'd said Matt would do the same thing if it were Johnny. The two men must be mated.

Looking at Tyler again, Zacky couldn't help a smile. Tyler smiled back, blowing a kiss and elbowing Matt who growled. The growl was thankfully not loud enough for anyone else to hear. Johnny smiled and Jimmy snickered.

Turning to face the minister again, Zacky breathed out nervously. He just hoped they weren't going to make trouble for him, but that seemed unlikely.

* * * *

By the end of the service, Zacky was completely on edge and nervous about why the whole pack was there. He was desperate for some sort of contact with Tyler, even if it was just to touch his hand. Zacky felt like he was shaking. He was so hungry again and, somehow, he knew that even if Tyler let him, feeding from him wouldn't really be enough this time.

He let his parents file out in front of him, watching Mark slip into the aisle beside them. Mark glanced back at him with a glare and then turned to look at the pack. Tyler slid his gaze back to Zacky, eyes softening as his lips curled up gently. As Zacky passed the final pew, Tyler got up to move next to him and stroked the back of his hand. Electricity tingled up Zacky's arm. The other three pack members followed, and Zacky, still nervous, tried not to grab Tyler's hand. He managed to introduce the minister to the four pack members quietly. They were all polite, easing Zacky away from the rest of the congregation.

"What's going on, guys? What are you doing here?" Zacky whispered.

"It's time," Matt said.

"Time for what? You can't just show up here. Are you insane?"

"Just wanted to see why you got so many issues, dude," Jimmy said with a giggle.

"Guys, leave him alone," Tyler sighed. "Baby, there's something we need to do."

"That's so wrong," Mark said.

Zacky stiffened at the quiet exclamation from behind him.

"You're letting him call you baby now?" Mark continued. "And what the heck do you think you're doing letting these freaks into our church?"

"You think *I* can stop them?" Zacky asked softly. "Look, I'm going to stay away from you like you asked. What more do you want from me?"

"Some sign of repentance maybe?" Mark snapped, grabbing Zacky's arm and spinning him around.

"Don't you touch him," Tyler said with a low growl.

"Don't talk to me asshole," Mark said angrily. "Well, Zachariah? Do you care at all that you're sinning against God? Aren't you ashamed of what you've done? Your perversion brings shame upon the whole church, Zach, and yet here you are, calmly socializing with these freaks like everything's okay."

Every word of Mark's rant stabbed Zacky with guilt, and tears pricked his eyes. "I'm not." His voice broke into a sob, and Tyler shoved Mark out of the way, trying to pull Zacky into a hug. Zacky batted Tyler's arms away. He had to get out of there before he burst into tears and let Tyler comfort him in front of everyone. Turning, he hurried away.

"Zacky, wait! Zacky!"

He sped up, starting to run faster and faster until, suddenly, he found himself at the dorm, leaning his forehead against Tyler's door and panting for breath.

"Zacky," Tyler whispered just behind him, sliding his arms around Zacky's chest. Zacky sighed, letting his tears fall freely.

"Oh baby, don't cry. You shouldn't listen to him," Tyler breathed against the back of his neck.

"He was my best friend."

"Then he shouldn't judge you, Zacky. If he were really your friend, he wouldn't treat you like that."

"But he's right."

"Damn it, Zacky." Tyler let go, punching the wall. "I thought we were past this. You're not a freak. Being born different is *not* a sin."

"I tasted his blood, Tyler, and I wanted to drink more."

"That's what we do, Zacky."

"We hunt people?" Zacky whispered, sick with horror as his stomach growled with hunger. Tyler spun him around and pressed him against the wall, kissing him again.

"Yeah, we hunt people. We do it, or we starve. Do you understand?"

"I don't think I can, Tyler. I can't kill."

"I never said anything about killing anyone," Tyler whispered, leaning into him.

There was movement behind them, the sound of footsteps pausing.

"Oh that's fucking disgusting! Do you have to do that in public?"

In the blink of an eye, Tyler twisted and grabbed the large, blond jock, opened the door, and pushed them all inside.

"Tyler, what are you doing?"

"Showing you what we do," Tyler grunted with one hand over the blond man's mouth and the other clasped around his neck to hold him up against the wall. The blond struggled uselessly, his eyes wide with fear. Zacky could smell the fear in the air and the heightened rush of blood through the jock's body. His mouth watered.

"Tyler, I can't."

"Yes, you can. Take his wrist and bite it."

"But I--"

"Do it, baby. Please," Tyler begged. "You need to feed. I can't keep you alive with my blood anymore. You're draining me."

Meeting his mate's pleading gaze, Zacky sighed. Apparently, he couldn't refuse Tyler anything when he said please. Zacky knew, to a degree, that Tyler was right. He had to feed or risk losing control, like he nearly had with Mark the night before. He didn't want to weaken Tyler anymore either. If he did this, there was no chance of redemption. If he fed off another- an unwilling, living person, then it was all over. He wasn't really human, and he wasn't sure he was ready to admit that.

"Zacky," Tyler whispered. "You're not going to hurt him. Trust me." The blond whimpered against Tyler's hand, struggling harder. "Damn it, Zacky. I'm trying to let you accept this in your own time, but Matt isn't going to wait any longer."

"Wait for what?"

"To accept you into the pack."

"I thought you were my pack, Tyler," Zacky said softly

"I am. I might be older than Matt but I run with his pack and so will you. He has to know that you can fend for yourself, and that you won't weaken us."

Zacky stared at Tyler, heart pounding with sudden fear. "If he didn't accept me into his pack, what would you do?"

"Are you seriously asking me that?"

"Yes."

"You're my mate, Zacky. I would never leave you, but we are safer in a group."

He breathed out, relief flooding him so intensely that he felt his knees weaken. He dropped down, kneeling in front of Tyler and the blond. He took the jock's wrist and closed his eyes, biting down. The blond groaned, eyes rolling back in his head, and Tyler let him drop to the floor, where he lay unconscious. Blood burst into Zacky's mouth, hot, and thick, and so very good he had to swallow and suck harder.

"Yes, Zacky," Tyler whispered, kneeling next to him and leaning in. He took Zacky's hand and bent down, twisting and licking across Zacky's top lip as he fed. With a soft groan, Zacky lifted his mouth and kissed Tyler hard, his groin tight already. They licked over the blonde's wrist, tongues touching as they sucked and swallowed, kissing and passing blood between their mouths. Zacky shivered with need, blood pounding through his body and settling in his groin. He let go of the blond and lunged at Tyler, knocking him to the floor and climbing on top of him to kiss him, search out the taste of blood in his mouth, and lick, until all he could taste was his mate. He groaned again.

Tyler's hands were everywhere, tearing at Zacky's clothes, touching his skin, fingers digging in, stroking and scratching. He pushed up Tyler's t-shirt, sliding his hands down against smooth skin. Unbuttoning and

unzipping Tyler's pants, Zacky tugged them down to release the other man's erection. Tyler lifted his head to stare down at him wide-eyed.

"Baby, what are you doing?"

"Don't say anything," Zacky whispered. He desperately wanted to try and taste, but he had no idea what to do, or if he could. "I'll lose my nerve."

"You don't have to."

"Shut up, Tyler," Zacky snapped. He grasped his mate's cock tightly and bent to lick the tip.

"Oh fuck," Tyler gasped, head dropping back again.

The taste was amazing, spreading over his tongue and making his cock jerk. It was salty, bitter, thick and hot, similar to his lover's blood. Zacky groaned. He sucked Tyler's cock into his mouth, tongue sliding down silky skin to feel the pulse on the underside.

"Oh fuck, Zacky, that's good," Tyler whispered. "Harder."

Zacky sank down as far as he could without gagging. Swallowing and sucking harder, he licked over the slit and tasted the addictive pre-cum. Still, as much as he wanted to taste Tyler's cum in his mouth, he was starting to feel empty again. He needed to touch, and kiss, and fuck. He wanted to feel complete and share blood with his mate. He lifted up slowly, sucking gently on the head of Tyler's cock, making Tyler groan and writhe, before letting go.

"Tyler?"

"Yeah, baby?"

"I need you. Please?"

"Need what, Zacky? You have to tell me," Tyler said softly.

"I need you inside me," Zacky whispered, looking away in embarrassment. He should have been ashamed and disgusted with himself, but he couldn't find it in him anymore. What did it matter anyway? He was eternally damned, and he wanted Tyler, needed him so desperately that it hurt to be without him.

"Don't look away from me," Tyler whispered, sitting up and cupping Zacky's chin. "I want you to really want this."

"I do really want this."

"Show me."

"Show you? How?"

"Show me how you want it, baby. Use your imagination."

Swallowing nervously, Zacky got to his feet and slowly undressed, fingers trembling as he unbuttoned and pushed off his shirt and slacks. Finally, he was naked under Tyler's hungry gaze- naked and helplessly hard.

"God, you're beautiful," Tyler breathed, pushing himself up to his knees and reaching out to him. Zacky shook his head and backed away, turning and walking to the bed, climbing up on all fours. Twisting his head around, Zacky met shocked, heated brown eyes and smiled shyly, sliding a hand over his ass.

"Fuck!" Tyler stood up and wrenched his t-shirt over his head as he stalked across the room, clambering onto the bed, shoving Zacky forward and licking across the small of his back. The slick touch made Zacky moan, heat tingling over his skin.

"Please," Zacky whispered. Tyler licked Zacky's spine all the way to his neck and nipped his skin hard.

"Fuck, I want you so badly, Zacky," Tyler whispered.

"Please," Zacky repeated, pushing back against the solid length of his lover's cock, resting teasingly against his thigh. Holding a hand in front of Zacky's mouth, Tyler leaned over to whisper in his ear.

"Bite me, baby."

With a groan, Zacky sucked gently on the fleshy part of Tyler's palm, under the thumb and bit down hard. Blood gushed into his mouth, sweet and more amazing than anything else. Better than Mark or the blonde's blood.

"Easy," Tyler whispered, pulling his hand away. Tyler reached under the pillow, grabbed something, and lifted up to kneel between Zacky's legs.

"Tyler," Zacky gasped, the sudden lack of heat and contact making him shudder desperately. He looked back, biting his lip hard while he watched his mate slide his hand up and down his cock, spreading lube along the thick length. "Oh, Tyler."

"I'm coming, baby," Tyler said, sliding slickened fingers over Zacky's ass and pushing one into his body.

"I told you, Tyler," Zacky growled impatiently. "I like it when it hurts."

"Are you sure?"

"Now!"

"Hey," Tyler said with a low chuckle, slapping Zacky's ass gently. "Who's the alpha around here?"

Zacky jerked with a shocked moan of pleasure at the playful smack.
"You are, Tyler."

Easing his finger free, Tyler shifted closer, cock pressing between Zacky's ass cheeks and sliding up and down the crease, inflaming Zacky with desire. He whined with impatience, rocking back against Tyler.

"Fuck, Zacky, patience," Tyler growled, grabbing Zacky's hips tightly. Tyler pushed into him, cock invading his body in one, long stroke that stretched and burned him with pain and pleasure. Gasping, Zacky dropped onto his forearms and shoved himself back until his ass smacked hard into Tyler's hips.

"Oh yes," Zacky breathed, biting down on his lip hard. "Again." Tyler slid slowly back and stopped, only the head of his cock holding Zacky open.

"Say it, Zacky," Tyler whispered. "Say what you really want. Tell me how you really want it," Tyler murmured, bending over and nipping Zacky's back. His hips rocked slowly and gently, barely moving inside him. It was torture.

Zacky groaned desperately, trying to push back hard, but Tyler was too strong and held him in place.

"Please, I need you inside me. Stretch me wide. Fill me up."

Tyler shuddered, hips jerking a little harder into Zacky. "More," Tyler grunted.

"Tyler, what do you want me to say?"

"Say it like you mean it."

With a soft whimper, Zacky dropped his head and clenched down hard around Tyler's cock.

"Fuck yes," Tyler gasped, thrusting a little deeper and harder. Zacky could barely stand it. He was so close already- cock so hard it hurt, balls tight, muscles rigid with need.

"Please," Zacky whispered, arching his back again. "Fuck me."

Tyler froze. His fingers dug hard into Zacky's flesh. "What?"

"You heard me."

"Say it again," Tyler whispered, easing back.

"Tyler!"

"Say it *again*."

"Fuck me!" Zacky yelled, frustration overwhelming him. Tyler cried out, plunging harder into Zacky's body, not stopping for a second as he

pulled back and thrust into him again and again. Tyler pushed deeper and harder with every stroke, hips and thighs slapping into Zacky, intense pleasure spreading through every nerve.

"Yes, Ty, fuck me harder. Need to come," he moaned. He quickly grasped his dripping cock, jacking himself hard. Tyler bent over, sliding his hands up Zacky's sides and around his chest, holding tightly, hips jerking into him.

"*Rakastan sua*," Tyler whispered against Zacky's skin before biting down and sucking hard. Pleasure shot up Zacky's spine and pain shot down, meeting and exploding into his climax. He shuddered and jerked back, spurting onto the bed. Tyler grunted and bucked against him, heat filling Zacky before Tyler collapsed on top of him.

Zacky slid down to lie flat on the bed, sighing quietly. He'd never felt such a strong combination of happiness, satiation, guilt, horror, completion and utter shame before.

"What did you say?" Zacky murmured. Tyler tensed for a moment and sighed.

"Nothing," he whispered. Zacky frowned. "Just heat of the moment stuff."

Zacky didn't believe Tyler, but he didn't know how to confront him either. He turned his head away and stared guiltily at the unconscious man they'd fed from. He was lost now, and he couldn't even find it in himself to feel sick.

"Will he be okay?" Zacky whispered. Licking Zacky's bitten shoulder, Tyler nodded.

"It'll feel like a hangover when he comes around, because of the blood loss."

"Won't he remember us?"

"Not really, baby," Tyler said quietly, kissing his neck. "Not in a way that'll make sense to him anyway. I admit, we don't usually feed so close to home in case someone does remember. They're usually too confused about passing out to remember us. We don't need to kill, baby. We don't need enough to risk that kind of exposure. Are you okay?"

"I don't know," Zacky sighed. He turned again and buried his face in the pillow. Tyler kissed the back of his neck and eased out of his body. He bent

over, kissing Zacky's spine all the way down to his ass. "Tyler, what are you doing?"

"Hush, baby," Tyler whispered, turning him over. His tongue slid over Zacky's stomach and groin, licking him clean.

"No, don't," Zacky gasped, even as warm pleasure tingled over his skin from the strong, slick slide of tongue.

"I want to," Tyler said softly, nipping one of Zacky's hip bones. "Does it feel good?"

"Yes."

"So let me do it."

"Okay," Zacky whispered, giving in once again, covering his face and arching into the wet touch as Tyler licked him hard. His groin tightened and his cock twitched. He groaned, pulling away and sitting up.

"Too much," he sighed at Tyler's questioning look. "I have to go home."

"Why?"

"What do you mean why?" Zacky exclaimed. "Do you have any idea how much trouble I'm already going to be in just for leaving church without being excused?"

"You cannot be serious, Zacky. You have to be excused?"

"Yeah and if Mark told my father anything..."

"All the more reason to stay," Tyler said, frowning at him. "You don't have to live by their rules. You wouldn't have to even if you were human. Don't you get that?"

"It's not that easy, Tyler."

"But it could be," Tyler sighed, getting up to clean himself off before handing Zacky a wipe. "Just let go."

"That's not easy," he said with a quiet sigh, wiping himself off and getting up to pull on his clothes.

"Will he hurt you?"

"If it didn't hurt, it wouldn't be a punishment."

"How can you accept that, but think that what we just did is wrong?"

"Do you hear what you're saying?"

"Yes. *I'm* the one making sense," Tyler said, starting to sound angry. He pulled on his t-shirt and did up his pants.

"You think this makes sense?"

"It does for us," Tyler said softly.

"And that's your answer for everything, isn't it?" Zacky spat, striding over to the door.

"Zacky, wait. You don't have to go. You have a choice."

"Fine, then I choose to go home," he whispered, heart clenching painfully when Tyler's face fell.

"You're choosing them."

"They're my family."

"I'm your family, damn it!" Tyler shouted. "I'm the one who accepts you for who you are."

"Then accept that I have to go," Zacky said pleadingly. "I can't just not go home or my mom--"

"You can't keep doing this. You can't keep pretending you're still normal and sneak back to me when you need me."

"Why can't I, Tyler? You keep telling me I can't, but you keep letting me. You need me, too, don't forget."

Tyler went even paler than normal and took a step backwards.

"You fucking bastard. So what? You're just going to use me? Don't you care at all what you're doing to me?"

"What I'm doing to you?" Zacky exclaimed. "You did this to *me*." He yanked the door open, stalking out, shaking with conflicting emotions. He knew what he was doing to Tyler. It was almost like he could feel the other man's pain, but he couldn't help it. When he was hungry and needy, he felt like he could accept what he was, but when he wasn't, he felt torn apart. He almost wanted to kneel for his father's punishment. Even if his father wouldn't know exactly what Zacky was accepting punishment for. As long as Mark hadn't said anything, of course.

"Zacky!" Tyler shouted.

Zacky froze, holding back a sob. He felt so badly for what he doing to the other man. "I'll come back," he said softly, feeling Tyler's glare burn into his back.

"Oh gee, thanks for the reassurance. Am I just supposed to sit around waiting for you to need me? Is that it?" Tyler said, his voice low and trembling with tension and anger. "What about when I need you, Zacky? This isn't all just about you."

"I know that okay?" Zacky sighed, still not turning around. He couldn't look at the other man or he'd give in. "I just can't deal with anything else right now."

"You have to Zacky," Tyler said softly, "and soon."

Shoulders stiffening, Zacky couldn't quite bring himself to ask why 'soon'. He walked away, trying not to feel sick about treating Tyler so badly. He was nervous about what he had yet to face at home.

On his way home through the cemetery, he passed the other three pack members drinking by the mausoleum.

"Zacky," Matt said.

He stopped and sighed, glancing over. "What?"

"Did you feed?"

"Yes," he said through gritted teeth, shoulders hunching defensively.

"Not from Tyler?"

"No, not from Tyler."

"Well, that's something at least," Matt snorted.

"Leave me alone."

"Did you two fight again?" Johnny asked quietly.

"What business is it of yours?"

Johnny sighed. "It's our business because he's our friend, and you're breaking--"

"Quiet, Johnny," Matt growled.

"Breaking what?" Zacky whispered.

"Nothing," Matt said harshly, getting up and walking over. "You'd better get your head out of your ass, cub, and soon, or you will have me to deal with."

Zacky glared at the large man. "*You* are not my alpha," he snapped. So much had happened and so much was still going to happen. He was starting to lose it, and Matt was just pushing him closer to the edge.

"Maybe not, but Tyler runs with *my* pack. He is my friend, and I will not allow you to keep fucking with him," Matt yelled, shoving Zacky hard.

"Don't *touch* me," Zacky snapped, smacking Matt as hard as he could. The bigger man went flying back, smashing into the mausoleum, and Zacky stared in shock. Johnny and Jimmy immediately leapt to their feet, running to stand in front of their alpha and growling. Matt stood slowly and put his hands on their shoulders as he laughed.

"Well, at least you're not weak," Matt said, smirking.

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be. Just remember what I said. Soon, Zacky. It had better be soon."

Swallowing hard, Zacky nodded and backed away before turning and running home. Why soon? Why did they all seem to be in such a hurry?

He let himself into the house quietly, locking the door and tiptoeing down the hall towards the basement.

"Where do you think you are going?"

Freezing, Zacky twisted his head slowly, swallowing nervously at the sight of his father sitting in the study, staring at him through the door.

"Sir, I..."

"Come here, boy."

"Yes, sir."

"You bring strangers to church without permission, you cause a scene in public, and you run away from church without being excused. Does any of that strike you as acceptable behavior?"

"No, sir."

"You disappear for hours and make your mother worry." His father stood and moved the chair out of the way, beckoning to him. "Do you think that is acceptable behavior?"

"No, sir," Zacky sighed, flinching at the mention of his mother. He walked to the center of the room, hoping that she hadn't already been subjected to the same punishment.

"Who were those boys?"

"I don't really know them, sir," he said, not really lying. "They go to my school."

"You know them well enough to introduce them to the minister. Lying is a sin, Zachariah."

"I'm not lying"

"Kneel and prepare."

Zacky closed his eyes and knelt, taking off his tie and shirt and neatly folding them. He removed his belt and presented it with a bowed head. He kept his eyes shut, listening to his father prepare until he realized that he could hear the jangle of his belt buckle. Zacky looked up, staring in shock.

Usually, his father struck him with the leather end. He hadn't used the buckle end in years.

"Sir I—" he started, his breathing speeding up apprehensively.

"Be quiet, boy."

Swallowing back a protest, Zacky closed his eyes and dropped his chin to his chest. It wasn't fair.

The first blow smashed into him, splitting his skin instantly. Blood trickled slowly down his back, and he barely held back a cry of pain. He could feel the wound swelling already.

"Thank you, sir," Zacky whispered. He couldn't help crying out at the second and third strikes, the belt buckle ripping his back apart. Pain lanced through his nerves as he tried to breathe. He tried not to cry and tried to thank his father.

As the fourth lash slashed through his skin, Zacky screamed, falling forward onto his hands and shaking helplessly. He could feel his back welting, smell the blood that flowed, and he growled. It wasn't fair.

"I didn't hear you, boy."

"Thank you, sir," Zacky managed to grit out. The belt hit him again, and he couldn't help but scream.

Suddenly, he heard shouting. Then, the study door burst open, and he stared in shock. Tyler stood in the doorway, hair and eyes wild, face flushed with fury, teeth bared in a snarl.

"You son of a bitch!" Tyler shouted, starting forward. "I'll kill you!"

"Tyler, no!" Matt, Johnny and Jimmy followed quickly, grabbing hold of Tyler. All three of them struggled to hold him back as he tried to lunge at Zacky's father.

"Get out of my house," his father thundered. "How dare you?"

"You fucking asshole, I'll kill you for touching him."

"Tyler, no," Zacky whispered, reaching out to his mate.

"Esther! Call the police."

Tyler was actually dragging the other three forward, arms reaching with clawed hands for Zacky's father.

"Matt, let me go!" Tyler screamed.

"No, we can't risk this kind of exposure, Tyler. You know we can't."

"He hurt my mate."

"Tyler, stop," Zacky begged, trying to push off the floor.

"What?" his father shouted. "What is this?" He stared angrily at Tyler.
"You... And my son?"

Everything suddenly seemed to go in slow motion. Zacky watched in horror as his father lifted an arm and lashed the belt at Tyler, the buckle catching him full in the mouth. Blood sprayed from Tyler's mouth, his head jerking back as he cried out. Rage exploded through Zacky, and he scrambled to his feet, blood pumping furiously through his veins.

"No!" he screamed. His father stared at him, furious and shocked. Zacky strode over, ripping the belt from the old man's hands and grabbing his collar. Fear flashed behind his father's eyes, and Zacky growled.

"You do not touch my mate," Zacky snarled. He lifted his father clear off the floor and threw him across the room. His father slammed into a bookshelf and fell to the floor unconscious. Zacky stumbled back, fury replaced with horror at what he'd done. The pain from his back surged again, and he swayed, lightheaded.

"Zacky." Tyler lifted him up into his arms.

"What did I do?"

Tyler smiled, blood trickling down his chin from his ravaged mouth.
"You chose me," he whispered, eyes shining.

"Oh," Zacky breathed. "Good."

Then everything went black.

Chapter Eight

Consciousness came slowly. Zacky felt confused and hazy, like his brain wasn't quite ready to work. He was warm and pressed against the mattress by a weight too heavy to be his covers. His back was stiff and a little sore but not even close to as painful as it should have been.

"Hot," he muttered, turning his face into the pillow and lifting a hand to bat at whatever was weighing him down. The weight shifted forward and soft lips pressed a kiss to his earlobe.

"You certainly are, baby."

"Tyler?" Zacky opened his eyes in surprise, glancing back awkwardly over his shoulder to meet warm brown eyes. Tyler was lying on top of him. He blinked in confusion. "What happened?"

Moving to the side, Tyler turned him so they were facing each other.

"What do you remember?"

"I uh..." Zacky stared in shock. "You came to save me and my father hit you." Lifting a hand wonderingly, he touched Tyler's undamaged mouth. "Didn't he?"

"Yeah, he did and *you* saved *me*," Tyler said softly with a tiny smile.

"Oh no," Zacky gasped. His heart pounded fearfully, throat tight with worry. "Is he okay?"

Tyler's eyes darkened with anger, and he drew back a little. "How can you ask me that? How can you care about him after what he did to you?"

"But I--"

"He's fine. You knocked him out, that's all. You, on the other hand, were not okay, baby. Your back was shredded. You've been unconscious for over a day." Tyler stopped, swallowing hard. "You scared me half to death when you collapsed."

Zacky smiled weakly. He seemed to do nothing but hurt his mate, yet here Tyler was, looking after him and worrying.

"I'm sorry," Zacky whispered.

"I know." Tyler looked up and stroked his cheek gently. "I'm just glad I got to you before he hurt you more. I'm sorry I didn't get to you before he hurt you at all."

"Did you come after me?"

"Not exactly. I went to the cemetery," Tyler stopped, looking sad and pained. "I felt your fear and pain. I couldn't let him hurt you. You're my mate. I need to protect you."

"Would you really have killed him?"

Tyler sighed, nodding slowly. "If Matt and the others hadn't stopped me, yes, I probably would have."

"I thought you said we don't kill."

"I said we don't *need* to kill in order to feed. If someone attacks Pack, all bets are off, especially if it's your mate. You felt that. You know that."

"Yeah," Zacky whispered. "Tyler, why doesn't my back hurt?"

"I licked your wounds."

"Pardon me?"

"Haven't you wondered why our bite-marks heal so fast?"

"Well, yeah."

"We heal fast anyway, but," Tyler stuck his tongue out and tapped it, "our saliva heals us faster."

"So you-"

"I brought you here," Tyler whispered. "Held you, kissed you, and licked your back until you healed." He cupped Zacky's cheek and leaned closer, gently licking over his lips. Smiling, Zacky kissed his mate back quickly.

"Where's here?" Zacky glanced around at the unfamiliar surroundings. They were lying in a large, black bed in an otherwise empty room, with bare brick walls and a few candles in sconces.

"Don't freak out."

"Why would I freak out?" Zacky asked with a frown.

"Because we might be in a hidden chamber under the mausoleum."

"We might be or we are?" Zacky asked, holding back a snicker of amusement.

"We are. It's kind of a bolt hole."

"I wondered why you hung out in the cemetery all the time."

"Not *all* the time. We use it as a base. Frankly, Matt and Johnny are really loud when they fuck after they feed."

"Tyler!"

"What? They are," Tyler said, snorting with laughter.

"What does Jimmy do?" Zacky asked softly. Brown eyes slid away from his face, and Tyler's expression saddened.

"He feeds by himself. He will be lonely and incomplete until he finds his mate. We all are until we find our mates. Being in a pack helps, at least then you have family." Releasing his breath shakily, Tyler forced a smile. "Not like he's been waiting long though."

"How long?" Zacky asked a little tentatively. He hadn't asked nearly enough questions and didn't know half as much about Tyler as he was sure Tyler knew about him.

"How long has Jimmy been waiting or how long have I been waiting?" Tyler whispered.

"I guess both."

"We become fully Pack at twenty-one, that's when we start feeding on blood. We call it turning but it just means maturation. Once we turn, that's when we can mate."

"You all look my age yet—" Zacky paused, blinking in realization. "Well, I guess you can't be."

"I think maybe we should wait for the explanations until after you've fed. You're weak from the blood loss."

"I'm not sure I can move, Tyler."

"It's okay. You don't have to." Tyler kissed him gently, climbing out of the bed. He pulled on a black t-shirt and jeans and shoved his feet into a pair of boots.

"You're not going to bring some sacrificial lamb here for me to feed on, are you?" Zacky asked, feeling a little sick at the thought.

Tyler laughed. "No, Zacky, a volunteer."

"A what?"

"Just wait for me. I'll be right back."

"Okay," Zacky said, sighing helplessly. He didn't have a lot of choice. He was hungry, but Tyler was right he was weak from the beating.

"Here we are," Tyler said, leading Mark into the room.

"Zach," Mark said softly.

Zacky stared in shock. "Mark? What are you doing here, I don't understand."

"I'm so sorry," Mark whispered.

"Tyler, what's going on?"

"He wants to help, baby."

Jaw dropping, Zacky shook his head in disbelief. "No."

"Yes, Zacky."

"No, you can't ask me to do that, Tyler. He can't possibly know what helping me means."

"Yes, I do," Mark said, moving over and sitting on the bed.

"Don't," Zacky gasped, rearing back. The heat, scent, and sound of blood from his friend almost overwhelmed him. "I can't feed from my best friend, Tyler."

"You'd rather feed from someone unwilling?" Tyler said softly.

"That's not fair."

"He *wants* to help you, baby."

"Why?"

"Because I saw what happened," Mark whispered. "I saw Tyler and the others break into your house. I ran in after them, and I saw." Mark's face screwed up, eyes shining. "I'm so sorry, Zach. I didn't know your father did that to you."

"I never wanted you to know," Zacky sighed.

"I could have helped. Why didn't you ever ask for help? You know the minister would have stopped--"

"Mom and I just would have gotten into more trouble."

"I don't really understand what you are," Mark said hesitantly. "But they said you need blood, and I want to help."

"Let him help you, please. We're running out of time," Tyler said.

"Time for what, Tyler?" Zacky whispered. "Why are you guys in such a hurry?"

"I will explain everything later, Zacky. I swear. Please feed."

"Are you sure, Mark?"

"Yes, I'm sure."

"Okay," Zacky sighed, giving in. He wasn't getting any stronger sitting there arguing with both his mate and his best friend.

"Thank you," Tyler said softly. He toed off his boots and pulled his t-shirt over his head. Mark stared, eyes wide with horror.

"What are you doing?"

"Getting back into bed," Tyler said. He shrugged as he stripped off his jeans, climbing back into bed naked. Zacky almost wanted to laugh at his friend's expression, and he slapped Tyler's arm, rolling his eyes at his mate.

"What?" Tyler said. "You need me. While I'm grateful to Mark, you are my only concern."

"Okay," Zacky said softly. He took Mark's arm and met worried blue eyes. "I won't hurt you. Are you ready?"

"Yeah," Mark breathed. Zacky turned onto his side, and Mark shifted to sit at the head of the bed. Zacky lifted his friend's wrist to his mouth and bit down. Mark groaned, eyelids fluttering as his blood gushed into Zacky's mouth. Zacky clamped his lips around the wound, sucking more blood into his mouth as he swallowed.

Tyler spooned up behind Zacky. He stroked a hand down Zacky's side and under the cover to his hip, and kissed the back of his neck. Sucking and licking at Zacky's skin, Tyler slipped his hand down to his groin, palming his half-hard dick and rubbing it to full erection. Groaning, Zacky lifted his head and glanced up at Mark to see that he was unconscious before looking back at his mate. Need consumed him.

"Tyler?"

"Yeah?"

"Fuck me."

Tyler shuddered, hips jerking against Zacky's ass, cock pressing against him. Swallowing one last mouthful of blood from Mark's wrist, Zacky let go of his friend. He spat into his hand and reached back, wrapping his fist around Tyler's cock and slicking the silky skin with saliva. He bent his top leg up and arched back against his mate.

"Tyler," he whispered. Tyler bit down on his neck and sucked gently as he eased back. Zacky whimpered, looking back desperately.

"Patience," Tyler murmured, taking a moment to slick his cock with the lube he'd acquired from under a pillow. He settled back against Zacky, pulling his ass cheeks apart and plunging into his body. He pushed deep in one hard stroke, stretching Zacky wide and making him groan with pained

pleasure. Zacky rocked his hips forward to push his cock into his mate's hand. Then, he pushed back hard, impaling himself on Tyler's shaft.

"Oh fuck yes," Tyler mumbled against Zacky's skin, fisting his cock tightly. "So good, fuck yourself on me."

Trembling with lust, Zacky moaned softly, rocking himself between hand and cock, every thrust stabbing him with burning pleasure. Tension was tight in his groin and need for his mate was intense and overwhelming. Tyler pressed hot, sucking kisses up and down Zacky's neck and shoulder. His chest was solid and slid, slick with sweat, against Zacky's back as they moved together.

Zacky rocked faster, frantically, desperate to come, and he twisted his torso, turning his head back so he could kiss his lover, biting at Tyler's lips hard to taste his blood.

"Yes, Zacky," Tyler moaned, biting hard on his bottom lip and sucking. The pain swept through Zacky, and he jerked back hard, shuddering as the tension exploded and he came hard, clenching down around the length of cock inside him. With a groan, Tyler grabbed Zacky's hip, thrusting harder and faster into his ass and kissing him deeply as his tongue lapped at Zacky's torn lip. It felt so good. Aftershocks of pleasure shook Zacky's body until his mate cried out, holding himself deep and filling Zacky with heat.

"Mmm, Zacky," Tyler murmured, kissing him gently. "So good." He lifted his hand and licked Zacky's cum from his fingers slowly. Then he kissed Zacky again. Zacky could taste the mix of his cum and blood in Tyler's mouth, and he shivered, groin stirring already. Pulling away, he shook his head.

"Too much," he whispered.

"You know it's okay to have sex without feeding, Zacky."

"I just..." Zacky stopped and sighed, not quite comfortable with the thought.

"We're mated, baby. We're going to want each other most of the time."

"Most of the time?" Zacky exclaimed, eyes widening. "How do you get any work done?"

Snickering, Tyler shook his head, patting Zacky's thigh as he gave him a quick kiss and got up again.

"We have *some* self-control, you know. It's not like we're actually here to study, this is just cover."

"Why are you here then?" Zacky asked. Tyler stared incredulously at him.

"For you, of course."

"For me?"

"Yeah," Tyler said with a soft smile. "Did you think it was coincidence that we showed up now?"

"No but--"

"Just let me deal with Mark first, okay?" Tyler interrupted. He pulled on his clothes again and picked Mark up from the bed. "Jimmy's going to drive him home, sneak him in, okay? We already explained that to Mark. Why don't you get dressed so we can talk? Your friend brought you some clothes." He nodded over to a small chair behind the bed, half-smiling, half-grimacing and looking oddly apologetic which made Zacky feel very nervous.

Watching Tyler disappear with Mark in his arms, Zacky shook off the strangest sense of jealousy and got up, licking the last of the blood from his hand before getting dressed.

He found his way out of the mausoleum before Tyler came back. His mate was talking to Matt and Johnny who were sitting by a tree. Both men had beers in their hands. There was an opened six pack on the ground next to them. He heard Matt say something about running out of time and started to frown as he walked towards them.

"I know," Tyler said quietly. "But he's made his choice now. We're nearly ready."

"Ready for what, Tyler? What's going on?"

"Come sit with us," Matt said, staring steadily at him. Taking a deep breath, Zacky walked to stand beside Tyler, and his mate took his hand, drawing him down to sit opposite the other mated pair.

"So, explain."

"Do you want a beer?" Johnny asked.

"No, I want an explanation. Stop avoiding the question. Am I Pack or not?"

"You're definitely Pack," Matt said with a chuckle. Tyler looked both relieved and proud. "'Bout fucking time too, Ty."

"Tell me about it," Tyler sighed.

"Tyler," Zacky snapped, starting to get frustrated. He was nervous and apprehensive, especially since he knew now that he had no choice. He had nothing to go back to. The pack was now his family, and he wanted to know what that meant.

Matt raised an eyebrow at Tyler. "You're gonna let your mate talk to you like that?"

Tyler shrugged. "Yeah, I'm not you, and Zacky isn't Johnny."

"Hey, what does that mean?" Johnny exclaimed with a pout.

"It means you guys have a different type of relationship than we do. Every mated pair does."

"Really?" Johnny looked up at his mate.

"Of course," Matt said.

"You mean," Johnny's eyes flashed with mischief, and he grinned, "I don't *have* to be submissive?"

In the blink of an eye, Matt rolled Johnny over and pinned him to the ground.

"Oh no," Matt growled softly. "You do." He nipped the blonde's chin and chuckled as Johnny whined and arched under him. Shifting, Zacky cleared his throat, feeling a little uncomfortable with the other couple's openness. It sort of turned him on.

"You okay, baby?"

"Um no," Zacky whispered. "Tyler, I want to know."

"Know what?"

"Everything."

"Yo, I'm back." Jimmy collapsed next to them and picked up a beer, biting off the cap and sucking down a long draught.

"Is Mark okay?" Zacky asked, still worried about his friend.

"Dude, he's fine, seriously."

"Okay." Zacky looked around at the pack. "So?"

"Where to start?" Tyler sighed.

"Well, why not explain why you're in such a hurry. What's going on?"

"You probably realize that there are not very many of us."

"Yeah, I'd guessed that."

"Yeah, we aren't born very often and, up until recently, we often didn't survive childhood. The last fifty to a hundred years have seen more of us survive, and that..." Tyler stopped and grimaced, eyes flicking down. Zacky

tried not to get impatient, biting back a sigh and reaching out to gently touch his mate's thigh.

"That what?"

"It has created problems," Matt said. "In the past, we knew where all the families carrying the line were. Alphas would go to new Pack at turning and teach them. It's a lot easier to discover that you can only survive on blood if someone's there to help you through it."

"Who teaches alphas then?" Zacky asked, frowning in confusion.

"Other alphas," Tyler murmured.

"So you and Matt..."

"He turned me, and I ran with his pack until I found Johnny," Matt interjected. "When Tyler's pack was killed, Johnny and I took care of him."

"Okay, so that explains why there are two alphas in one pack, but what's this got to do with more Pack surviving?"

"Too many of the newer, rogue Pack are, uh..." Tyler paused.

"Blood thirsty, vicious, murdering bastards?" Jimmy said with a giggle.

"Subtle, Jimmy," Tyler snapped.

"What? They are," Jimmy said with a shrug.

"Well, yeah," Tyler sighed. "There have always been Pack who didn't follow the rules. Some love the power, love to create fear, even kill their prey, but not like rogues. The trouble with so many people emigrating from Europe to the new world was that it made it impossible to keep track of Pack. We find some in time, but too many are lost to us."

"Wait. What?" Zacky rubbed his forehead, trying to take it all in. "Just how do you know that? How old are you?"

"*Old*," Jimmy said emphatically.

"You said we're not immortal," Zacky said, glancing at Tyler.

"We're not immortal in the sense that we can't be killed, but we don't grow old. We can live for... Well, I don't really know for how long."

"Did Pack kill your, *our*, pack?" Zacky asked softly.

"Yes," Tyler whispered, closing his eyes and swallowing audibly. "But not rogue Pack. It wasn't that recent."

Zacky blinked, confused. "So, a century or so is recent?"

Matt snorted. "Only for Jimmy."

"Shut up, Matt. I'm not the baby anymore."

"Are you calling me a baby?" Zacky exclaimed.

Jimmy laughed. "Yeah."

"I'm twenty-one."

"I'm a hundred and forty-six, so there."

"Jimmy," Matt snapped.

"What? I thought we were telling him everything."

Inhaling shakily, Zacky stared in disbelief. "A hundred and forty-six?"

"Yeah," Tyler sighed.

"And you three are older?"

"Yeah," Matt said, nodding slowly.

"How long ago did our pack die, Tyler?"

Tyler's breath hitched for a moment. "Nearly three hundred years ago. When they died, I found Matt and Johnny, and they let me run with them."

"Safety in numbers," Matt said with a firm nod.

"Who killed them?"

"An alpha named Connor. He grew up when the English were invading Ireland, and he was treated appallingly. It made him hate authority. When he was turned he focused all that hate on me. I was older, stronger and he was insanely jealous. His mate kept him balanced but when Jamie died, Connor completely lost it."

"But why kill our pack?" Zacky asked his mate quietly. He stroked Tyler's leg in an awkward attempt to soothe him.

"Connor blamed me for Jamie's death."

"Why?" Zacky whispered, feeling uncertain. Tyler lifted his hand and kissed his knuckles gently but didn't reply.

"About three hundred years ago, we went to war," Matt said quietly. "There are men, hunters, who believe that we're evil. Tyler brought some of the packs together to fight. Pack structure isn't rigid. The alphas are the leaders because, essentially, they're stronger. Any Pack can change who they run with, especially to be with a mate. We can work together more easily than you'd think, and we did. We fought against one of the larger groups of hunters. There were deaths on both sides, but Connor blamed Tyler for the whole thing."

"Why?"

"I was in charge," Tyler said softly. "Many packs lost members, but Connor could never let it go."

"What happened?"

"He managed to trap and incapacitate us. He set himself on fire right in front of us, laughing. I barely made it out alive," Tyler said, his voice tense and a little choked. "I was the only one."

Tears pricked Zacky's eyes, his throat tight with emotion. Tyler's pain hurt him, and he wrapped his arms around his mate, stroking his hair gently.

"Oh, Tyler, I'm so sorry."

"I just wish you could have met them," Tyler whispered.

"Mika would have loved him," Matt sighed, his eyes full of grief.

"Yeah," Tyler said with a nod.

"I wish I could." Zacky stopped and kissed his mate gently. He'd thought the whole situation was insane before, but this was huge. It was going to take a while for him to get his head around it all. He almost didn't believe it, except here he was, mated and living on blood. He still felt guilty and ashamed. Although, he was starting to accept that it was his nature and not a choice. He still couldn't get over feeling that it was wrong and that was hard.

"Matt?" Johnny murmured, looking up at his mate. The big alpha nodded, nudging his mate's cheek with his nose gently.

"Go ahead, Liebling."

Johnny leaned over to pat Zacky's hand. "I know it's a lot to take in, but you and I were lucky."

"Lucky?" Zacky said, eyebrows raising doubtfully.

"We were found by our alphas and mated at turning. It's easier that way."

"Yeah, that's for fucking sure," Jimmy said with a loud snort. "Not having a mate doesn't stop me from getting horny when I feed, and now Tyler doesn't fuck me..."

"Jimmy!" Matt exclaimed.

"What?" Zacky's heart sank, bile rising to the back of his throat as pain flared. "No!"

"Dude, it was just sex."

Zacky stood, trembling with confusion and uncertainty. He turned and started to walk away. He needed to get away and think. He'd almost accepted his relationship with Tyler because it felt special and unique. Now, it seemed it wasn't. How could he accept this?

"Baby, this isn't what you think," Tyler said, trying to stop him.

"What do I think it is?" He shoved Tyler away and carried on walking.

"Something that's more than it was," Tyler sighed, following after him.

"Zacky, we just fucked. It's no big deal," Jimmy called after them. "He fucked Matt too. You don't see Johnny spazzing out."

"Shut up, Jimmy, you stupid asshole. It's a big fucking deal to Zacky," Tyler shouted.

Shaking his head, Zacky kept walking, wrapping his arms around his chest and suddenly feeling very alone.

"Baby, stop," Tyler said, still following him. "Where are you going to go?"

Zacky sped up, heading for the path. "I don't care as long as it's away from you."

"Baby, don't say that," Tyler whispered. "It's not what you think."

"Just leave me alone."

"Zacky, stop. Right now!"

Zacky froze, completely unable to resist the command no matter how hard he tried. He gasped helplessly, bowing his head. Strong arms slipped around his chest, and he couldn't even struggle.

"Listen to me," Tyler whispered, nuzzling Zacky's neck gently. "Jimmy and I were lonely. He's right. Being unmated doesn't stop you from needing sex. We stopped having sex when we came here for you. We kept track of your family."

"And Matt?"

"I haven't had sex with Matt for three hundred and fifty years," Tyler sighed.

Zacky gasped in shock.

"It was just sex, simple and uncomplicated, just two friends trying to ward off the pain and loneliness of not having a mate. It's nothing like what we have."

"Really?"

"Really. Being mated is special. I know you feel it. You can't tell me you don't."

"I wouldn't know," Zacky whispered. "I've never had sex with anyone else."

Growling loudly, Tyler spun him around, yanked him close and grabbed his face.

"Nothing we've done together was *just* sex. I haven't wanted anyone but you since I first laid eyes on you. You know that's true or you wouldn't have reacted like this."

"I just don't understand," Zacky admitted, meeting darkened brown eyes.

"You're my mate, Zacky. I'm never going to want or need anyone else now that we're together, but I was alone for a long time. You can't expect me to have been a monk," Tyler sighed, loosening his grip on Zacky's ace and kissing him quickly.

"I just can't imagine wanting anyone else," Zacky whispered, biting his lip and flushing as he realized the truth of what he'd just admitted. Tyler's eyes lit up with a smile, and he kissed Zacky again.

"It's not even about that, baby. It's about craving contact, and warmth, and empathy." He stroked Zacky's face gently. "Matt fucked everyone who didn't have a mate and a few humans too, until he found Johnny. He doesn't have eyes for anyone else. He hasn't touched anyone else since they first met."

"How long have they been mated?"

"Three hundred and fifty years," Tyler said with a rueful smile.

"As long as you and he—"

"Yes." Tyler smiled and slid his hand around the back of Zacky's neck, tugging him up until their mouths brushed together. "Now that we're mated, I can't imagine wanting anyone else either, Zacky," Tyler whispered against his lips, just barely kissing him and making him shiver.

"Tyler," Zacky breathed, pushing up into a hard kiss. He needed reassurance, and he needed to feel warm and complete again. "Show me that I'm yours, and you're mine."

"Yes, Zacky," Tyler whispered, kissing him again and backing them both into the shadows until they hit a tree. Tyler's tongue quickly possessed Zacky's mouth as he leaned in and rocked against his rapidly hardening cock. "I'm yours."

Tyler slid down his body to his knees, tugging open Zacky's pants and yanking them down along with his underwear.

"God, I love your scent, baby," Tyler whispered, nuzzling Zacky's crotch and inhaling deeply. He rubbed his cheek up the length of Zacky's cock, turning his head to lick over the tip. Zacky groaned, staring down at his

mate. Brown eyes stared up at him, warm and full of desire, and Tyler's beautiful, slim lips parted over the head of Zacky's cock, sucking him into wet heat that slid quickly down his shaft.

"Oh, Tyler," Zacky gasped, his cock jerking needily as pleasurable pressure built quickly in his groin. Tyler sucked and swallowed, working Zacky's shaft with lips and tongue, up, down, harder, and faster with each stroke until Zacky was panting and writhing desperately. Tyler's hands roamed down Zacky's chest, stroking, scratching, and gripping his hips.

"Oh, Tyler!" Zacky cried out. He came hard, pleasure rocketing through his body as he spurted cum down his mate's throat, shaking helplessly. Moaning, Tyler swallowed and pulled back, sitting on his heels and ripping his pants open. He wrapped his fist around his dripping cock, jacking himself, and Zacky groaned at the stirring of lust in his groin. Tyler looked so beautiful, he had to touch his cock.

Zacky slid down the tree, resting his knees on his mate's thighs as he batted Tyler's hand away and fisted his gorgeous, thick cock tightly. He stroked hard and fast and leaning in to kiss Tyler, tongue sliding deep to taste himself in his mate's mouth. Tyler groaned loudly, his hips rocking as he pushed his cock through Zacky's hand urgently, kissing and panting into his mouth. Zacky slipped his free hand into long, dark hair and slid his thumb over the head of Tyler's cock, twisting his hand around the shaft. Then, he bit down on his own tongue.

Tyler cried out, bucking hard into Zacky's fist, his back arching and his whole body shuddering as he sucked on Zacky's bleeding tongue, coming all over his hand.

"Oh fuck, baby," Tyler whispered, pulling back and licking his lips. Zacky lifted his hand, quickly sucking his mate's seed from his fingers and moaning happily at the bittersweet flavor. The silky, thick fluid slid over his tongue and down his throat. It was so similar to Tyler's blood, and so much a part of his mate's essence that it filled him with a sense of completion.

"God, that's so hot, Zacky, I--" Tyler stopped abruptly and leaned forward to kiss him again quickly. "Thank you. Will you come back?"

"Yes," Zacky whispered, smiling softly and standing up. He held out his hand, and Tyler took it, standing up. They did up their pants and took each other's hands again, walking slowly through the cemetery back to where the other three were waiting.

"Dude, I'm really sorry," Jimmy mumbled.

"That's okay," Zacky managed with a nod.

"I really didn't think it was a big deal, you know?"

"Okay."

"I mean it was just sex."

"Jimmy, shut up," Tyler said with a snort.

"Okay already. It's not like you didn't make up, is it?" Jimmy said, pouting at them. Matt and Johnny snickered, and Zacky felt his cheeks heat up in horror and humiliation.

"I said shut up." Tyler bent and cuffed the back of Jimmy's head.

"Ow!"

"Enough. Sit down," Matt said. Tyler sat and tugged gently at Zacky's hand until he sat next to him.

"You both need to lighten up is all I'm saying," Jimmy muttered.

"Jimmy, you really need to learn when to be quiet," Johnny sighed. He clutched at his mate who looked like he was about to shout.

"What I *need* is cock," Jimmy sighed.

"Yeah, preferably stuffed in your big fucking mouth," Matt snapped.

"That would be fucking awesome," Jimmy said with a nod. "I guess I'll make do with beer."

Matt snorted and shook his head. "Is everyone done now? We have plans to make."

"Plans?" Zacky said, frowning. "What kind of plans?"

"We have to move on," Matt said. "We've stayed here far longer than we should have already." Matt glared at Zacky, making him stiffen. "We only came here to get you."

"Chéri, you saw what he had to overcome," Johnny said softly, twisting around and laying his head in Matt's lap.

"I know, Liebling," Matt sighed, stroking Johnny's blond hair gently. "You know we didn't plan to stay this long. We could be discovered."

Zacky couldn't help watching the pair, demonstrative, loving and completely unashamed. He couldn't quite imagine being that comfortable in front of other people.

"Discovered by whom?" Zacky asked. "Why move on?"

"Most packs choose to roam. It helps to avoid the hunters and the rogue Pack, and the risk of being seen feeding," Tyler said softly. "Besides, we're

always checking on new Pack. We help them transition when they turn and teach them the rules."

"What are the rules?"

"Pack is family. Your only loyalty is to your pack," Tyler started.

"Alpha's word is law," Matt added firmly.

"Would that be Tyler or you, in my case?" Zacky asked, arching an eyebrow.

"He's got you there," Jimmy said, giggling.

"Baby, how can you even ask that?"

Rolling his eyes, Zacky couldn't help a snort of laughter. "I was under the impression that you deferred to Matt."

"Oh really? Is that what he told you?" Tyler cocked his head and looked at his friend.

"Hey, that's not exactly what I said. Besides, it's-" Matt paused, pouting slightly, "sorta true."

"I don't interfere with your pack, that's all," Tyler said firmly. Matt's bottom lip protruded further and he grimaced and nodded.

"Your alpha is Tyler, of course" Johnny said softly. "And his word is law because he can compel you to do whatever he says, if he wants to."

"Yeah, but usually only crappy alphas do that," Jimmy said with a firm nod.

Zacky blinked and turned his head slowly to glare at his mate.

"Is that what you did to me just now?"

Tyler flushed and shrugged. "Only because you wouldn't stop walking away."

"So you thought it was okay to force me to stay?" Zacky exclaimed, completely infuriated.

"I just needed you to listen so I could explain," Tyler whispered. "I wouldn't just--"

"You *just* did, Tyler. Not even God would take away my free will." He tried to get up, but Tyler caught his arm and held him down.

"Do you two ever stop arguing?" Matt sighed.

"Don't you start with me, Matthias," Tyler snapped.

"No then?"

"Apparently not," Tyler sighed.

"This isn't a joke," Zacky snapped, trying to wrench his arm free. "I don't have a choice in any of this. How can you take what choice I have left away from me?"

"That's not fair," Tyler whispered, his eyes darkening before he looked away.

"Oh right. It's always me who's unfair," Zacky said. Tears sprang to his eyes as he felt his mate's pain wash over him. It hurt him to hurt Tyler but he pressed on anyway.

"We haven't got time for this," Matt snapped. "Tyler, you need to control your mate."

"Stay out of it," Tyler growled, glaring at the other alpha. He got to his feet, dragging Zacky with him. "Excuse us."

"Where are we going?" Zacky asked. "Or don't I get a choice in that either?"

Tyler dragged him into the room below the mausoleum and threw him on the bed.

"None of us have a choice. This is who we are. I tried to help you through this. I tried to give you time that we don't have to accept it." Climbing onto the bed, Tyler pinned Zacky down, his eyes so dark they were almost black. "If you hate to hurt me, why do you keep doing it?"

"You can't force me to do something against my will, Tyler," Zacky whispered. "That's not fair."

"I could have forced you through all of this, but I didn't."

"I know," Zacky sighed, closing his eyes.

"Stop fighting this," Tyler whispered. "Please. You know how much I need you." He let go of Zacky's arms and lay on top of him, burying his face in Zacky's neck.

"I know," Zacky said again, tentatively sliding his hand through his mate's hair. "Free will was granted by God. Tyler, I can't lose that."

Tyler nodded and lifted his head. "I know. I swear to you, Zacky, I'll never compel you to do anything against your will. I swear. Just--" He stopped and shook his head. "God, and you think I have power over *you*."

"You do," Zacky said softly, managing a small smile. "You just have to say please."

Tyler huffed out a breath, not quite a laugh, and smiled. "Really?"

"Yes."

"Then, can you *please* try and accept what you are?"

Zacky smiled and lifted his head to kiss his mate. "I'll do my best."

"Thank you, baby." Tyler kissed him back and pushed himself off the bed, holding out his hand. Zacky took it and got up, squeezing his mate's fingers. "Let's go, and don't mind Matt. He worries, and he's got a temper," Tyler said.

"I hadn't noticed," Zacky said with a snort. Tyler glanced at him and chuckled.

Chapter Nine

They rejoined the others who stared at them slightly warily.

"Drama much?" Matt snorted.

"Don't," Tyler said shortly. "Let's finish with the rules and get ready to leave."

"About time."

"Chéri, I don't think you're helping," Johnny said softly.

"Johnny," Matt growled.

"*Pardonnez-moi, mon amour.*" Johnny bowed his head and tilted it away from his mate, exposing a small tattoo just under his ear of the letter M. Matt leaned over and nipped Johnny's skin, nuzzling his neck gently. Johnny made a quiet whining noise and turned, burying himself in his mate's arms. Matt rested his cheek on Johnny's blond hair and stared steadily at Tyler and Zacky.

"Rule three- we do not kill our prey or risk exposure unless we are defending ourselves or the pack."

"The fewer humans who know about us the better," Tyler said quietly. "There are already too many who do."

"Hunters?" Zacky asked softly.

"Yes, odd ones here and there. Unfortunately, there's also a highly organized group of militant fanatics who are trying to exterminate us, as they put it."

"Why?"

"Because they think we're evil, dude," Jimmy said with a grimace.

"They're not far wrong with some packs," Tyler sighed. "But they think we're all the same."

"Come on. Let's go back to the dorms. Pack light. We'll come get you at dawn," Matt said.

Zacky felt a wave of sadness sweep over him.

"I haven't anything to pack." He wouldn't miss anything he left behind. There was nothing in his old life that couldn't be left behind, except his mother and Mark, and that made him feel unbelievably sad.

"Oh, baby, I'm sorry." Tyler nuzzled Zacky's neck gently and wrapped his arms around him. The other three got up, picking up the beer and empty bottles.

"We'll see you tomorrow."

Tyler lifted a hand to give them a brief wave and stroked his hair.

"Tyler?"

"What is it, Zacky?"

"I need to see my Mom before we go," he whispered. He knew Mark would understand that he had to leave, but he couldn't just abandon his mother without some sort of explanation.

"Are you sure you want to go back there?"

"I have to see her, Tyler. I have to say goodbye."

"Okay." Tyler kissed his forehead and stood, pulling Zacky up with him. "We have to do it now."

"Thank you." Zacky let his mate take his hand and lead him out of the cemetery to his parents' home. They slipped around back, and he peered into the kitchen window. His mother was sitting at the table. She looked pale and sad. It hurt to see.

"Do you want me to wait for you?" Tyler whispered.

Inexplicably, Zacky knew he couldn't do it alone. He wanted his mother to have the chance to at least meet Tyler so she'd know who he was leaving with.

"No," Zacky said softly. "Come in with me."

"Sure?"

"I'm sure."

"Is she a scary kind of mom?"

Zacky almost laughed. "No, she's a lovely mom. Tyler?" He pulled away from his mate to look at him quizzically. "Are you scared of meeting my mother?"

"Scared?" Tyler looked put out and shook his head. "No, of course not."

"Of course not," Zacky said, holding back a chuckle. "Come on then." Quietly, he unlocked the back door, and they slipped inside. His mother hadn't moved or heard them. She was still staring into space.

"Mom?" Zacky said softly.

She looked at him, her eyes widening, filling with emotions like happiness, sadness, and a touch of fear. It made Zacky's heart ache.

"Zach," she breathed.

"Is father around?"

"No, he's asleep."

Zacky breathed out in relief. "Did I hurt him?"

"Not like he hurt you," she whispered, tears trickling slowly down her cheeks.

"Oh, Mom." He let go of Tyler's hand and knelt down in front of her, leaning up to hug her. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be, my darling. You can't help how you were born."

He pulled back and stared at her. "You knew?"

"No, well, not exactly." She sighed. "When you were born, your grandmother told me that you weren't human, but I didn't believe her. I mean, who would?"

"Nobody these days," Tyler said quietly.

She looked up at Tyler and fear entered her eyes again. "You wanted to kill my husband."

"Don't be afraid, Mom. He won't hurt you."

"He was hurting Zacky," Tyler said with a grimace. "I'm afraid I can't control my reaction to that. I have to protect him."

"Tyler," Zacky sighed.

"I'm sorry, baby, but it's true."

"Baby?"

"Tyler and I..." Zacky cleared his throat nervously. "Tyler's my..."

"You two are together?"

"Yes, we are," he whispered, unable to help smiling at his mate. Tyler's breath hitched quietly. "Mom, listen, I have to say goodbye. We have to leave town."

"Oh, darling, no."

"We have to, Mom," Zacky whispered, taking her hand. "I just wanted to say goodbye, and I wanted you meet Tyler so you would know I'm not alone."

"I'll take care of him," Tyler said. "I promise."

"Thank you," she whispered tearfully. She bent forward to hug Zacky, kissing his cheek. "My darling boy, I always knew you were special, even if I didn't quite believe my mother."

"How did she know?"

"She said her uncle was the same way. She was scared, but I don't know why."

"We're not evil," Tyler sighed. "Some of us are bad, just like humans, but we're not inherently evil."

"I know," she said. "I know because I know my son."

"Thank you, Mom," Zacky said, barely holding back tears. She twisted her head to kiss his cheek again.

"I love you, Zach."

"I love you, too, Mom."

"When do you leave?"

"At dawn."

"You will stay in touch, won't you?"

"Of course I will." He got to his feet, leaning into his mate for comfort. Tyler put an arm around him. Zacky wanted to tell his mom to leave too, but it was pointless. He knew she wouldn't leave his father. "When you see Mark, will you tell him I said goodbye and thank you?"

"Yes, of course." She stood and held out her arms. He pulled away from Tyler to hug her again.

"Love is never a sin," she whispered in his ear. Zacky stiffened in shock. Pulling away, she smiled and looked at Tyler. "I'm holding you to your promise."

"I won't let you down, ma'am," Tyler said with a firm nod. "Ready to go, Zacky?"

"I guess. Love you, Mom."

"Love you too, darling."

With a sigh, Zacky took Tyler's hand and let his mate lead him away. They walked slowly through the cemetery, across the park, and back onto campus. Tyler let go of Zacky's hand and slid an arm around his waist instead, tugging him closer. Zacky took comfort in the solid heat of his mate's strong body, half leaning against him as they walked. Somehow, he wasn't concerned with anyone seeing them together. There was no point.

They were leaving in the morning. Besides, no one could judge him any more than he'd already judged himself.

"I'm sorry, baby," Tyler said suddenly.

"Why?"

"Because I know how much it hurts to lose your mother."

"Does it stop hurting?"

"Not really." Tyler tugged him to a stop and pulled him into a hug, smoothing Zacky's hair back with one hand. "I'm glad you had one good parent, though."

"She did her best," Zacky whispered, swallowing back tears with difficulty. "Considering."

"I know." Sighing softly, Tyler bent his head and kissed him. A soothing, gentle brush of lips met Zacky's mouth, and fingers clutched at his hair.

"See, I told you they were fucking queers."

Zacky pulled back with a gasp, and they both looked around. The jock they'd recently fed from was standing and sneering at them along with four other jock types.

"Crap," Tyler sighed. "We really have been here too long."

The five men moved slowly around them, and Tyler pushed Zacky behind him.

"Back off, guys. We're not doing anything to you."

"Aw, look. He's trying to protect his bitch." The men laughed, and Zacky's heart started to pound, adrenaline pumping his blood hard.

"Baby, try not to hurt them too bad, okay?" Tyler said softly.

"Hurt *us*?" They laughed harder. Then, suddenly, three of them lunged at Tyler. Fury erupted through Zacky's body.

"No!" Zacky screamed, starting after his mate. One of the other two jocks grabbed his arm and spun him around, punching him in the mouth. The taste of his own blood and the rush of pain filled him with strength. He stormed forward, smashing his fist into his attacker's jaw. The jock went flying backwards. Zacky turned, growling angrily at the sight of Tyler fighting against the other three.

The fifth man ran at Zacky and jumped on his back, trying to punch him in the face with one hand and throttling him with the other.

Tyler roared, throwing two of the men back and head butting the third. The two men he'd shoved leapt at Tyler, and Zacky gasped in pain as he felt Tyler's shoulder get wrenched out of its socket.

Zacky pulled at his attacker's arm and bit down, tearing through the skin and moaning in ecstasy as blood spurted hotly into his mouth. He swallowed quickly until the jock on his back collapsed. Then, he ran at the other two, who Tyler was having more trouble with because only one of his arms was working properly.

"Watch out," one of the attackers grunted. Another let go of Tyler and spun around, catching Zacky in the face. Zacky fell back.

"No!" Tyler straightened up. He grabbed the jock who was still attacking him and lifted him off the ground. "You do not touch my mate," he thundered, eyes flashing with fury.

"Jesus," the man standing over Zacky whispered, fear thick in his voice. Tyler threw the man who attacked Zacky into the side of a dorm building, where he slid to the ground and remained unconscious.

Then, Tyler turned and glared at the last man standing. Tyler put his hand on his loosely hanging arm and shoved it up. His shoulder snapped back into its socket.

"You." Tyler shot forward, moving several feet in the blink of an eye, and punched the last guy square in the chest, sending him flying. "Do not touch my mate," he whispered. Taking a deep breath, he shook his head and crouched next to Zacky.

"Zacky," he breathed, lifting a hand hesitantly.

"Are you okay?" Zacky whispered, taking his mate's hand and instinctively tugging it to his mouth to lick the bloodied knuckles. Tyler groaned, watching him wide-eyed, mouth open as he panted.

"Yeah," Tyler whispered. "We should get inside."

"Shouldn't you," Zacky paused, unable to quite believe what he was going to say. "Shouldn't you feed?" He frowned suddenly, realizing something. "Tyler, when was the last time you fed?"

"I don't know. A couple days ago."

The protective instinct that had kicked in during the attack flared again. Zacky pushed himself up, grabbing the foot of one of the unconscious men.

"Feed."

"We have to get out of here, Zacky."

"We're getting out of here at dawn. Feed now," he snapped. Slim lips curved into a soft smile, as Tyler leaned up to kiss him hard and fast.

"Who's the alpha around here?"

Zacky couldn't help a chuckle, and he shook his head. "Act like one, Ty."

Tyler's breath hitched, and he leaned up to kiss Zacky again. The kiss was so tender it made Zacky's heart swell with emotion, and he whimpered softly, clasping Tyler's face and kissing back a little desperately.

"Mmm, Zacky," Tyler whispered against his lips.

Zacky pulled back with a gasp and looked away, cheeks flushing with shame, as he realized that it wasn't feeding or blood that precipitated his need for Tyler. He simply needed Tyler- needed to touch, kiss, hold, and have sex with him. He had no excuses to hide behind anymore, and his lack of horror filled him with guilt all over again.

"Feed, Tyler," he said.

Sighing, Tyler lifted the jock's arm and bit into his wrist, swallowing down blood quickly and noisily. Then he shoved the man away and stood up.

"Let's go."

"Okay," Zacky said, wincing with pain as he stood.

"You're hurt."

"I'll be fine," Zacky said. He licked his split lip and Tyler's eyes darkened. Zacky swallowed hard, need filling him. He slid his tongue over his lip again.

"Zacky," Tyler growled softly. Zacky smiled. Tyler bent his head, smashing his mouth onto Zacky's. His tongue plunged deep and his teeth bit Zacky's lips, making him groan and pant with desire. Lust weakened his knees. He melted against his mate's strong body, kissing and rubbing his hardening cock against Tyler's groin. Tyler lifted his head, eyes dark and indecipherable, as his lips parted, and he panted for breath.

"How do you feel now?"

"A bit better," Zacky whispered. "I think I need more."

Making an incredible, strangled growling noise, Tyler hauled Zacky into his arms, carrying him far too easily and running fast up to the room. He slammed the door shut behind them and threw Zacky on the bed.

"Get your clothes off, Zacky," Tyler murmured, stripping out of his own. He was so gorgeous- pale, and strong bodied, all lean muscle and smooth skin. Tattoos decorated his chest and arms, some faded, some colorful. Zacky sighed, his cock pushing painfully at his zipper.

Tyler had already seen him naked and Zacky could feel how much his mate wanted him, but he suddenly felt painfully shy and inadequate. He hesitated despite his own want and need. Why would someone like Tyler want someone like him?

"Zacky?" Tyler sat on the bed and stroked Zacky's lips gently. "What's wrong?"

"Why choose me for a mate?"

"Oh." Tyler sighed and took Zacky's hand. "It doesn't exactly work like that."

That made Zacky feel worse. "So you *didn't* choose me," he whispered.

"I didn't say that, Zacky." Tyler licked his lips slowly, staring with a hint of wariness in his eyes. "It isn't a conscious choice. It's a connection between us. We choose each other. It's a little like the way an alpha and his pack connect, but on a much deeper level."

"Deeper?"

Tyler pressed Zacky's hand against his chest. "I feel you inside me all the time. We're connected *here*. You make my heart beat faster, just looking at you. I wanted you from the first moment I saw you. I'd never seen anyone so beautiful. Realizing that you were mine, I've never been so happy."

"Until you actually met me, huh?" Zacky whispered with a slightly bitter laugh.

"I wouldn't change anything, Zacky," Tyler said softly, lifting his hand and kissing his fingertips. Zacky's heart tightened.

"Even though I hurt you and fight with you all the time?"

"You wouldn't be you if you just did whatever I said, baby. I wouldn't want a mate who did," Tyler said with a sigh. "I just want you."

Tyler tugged Zacky closer, kissing him with utmost tenderness, his tongue lapping gently at Zacky's bruised, split lip. His fingers slipped up Zacky's chest and unbuttoned his shirt, pushing it off his shoulders. The pads of his fingertips stroked gently over Zacky's chest. Zacky gasped in shock as his nipples tightened under the firm touch of his mate's fingers. Desire flooded his body.

Tyler's tongue slid over his lips and up his cheek, licking a small cut. Tyler's lips pressed to his skin for a brief kiss before he licked lower, over a tender spot on his jaw. His fingers moved lower, unbuttoning and unzipping Zacky's slacks as he pushed inside to stroke Zacky's cock.

Zacky couldn't help a moan of want and desire. His fingers clutched at Tyler's neck and shoulders as he reacted to the gentle ministrations of his mate's mouth and fingers. Tears trickled from his eyes, and he pulled Tyler up, kissing him urgently, rocking helplessly into his palm.

"What's wrong?" Tyler asked, pulling back to frown at Zacky in concern.

"Nothing," Zacky whispered. "Just make me come, please."

Tyler nodded, sadness filling his gaze for a second before he bent his head to kiss and suck gently on Zacky's bottom lip. Tyler's fingers curled around his mate's cock, stroking harder as his thumb and forefinger teased the head. Zacky shuddered. Pleasure burned through his gut, down to his groin, and he jerked his hips, rocking his dick through his mate's hand. Tyler's touch was so good. Zacky's skin tingled. He was so needy. It was insane how much he wanted and needed Tyler. He'd almost thought of himself as asexual before and now, suddenly, he could barely survive without his mate's touch.

Gasping, he arched up, shocks of pleasure coursing through him as he came and spurted over Tyler's hand.

"Baby," Tyler breathed, burying his face in Zacky's neck. "*MäMä rakastan sua.*" His hand eased from Zacky's pants and dropped to his own crotch. He fisted his cock to stroke himself hard and fast, sucking gently on Zacky's neck. Zacky pulled away to stare, licking his lips as he watched Tyler's strong hand working his cock, pre-cum dribbling over split and bloodied knuckles.

It was too much. He slid off the bed to kneel between Tyler's legs, leaning in to lick over his mate's hand. The sweetness of his blood and the tang of pre-cum filled Zacky's mouth, and he groaned, lapping eagerly at Tyler's knuckles and over the head of his cock.

"Yes, fuck," Tyler gasped. "So good."

Moaning quietly, Zacky wrapped his hand around Tyler's fist and put his lips around the head of his mate's cock, sucking as they both stroked him hard.

"Ah fuck, fuck," Tyler groaned, hips rocking jerkily. "Coming, baby."

Zacky sucked harder as Tyler arched and shuddered. Thick, hot cum filled Zacky's mouth, and he swallowed with a happy sigh. Easing back, he laid his head on his mate's thigh, sighing again when Tyler gently stroked his hair.

"Are you hurt anywhere, Tyler?"

"Not really, but I'm up for you licking me anywhere you want, baby," Tyler said with a teasing grin. Not quite managing a smile, Zacky pushed himself to his feet.

"I just need, uh." He pointed at the other door and quickly locked himself into the tiny ensuite. While he hadn't emptied his bowels since he'd started feeding on blood, he still needed to relieve his bladder. He peed quickly, then washed his hands and face, using Tyler's toothbrush to freshen his mouth. When he let himself out, he found Tyler lying on the bed, arms crossed behind his head, staring up at the ceiling, still completely naked. His softened cock was nestled against dark, wiry hair. He looked thoughtful and sad, and Zacky stared sorrowfully. Tyler glanced at him and smiled, holding out a hand.

"Come to bed, baby."

A little hesitantly but unquestioningly, Zacky stripped off his clothes and slid into the bed, curling up against his mate who pulled him onto his chest, nuzzling into his neck.

"I wish you'd talk to me," Tyler sighed.

"I'm fine," he said with a quiet sigh.

"No, you're not."

"Tyler, please just leave it alone."

"I can't do that, Zacky. Not when I can feel your sadness. It fills me, baby."

"Don't," Zacky said quietly. "I'm going with you. Isn't that enough?"

Swallowing audibly, Tyler nodded, rubbing his nose gently against Zacky's neck and licking his skin soothingly. Zacky closed his eyes and held on tightly.

Chapter Ten

He woke with a moan, not quite of complaint, as he felt the sensation of a hot, wet tongue lapping slowly and thoroughly over the back of his neck.

The thought that Tyler was apparently grooming him should have disgusted him, but it felt so good, soothing and filling him with a sense of connection. All he could do was tip his head forward to give his mate more room, groaning low in his throat.

"Morning, my beautiful mate," Tyler murmured, leaning farther over to lick his ear gently then moving back slightly to lick along his shoulder.

"What are you doing?"

"Enjoying you."

"I haven't showered in two days."

"You didn't mind when it was your cock I was licking."

Tyler lapped over the knob of bone at the base of his neck and down to his other shoulder. Zacky shivered, skin tingling with warmth.

"Have we got time for this?"

Tyler groaned and pulled back. "Fine, I'll stop. Why don't you take a quick shower?"

Perversely, Zacky felt disappointed by his mate's withdrawal and bit back a sigh, turning over to press a soft, apologetic kiss to Tyler's lips.

"I haven't got any clean clothes."

"I'll lend you some underwear and a clean shirt for now," Tyler said, pushing himself up. "I'll buy you whatever you want once we get away."

"I beg your pardon?"

"I said I'll buy you whatever you want once we get away."

"No, I heard you, I just..."

"What?" Tyler snapped. "What the fuck is your problem now?"

Zacky reared back in shock at his mate's reaction. "Nothing. Never mind, I'll go shower," he said quietly. He got up, but Tyler grabbed his wrist.

"Wait, I'm sorry. What is it?"

"I haven't got anything," Zacky whispered.

"Zacky, that doesn't matter. You're my mate. What's mine is yours. I've been around a long time. Don't you think I'm pretty well off?"

He blinked at Tyler. "Really?"

"Yes," Tyler said with a soft laugh. "I know it doesn't look like it right now, but we all have money. Centuries of savings and investments build up, you know."

"But I can't contribute."

"That's okay. We've got all the time in the world for that."

"Okay." Zacky managed a smile, and Tyler let him go.

* * * *

After a quick shower, he dressed in the clothes Tyler had left out for him, while his mate showered in his turn. Tyler had packed up his clothes and a few bits and pieces into a backpack and duffel bag and, by dawn, they were waiting for the others to come around.

There was a knock, and they got up to answer the door.

"Come on. The sooner we get out of here the better." Matt made an abrupt gesture and walked off.

"He's not a morning person," Johnny said with an apologetic grimace.

"Come on," Matt yelled from down the corridor.

"We're coming, dear," Johnny sighed, starting after his mate.

"Are you sure it's not the fact that you *didn't* come this morning that's making him crabby?" Jimmy said with a snort.

"How would you know that?"

Jimmy laughed, "My room's right next to yours. You, my friend, are a screamer."

Johnny smiled a little dreamily and nodded. "Yeah, true, but he just does me so good. Mmm."

Zacky flushed and ducked his head, trying not to get embarrassed and failing miserably. Tyler shifted the bags and slid an arm around his waist.

"Don't pay any attention to them. They talk about sex more than girls."

"Girls talk about sex?" Zacky asked hesitantly.

"Honey, you have no idea," Tyler said with a snort.

Zacky glanced at his mate. "Honey?"

Tyler cleared his throat. "You never said anything about me calling you baby."

"You always called me baby. I suppose I didn't think about it."

Tyler frowned, looking a little upset. "I can stop."

Zacky stared at his mate. Tyler had called him baby from the beginning and, for some reason, he'd never really questioned why. He'd just accepted it. The thought of Tyler stopping made him feel terrible.

He swallowed against the sudden lump in his throat. "I don't want you to stop."

Tyler smiled shyly. "Thank you."

"Come on, come on, bags in the trunk. Let's go," Matt said, snapping his fingers at them.

"Chill out, Matt," Jimmy sighed. "Johnny, can't you do something?"

"Like what?"

"I don't know. Blow him or something."

"Jimmy, shut the fuck up and get in the car," Matt snapped.

"I could blow you if you want me to, *chéri*," Johnny said, his lips curving up into a grin, eyes twinkling.

"Oh right. While I'm driving?"

"Wouldn't be the first time," Jimmy said with a giggle.

"Yeah, and if you'll recall, we got pulled over last time. Johnny was blowing me and Tyler was fucking you in the backseat."

"Yeah," Jimmy snorted, biting his lip, trying not to laugh out loud.

Zacky stared at them, flushing in shock, trying to ignore the small surge of jealousy in the pit of his stomach. He knew there was nothing between Tyler and Jimmy now, and knew there *hadn't* been anything between them other than companionship, but Tyler was his mate. The thought of someone else touching him made Zacky want to hit something.

Tyler smiled at Zacky, stroking his arm from shoulder to wrist, then taking his hand.

"Easy, baby," he whispered, threading their fingers together. Despite the intimacy of the gesture, Zacky couldn't bring himself to pull away. He enjoyed the feeling of closeness even though he was still finding it hard to accept.

"I don't want to get arrested again," Matt said, raising his eyebrows at Jimmy. "Even if..."

Johnny smiled. "You do want me to blow you."

Matt sighed. "When do I ever not want you to, mein Herz?"

"*Je t'aime, chéri*," Johnny said softly, leaning up to kiss him gently.

Zacky blinked, shock trickling through his whole body as he stared at the pair in realization. They were actually in love with each other. They weren't together *just* because they were mated. They loved each other. They were two men who were in love, a concept he'd never accepted before.

"Look, if it'll sweeten your temper, why don't you two get in the back?" Tyler said. "I'll drive."

"Really?" Matt half-smiled, half-leered.

"Yes, come on. Let's actually get going, shall we?"

The car was a large convertible with bench seats so it was easy enough for Zacky and Jimmy to sit in the front with Tyler, leaving the back free for Matt and Johnny.

He couldn't quite believe they were actually going to have sex in the car, in front of them, but he didn't say anything. He just got in beside his mate and let Jimmy squash him in on the other side. Tyler started the engine and pulled away, and Zacky looked back with a pang of sadness. He'd never left his hometown in his entire life and, now, it seemed unlikely he'd ever return. There was no turning back now. He was Pack. He was Tyler's, and Tyler was his.

Sighing, he rested his head on his mate's shoulder and put a hand on his thigh.

"I know, baby," Tyler said softly. He twisted his head quickly to kiss Zacky's hair.

A soft moan from behind them startled Zacky, and he couldn't stop himself from glancing back. Matt and Johnny were kissing passionately. Johnny had opened Matt's pants and was stroking his short, thick cock with a tight grip, fingers only reaching about half way around, thumb swirling over the head.

Flushing with shock and embarrassment, Zacky looked away again, pressing his thighs together tightly at the stirring of desire. Having sex with Tyler was one thing, and he could just about cope with the fact that he enjoyed it, but he *could* not watch two other men and get aroused.

Jimmy, apparently, had no such qualms, leaning over the back to watch, rubbing his crotch slowly.

"Tyler," Zacky whispered. "Are they really going to--"

"Yes," Tyler said softly. "I know you're uncomfortable, but it really is a case of 'the sooner you get used to it, the better'."

"Okay," Zacky said reluctantly. He closed his eyes tightly, his head still on his mate's shoulder.

"You should just enjoy the show, dude. These two are hot," Jimmy said.

The moans were getting louder, and he heard a quiet slurp. He bit his lip, unable to stop himself from looking back again, staring at Johnny sucking eagerly on his mate's cock, the fat length stretching his lips wide. Matt was watching avidly, hips rocking, one hand clutching tightly at short, blond hair.

"Yes, Johnny, Jean, harder," Matt groaned. "You know what I want."

Moaning happily, Johnny moved faster, sucking noisily and burying his mate's cock inside his mouth so deeply that Zacky could hear him gagging. Yet Johnny didn't stop, rubbing Matt's balls through his jeans, and letting his other hand slide up under his t-shirt.

Zacky bit his lip, stomach tight with lust, his dick hardening despite himself. He shouldn't even be watching them, but he couldn't seem to help it.

Jimmy's hand was now down the front of his pants, and he was jacking himself as he watched the pair. Zacky squeezed his eyes shut again, fingers clenching around Tyler's thigh.

"Enjoying the show, baby?" Tyler asked.

"No," Zacky said, shaking his head in denial.

"It's okay if you do, Zacky."

"I don't want to," he whispered, feeling almost desperate. It was so wrong to watch, wrong to get aroused, wrong to want to. It seemed he did want to.

"It's just a part of who we are," Tyler said softly. "It's not wrong or unnatural, Zacky. They're having sex. It's normal to get horny and want to watch," Tyler sighed. "You don't have to, but it's okay if you do."

"Fuck, Jean, fuck," Matt growled suddenly, and Zacky looked back without thinking, watching the alpha thrust up hard into his mate's mouth.

Jimmy moaned quietly beside Zacky, shuddering against him. With a noisy slurp, Johnny lifted his head and swallowed, smiling and licking his lips.

"You want to come, Liebling?" Matt murmured.

"*Oui, s'il te plait*," Johnny whispered pleadingly.

Matt stroked his mate's face gently and shook his head slowly. "Not now."

"But."

"Ah ah," Matt said, raising an eyebrow at his mate. Johnny ducked his head and bit his lip.

"Sorry."

"Good boy," Matt said softly. "*Liebe dich*."

"*Je t'aime*," Johnny murmured, curling up against the large alpha.

Zacky frowned in confusion. He didn't understand why Matt would deny his mate. He leaned up to kiss Tyler's ear. "Don't you ever do that to me."

"Wouldn't dream of it," Tyler said. He turned quickly to kiss Zacky before looking back at the road. Zacky licked his lips to taste his mate and sighed quietly, his cock pulsing in his pants. It was torture, sitting close to his mate, smelling his arousal, being turned on but unable to do anything about it. The worst thing was he should have been horrified with himself, but he wasn't.

"Poor fucker," Jimmy said with a giggle.

"Shut up, Jimmy," Matt murmured, lying back against the seat lazily and hugging his mate close.

"Yeah, okay." Jimmy pulled his hand from his pants and licked his fingers clean before leaning against the door and closing his eyes.

"Are you all going to sleep?" Tyler asked.

"Uh huh."

"Lazy fuckers," Tyler sighed, shaking his head. He turned to kiss Zacky's temple and smiled. "Are you going to keep me company at least, baby?"

"Okay." Zacky shifted slightly, curling up against his mate with a sigh, trying to ignore the scent and the way it only increased his desire.

"What's wrong?"

"I don't want to feel like this."

Tyler sighed and glanced at him with darkened brown eyes. "Like what?"

"Like my life is completely out of control. Like my nature contradicts my morals," he whispered. "I don't want to want you like this all the time. I could jump you at any moment."

Tyler grinned at him. "Really?"

"It's not funny, Tyler. I can't do this."

"Yes, you can. It's not immoral to want to have sex with your mate. You didn't have sex before marriage, baby. For all intents and purposes, we *are* married, okay?"

Zacky licked his lips, jaw trembling with emotion. Tyler's words impacted his heart unexpectedly. He couldn't even begin to formulate a response or work out how to react. He felt like he wanted to cry and laugh hysterically. He had no idea what that meant or how to deal with it.

"Okay," he whispered, screwing his eyes shut so he didn't have to meet his mate's intermittent glances.

"Are you okay, Zacky?"

"Not yet," he whispered, snuggling closer to his mate for a sense of comfort. It was ironic, really, that he gained comfort from the source of his stress and distress. Sighing heavily, Tyler wrapped an arm around Zacky's shoulder, one hand on the wheel as they cruised down the highway.

* * * *

Zacky woke with a start when the car stopped. He and Tyler had replaced Matt and Johnny in the back half way through the day. Matt, and then Jimmy, took over the driving while he and Tyler dozed, catching up with their sleep.

Rubbing his eyes, Zacky sat up and looked around.

"Where are we?"

"Some hick town, somewhere," Jimmy said with a shrug.

"You don't know?"

"We just point the car and drive until we get where we're going."

"Do you know where you're going before you start?"

Tyler grinned. "Sometimes. It depends on if we're on a mission or not."

"On a mission?" Zacky asked in confusion.

"Tracing new Pack to help them."

"Oh." Zacky stared at his mate. "Are we on a mission or, uh, just pointing?"

Johnny laughed. "That's funny."

"Yeah," Jimmy agreed, snickering loudly.

"We're not on a mission this time, baby, but we have people to see, so we know where we're going."

"People or Pack?"

"Pack. Now can we get some dinner?" Matt snapped. He wrapped his arm around Johnny and glared at him.

"Dinner?" Zacky gasped. "That's people you're talking about."

Matt shook his head. "No, let me make that very clear to you, Zacky. That's food. You have to make the distinction or you won't survive. Even though we don't kill, you have to get that clear in your mind, okay?"

A little taken aback, Zacky moved closer to Tyler.

"He's right, Zacky. People are food," Tyler said softly. "If you think of it any other way, you won't be able to feed, okay?"

"I'll try. I just don't like the idea." He stopped and sighed. "Do we really have to call it hunting?"

"Call it whatever you want. Can we just get on with it?" Matt sighed. "I'm starving."

"We booking into the motel first?" Jimmy asked.

"Yeah, you volunteering?"

Jimmy made a rude noise. "Ugh, okay. Am I paying?"

"No. Here, take my credit card," Tyler said, digging in his pocket. "Get three double rooms. No porn this time."

"Spoilsport," Jimmy muttered. He took the card from Tyler and headed towards the motel lobby.

"See you in the bar," Matt yelled after him. Jimmy waved but didn't look back. "Let's go, Liebling." With his arm still wrapped around Johnny's shoulders, Matt led the way to the bar that was situated a little way down the strip. Zacky frowned after them.

"If we're in some hick town, is it a good plan to be so obvious? I mean, I might be generalizing, but aren't they going to attract unfavorable attention going into a small town bar with their arms around each other?"

"Unfavorable attention?" Tyler whispered, his lips trembling with obvious amusement.

"Don't laugh at me," Zacky whispered.

"I'm sorry, baby, but that's the idea. It's easier to feed from the assholes, Zacky," Tyler said softly.

"Oh." Zacky blinked and frowned, staring down at the sidewalk as they walked. He wasn't sure whether feeding from assholes made it easier if they had to bait them first.

"We don't have to do it that way. It just works for Matt and Johnny," Tyler said, stroking the back of Zacky's neck gently. "We can find our own way."

"Yeah, I think I'd prefer that."

"For tonight, we'll just see what happens. Come on."

Zacky followed Tyler into the bar after the other pair, flinching at the looks they were getting already. Matt walked up to the bar and sat down. Johnny stood behind him and draped himself over his mate's back.

"Some Jack, Liebchen?"

"*Oui, merci mon amour.*"

"Ty?"

"Beer," Tyler said with a nod, sitting next to him.

"Zacky?"

Zacky shifted awkwardly on his feet. It was a small, dingy place, dark with a long bar down one wall, a pool table at the back, and a few scattered tables up front. Most of the patrons were old trucker types, sitting with shared jugs of beer and smoking. The few younger guys seemed to congregate around the pool table. He'd never been in a bar before, and it made him feel extremely uncomfortable.

"Zacky, sit down," Tyler said softly, patting the stool next to him. Nodding, Zacky sat and cleared his throat.

"Just water please, Matt."

"Polite isn't he, your cub?" Matt snorted.

"Don't call me 'cub'."

"ID," the barman said, wrinkling his nose at them. Matt started to laugh, twisting his head to nuzzle Johnny's cheek.

"He wants ID, Liebchen."

Chuckling quietly, Johnny took his wallet out of his back pocket and slipped two ID cards from it to show the bartender.

"Do you find this funny?" The man growled, checking the cards carefully.

"Just a private joke," Matt said, glancing at Tyler and winking.

"And, you. You funny guys too?"

Tyler had already pulled out his card, and he nodded at Zacky to do the same.

Reluctantly, Zacky pulled out his ID and showed it to the barman.

"How convenient. You're all twenty-one."

Johnny snorted and buried his face in Matt's neck. They were drawing a lot of attention, and Zacky shifted closer to Tyler nervously. He knew by now that they could easily defend themselves, but he hated being stared at.

The barman served them all, taking their money almost suspiciously.

"What the fuck is taking Jimmy so long?" Matt said, downing a shot of Jack Daniels quickly.

"He's not going to miss out on a drink, Matt. He won't be long," Tyler said, sipping his beer. "You sure you only want water, Zacky?"

"I don't drink," Zacky said quietly.

"We can, you know," Tyler whispered. "It doesn't affect us. Something to do with our metabolism I think."

"How come we can drink other things but not eat other things?"

"I don't know. Maybe because it's liquid." Tyler shrugged. "Do you want to try some of my beer?"

"Okay." Hesitantly, Zacky took a sip. It was bitter, and he grimaced, forcing himself to swallow quickly.

"That's disgusting. Why would anyone drink that?" He exclaimed.

"It's an acquired taste," Johnny said with a soft smile.

"Like cum," Jimmy said with a snicker from behind.

"That's not true." Zacky flushed, realizing what he'd said, horrified with himself for even thinking it.

"Well, well. You do that innocent thing very convincingly."

"That's because he is innocent," Tyler said firmly.

Jimmy snorted. "Right, because innocent little boys regularly suck cock."

"Hey!" Tyler turned and smacked Jimmy hard. "That's enough mouth from you."

"Ow, jeez. Okay, touchy."

Cheeks hot and red with humiliation, Zacky stared down at the bar.

"Baby," Tyler said softly, touching his arm. Zacky pulled back and turned away.

"I think I'm just going to go to the motel. Jimmy, may I have a key?" he whispered.

"Sure," Jimmy sighed, holding one out. "Dude, you know I was only teasing right? I mean, I'm really kinda impressed."

"Jimmy, leave it," Tyler said sharply. "Zacky, do you want me to come with you?"

He did, desperately, but he couldn't let himself admit it, so he shook his head. "I want to be alone," he whispered, heading for the door.

"Don't forget we need to eat," Tyler said. The hurt in his voice washed through Zacky and brought tears to his eyes. He nodded and left the bar hurriedly, before he could give into the urge to go back to his mate.

Chapter Eleven

Walking back towards the motel, Zacky wrapped his arms around his chest, trying to suppress the chill he felt walking away from his mate. It didn't feel right, and he was getting very hungry. He knew they had to feed, but he couldn't quite bring himself to bait. It felt wrong.

He glanced back, hoping Tyler was following. He wasn't, but two men appeared to be. Swallowing hard, he sped up, heart beating faster when they sped up after him.

"Tyler, now is not the time to actually listen to me," he muttered to himself with a snort as he started to run. He reached the motel fast enough to startle himself and found his room, letting himself in and locking the door, leaning back against it.

Fists pounded against the door.

"Come on, pretty boy. Let us in, and we won't hurt you," one of the strange men shouted.

"Hurt *him*?" Tyler's voice cut through his fear, and Zacky breathed a sigh of relief. His mate laughed. "That's a good one."

"Maybe we'll hurt you instead."

"Zacky, open the door," Tyler grunted. Zacky turned and quickly opened the door. Tyler had both men by their necks, and he shoved them into the room.

"I thought you didn't want to play with your food, baby."

"Very funny," Zacky said, glaring at his mate. One of the men broke free suddenly, lunging at him. Zacky instinctively twisted out of the way, knocking the man to the ground. Tyler grinned at him.

"Nice move."

Zacky stared down at the unconscious man in horror. "Oh no, what am I doing, Tyler?"

Tyler sighed, turning and clamping his hand around the second man's throat. "You're just doing what comes naturally. Look, you just knocked him out. If you think about it, you caused him the least amount of pain he could have suffered if you'd fought him."

"Yeah but--"

"Just feed. You have to get used to this, or we'll die."

Zacky stared at his mate in confusion and fear. "We?"

"If you don't feed, you'll end up feeding on me like before. You'll weaken us both until we die or we're killed," Tyler said with a pained grimace. The man Tyler was holding finally passed out, and he let him drop to the floor. "Baby, we can't go through this every time. Please feed."

Taking a deep breath, Zacky closed his eyes for a moment and nodded. "Okay."

"Thank you." Tyler knelt down by one man, and Zacky knelt by the other, taking his wrist. He *was* hungry. He could smell the blood pumping through the unconscious man's body, could hear it, and feel the warmth of it. Meeting Tyler's eyes, he lifted the man's wrist to his lips and bit down. Hot blood gushed into his mouth, flooding him with such pure pleasure that he wondered why he'd even objected. Warmth spread downwards, his hunger turning into lust as he swallowed and watched his mate lick and suck the other man's wrist. Tyler's eyes were dark and heated as he stared back.

Suddenly, Tyler let go and leaned over so he was on all fours. Licking blood from his lips, Tyler crawled slowly across the floor, the intensity of Tyler's gaze burning into him.

Swallowing hard, Zacky dropped the man's wrist and slipped his tongue over his bottom lip to lick up the blood. Breathing heavily, cock hardening painfully, he didn't move. He was transfixed by his mate's eyes. Reaching him, Tyler leaned up and nuzzled under Zacky's neck gently. Licking up his throat and nipping his jaw, Tyler made a soft, whining noise. Zacky grunted, sparks shooting through his nerves. He tipped his head back to give Tyler more room.

Moaning softly, Tyler pressed soft, sucking kisses over Zacky's neck and shoulder, unbuttoning his shirt and pushing it off. Trembling with need, his skin tingling, Zacky ripped it off his arms and lifted them to grasp long, soft hair. He tugged Tyler up into a hard kiss, plunging his tongue between his lips to search out the taste of blood in his mouth.

Strong fingers stroked Zacky's skin, gently sliding over his chest, thumbs smoothing over his nipples. He gasped softly and tugged his mate closer, until Tyler was straddling his lap and kissing him passionately. His hands moved down to grasp Tyler's hips. He needed more contact, needed to feel skin, and he pulled back enough to tug at his mate's t-shirt.

Tyler leaned back and yanked it over his head, putting his arms straight back around him, pulling him close and kissing him again. Tyler's skin was warm and smooth, and it felt so good that Zacky clung tighter, sliding his hands up and down his mate's back to feel the silkiness under his fingertips. Tyler hauled them both to their feet, walking them slowly back towards the bed as he unbuttoned and unzipped both of their pants without breaking the kiss.

Zacky felt warm and needy. Lust made him feel empty, and he clutched at Tyler's hair, kissing him harder, sucking on his mate's lip, then slashing it open with his teeth. Tyler groaned and bucked against him as Zacky sucked his mate's gorgeous, sweet blood into his mouth. His cock pulsed with need, and he helped Tyler push their pants and underwear off before pulling him onto the bed.

"God, Zacky," Tyler whispered, lifting his head to stare down at him. "You're so beautiful. I want you so bad."

"Please," Zacky moaned, pulling his mate down on top of him. He gasped at the feel of Tyler's thick, hard cock pressed into his groin, sliding against his erection as he rocked over him and kissed him again. Tyler bit hard on Zacky's lip, and the pain shot need harder through his nerves. Tyler sucked on the gash and thrust harder against him. Pre-cum slickened their movements, and they slid together faster until he started to feel desperate.

He wrenched Tyler's head back and licked his bleeding lip.

"I need you," Zacky whispered. Rearing back, Tyler knelt between his legs and smiled.

"Say it."

"No," Zacky breathed, dropping his hand to his cock and stroking slowly as he watched his mate carefully.

"Oh fuck," Tyler whispered, his cock jerking, a trickle of pre-cum sliding down his shaft. "Say it, Zacky. I want you to."

"No," Zacky said again. He lifted his other hand to his mouth and sucked his fingertips, wetting them as thoroughly as he could. He kept his

gaze locked on Tyler as he reached down, bent his legs back, and pushed his fingers inside himself with a groan.

"Oh yeah," Tyler groaned. "Fuck, that's hot. Oh fuck, I want you." Tyler spat into his hand and spread saliva and pre-cum thoroughly over his beautifully hard cock. He pulled Zacky's fingers free and Zacky groaned at the sudden lack of stretch. Tyler dipped down and kissed him again, cock pushing against his ass insistently.

"Zacky, please say it," Tyler whispered, sliding the head of his erection up and down Zacky's hole, teasing him unbearably.

"Why?"

"Because it really turns me on, baby," Tyler gasped.

"If I say it, will you..." Zacky stopped and grinned. He couldn't seem to help the urge to tease despite his need to be filled.

"Will I what?" Tyler murmured with a strained voice. His cock pushed a tiny amount inside Zacky, stretching him open.

"Oh my, Tyler," he groaned, the burn making him shudder. It was going to hurt without proper lube, but he didn't care.

"If you say it, will I *what*?" Tyler said again more insistently, holding them both still, almost hovering, holding himself up, his lips barely brushing Zacky's. They were teasing each other, but Zacky couldn't take it anymore.

"If I say it," Zacky lifted up and bit his mate's earlobe, "will you fuck me hard?"

Tyler's eyelids fluttered, and he groaned loudly, plunging deep and hard into Zacky's body. Zacky cried out, pain and pleasure tore through him as he clutched at his mate's shoulders and wrapped his legs around his hips. Tyler pulled out almost all the way then thrust into Zacky even harder. Zacky cried out again, biting down on his own lip until he could taste blood. He dragged Tyler on top of him, rocking his cock into his mate's solid stomach, his ass down into his mate's thrusts.

"That feels... Oh fuck, Zacky," Tyler groaned. He kissed Zacky almost tenderly in contrast to the fast, hard thrusts of cock plunging inside him, stretching him beautifully. "So fucking good."

"Tyler," Zacky groaned. He clutched at his mate, digging his fingers into his back, as he clenched down hard around the thick length inside him. "Harder."

Gripping Zacky's hips tightly, Tyler rolled them over so Zacky was straddling him. Zacky gasped as Tyler's cock pushed even deeper inside his body.

"Now you can fuck yourself as hard as you want, baby." Tyler grinned and wrapped his hand around Zacky's cock, stroking him tightly. Zacky groaned and leaned forward, putting his hands on Tyler's chest and thrusting into his mate's fist. The movement rocked his ass over Tyler's cock, and he shivered with sparks of pleasure. He thrust back, hard, impaling himself as deep as he could, shuddering happily.

"Ty, fuck yes," he groaned. He rocked harder and faster between fist and cock until his climax ripped through his body, and he came over his mate's stomach.

"Oh God, yes. That's hot," Tyler panted, moving both hands to Zacky's hips and rocking him up and down his dick. Aftershocks of pleasure rippled through Zacky's body, and he smiled happily, sliding his fingers in his cum, and meeting dark brown eyes as he licked them clean.

"Fuck!" Tyler gasped and arched up. Tyler's hips jerked and Zacky was filled with the heat of his cum. He flopped forward onto his mate's chest, panting softly, kissing the sweat-slick skin under his mouth and inhaling the scent of satiation. Sighing, Zacky gently stroked Tyler's chest, tracing the line of one of his tattoos.

"Why do you have tattoos?"

"I got them because they were traditional where I grew up. Then, I got them because they're a part of who I am. Each one I get makes me more me."

"That's really beautiful," Zacky whispered. He'd been brought up to think that tattoos were disgusting, for convicts and sailors, and that no decent person would have them, but Tyler's were actually quite beautiful. Intricate and detailed symbols he didn't recognize spread from shoulder to shoulder, across his mate's chest. Wolf-like creatures descended down one arm, and a large tree wound its way down the other, branches and leaves wrapped around Tyler's entire shoulder, the trunk extending most of the way down his arm, and the roots reaching to his wrist.

"Do they mean anything?"

"Yes. There's a reason, a story, for each one, but it's hard for me." Tyler stopped abruptly and shook his head. "It's complicated."

"Oh." Zacky felt a little hurt and sad that Tyler wasn't going to share something so personal with him, but then why should he, when Zacky barely trusted him with anything? He frowned at the sudden realization that that actually wasn't true anymore. He trusted Tyler, almost completely, but he had no idea how to trust his own feelings or even how to express them.

"It really is complicated. It'll be easier when we actually have some time to sit down and really talk," Tyler said softly, stroking his hair gently.

"Why haven't we got time now?"

"We have things to do."

"Like what?"

"Well, shower for a start. Then, we have to move them." Tyler pointed over the edge of the bed at the two unconscious forms.

Zacky stared at the men. "I didn't even do anything. They just started chasing me."

"You were on your own. They probably wanted to mug you." Tyler's gaze dropped. "I'm not sorry I followed you. I know you said you wanted to be alone but--"

"I didn't mean it," Zacky admitted softly. "I was embarrassed. I just needed to get out of there, you know? I guess I'm used to being alone."

Tyler sat up, arms wrapping around him loosely. "You're not alone anymore, Zacky. You're mine now, and I'll never leave you."

"Yeah," Zacky sighed, looking down.

"What?" Tyler said with a tone of exasperation and wariness. "What is it?"

"You're stuck with me, that's all. I wouldn't want to be stuck with me."

"Zacky." Tyler shook his head. "I'm not stuck with you. Do you think of yourself as stuck with me?"

He stared at his mate thoughtfully. *Stuck* with Tyler? Maybe he should have thought that way, but he was starting to realize that he hadn't for a while. "No," Zacky whispered, his cheeks heating up a little.

"Well, that's a relief," Tyler said with a wry smile. "I'm not stuck with you. I need you. I want you, I..." He stopped abruptly, sadness flicking through his eyes momentarily. "Come on, shower."

"I still haven't got any clean clothes."

"I know, but we can sort that out as soon as we get to New Orleans."

Zacky frowned a little worriedly. He'd heard terrible things about New Orleans, admittedly mostly from his father, but still. "Isn't it a dangerous place?"

"Yes, it can be, especially around Mardi Gras. Although, that can be fun too."

Zacky swallowed hard, feeling nervous. Mardi Gras was a licentious festival of sin. How could it be fun?

Tyler stared at him. "I need you to be careful. There could be hunters." Tyler put a hand on Zacky's arm, squeezing, his fingers dug into Zacky's flesh painfully.

"Tyler, you're hurting me."

"Baby," Tyler gasped. "I'm sorry, but it can be dangerous, and I don't want to lose you. I've just found you."

"I'll be careful. How is it fun?"

"Lots of people partying, getting drunk, and having a good time? It's good feeding for a start. Nobody notices the odd sip here or there."

Zacky lifted up carefully, suppressing a feeling of loss as Tyler's softened cock slipped out of his body. Tyler sat up with him.

"If it's good feeding, won't there be other Pack there?" Zacky asked.

"Yes, but that's why we're going. It's an annual meeting place for us."

"Oh." Zacky stared down at his lap, his nervousness increasing along with his feelings of inadequacy.

"Baby, it'll be fine. It'll be good for you to meet other Pack," Tyler said, smiling and kissing his cheek. "Why don't you go take a shower? I'll get you some clean underwear."

"Okay, thank you." Zacky got up and walked towards the bathroom, stopping and looking around when Tyler made a small noise of pleasure. "What?"

"You just walked across the room naked, baby," Tyler said, beaming. Zacky blinked and looked down at himself, flushing at his naked body. It hadn't even occurred to him to cover up like he normally would have. He moved his hands down to cover his groin.

"Don't, Zacky. I like seeing your body," Tyler said softly. "It's a close second to touching your body."

Tyler's voice was husky and a little strained. It washed desire through Zacky. His groin twinged with renewed need. Groaning quietly, he escaped

into the bathroom before he could run back to the bed and climb on top of his mate. He still wasn't quite ready to admit that he wanted and needed Tyler all the time, not just when they fed, not just when Tyler provoked him.

Zacky leaned against the cold tiles, watching the water streak down his front, his cock hardening despite himself, just thinking about the way his mate had looked at him. There was no doubt in his mind that Tyler wanted him as much as he needed him. That distinction made him feel good but also guilty.

Sighing, he ignored his erection with difficulty, quickly washed, and got out of the shower. He dried off and wrapped the towel around his waist before leaving the bathroom. Tyler had put on some boxers and got the bags from the car, digging through them to find clean clothes for them both. Tyler glanced over at him and smirked. Zacky found himself wanting to cover up again.

"What?"

"Happy to see me?" Tyler chuckled, pointing at Zacky's groin. His dick was still hard, tenting the towel. Zacky glared at his mate.

"Maybe."

Tyler's smirk faded, and his brown eyes widened. "Really?"

Zacky smiled shyly and shrugged. "Yeah, I guess."

Tyler looked a little flustered, and Zacky felt an unexpected surge of warm emotion that made him unable to resist crossing the room. He wrapped his arms around his mate and kissed him softly. Tyler smiled and kissed him back, cupping his cheek gently as their tongues twined. It was a tender kiss that made Zacky's heart pound and tears prick his eyes. It felt so right and good, it was overwhelming.

He pulled back with a sigh and turned away, quickly replacing the towel with boxers and pulling on slacks and a t-shirt.

"Zacky," Tyler started with a sigh.

"Not now," Zacky whispered pleadingly, too overwhelmed by his emotions to be too close to his mate. "Can we just get rid of those guys so we can go to sleep?"

"Fine." Tyler sighed again and yanked on his jeans, t-shirt, and boots. He crouched down by one of the unconscious men and hauled him over his shoulder. "Get the other one, will you?"

"Okay." Grimacing in disgust, Zacky picked up the man he'd fed from, slung him over his shoulder with little difficulty, and followed Tyler from the room. "Aren't you worried about being seen?"

"We're just going to sneak them around the corner. It'll be fine."

Zacky stared at his mate. "What if they get robbed or something while they're unconscious?"

"Are you kidding?" Tyler said with a loud snort, glancing back. "Who cares? Serves them right for trying to attack you, Zacky. Never forget that they brought it upon themselves."

"That's not very charitable, is it?" Zacky said softly.

"Well, what do you suggest? Should we drive the fuckers home?"

"Well..."

"No. No way, Zacky."

"Why not? We can afford to be charitable. We have a distinct advantage over them, you know," he said, frowning at his mate.

"But they didn't know that," Tyler snapped. "They knew it was two against one, and they would have hurt you, robbed you, and quite possibly raped you, without thinking twice. They certainly wouldn't have taken you home afterwards."

"That's not the point, Tyler. The point is that we don't do what they might have done, because we're better than that, aren't we?"

Tyler sighed heavily and stopped in the parking lot. "You're serious, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Man," Tyler sighed. "Matt is going to die laughing over this."

"Is that a yes?"

"Yes." Tyler sighed again and shook his head. "Check his pockets for a wallet and keys."

"Why keys?"

"For their car."

Zacky put the man he was carrying down and searched through his pockets as Tyler did the same.

"A ha! Keys. Okay, wallet. Come on then."

"Wait. If we drive them home in their car, how do we get back?"

Tyler glared at him. "This was your idea."

"We should just take our car," Zacky said.

"It's Matt's car, and I am not going to ask him for the keys and explain what we're doing," Tyler said, still glaring.

"For goodness' sake, Tyler." Zacky crossed his arms over his chest, stuck out his chin stubbornly, and glared at his mate. "We're taking the car. I'll ask Matt for the keys." He started towards the motel room next to theirs.

"No, you will not." Tyler ran after him, grabbing his arm and spinning him around. "Zacky, I said no."

"So? Look, I know alpha's word is law but this is stupid. I'm allowed to disagree with you, aren't I? Will you just let me do this so I don't feel so bad?"

"I'm never gonna win with you, am I?" Tyler muttered, sighing heavily.

Zacky almost managed a smile. "It's not about winning. It's about me being right."

"Oh is that so?" Tyler said with a snort, tugging Zacky into his arms.

"Yeah." This time Zacky smiled and leaned up for a quick kiss. "Now, go ask Matt for the keys."

Tyler pouted. "I thought you were going to ask him."

Zacky raised an eyebrow.

"Okay, okay, I'm going. Can you put them in the car?"

"Sure."

Zacky went back to the car and hoisted the two men into the back, listening as Tyler hammered on Matt and Johnny's door.

"Ty, what the fuck?" Matt snapped, as he yanked the door open. "We're kinda in the middle of fucking, you know?"

"Yeah, sorry," Tyler said. "I need the car keys."

"What the fuck for?"

"We're going for a drive."

"I repeat, what the fuck for?"

"Just give me the keys," Tyler snapped.

"Not till you tell me why."

"I'm just doing something for Zacky, okay? Don't be a dick. The sooner you give me the keys, the sooner you can get back to Johnny."

"Fine, fucking fine, here."

"Thank you." Tyler stalked back to the car and jangled the keys. "Happy now?"

Zacky smiled. "Yes."

His mate shook his head, lips quirking into a smile. "Well, I suppose that's all right then."

"Thank you, Tyler," Zacky whispered, putting a hand on his mate's shoulder and leaning up to kiss him.

"You're welcome. Come on." Tyler got behind the wheel, and Zacky got in the front next to him, curling up against him with a sigh.

They drove in silence for a while, Tyler trying to work out where they were going. Zacky paid no attention. He couldn't drive anyway, so it made no difference to him. Truthfully, he wanted to get rid of the evidence of his feeding and go to sleep with Tyler's arms wrapped around him. He was starting to wonder how he'd ever managed to sleep alone. He sighed quietly and turned his head to bury his face in Tyler's neck.

"What is it, baby?"

"I'm so tired of not knowing how I feel about anything anymore."

"I wish you could just be happy knowing who and what you are. You're not alone, baby."

"I'm glad I'm not alone," Zacky whispered, sliding an arm around Tyler's waist.

"Me too," Tyler said softly. "I've waited such a long time for you."

"I'm sorry I'm giving you such a hard time."

Tyler twisted to quickly kiss his forehead. "You're giving yourself a hard time. I just want you. Can't you just be yourself?"

"I don't know who that is, Tyler."

"I know that you're strong, and smart, and kind." Tyler sighed, pulling him closer. The warmth and solidity soothed Zacky immeasurably. "And brave, and sexy, and sweet."

Flushing hotly, Zacky shook his head. "Don't, I'm not."

Tyler chuckled. "And modest, and I'm happy."

"That's something," Zacky said with a soft smile, kissing his mate's cheek.

"Right, here we are." Tyler parked the car and got out, looking around. They were in a rundown neighborhood, the street full of decrepit wooden houses covered in graffiti and peeling paint. The house they'd parked in front of had a large porch, and Tyler nodded.

"We'll leave them both here, okay? They'll be safe enough."

"Okay." Zacky got out of the car and hoisted one of the men over his shoulder. They carried both men to the porch, and he tripped, dropping his load onto the floor which creaked ominously. They both froze as lights switched on in the house.

"Shit, Zacky."

"I'm sorry!"

"Let's get out of here," Tyler said. He grabbed Zacky's hand and yanked him towards the car. The door of the house opened and a large woman shuffled out. Seeing the two unconscious men, she started screaming, and Tyler and Zacky dived into the car. Tyler started the engine hurriedly and pulled away from the curb in a screech of tires.

"Shit, shit!" Tyler smacked the steering wheel hard. "Now we're gonna have to leave, and I'm going to have to tell Matt why."

Zacky frowned in confusion. "You're older than Matt. You're an alpha. Why does it matter to you what he thinks?"

"It's not that it matters what he thinks exactly, but we're both alphas. Even though I'm older than him, it's a matter of pride because I run with his pack, and it's a bit of a reversal."

"What do you mean?"

"New alphas run with the pack of the alpha they're turned by, until they form their own pack. They don't expect to have that alpha then run with *them*."

"Why did you stay after you healed then?" Zacky asked softly.

Tyler shrugged. "Safety in numbers, and I trust Matt with my life."

"Why?" Zacky asked, frowning curiously.

Tyler sighed and glanced at him. "His parents were killed by a mob when he was eleven, because his village decided he was a devil child. When we found him a year later, he was still running. We took him in."

"You raised him?"

"Yeah."

"But, you and he..." Zacky grimaced in distaste.

"Yes, when he was much, *much* older, Zacky. I'm not his father, and we all raised him."

"That's still odd."

"Zacky, we're all related," Tyler said with a sigh.

"We?" He stared at his mate in confusion. "What?"

"We all come from the same family line. That's why your great uncle was born Pack."

"Did you know him?"

Tyler grimaced. "Yes, I knew him."

"Really?" Zacky gasped. "Why didn't you ever tell me?"

"He died before you were even born."

"I thought maybe he was one of the rogues."

"Because your grandmother was scared of him?"

Zacky nodded. "Yeah."

"No, he was bitter but not rogue. I didn't know him that well. Another alpha turned him."

"There's more to this than you're telling me," Zacky whispered, trying to suppress his hurt that Tyler didn't quite trust him. It wasn't his mate's fault, after all, but it felt like every time he thought he knew what was going on, it turned out there was more to know.

"Baby, it's not like I'm deliberately withholding things from you. There's so *much* to tell," Tyler sighed. "I'll try and explain more when we're back on the road but not now, okay?"

"Promise me," Zacky whispered as they pulled into the motel lot.

"I promise. Will you get the stuff from our room? I'll get the others."

"Okay, sure." Zacky got out of the car and hurried to the room, quickly grabbing everything, shoving it into the bags, and carrying it back to the car. He could hear shouting and glanced at Johnny and Jimmy who were both hurrying over with their bags.

"Don't worry," Johnny said, smiling. "Matt's pissed, but he'll get over it."

"Yeah, he always does," Jimmy agreed with a nod.

"I can't believe you did something so fucking stupid!" Matt yelled.

"Well, I did. It's done, so can we just go?"

"You always taught me to never risk exposure," Matt continued to rant. "Ever since you found that fucking cub, you've been completely irrational."

"You're one to talk," Tyler snorted, stalking back towards the car. "Just leave Zacky out of this, okay?"

"Why?" Matt snarled. "It was *his* idea wasn't it? You're too fucking pussy whipped to say no to him. You're the fucking alpha. Act like it."

Stopping abruptly, Tyler straightened, eyes flashing with fury. "Do not *push* me, Matthias."

Matt stopped just behind Tyler, lips pressed together in anger. "I hate it when you call me that."

"I know, but it makes you stop, doesn't it?"

"Yeah," Matt said resentfully, glaring.

"Just get in the car. I'll drive."

"Well, it's only fair considering it's not my fault we have to leave." Matt glared at Zacky making him flinch.

"I said leave him out of it," Tyler said quietly. "Come on, baby, get in the front with me."

Nodding, Zacky slid into the front, next to his mate. Jimmy squashed in next to him, while Matt and Johnny got in the back and snuggled up together.

Tyler pulled out of the lot and headed straight for the highway, not speeding so they wouldn't get pulled over.

"Did you really take your food home?" Jimmy asked.

"I couldn't just dump them," Zacky whispered. "It would make me feel like I was as bad as them."

"I hate to break it to you, dude, but we're worse than them."

"No, we're not," Tyler said quietly. "More dangerous, maybe, but not worse."

Jimmy sighed. "Yeah, I guess you're right but food is food. You have to remember that."

"I'll try," Zacky said quietly, curling up against Tyler and sliding his arm around his waist.

"Thank you, baby," Tyler said, twisting to kiss his forehead. They sat in silence for a while and soon the car was filled with gentle snoring from the other three Pack.

"So are you going to tell me about the others?"

Tyler sighed. "The reason we always try our best to be there when Pack come of age isn't just to teach them about the rules. It's about the blood."

"What about it?"

"When we hit twenty-one and become fully mature, the transition is supposed to be made through Pack blood," Tyler said with a grimace. "If we don't get there in time, and their first taste of blood is human, they are lost to us. They become rogues- wild, uncontrollable, vicious killers. If they're alphas, they can force their pack to do anything."

"Are you sure my great uncle wasn't like that?"

"Yes, I'm sure."

"Then why was my grandmother so scared? Why did she hate me?" Zacky whispered, his grandmother's rejection even more painful. It made him feel even more like he didn't belong. He'd been bad as a human and, now, he was bad at being Pack. He only seemed to hurt the people he loved.

"She didn't understand, baby. It's not your fault her uncle was an ass. Nothing like Connor, but he liked being powerful, liked to scare people. It's not your fault, okay?"

"Okay." Zacky forced a smile and buried his face in Tyler's neck, closing his eyes.

"*Rakastan sua*," Tyler whispered.

"Do you?" Matt said quietly from behind them. He felt Tyler glance into the rearview mirror and nod.

"Of course I do."

Matt sighed heavily. "Of course. I guess I knew that."

Zacky lifted his head to look at his mate. "You do what?"

Tyler pressed his lips together tightly and shook his head.

"Tell me."

"Zacky, seriously, leave it alone," Matt said, his voice almost gentle. He glanced back at the large alpha in surprise and raised an eyebrow.

"Tyler, you promised to tell me everything," Zacky said softly.

"Not this!" Tyler snapped angrily.

Zacky reared back in shock at Tyler's reaction and the sense of frustration, pain, uncertainty, and fear that he felt from his mate.

"Okay," Zacky whispered, sitting straight up between Tyler and Jimmy, arms wrapped around his chest as he tried to hold himself away from them both. He was tired and just as frustrated as his mate. Neither of them had it easy, but it might help if Zacky actually knew all the facts. He didn't understand why Tyler was so resistant to telling him what he'd said.

"Dude, relax. I can't sleep with you all tense next to me like that," Jimmy sighed, shoving Zacky back against Tyler. His mate felt too good and warm, smelled too nice to resist. Leaning against him again, Zacky put a tentative hand on Tyler's thigh, sighing in relief when his mate wrapped his arm around him and pulled him in tight.

"Get some sleep, Zacky."

"What about you? You need to sleep too."

"I'll take over in a few hours," Matt said sleepily.

"Thanks," Zacky whispered.

Chapter Twelve

"We're here."

Zacky bolted upright, blinking in surprise and unable to breathe momentarily.

"Baby? You okay?"

"I... Yeah," he said, relaxing slowly back against his mate. "I think I was having a bad dream." He frowned but could only remember mad, green, laughing eyes and flames everywhere.

"You think?" Jimmy said with a snort.

"Well, I can't remember now." Zacky snapped, feeling a little edgy.

"Whoa, chill out, man. I was just asking."

"Sorry."

"Are you sure you're okay, Zacky?" Tyler whispered.

"Yeah, I just feel out of sorts." He glanced around and frowned. "Why are we at the mall?"

"So you can get some clothes and things," Tyler said. "Matt and I have a meeting, so we'll pick you, Jimmy and Johnny up later."

"Oh, okay." Zacky pushed aside a surprisingly intense feeling of disappointment and nodded. It wouldn't be a bad idea to try and spend time away from his mate. Maybe he'd be able to think straight without Tyler's presence clouding his judgment. He could try and work out how he really felt about everything.

"Matt, chéri, can I get another piercing, please?" Johnny asked, his tone just the right side of wheedling.

Matt smiled indulgently. "What were you thinking of getting, mein Herz?"

"Nipple."

Leering at his mate, Matt nodded. "Mmm, I enjoyed that one last time. Very well."

"*Merçi, mon amour.*" Johnny kissed Matt again, grinning happily.

"Okay, Zacky, here's my credit card. Get anything you want. Just remember we have to travel light," Tyler said.

Zacky took the card a little reluctantly and nodded.

"See you later, baby." Tyler kissed him gently. Then Zacky, Johnny, and Jimmy got out of the car. The other two grabbed an arm each and led Zacky into the mall, both bouncing a little excitedly.

"So, where to, Zacky?"

He looked around, feeling a little overwhelmed. He'd never actually been into a proper mall before. "I don't know really. My mom used to get my clothes for me."

"Oh, Jimmy," Johnny said, eyes twinkling. "I feel a makeover coming on."

"Oh fucking rad idea, man," Jimmy said with an enthusiastic nod.

"Makeover?" Zacky whispered, feeling distinctly nervous.

"Put yourself in the hands of the master, dude. I guarantee you Tyler will want to eat you alive."

"Eat me alive?" Zacky breathed, chest tightening with sudden desire.

"Only in the very good way," Jimmy said with a leer.

"Oh." Zacky swallowed, trying not to react to the thought, trying to ignore the fact that the idea turned him on. This was exactly why he needed time away from Tyler, yet it seemed he couldn't escape him.

"Pretty please," Johnny said, batting his eyelashes.

Zacky couldn't help a smile and nod. "Okay."

"Excellent!" They took his arms again. "First stop, jeans. You definitely need jeans."

Inside the store, Johnny started grabbing pairs, seemingly at random, and throwing them at Zacky until he staggered under a mountain of denim and couldn't see anymore. They guided him to the changing area.

"Try them on."

Zacky was aghast. "All of them?"

"Yes. Come on, we haven't got all day."

With a sigh, he started to try on pair of jeans after pair of jeans, parading himself in front of the other two men. Finally, Johnny picked two pairs- one black, one navy- that he claimed made Zacky look hot, adding two belts. Then, they started all over again with button-down shirts, piling them high

in Zacky's arms and making him try them all on until he'd picked out several.

"We're getting you some underwear too," Johnny said, picking up a pack of briefs and staring at them before shaking his head and putting them back. "Boxers."

"I prefer briefs."

"Really?" Johnny said with a frown. "Well, all right." He picked up the briefs again and pulled a pair out, then did the same with a pack of socks. "Go change."

With a sigh, Zacky went back to the changing room and swapped his slacks, borrowed t-shirt, and underwear for the new briefs, socks, jeans, and shirt. Putting his shoes back on, he went back out to the others.

"Are we done now?" he asked hopefully. He felt exhausted.

"No way. You need t-shirts, some boots, a jacket, hats..."

He stared at Johnny in horror. "Any chance we can do it all in here?"

Pouting just a little, Johnny sighed and nodded. "Fine, spoilsport. Jimmy, what do you think?"

"Well, I guess. Not boots though. He needs good boots."

"Definitely." Johnny nodded decisively. "Come on then."

With a heavy sigh, Zacky followed Johnny around the store again, holding out his arms for t-shirts, jackets and hats.

"Try it all on?" Zacky sighed, preemptively.

"You're learning," Jimmy said with a giggle.

"Fine." Zacky went back into the changing room, once again trying it all on and parading himself in front of the other two.

"Very nice," Johnny said with a grin. He added several t-shirts, one of the jackets, and a couple of hats to the ever growing pile and nodded. "Go pay for it."

"Okay." In a daze, Zacky went to pay, nearly swallowing his tongue at the total, which was more money than he'd spent on anything his entire life.

"Just buy them," Johnny sighed. "Tyler said any amount. Just do it."

"But it's nearly five hundred dollars."

"We're going to spend a lot more than that before we're through with you. Hurry up."

"I'm tired."

"You need boots," Johnny said firmly.

"And a haircut," Jimmy said with a nod.

"What's wrong with my hair?"

"It's just a bit, you know..." Johnny frowned thoughtfully and made a vague gesture.

"Shit," Jimmy said, giggling.

"Thanks," Zacky sighed.

* * * *

Next, they took him to a shoe shop, and he tried on several pairs of boots before Johnny picked some black biker boots. Zacky tried to protest again at the price, but Johnny brushed it off as nothing and led him to a barbershop. Zacky sat while the other two had a long discussion with the barber, his nerves growing the longer they took.

"Zacky, I'm going to get pierced while they do your hair. Jimmy will keep you company, okay?"

"I guess," Zacky said with a sigh, watching Johnny leave. He couldn't imagine why anyone would want to get anything pierced, let alone a nipple, but to each their own.

"Jimmy, what happened to his last piercing?"

"What do you mean?"

"Matt said he had it before."

"Oh, right, you don't know about them." Jimmy quirked a smile and sat down as the barber sprayed down Zacky's hair. "Matt ripped the last one out with his teeth."

Zacky shuddered, nausea tightening his throat at the thought. "Why?" He gasped.

"Because he wanted to. Matt's a hardcore Dom. He does whatever he wants to Johnny. Believe me, Johnny loves every minute of it."

"Seriously?" Zacky breathed, trying not to move as the barber started to chop at his hair.

"He's a sub," Jimmy said with a shrug. "And he gets off on pain. He loves Matt. He does anything he says."

"Is that why Matt is so weird with me?"

"Sort of. I guess sometimes he thinks Tyler should just make you do things."

"Tyler wouldn't--"

"Of course not. We all know that. Tyler wants you just the way you are."

"If you say so."

"I do." Jimmy smiled, and Zacky managed to smile back.

* * * *

After the barbershop, his hair cut, gelled and spiked, Zacky let Johnny and Jimmy lead him to the restrooms.

"Now what?" He said with a slight whine.

"Got a text from Matt. They're on their way."

"Yeah, so it's time for finishing touches," Jimmy said, grinning.

"Should I be scared?"

"Nah, just sit on the counter and relax."

Zacky sighed and sat between two sinks.

"Eyes closed."

"I don't know what the heck you think you're..." He paused at the feel of something powdery smoothing over his eyelids, then, something scratchy along the edges. Something slick was spread over his lips, and he felt the other two men move back. He opened his eyes.

"Wow," Jimmy whispered. "You're pretty. No wonder Tyler's so--"

"Jimmy!" Johnny elbowed him hard.

"Ow, okay, I'm sorry," Jimmy exclaimed. "I wasn't gonna say it."

"Say what?" Zacky asked with a frown.

"Nothing, nothing," Johnny said hurriedly. "Why don't you take a look?"

Zacky got off the counter and turned slowly. The reflection in the mirror was him, but it was a him he didn't quite recognize. His eyelids were rimmed with red and black, making his green eyes stand out in his pale face. His lips were full, and shiny, and pink. He looked kind of good.

"Come on, dude. Tyler is gonna die when he sees you," Jimmy said, giggling again. They headed out to the parking lot, and Zacky started to feel better somehow. There was an easing of tension in his chest, and he knew that Tyler was close.

Jimmy stood in front of Zacky as the car pulled up.

"Zacky?" Tyler said softly. Jimmy moved, and Zacky met brown eyes that widened, slim lips parting in shock. "Oh my fucking--"

"Wow," Matt muttered.

"Is it okay?"

Tyler jumped out of the car and strode up to him, stopping abruptly in front of him.

"Tyler?" Zacky whispered, his heart starting to pound. Lifting his hands, Tyler cupped Zacky's cheeks gently and brushed his lips. Zacky shivered at the intensity of lust and desire in his mate's brown eyes.

"So beautiful," Tyler whispered, kissing him softly. "I want you so much, baby." He kissed Zacky again, sliding his tongue between his lips and possessing his mouth until he was shaking with need. Zacky's knees weakened and he sagged against his mate, kissing back with urgent desire.

"Guys, chill out. You can't have sex right here," Matt said with a chuckle.

Zacky pulled back with a gasp of horror, cheeks heating up in embarrassment. Tyler made him lose control, and he still wasn't used to it. Although, he'd almost accepted that he couldn't help it. He just wished Tyler wouldn't affect him so publically.

"You look- God- so amazing," Tyler said softly, resting his forehead on Zacky's shoulder.

"Thanks."

"Missed you, chéri," Johnny murmured, sliding into Matt's embrace. Zacky stared curiously as Matt grinned and stroked his mate's chest, pinching the nipple Johnny had pierced. Johnny bit his lip, whining loudly and shuddering.

"Mmm I like that," Matt said with a smirk. "Did that feel good, mein Herz?"

"Hurts so good," Johnny breathed, smiling blissfully. "How was the meeting, mon amour?"

Matt pulled a face, and Tyler sighed loudly.

"Not good."

"What happened?" Johnny said, straightening up and frowning in concern.

"It's really serious, but I--" Tyler stopped and squeezed his eyes shut for a second and shook his head. "We'll talk about it tomorrow. Back in the car."

He dragged Zacky into the backseat, and the other three got in the front, Matt driving.

"We getting any food in?"

Zacky flinched, and Tyler turned to smack Jimmy across the back of his head.

"Ow! What?"

"Don't put it like that."

"Oh, right." Jimmy grimaced. "Sorry, Zacky."

Zacky managed a tight smile, catching the hand Jimmy held out to him over the seat in apology.

"No, Jimmy, we're staying with Oudinot tonight," Matt said softly. "He'll supply us."

"*Supply* us?" Zacky whispered.

"Sometimes Pack maintain close ties with their families, usually brothers or sisters and, sometimes, their children and their children's children," Tyler said quietly.

"Oudinot is my great, great, great, yadda, yadda nephew," Johnny said with a smile. "He and his family often let us feed from them."

"They *let* you?"

"Mark let you," Johnny pointed out.

"Yeah, I guess." Zacky frowned in confusion. "It just seems strange."

"Hey, guys, we're here."

They were parked in front of a beautiful old town house with pillars and balconies all covered with trailing ivy and wisteria. A large man with silver hair and a red face flew out of the door, arms wide, a huge smile on his face.

"Grandpère!"

Johnny jumped out of the car, running to meet him halfway up the steps, lifting the elderly man into his arms.

"Oudinot, it's been too long, mon petit," Johnny exclaimed, sounding happy and excited. Matt jogged up the steps after his mate, patting Oudinot's back.

"Come on, guys," Jimmy said with a wide grin as he climbed out of the car.

"Did he just call Johnny grandfather?" Zacky asked his mate.

"Yeah, his whole family does. It's sort of a term of endearment. We've known Oudinot since he was born, don't forget," Tyler said, getting out of the car and holding out his hand.

"Oh, yeah." Zacky shook his head. The sheer age of his companions was still something he couldn't quite get his head round.

"Come, meet Johnny's family, baby."

"Okay." Zacky got out of the car and took his mate's hand, letting Tyler lead him up the steps to where Jimmy was hugging a young man and two women who had joined the rest of the group, hugging and kissing Johnny and Matt.

"Seigneur," Oudinot said softly, holding out his hand.

"Don't be ridiculous," Tyler snorted. "Come here." He gave the old man a hug and kissed his cheek. Oudinot smiled at Zacky over Tyler's shoulder.

"And who is this handsome young man?"

"Tyler found his mate at last," Johnny said with a smile. "This is Zacky."

"*C'est vraiment un plaisir*," Oudinot said softly, beaming widely.

"Thank you," Zacky said, feeling oddly shy.

"Come inside. Come inside."

They followed the family into the house, and everyone settled in a large sitting room. There weren't quite enough seats but Johnny sat in Matt's lap and Zacky, a little reluctantly, sat in Tyler's lap, so they all fit.

"I'm so happy to see you mated, Tyler," Oudinot said quietly, still smiling.

"Thank you. So am I," Tyler said with a firm nod.

"Zacky, these are my children, Theresa, Abigail and Jonathan." All three were in their late twenties, blond. They vaguely resembled Johnny.

"Nice to meet you," Zacky said softly. He felt distinctly unsettled knowing he was being introduced to the people who were essentially his next meal. They were all smiling and nodding at him, as if it were okay, and he wasn't sure how to react.

"Tyler," he whispered. "Can we?" He stopped. He didn't want to be rude, but he didn't want to meet Johnny's family when he'd just had to leave his own behind. Tyler patted Zacky's hip gently.

"Oudinot, we don't mean to be rude, but if you don't mind, we're going to retire for the evening."

"Of course. Just ring down when you'd like Theresa to join you."

"Thanks."

Tyler led Zacky upstairs to a large, sumptuously decorated bedroom. The huge bed had brocade covers and curtains tied to four posts. Zacky looked around in awe. He'd never seen such a richly decorated room before.

"Wow," he whispered, turning around slowly.

"Mmm hmm," Tyler murmured, slowly sliding his arms around Zacky and kissing him. "As much as I love the new clothes on you..." He kissed him again, harder, and desire slowly warmed Zacky's blood.

"I really want to take them off right now, baby," Tyler whispered against Zacky's lips. Strong hands stripped Zacky of his belt before sliding under his t-shirt.

Moaning softly, Zacky leaned closer, parting his lips to the insistent probe of his mate's tongue and lifting his hands to clutch Tyler's neck. He stroked his mate's smooth skin from jaw to collarbone. Pulling back, Tyler quickly stripped them both of their shirts and tugged Zacky back into his arms, stroking his back and arms as they kissed.

Sensation flooded Zacky's body, groin tightening as his mate's touches filled him with need. Tyler possessed his mouth deeply, and all he could do was hold on as his knees weakened. He wrapped his arms around Tyler's neck and kissed back, twining his tongue around his mate's and reveling in the feel of warm, soft skin and solid body against his chest.

He wanted nothing more than to jump up on his mate and wrap his legs around his hips. He wanted to feel Tyler's strength holding him up, press their erections together and rub himself against him. He wanted to touch his mate, stroke and taste his skin. He wanted to stroke Tyler's cock, taste his pre-cum, and suck him down until he came in his mouth.

With a gasp of shock, Zacky yanked himself back, unable to quite accept the intensity of his feelings without the excuse of feeding to hide behind. It didn't feel wrong anymore. It felt natural, and he didn't even have a hope of denying how much he wanted and needed his mate. It overwhelmed him. He stared up at his mate, licking his lips as he panted for breath, desperately trying to come to terms with his feelings.

Tyler stared back. Then, Tyler's face fell, eyes dark with sorrow and resignation. He pushed Zacky gently onto the bed and climbed over him, cupping his cheek.

"Why can't you just let me love you?" Tyler's eyes suddenly welled with tears that spilled onto his cheeks. They ran down his face to collect on the

tip of his nose, dripping down onto Zacky's lips. The taste of salt hurt Zacky, clutched painfully at his heart, and he lifted his arms, wrapping them around Tyler's back and pulling him down on top of him.

Sliding his hands back around, he cupped Tyler's cheeks and gently wiped away the tears, drawing him into a soft kiss. Zacky couldn't bear seeing his mate in pain, not when he could relieve it. Carding his fingers into soft, thick hair, Zacky stroked his other hand down the satiny skin of his mate's back and under his waistband to cup one firm cheek.

Tyler whimpered into his mouth, jerking against him, making Zacky feel even worse for denying him. Tyler lifted his head slowly, eyes wide and wary.

"Tyler, will you fuck me, please?"

Growling softly, low in his throat, Tyler rocked his hips hard into Zacky once then clasped his face, dipping his head and kissing him with such soft tenderness that it brought tears to Zacky's eyes.

"Would it be easier if we fed first?" Tyler paused, biting his lip as he looked down again. "I can call Theresa if you want."

Tyler's offer tore at Zacky's heart. He felt even worse for how much pain he had caused his mate. He couldn't hide behind the excuse of feeding.

"No," Zacky whispered. "I just want you."

His mate's joy washed over him, and Zacky pushed up to kiss Tyler desperately. He curled a leg around Tyler's thighs and dragged him down. He rolled his hips against his mate, pushing his lengthening erection into his groin. Tyler's answering hardness made his gut clench, desire tightening his muscles, tension building with his need.

"I need you," Zacky moaned. "Tyler, I need you. Fuck me."

"Oh God," Tyler breathed, rocking into Zacky harder. "I love it when you say that. It makes me so hot." Tyler kissed him again, possessing his mouth urgently, his passion driving Zacky's need higher. Zacky whimpered into Tyler's mouth, wrapping his other leg around his mate to rub harder against him.

"Please," Zacky gasped again. The constriction of the tight jeans around his erection was starting to hurt, and he managed to push up, rolling over and straddling his mate so he could tear open his jeans, groaning as his cock pushed out against the soft cotton of his underwear.

"Ah fuck," Tyler breathed, sliding a hand down Zacky's chest and stomach and wrapping it over the head of his cock, rubbing teasingly, softly. Zacky bucked into his mate's touch, shuddering happily, and moaning softly as his cock jerked, dribbling pre-cum.

"Oh yeah," Tyler whispered. He slipped his fingers under the waistband of Zacky's briefs and slid them over the slit of his dick before pulling them out and sucking them into his mouth.

"Tyler," Zacky whispered. His hips rocked uncontrollably as he leaned down to kiss his mate, sucking on his lips and fingers, tasting himself with a groan. "I want..."

"Tell me," Tyler said, gripping Zacky's hips tightly, thrusting against him.

"I want to taste you," Zacky whispered, feeling his cheeks heat up. "I want to lick your skin down to your groin, slide my tongue over your cock, suck you into my mouth, and swallow you down until you come..."

"Fuck. Oh fuck," Tyler gasped, bucking. "Do it, baby. Suck me off."

"No."

"What?" Tyler groaned in shock and smiled softly.

"I haven't tasted the rest of you yet."

"Oh, God, I think you're going to kill me, Zacky." Tyler dragged him down for a deep kiss, rubbing Zacky's cock gently through his underwear. Shivering, Zacky jerked into Tyler's touch and slid his lips up Zacky's jaw nipping his earlobe.

"Not before you fuck me, Ty," Zacky whispered.

"Oh God," Tyler groaned, fingers digging in so hard that Zacky knew he'd bruise. It felt good, and he rocked his hips harder against Tyler's, sucking his way down and licking along his mate's collarbone. Zacky dipped his tongue in the hollow at the base of Tyler's throat, tasting the salt-sweet sweat starting to pool there. Tyler groaned softly, his hands slowly stroking up Zacky's back to clutch at his neck and hair.

Zacky lifted his head briefly to smile at his mate then shifted lower, pressing a kiss to the center of Tyler's chest. It felt so good against his lips and tongue, the taste of his mate's skin was as addictive as his blood and cum. He licked up Tyler's breastbone, dipping his tongue into the hollow spot again with a quiet moan. His mouth was watering, and he wanted to taste everything. Tyler's erection was digging into his thigh, and he pressed

down against it as he dragged his tongue down Tyler's chest to circle a nipple. The skin puckered, and Zacky smiled, lapping over Tyler's nipple before biting down without warning and drawing blood.

Tyler cried out, arching against Zacky, fingers clenching Zacky's hips so hard he felt his bones groan under the pressure. Tyler's cock jerked against his thigh.

Zacky sucked happily on his lover's blood, the rich flavor increasing his need. Desire for Tyler almost overwhelmed him. His cock was so hard it hurt, and he couldn't help rubbing his groin against Tyler's leg, leaning harder against his mate's cock.

"Fuck, Zacky, please," Tyler groaned. "I can't take any more teasing. I'm gonna come in my pants."

Pulling back for a moment, Zacky licked the blood from his lips and smiled shyly at his mate. Tyler's reaction made him feel good, and he wanted more. Leaning up, he kissed Tyler hard, tasting him before shifting back and kissing a trail down the center of his mate's chest and stomach. He tugged Tyler's pants open quickly. His mate lifted his hips from the mattress to help Zacky push them down to the middle of his thighs. Tyler's cock pushed out, hard and thick, pre-cum dribbling down the shaft into pubic hair. Grasping his mate's hips, Zacky pushed him down and licked the trail of pre-cum, shivering as the taste made need tingle through his whole body.

"Fuck. Please, baby," Tyler whined.

Zacky couldn't resist any longer. Sliding his tongue over the tip before sucking the head into his mouth, he moaned quietly as pre-cum leaked onto his tongue. The silky texture and bittersweet taste were so good, and he wanted more. He sank down his mate's cock, lips tight around its shaft, cheeks hollowed with suction as he swirled his tongue along the length.

Tyler's hands carded through Zacky's hair, rubbing his scalp, clasping his neck as he writhed, panting and groaning loudly.

"So good, baby. Feels so good. Harder," Tyler said, his voice strained and husky. The sound of it pierced Zacky with more desire. Moaning desperately, cock jerking and leaking into his underwear, Zacky rocked his groin into his mate's leg, trying to relieve the pressure of his need.

He sucked harder, sliding up and down Tyler's cock faster, swallowing on every down stroke, flicking his tongue over the tip on every upstroke.

"Yes. Fuck. Oh yes." Tyler rocked up, straining against Zacky's hands, panting and moaning. "Coming, baby. Fuck!"

Zacky sank down and swallowed hard as Tyler arched into him. Tyler's thick, hot cum shot into Zacky's mouth. He swallowed the salty bitter fluid with a soft moan and slid slowly up Tyler's shaft, kissing the tip before letting go and looking up at his mate.

Tyler's glazed brown eyes were fixed on him, smiling.

"I messed up your hair."

Zacky smiled. "I don't care."

"Are you horny, baby?" Tyler whispered, tugging Zacky up, and kissing him deeply, tongue probing his mouth. Zacky whimpered and nodded, kissing back eagerly. Tyler hauled Zacky over and pushed him against the bed. Stroking one hand down Zacky's chest and stomach, Tyler slid it under his briefs and wrapping his fingers round his cock. Shuddering, Zacky kissed Tyler harder, thrusting his dick hard and fast, lust throbbing through his whole body.

With a quiet growl, Tyler bit down on Zacky's lip, slashing it open and sucking hard. Pain surged through Zacky's body, and he bucked into Tyler's hand, coming with a gasp of happiness and pleasure.

"Oh, Tyler," he whispered, heaving.

"Mmm," Tyler murmured, easing his hand free and lifting it to his mouth to lick his fingers clean. "You taste so good, baby- mouth, skin, blood and cum- You are totally addictive."

Flushing hotly, Zacky lay back against the mattress, trying not to let his conflicting emotions ruin the moment. He truly cared for Tyler, and the sex was amazing. He just wished he didn't feel so guilty afterwards- for doing it, for enjoying it, for wanting more.

"You're doing it, aren't you?" Tyler sighed, flopping onto his back.

"Doing what?"

"Guilt-tripping."

Zacky sighed and rolled over, lying against his mate and putting his head on his chest.

"I wish I weren't."

"I guess that's progress."

"I'm trying," Zacky said, trying to pull away. The resignation in his mate's voice made him feel worse.

"Don't do this."

"Tyler, I'm not," Zacky started, his throat tight with sorrow.

"I could *feel* you. I could feel that you were starting to feel badly." Tyler sighed quietly, getting off the bed and yanking his pants up. "You know what? Never mind. If having sex with me makes you feel badly, I don't think I can stay here right now."

So much pain filled Zacky's heart. He wasn't sure how much of the pain was Tyler's and how much was his. It hurt so much that he couldn't make his voice work, and he watched his mate walk out of the room. Tears filled his eyes and started to trickle down his cheeks as he reached out uselessly. The door had already slammed shut.

Curling up on the bed, he grabbed hold of the pillow Tyler had laid on, burying his face in it and inhaling the scent as he cried helplessly. Zacky couldn't bear it. Hurting Tyler was tearing him apart. He wanted to accept who he was, wanted to be what Tyler needed, and it was getting easier, but there was still confliction in his emotions that he didn't know how to deal with.

Chapter Thirteen

There was a light tap on the door, and Zacky looked up as Theresa peeked into the room.

"Mr. Baker?"

"Yeah?"

"Seigneur Tyler sent me up. May I come in?"

Zacky blinked uncertainly. He was hungry but he'd never fed without his mate before. "Is he coming?"

"Oh. I don't think so." She smiled apologetically. "May I come in?"

"I guess." Zacky sat up, wiping hurriedly at his face. The woman approached the bed and sat next to him.

"Don't worry," she said, smiling. "I've done this many times before. You won't hurt me."

"But I-"

"You must feed," she said quietly, holding out her wrist. The pulse of her blood thrumming through her veins filled Zacky's ears. The scent made his mouth water, and his stomach clenched painfully with hunger. He took her hand tentatively, staring at her face, wide-eyed and a little frightened.

"Go on," she whispered, still smiling.

Lifting her wrist to his mouth, he bit down, groaning with pleasure as the hot, sweet blood hit his tongue. Need started to tingle across his skin. It was the painful need for his mate that made him want to cry. He swallowed her blood, and she fell unconscious onto the bed.

Why wasn't Tyler feeding with him? Had Tyler fed at all?

Drinking as much blood as he dared, Zacky got up from the bed and lay her down more comfortably on the mattress, supporting her head with a pillow. Pulling his t-shirt back on, he left the room, trailing silently down the stairs, following his mate's scent to a much smaller sitting room. Tyler was sitting on the large, comfy couch, staring into space, arms wrapped around

his chest. It broke Zacky's heart, and he stumbled into the room. Tyler looked up, almost in surprise.

"Zacky?"

"Did you feed?"

"No."

"Tyler, I wish you wouldn't do that."

"I can't feed when you hurt me," Tyler said quietly, looking away.

"That's not fair." Zacky moved slowly into the room, tears pricking his eyes. "You can't say things like that to me. It's not fair."

"It's just the truth, Zacky. I'm not saying it to make you feel badly. I know you're going to hurt me. I hurt you sometimes. It's just that I." Tyler stopped again and looked up, his brown eyes dark and brimming with pain. "And you don't."

"What?"

"Nothing," Tyler sighed. "Did you feed?"

"Yes." Zacky crossed the room and climbed into his mate's lap, partly for his own comfort and partly to relieve Tyler's pain. "I don't ever want to feed alone again, Ty. Please don't do that to me again."

Zacky leaned up and kissed his mate. Tyler stared in surprise but slid his arms around his waist, kissing him back briefly. Meeting his mate's eyes again, Zacky lifted his wrist to his mouth and bit down, tearing his skin open with a groan of pain.

"Zacky?" Tyler whispered, breath hitching in surprise.

"Feed," Zacky said, lifting his wrist to his mate's mouth. "Please."

Groaning, Tyler grabbed Zacky's wrist and lifted it to his mouth, licking up the trail of blood. Tyler's tongue tickled his skin, and Zacky squirmed slightly, wriggling closer to lie against his mate's chest. Tyler clamped his lips around Zacky's wrist, tongue flicking over the torn skin as he sucked and swallowed, moaning quietly.

It felt good, the pain just an edge to the pleasure Zacky felt just from watching Tyler feed and feeling his mouth on his skin. Zacky leaned in and kissed Tyler's neck, pressing his lips to his mate's throat to feel his Adam's apple bob as he swallowed. It was warm and comforting, yet hot and sexy. He could feel Tyler's cock hardening. Lifting his head from Zacky's wrist, Tyler licked blood from his lips and stared at him again.

"Still want me to fuck you?"

Desire shuddered through Zacky's body, warm need clenching his stomach, and a sense of emptiness making his cock harden fast enough to leave him lightheaded, and he nodded jerkily.

"Yes," he breathed, shifting around to kiss him again, harder, tasting his blood in his mate's mouth with a shiver. Tyler pushed him back suddenly, clutching his chin with one hand, thumb and fingers digging into his cheeks.

"Why?"

"What?" Zacky whispered in confusion.

"When we're together, it's amazing. It makes me feel so good and so happy and then I feel your confliction, your sadness, even your despair sometimes. So why even bother?" Tyler whispered, pain visible in his eyes.

Zacky dropped his gaze and curled up tighter in his mate's lap, holding onto Tyler's wrist.

"You know why. I need you," Zacky said, feeling more upset and distressed with each word.

"But you don't really want me," Tyler whispered, breath hitching quietly.

"No, that's not true," Zacky whispered, his mate's pain starting to overwhelm him. He pulled Tyler's hand from his face and gently kissed his fingertips. "I always want you, always need you. You make me feel good and happy, and that's why I feel conflicted, because I was always taught that it's wrong."

"If it makes you feel good and happy and you're not hurting anyone then how can it be wrong, Zacky?"

"I know, okay? I'm trying, you know I am."

Tyler sighed heavily, pulling his hand free and lifting it to stroke through Zacky's hair. "Yes, I know. It's just sometimes it feels like I'm not... enough."

Zacky stared at his mate in shock.

"But that's how *I* feel. Why would *you* feel like you're not enough? You are." He stopped abruptly as he suddenly realized what he'd been about to say. Everything. How could Tyler be everything to him? His heart flipped in his chest, constricting with emotion, but his brain screamed in denial, and he shook his head.

"I am what?" Tyler asked.

"You know who you are and what you want. Why would you feel like you're not enough?"

Tyler shrugged. "Why would you?"

Zacky snuggled closer to his mate, his need for comfort increasing beyond his confusion.

"Because I feel like I don't know what the heck I'm doing. I mess up. I hurt you." He sighed and stroked his mate's cheek. "I hate hurting you. You know that."

"Yeah, I do," Tyler said quietly. "But you've only known you were Pack for a few weeks. I know you've felt under pressure, but you don't need to. We have our whole lives, and you are enough. You are everything."

Zacky's breath caught in his chest. Tyler's words echoed his thoughts and made him wonder at their connection. He could feel what Tyler felt, knew when he was close, felt empty when he wasn't. What else might they be able to do?

"You know how we're connected?"

Tyler smiled softly. "Yeah."

"How deep does it go?"

"What do you mean?"

"It seems so strong, like you know what I'm thinking."

"I feel what you feel so strongly that maybe it seems that way, but it's empathy, not telepathy, baby. You feel what I feel too," Tyler said, his voice soft with happiness.

"I know. It's just overwhelming sometimes. Like you said, I haven't been Pack that long."

"I know," Tyler murmured.

Zacky cuddled closer and rubbed his nose against his mate's neck to inhale his scent. Tyler was right. It felt good to be accepted for who he was, to not be alone anymore, to be a part of someone so completely that he felt empty without him. But that also scared Zacky. Being so reliant on another person made him feel vulnerable and exposed.

"Don't be scared of me," Tyler whispered in a tiny voice, arms tightening around him.

"I'm not scared of you. I'm scared of what will happen if I—"

"Let me love you?" Tyler sighed.

Zacky swallowed hard. "Do you?" He whispered uncertainly.

"I want to. I want you to let me," Tyler said, his smile forced and pained. "I want you to want me to."

It was all a little too much, and he buried his face in Tyler's neck.

"Can we just go back to bed?"

"Do you still want me to fuck you?" Tyler asked hesitantly. Zacky shook his head slowly. He needed connection with his mate but he didn't want either of them to be hurt again that night which was likely if they had sex.

"Can we maybe just cuddle tonight?"

Tyler clutched him tighter. "I'd like that."

They got up and headed up the stairs to the bedroom.

"Get undressed, baby. I'll take Theresa to her room, okay?"

"Okay." He watched his mate carefully lift the young woman and carry her from the room before stripping out of his clothes. He curled up under the covers, throwing one of the pillows on the floor so they had to share one, so their scents would mix on the fabric.

Tyler came back into the room, closing the door carefully before crossing the room, and stripping out of his clothes. Then, Tyler climbed naked under the covers with Zacky. Tyler pulled him close, wrapping his arms round him and nuzzling into his neck with a soft murmur.

"*Rakastan sua*," Tyler whispered.

"I wish you'd tell me what that means."

"One day I will."

"Promise?"

"Yes, I promise."

Zacky smiled at his mate and kissed him before lying against his chest and snuggling closer. Zacky's eyes closed with a sigh of contentment.

* * * *

Zacky woke slowly, Tyler's warm tongue lapping over the back of his neck and making him tingle. Tyler's arms were wrapped tightly around him, his body warm against Zacky's back, his cock pressed against his ass, solid and hot.

"Tyler," Zacky murmured quietly.

"Morning, baby."

"Good morning," Zacky said, turning around to kiss his mate, smiling against his mouth. He'd had a lovely night just lying there with Tyler, wrapped up together with no pressure, no guilt, no worrying, or wondering.

"You look happy," Tyler said with a soft smile.

"I feel happy."

"Good." Tyler kissed him gently then tipped his head back, licking up the column of his throat. Zacky's skin tingled with desire, and he moved closer, sliding his leg over his mate's hips. He moaned quietly as their cocks brushed together, a drop of pre-cum smearing over his stomach. He moved his head, taking Tyler's mouth in a soft kiss and rocking his hips to rub his cock into his mate's groin. The soft skin and wiry hair against his erection filled him with need. Lips and tongues moving together, they rocked and touched, hands gently stroking over smooth skin. It felt good and warm, and Zacky couldn't help wanting more. He clutched at his mate and kissed him harder, hips moving faster as pleasure built in his groin. Tyler moaned quietly, panting as his fingers dug into Zacky's skin.

"God, you feel good," Tyler groaned. "Harder, baby."

With a grunt, Zacky moved faster, rocking harder into his mate, his own need starting to overwhelm him. Licking into Zacky's mouth, Tyler sliced through his tongue and blood spurted into Zacky's mouth, sweet and hot. Pleasure exploded from Zacky's taste buds down through his whole body as he swallowed, and he jerked hard, coming with a small cry over his mate's stomach.

Groaning loudly, Tyler bit hard on Zacky's lip and sucked his blood, the pain sending aftershocks of pleasure through Zacky's body as his mate groaned and bucked into him, wet heat spreading over his stomach.

"Mmm that was nice," Tyler mumbled, licking gently over Zacky's torn lip.

"Yeah." It did feel nice, and Zacky didn't feel cripplingly guilty for a change. He smiled at Tyler and kissed him again, drawing back to look into his mate's dark brown eyes. "What are we doing today?"

"Well, unfortunately, not being lazy students," Tyler sighed.

"Hey." Zacky frowned. "I wasn't lazy just because I was a student."

"Yeah, but baby, you actually gave a damn about what you were studying, didn't you?"

Zacky blinked at his mate, suddenly realizing that he wasn't sure.

"I don't know. I did what my father told me to do."

Tyler's expression darkened, and he shook his head. "Well, you've got all the time in the world to think about what you want. After all, what's the point in living as long as we do if we can't follow our interests?"

"I guess it would get a little boring after a while."

"It would drive you insane," Tyler said. "But you're still young. The first lifetime is the easy one to get through. Plus, you have me." Tyler grinned at him and winked.

"You mean I have to put up with you for the rest of my eternal life?" Zacky said, teasing his mate. Tyler blinked, hurt filling his eyes.

"Yes, you do," he whispered, wrapping his arms around his chest defensively.

"Oh, Tyler," Zacky said, reaching for his mate, "I'm sorry. I was just teasing."

"That wasn't very nice."

"I know," Zacky said softly, still holding out his hand. Tyler finally took it, and it felt like he could breathe again. "I'm just glad, you know?"

"Glad?"

"That I'm with you." Joy swept through Zacky and was echoed by his mate's wide smile. Tyler yanked him to his feet, pulling him into a tight hug.

"Really?" Tyler whispered.

"Well, I could have been stuck with Matt." Tyler tensed immediately, and Zacky held on tight. "I'm teasing."

"It's just you haven't really been, you know, accepting," Tyler sighed. "It's hard to tell when you're teasing me."

"Ty, surely you can feel it."

Tyler smiled a little sheepishly and nodded. "Yeah, you're right. I guess I'm reacting before I think."

"You've been Pack a lot longer than I have."

"Baby, I've never been mated before," Tyler said quietly. "I'm new at this too."

"That's true." Zacky smiled at his mate and leaned back. "I need a shower."

"Want to shower together?"

He stared at the older man. Showering together had never occurred to him before. "That would be nice."

Tyler grinned again and nodded, leading him into the en suite bathroom. He switched on the water and checked the temperature before dragging Zacky under the spray and back into his arms. The warm water felt good

over Zacky's skin, and he curled up against his mate, wrapping his arms around his neck and resting his head on his chest.

They swayed under the water, content to just enjoy each other's company. It was nice to be with Tyler without feeling wrong, or different, or anything that caused difficulties between them. It felt good, and he murmured quietly, stroking Tyler's chest, fingers sliding over skin that felt silky smooth under the water that flowed between them.

Tyler kissed his forehead and gently pushed him back, picking up the shower gel and pouring some into his hand. He lathered it between his palms and smiled as he lifted both hands, gently spreading the foam over Zacky's shoulders and arms. Tyler stroked down Zacky's chest, rubbing gently over his nipples until his skin felt like it was coming alive, every nerve alight with pleasure. He leaned back against the tile wall as his cock lengthened and hardened, his desire building quickly under Tyler's touch.

Slippery hands slid down to his stomach, brown eyes following every movement. Tyler's lips parted as his breathing deepened and became harsher. Whimpering quietly, Zacky pushed his hips up, trying to encourage his mate's hands lower, cock pulsing with need.

"Talk to me, baby," Tyler whispered, licking his lips as his eyes roamed over Zacky's body. His hands teased lower and lower until he was tangling his fingers in Zacky's pubic hair. Gasping, Zacky licked his lips and stared down at his mate's long, elegant fingers working around his groin, completely avoiding his aching cock and balls.

"Zacky, talk to me," Tyler whispered, moving closer to him and stopping most of the spray from hitting his body. "Tell me what you want me to do."

Zacky groaned, thrusting his hips forward.

"I need you to touch me."

"You can do better than that," Tyler breathed, leaning closer so the heat and scent of his body was overwhelming. His mouth hovered tantalizingly close.

With a growl of frustration, he lifted his head, catching Tyler's mouth in a hard kiss, biting down on his lip and sucking his blood into his mouth. Tyler groaned loudly, fingers digging into Zacky's hips, wet chest sliding up against his soapy one.

"Tell me," Tyler muttered urgently.

"I want you," Zacky whispered. "Wrap your beautiful, long fingers around my cock and make me come."

Tyler shuddered, tongue plunging deep into Zacky's mouth. He shifted and fisted Zacky's shaft, jacking him with short, tight strokes that had him on the brink of ecstasy in seconds. Zacky whimpered into his mate's mouth, clutching at him as he pushed his cock through Tyler's fingers faster.

Tyler bit down on Zacky's tongue and sucked his blood. The sharp burst of pain tipped Zacky over the edge. Pleasure flooded his body, every muscle tightening as he shook and came hard, spurting jerkily over Tyler's stomach. Humming quietly into his mouth, Tyler eased his kisses until he'd pulled away.

Zacky met glazed brown eyes and smiled. He felt good, a little shocked with himself, but actually good. He needed Tyler, and he couldn't help enjoying everything they did together. Maybe he was actually starting to accept that.

Looking down, Zacky groaned quietly at the sight of his cum trickling slowly down Tyler's skin towards his groin. Zacky couldn't stop himself, spinning them around and pushing his mate up against the wall. He dropped to his knees, water splashing over his head and back as he leaned forward, licking his cum from smooth skin and hard muscle. Tyler tasted musky and salty under the bitterness of his own cum and Zacky cleaned his stomach eagerly with his tongue.

"Fuck, Zacky," Tyler grunted, fingers sliding through his hair and gripping tightly. "Suck me off, baby."

Zacky licked his lips and parted them immediately over the head of his mate's straining erection, sucking gently, tongue flicking over the slit to taste him.

"Ah yeah," Tyler moaned, thrusting deeper into his mouth. Tightening his lips, Zacky slid his mouth up and down the hard length, sucking hard. He ran his fingers slowly along the insides of Tyler's thighs, pressing his thumbs up under his balls.

"Zacky. Oh fuck. Zacky, I'm gonna come. Please, harder," Tyler gasped. Zacky sank down as far as he could and swallowed, rubbing hard under his mate's balls as Tyler panted and groaned, his hips jerking as cum shot down Zacky's throat. He swallowed again, sucking gently until his mate stopped

shuddering. Easing back, he kissed Tyler's hip and got slowly to his feet, backing up so he was directly under the spray, rinsing himself off.

He felt the weight of Tyler's gaze, and he opened his eyes, blinking at his mate in surprise, the warmth and emotion visible in his dark brown eyes made Zacky's stomach tighten.

"What?"

"You're beautiful," Tyler said softly, lifting a hand to stroke his cheek. "Are you okay?"

Zacky smiled at his mate. Guilt niggled at the back of his mind, but disgust had been left behind. He still felt bad and sinful sometimes, but it was as if he didn't care anymore.

"I'm okay," he whispered. The happiness that poured from his mate filled his heart, and Zacky smiled. Tyler's happiness made it worthwhile, made it worth changing his entire life and damning his soul to hell.

A little overwhelmed, he threw his arms around Tyler's neck and held on tight, burying his face in his chest. When had Tyler become so important to him? It had snuck up on him before he could stop it. Now, it seemed to be all that mattered.

"Are you sure?" Tyler said quietly, stroking his hair.

He clung on a little tighter for a moment then nodded and pulled back. "Yeah."

They finished washing quickly and got out of the shower to dry off.

"Oudinot will be expecting us for breakfast," Tyler said quietly. "Is that okay?"

"But, we don't eat," he said hesitantly as he started to dress.

"No, but the family does, and it's nice to sit with them for a meal and feel normal for a change, you know?"

"Yes, I suppose so." He smiled tightly. "I'm used to family meals."

Tyler pulled on a pair of boxer-briefs and smiled back a little sadly.

"Yeah. Do you want to call your mom?"

"Can I?"

"Of course, baby, whenever you want," Tyler said. "Remind me to program your cell so you have all our numbers."

"That would be great, thank you. I'm sorry it all cost so much. Johnny made me spend ridiculous amounts at the mall."

"I told you what's mine is yours," Tyler said. He smiled and flicked his eyebrows up. "Besides, it was worth it. You look fucking sexy in your new stuff."

"What was wrong with what I wore before?"

"Nothing. You always look sexy baby." Tyler frowned at him. "I'm not trying to change you. You know that, right?"

"Yeah, I know," he said softly. He did up his belt and watched his mate finish getting dressed in his usual tight, black jeans, band t-shirt and boots. He was so beautiful he took Zacky's breath away, and as Tyler approached him, he lifted his hand and caught a lock of his hair, rubbing it between his fingers. Everything had changed so fast and so completely, it was scary how much less it seemed to scare him each day.

"Want me to do your hair, baby?" Tyler asked him softly. Zacky nodded. "Sit down for me then."

He sat on the edge of the bed, and Tyler dug a comb and some hair gel from his bag, climbing on the bed behind him. He combed Zacky's hair out then styled it quickly and easily.

"There we go. You look gorgeous." Tyler leaned around and kissed his cheek. "Can I persuade you to try makeup again?"

Zacky scrunched up his face and shook his head. "No."

"Okay." Tyler smiled and got off the bed again, taking a small pencil from the bag when he replaced the gel and comb, standing in front of the mirror to quickly line his eyes in black.

"How do you do that so fast?"

"Practice."

"How long have you worn makeup?"

"In this lifetime? Since the Seventies I guess." Tyler smiled. "The trend for makeup comes and goes, but I've always liked it."

"It does make you look good."

"Thank you." Tyler held out his hand. "Ready to go down?"

"Yeah."

"You know, Jimmy would have made a crass joke at that."

"I'm not Jimmy," Zacky snapped.

"Thank God," Tyler said emphatically, relieving Zacky's moment of jealousy immediately.

"Besides, I already went down," he said with a small smile.

Snickering softly, Tyler tugged him close and kissed his cheek.

"Nice to know we're all being a bad influence on you."

They walked downstairs hand in hand, and Tyler led him into an elegant dining room. A long table surrounded by beautifully carved chairs dominated the room. Oudinot and his two daughters were already seated, and Johnny was sitting in Matt's lap.

"Morning," Matt said, smiling at them.

"Good morning," Tyler said, taking a seat beside him. "Where's Jimmy?"

"Jonathan fed him last night. I guess they're still asleep."

Tyler frowned and made a slightly disapproving noise, but before Zacky could question it, Theresa spoke up.

"How are you feeling today, Mr. Baker?"

"Zacky, and I'm fine, thank you."

She smiled and nodded. "Thank you for putting me to bed."

"You're welcome," Tyler said. "Thanks for feeding Zacky."

Zacky winced, and Tyler stroked his arm in silent apology.

"Didn't you feed last night, Ty?" Matt asked with a frown.

"I fed from Zacky."

"Oh." Johnny frowned. "Are you sure he's strong enough for that?"

"Yes," Tyler said shortly.

"Strong enough?" Zacky asked.

"For me to actually feed from, baby," Tyler said with a sigh.

"I don't understand. I've fed from you."

"Yes, but you're young. It can be too much, fatal even. However," Tyler glanced at the other mated pair with a raised eyebrow, "I have enough self-control that I didn't almost kill you."

"Fuck you," Matt snapped, slamming his hand on the table. Zacky reared back in shock, staring at the big man. "It was an accident, and you know it. Don't you fucking dare make comments on what happens between my mate and I. It was none of your business then, and it's none of your business now."

The alpha veritably seethed with fury, and his mate murmured softly, stroking his face and nuzzling into his ear, trying to calm him.

"Gentlemen," Oudinot said. "We are all family here. Everyone is happy and healthy, are they not?"

"Yes, you're right," Tyler said. His gaze flicked over the table to Matt who was still glaring. "Sorry, Mattie, you were young too."

"Yeah," Matt said softly.

"Hey, guys. Whoa, what's with the heavy vibe?" Jimmy and Jonathan entered the room together, arms wrapped around each other.

"What the fuck is this?" Tyler snapped, leaping to his feet abruptly. Zacky frowned in confusion at the level of fury he could feel in his mate.

"What the fuck is what?" Jimmy asked, looking equally confused.

"What have I told you over and over again about humans?" Tyler yelled. "How many times do I have to tell you? *Don't* get involved with humans."

"You're not fucking him anymore. What do you care?" Jonathan snapped.

Tyler glared at the young man. "I care about you, and I care about Jimmy, child. We do not fuck our friends, Jimmy."

"I'm not just fucking him," Jimmy said sulkily. "I love him."

"No, you don't," Tyler said, suddenly looking deflated and sad.

"Yes, I do," Jimmy said quietly. "And he loves me."

"And therein lies the problem." Tyler sank back down onto his chair and put his head in his hands with a heavy sigh. "You might care about him, Jimmy, but you'll never be in love with him."

"But I am."

"No, you're not," Tyler repeated, sounding pained. "He's not your mate."

"He could be," Jimmy said, desperation in his tone.

"He's not Pack, Jimmy. He's going to grow old, and he's going to die, and he's going to go through life knowing that you can never love him the way he wants you to. Do you really think that's fair on either of you?"

"Just because he's human and I'm Pack doesn't mean I'm not in love with him," Jimmy said almost pleadingly.

"Yes, it does."

"How can you know that?"

"Because in over twelve hundred years, I've never been in love before I saw Zacky, but I have been through a lot of pain in the past trying to make myself believe that I was. I didn't tell you never to get involved with humans because I just felt like it, you know."

Zacky stared at his mate, completely frozen in shock, and he wasn't sure which admission was the most shocking. He could barely comprehend the

age of his mate and, apparently, that fact was just as shocking to Johnny and Jimmy as well as the human members of the group. They were all staring at Tyler, eyes wide, mouths open.

It was his mate's declaration of love that had him really overwhelmed. He had no idea how to react. He wanted to run but he couldn't move. He wanted to cry, laugh, question, beg Tyler to say it again, beg him to take it back. He felt like he was going to pass out, and he looked down at his knees.

"Zacky, I—"

"You're how old?" Johnny interrupted with a slight squeak.

"One thousand two hundred and twenty-one years old," Tyler replied slowly. "I'm the oldest living Pack. Every single one of you is descended from my sister."

"Why aren't you surprised, Matt?" Johnny asked his mate quietly.

"Because I knew."

"And you never told me?" Johnny gasped, his tone hurt.

"Jean," Matt said reprovably, raising an eyebrow at his mate who ducked his head apologetically. Matt sighed. "I love you, Johnny, but it wasn't for me to tell. I'm the only one who knew. All the alphas know that Tyler is oldest, but none of them know the whole story. *I* don't even know the whole story."

"Zacky?" Tyler whispered.

"You're twelve hundred years old?"

"Yes, I am."

"Oh," he whispered. He tried to focus on that information because somehow it was the least overwhelming.

"Oh? Is that it?" Tyler whispered. "Is that really all you have to say to me?"

"What do you want me to say?"

Tyler took his arm and pulled him to the sitting room. Tyler pushed him gently onto the couch.

"You have nothing to say?" Tyler whispered.

"What do you expect me to say?"

"I don't know, *something*," Tyler said. He knelt in front of Zacky and put his hands on his knees. "I just told you how I feel about you. Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

"Of course it does," Zacky sighed.

"I don't expect you to feel the same way," Tyler continued as if he hadn't spoken. "But I need you to at least acknowledge what I said."

"I do care about you, Tyler. You know that, and of course it means something to me. I just don't know what to say."

"Neither do I," Tyler sighed. He sat on the couch and held out his hand. "I didn't really expect to tell you like this."

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"Because I didn't want to overwhelm you," Tyler said with a rueful grimace. "You already had so much to deal with."

"All this time," Zacky breathed. "After everything I've put you through, you love me?"

"Yes, I do."

"Oh, Tyler." His throat tightened with emotion his heart clenched painfully. He shifted around, climbing into his mate's lap and clutching his cheeks. "Tyler," he murmured, leaning in to press a gentle kiss to his lips. With a muffled whimper, Tyler grasped his ass with one hand and clasped his neck with the other, pulling him closer and sinking into his mouth. The tenderness with an edge of desperation made every cell in his body ache with a need that seemed tainted by guilt. He didn't want Tyler to have to feel his guilt, and he pulled away, dropping his forehead onto his mate's chest.

"Don't love me, Tyler," he said, sorrow filling his heart, a lump growing in his throat, making it hard to swallow. "I'm not worthy of it."

Tyler started to laugh, shaking his head and clutching him tighter so he couldn't move.

"I don't even know where to start, because there's so many things wrong with what you just said."

"What do you mean?" Zacky whispered, lifting his head.

"Don't love you?" Tyler exclaimed. "You can't say that to me. You might as well ask me to stop breathing, Zacky. It's impossible. You're my mate." He smiled tightly and shrugged. "I'll love you forever."

"But I—" Tyler put a finger over his lips, and he stopped, eyes burning with impending tears.

"You are worthy. How can you think you're not worthy, Zacky?"

"I don't want you to feel bad. I don't want you to have to feel the guilt and shame that I can't help feeling when you make me want you and need you. You make me feel good and happy and like nothing else in the world

matters more than being with you. I don't want you to feel my guilt, because it's not fair." He stopped and shook his head, gently stroking his mate's cheek. "You don't deserve that."

Tyler clasped his hand against Zacky's cheek, his face breaking into a smile. "Thank you, baby. You don't know what that means to me," Tyler whispered, leaning into him, kissing him, his mouth soft and warm.

With a soft moan, Zacky let himself kiss him back, melting against his mate. He wasn't sure why the matter felt resolved between them. He couldn't work out what he'd said that had made Tyler happy, but he was glad that they weren't fighting.

"I've waited so long for you, Zacky," Tyler said softly. "And you are more than I could ever ask for."

"In twelve hundred years you've never found anyone?" Zacky shook his head. He couldn't imagine living that long, and now that he had Tyler, he couldn't imagine living that long unmated. "How did you know *I* was your mate?"

"It's a sense of recognition, Zacky. With each of our pack members, I felt an immediate connection." Tyler stroked his cheek and smiled. "It was like being brought back to life. It was as if I spent my whole life hovering close to death, and then I saw you. It was like having my chest torn open and my heart squeezed until it started to beat again."

Tears pricked Zacky's eyes, and he clutched at his mate, holding him tightly.

"I'm so sorry," Zacky whispered.

"What for?"

"For not knowing. For being so blind to how you felt even though I knew I was hurting you."

Tyler pulled him closer and gently nuzzled his neck. "Let me make a guess, honey. If you were taught that men being together was unnatural, you were taught that men couldn't be in love with each other, right?"

"Yeah."

"So why would it even occur to you that I love you?"

"I don't know."

"I do love you, though," Tyler said with a tight smile. "Can you at least accept that?"

"Yes," Zacky said, wrapping his arms around his mate's neck and kissing him. "You can't spend time around Matt and Johnny and not realize that they're in love with each other."

Tyler smiled more genuinely. "I'm glad you can see that, baby."

"Are you okay?" Zacky asked softly.

"Yes. I'm really good actually."

"Do you think we should go back?"

"I should probably apologize to Jimmy for shouting at him," Tyler sighed.

"He seemed really upset."

"He was," Tyler said with a grimace. "He's lonely. He wants a mate, and if he's always liked John, he'll be desperate to believe that he's in love with him."

"It's not like he has waited twelve hundred years though, is it?" Zacky said quietly, unable to help feeling guilty that his mate had waited for so long.

"No, but a hundred years can feel like an eternity, and it must be worse now that I'm mated as well." Tyler grimaced. "I know what it feels like being in a pack where you're the only one who's unmated."

Zacky flinched sorrowfully and kissed his mate again.

"Shall we go back to the dining room?"

"Yeah, okay." He got up from his mate's lap reluctantly and held out his hand. Tyler took it and squeezed gently. They walked back to the dining room where Johnny and Matt were trying to calm Jimmy and Jonathan. Oudinot and the girls were gone.

"Hey," Tyler said softly. "Jimmy, I shouldn't have shouted at you, but I've been through this and it hurts too much. One of my lovers actually committed suicide because I couldn't love him the way he needed. I don't want you to go through that."

Zacky flinched, increasingly saddened that Tyler had been through so much pain over the years. He reached down to touch his mate's shoulder, gently stroking with his fingertips. Tyler looked back at him and smiled softly as he petted Jimmy's hair.

"I just don't want to be alone anymore, Ty," Jimmy sobbed quietly.

"I know, but it's so much harder this way. Believe me," Tyler whispered. "When you find your mate, you'll understand, I promise, but you don't need this kind of heartache."

"What about me?" Jonathan suddenly snapped. "I'm not Pack, I don't get a mate. I *love* Jimmy. What the hell am I supposed to do?"

"You've got to try and move on, John. He'll never really be in love with you. Do think you can live with that?" Tyler said gently. "And what if he meets his mate when he's still with you? He'll break your heart."

Jonathan sagged onto the couch, and Jimmy put an arm around his shoulders, hugging him close.

"I wish you were my mate, Jon. I do love you."

Jonathan's eyes shone, and he turned, burying his face in Jimmy's neck. Jimmy held him close, gently stroking his hair as tears trickled silently down his face.

Zacky felt Tyler's distress, and he quickly moved to stand next to his mate, taking his hand.

"How are you feeling baby?" Tyler whispered.

"I'm okay. I'm just worried about you."

"Don't be. It is ancient history, literally," Tyler said with a snort.

"I just hate knowing you've been hurt so much, Ty."

"What are we going to do?" Matt said quietly, indicating Jimmy and Jonathan who were still clinging to each other.

"We have to go anyway," Tyler said sorrowfully.

"No," Jimmy said, looking up with an expression of determination. "I don't want to leave him."

"But--"

"I'll make my own mistakes."

"I'm a mistake?" Jonathan said quietly.

"I didn't mean it like that, John," Jimmy whispered. "I just meant I want to be with you."

"Jimmy, he can't come with us," Matt said.

"Why not? I can take care of him."

"Now is not a good time for hauling a human around with us."

"Hauling?" Jimmy exclaimed.

"Matt, *s'il te plait, chéri*," Johnny said softly, touching his mate's arm.

"I'm serious," Matt snapped, twisting his arm around to take Johnny's hand. "We can't waste time with this bullshit right now. Ty's right, John. You'll just get hurt and the way things are right now, you could get killed."

Zacky stared at Matt, then looked up at Tyler. "What does he mean?"

Tyler sighed and turned his head away. "We're in trouble."

"In trouble how?" Johnny asked softly, his voice trembling just enough to fill Zacky with fear.

"We're being hunted again. Whole packs have been systematically killed," Tyler said softly, his head still turned away from them all. His shoulders were hunched, tension vibrated through his whole body. "We're down to half our numbers already. Only one has survived the killings."

"Is it hunters?" Johnny whispered.

Matt pulled his mate closer and kissed his cheek. "We don't know, mein Herz."

"What about the survivor?" Jimmy asked, looking up again.

"He just doesn't know. He's not entirely sure how he survived, let alone who attacked him," Tyler sighed.

Zacky stared at his mate. There seemed to be so much pressure on him, so much pain, sorrow, and ridiculous responsibility weighing on his shoulders.

"Ty, it's not your fault," he said quietly, leaning in and putting an arm around his waist.

"Doesn't matter." Tyler bit his lip and looked up at the ceiling, sniffing loudly. "I don't know if I can go through this again."

"I know you lost your pack," Matt started quietly.

"I didn't just lose my pack, Matt," Tyler snapped suddenly, pained anger radiating from him. "I lost my family. I wasn't always the oldest Pack. Once I was the youngest."

Chapter Fourteen

"What do you mean?"

"I had only been fully mature for a year. I was the youngest, the baby." Tyler glanced at Zacky, and his mouth curled into a half-smile. "Our family was privileged beyond any other because we were considered blessed by Odin. Those of us who were born Pack were known as Wolf Warriors. Chiefs would vie for the honor of lying with our mothers and sisters in the hopes of fathering a Wolf Warrior who would eventually fight for their tribe."

"So what happened?" Zacky asked quietly.

"It was my brother." Tyler stopped for a second and took a deep breath. "We all grew up together until we reached eighteen then the boys were sent to live with their fathers. Non-Pack brothers remained with their father's tribe. They were supposed to marry and contribute, whereas Pack brothers could return to the family whenever they wished.

"Pack hierarchy was a lot more fluid in those days. It needed to be with us all living in one place. Alphas were more like officers. The older alphas had more authority. It was non-Pack brothers who were the first hunters. They knew our habits and our traditions, and they killed the whole family. Not just Pack, but the women and children too." Tyler's voice broke, and he sagged against Zacky.

"How?" Zacky whispered.

"Every year, all Pack would come home and join the family for the Feast of Odin. A group of hunters locked everyone in the great hall and set fire to it. My sister, Freya, and I escaped because we weren't in the hall. She was pregnant, and she didn't feel well, so I had taken her out to the forest for some fresh air. I couldn't save them, just like I couldn't save my pack."

"Ty, you barely escaped with your life when Connor killed your pack, and you know it," Matt said. "That was not your fault."

"I can't lose a third family, Mattie," Tyler whispered. "It's bad enough having to watch the humans in our family grow old and die. I can't lose you or Zacky *or* anyone else."

"What's your real name?"

Tyler looked at his mate in surprise. "What?"

"You're a twelve hundred year old Viking. Your name can't be Tyler," Zacky said softly, trying to distract his mate from the pain.

"No." Tyler managed a small smile. "My name was Tyr. My mother found it amusing to name us all after the Gods."

"All?"

"There were a few of us. I had three brothers and four sisters. I was the only Pack, and my brother Loki hated me. He resented the fact that I was Pack. The Elders tried to make sure we were all treated equally, but I was stronger than he was, faster. Even though I was younger, my brothers would always take my side when we fought. Loki was the one who killed them."

"Oh, Ty, I'm so sorry," Zacky whispered, pulling his mate into a hug.

"It's okay." Tyler hugged him fiercely for a moment then straightened up, squaring his shoulders. "I need to stop feeling sorry for myself, and we need to do something about this. We need to find out who's doing this, and if necessary, go to war."

"War?"

"I said 'if necessary', baby. It might not come to that. Especially if it's just a rogue pack or a few hunters, but if it's bigger..." Tyler shrugged.

Staring at his mate, Zacky started to shake his head. "You're talking about killing, aren't you?"

"Yeah." Tyler's expression was solemn, his eyes dark and full of worry.

"I can't," Zacky whispered.

"Bullshit you can't," Matt snapped. "You're Pack. It's a part of who you are."

"I might be Pack, but I'm also me. I cannot take a life, Matt," Zacky snapped back.

"Please," Matt snorted. "If someone attacked, Ty, you'd kill them without even blinking."

Fear tightened Zacky's throat, and he stared at his mate. Matt was right, and Zacky knew it, but the thought that he might kill someone made him

feel sick. Shame, guilt and self-loathing started to take over again. He wrapped his arms around his chest and turned away.

"Matt's right," Johnny said softly. "I know you don't want to hurt anyone, let alone kill, but sometimes we don't have a choice. Sometimes it's kill or be killed."

"And you will defend your mate to the death," Matt said.

"Enough," Tyler said firmly, putting a hand on Zacky's shoulder. "Baby, don't start this again."

He flinched away despite the pain it caused him, and the hurt he could feel in his mate. It felt like he'd gone all the way back to the beginning. The horror and self-disgust that had constantly filled him when he'd first met Tyler overwhelmed him again, and he ran from the room.

"Zacky! Zacky, stop."

He stopped at the top of the stairs and looked back at Tyler.

"Come on, baby. Please don't do this to me again," Tyler whispered, slowly walking up the steps towards him.

"Do what?" Zacky snapped, his confusing emotions making him angry. "Remember who I am and what you did to me?"

"Oh, don't you fucking dare put the blame on me again," Tyler shouted. He moved so fast up the stairs that Zacky nearly jumped back. His mate seemed to appear right in front of him. "No matter what I've done, you would have been Pack. You *are* Pack. Would you rather we'd left you to become a vicious, uncontrollable killer?"

"No."

"You are Pack, and we are mates. That is something neither of us can do anything about, no matter how much we might wish we could."

Zacky flinched again, bile burning the back of his throat, the sense of rejection made him realize just how badly Tyler felt when he did the same thing.

"I love you," Tyler said, his voice lowering to a pained whisper. "But there are times, Zacky, when I really wish I didn't, and then maybe it wouldn't hurt so damned much."

"Ty--"

"No, Zacky, no more." Tyler turned and started to walk back down the stairs. "I know you care about me. I know you want me and need me, but

you don't want to, and it is breaking my heart." Tyler stopped and looked up at Zacky, eyes dark with sorrow. "So we're going to stop."

"Stop?" Zacky whispered in confusion.

"We'll still feed together like I promised, and we'll probably have sex, but that's it."

"That's it?"

"I can't be with you anymore, Zacky. Not like this. I can't touch you knowing that you don't really want me to."

"But-"

"Just go call your mother." Tyler turned away again and walked stiffly back towards the dining room.

"I don't want you to stop," Zacky whispered, watching his mate walk away. It was true, and it struck him painfully. Despite his doubts and guilt, growing close to Tyler had been the best part of being Pack. He'd become comfortable with, and accustomed to, their physical relationship. He was used to touching his mate, leaning against him, hugging him, kissing him. Even though he knew he shouldn't, he loved curling up in Tyler's arms at night, feeling his warm body pressed against his.

He didn't know what to do. Tyler was giving him what he should want, so why did it just leave him feeling empty?

Forcing himself to turn away, he walked slowly back to the bedroom, getting his new cell phone from his bag and curling up on the bed before dialing home.

"Hello?"

"Mom."

"Zach! Oh my darling, it's so good to hear from you. How are you and your man?"

"Tyler and I," Zacky sighed, "keep fighting. I keep hurting him. I don't know what to do, Mom."

"Oh, sweetheart. Haven't you realized?" she said softly. "How does it make you feel when you fight?"

"Terrible. I can feel how much it hurts him. I hate it."

"What about when you're not fighting?"

"He makes me feel good. He makes me feel complete, but he said he can't be with me anymore, and I need him."

"You love him," his mother said. His chest hurt, his heart pounded painfully, and his breath stuttered.

"No, I can't. It's wrong."

"Who says?"

"Father, God, the church."

"Don't be ridiculous. God is love. How can love be wrong? Love is never a sin."

"But, I'm not--"

"Of course you are. I could tell the moment I saw you with him. Tell yourself the truth."

He lay back and stared at the ceiling. Tyler was his mate, and they'd be together, potentially forever, but it was more than that. Seeing Tyler made his heart beat faster. His smile made his breath catch in his throat. Even being away from him for a couple of hours at the mall, left him feeling empty. Knowing Tyler was hurting enough to pull away, made him feel like his chest had been torn open and his heart was being stuck with a knife that twisted and turned.

"I love him."

"Yes," she said quietly. "It's not wrong. You're not sinning for being in love, okay?"

"Okay. Thanks, Mom," Zacky whispered. "How are you? Is Father treating you okay?"

"Of course. I'm fine. I just miss you."

"Yeah, I miss you too, Mom."

* * * *

He'd talked to his mother for a long time, trying to push his revelation from his mind. It should have made everything better, but the timing couldn't have been worse. He couldn't bear the slightest chance of doubt, that Tyler might think he was saying it just to placate him, to get him to back down.

He'd never imagined that he'd find love before he met Tyler. He had almost accepted a life of never fitting in, a loveless marriage to Ruth. Finding love astounded him, above and beyond finding out he wasn't quite human, and it hurt that he couldn't tell his mate and make them both happy.

Tyler came into the room, and Zacky sat up, blinking.

"How's your mom?"

"Um, she's good."

"Good. We need to get packed."

"Okay." Zacky stood up, automatically reaching out for his mate who flinched away. The pain was sharp in his chest, and he yanked his hand back, tucking it under his opposite arm and turning away, swallowing back tears. "Do you want me to pack for you?" Zacky asked.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Thanks, bab--" Tyler stopped abruptly.

"Tyler, please don't stop calling me baby."

"Don't."

"Right," Zacky said, biting back tears and quickly grabbing the bags, busying himself by repacking the few things they'd taken out during their brief stay. He knew Tyler could feel his hurt, and he could feel his mate's pain also. He didn't know what to do. Tyler seemed determined to distance himself, and he didn't know how to bridge the gap.

He could feel Tyler's gaze burning into his back, feel his worry and his curiosity.

"Are you okay?"

"What do you think?" Zacky said a little sharply.

"I was just--"

"I know I took a step backwards today," Zacky whispered, sagging onto the bed. "But I don't want you to stop touching me. I need you." He looked up at his mate and held out his hand hopefully. "I don't want to be selfish, Ty. I don't want to hurt you, but I need you."

"I don't know," Tyler said quietly, staring at his hand. "I need to think about it."

Sighing painfully, Zacky watched his mate walk out of the room. Now what did he do? He *never* imagined love could be this painful.

How ironic that, after Tyler admitted how he felt, Zacky was the one having to hide his feelings. Ironic, too, that it made him feel guilty.

He finished packing the bags and dragged them down the stairs.

"What's wrong, Zacky?" Johnny asked as he walked into the hallway.

"Oh, you know, pretty much everything."

"The early stages of mating aren't easy for any of us, no matter what Tyler might have told you," Johnny said softly. "Matt and I went through fights and arguments like you wouldn't believe before I could accept that I was his mate and that he loved me. When I finally did, I realized that I loved him rather desperately."

Zacky flinched, looking away quickly, Johnny's words hitting a little close to home.

"I know it's difficult for you to accept, especially considering your background, but he loves you. He's in love with you."

"I know," Zacky whispered. "Why did you resist?"

Johnny grinned. "In Matt's words, I was a pompous, arrogant snob of an aristo."

"A French aristocrat, really?"

"Illegitimate son, raised as the heir until a legitimate son was born when I was twelve, and I was suddenly second best." Johnny snorted and shook his head. "As you can probably imagine, being a posh, rich, effete, French nobleman, I was horrified to find myself irresistibly drawn to a boorish German peasant."

"German peasant?" Zacky said slowly, raising a surprised eyebrow.

"Well, he was, a very long time ago. After running with Tyler, of course, he'd been educated, but that didn't matter to me at the time."

"I bet that annoyed Matt a lot."

"Oh yeah," Johnny drawled slowly with a large smirk. "Made for some damn good sex though."

Zacky flushed and looked away.

"Oops. Sorry, Zacky. I forgot you're not quite used to us yet. Look, don't worry. They might be big, strong alphas, but they're complete suckers for their mates."

Zacky managed a weak smile and hauled the bags out to the car, shoving them into the trunk. He closed the trunk and sat on it, drawing his feet up and wrapping his arms around his knees.

He couldn't believe it was just a few weeks since he'd met Tyler. His life had changed completely.

It seemed both amazing and ridiculous. Now, instead of being happy like he should have been that Tyler loved him, he was miserable.

"Zacky." His mate's voice sent a tingle down his spine, and he turned his head slowly to meet a solemn brown gaze. "Are you okay?"

"Will you stop asking me if I'm okay?"

"Don't do this," Tyler started with a sigh.

"I'm not doing anything, Ty. You're the one--"

"Trying to protect my heart?" Tyler interrupted, a soft sadness filling his tone. It hit Zacky like a punch to the gut, and his indignant anger faded to leave him, once again, full of misery.

"I'm not going to break your heart," Zacky whispered. "Please, Tyler. I'm sorry." Tears started to prick his eyes. His sadness and pain grew every second that Tyler stayed away.

"But you will still feel guilty and ashamed..."

"No," Zacky interrupted. "No, I won't."

"How do you know?"

"Because I--" He stopped himself and bit his lip to stop from blurting out his feelings. He just couldn't take that his mate might doubt him. "It's something my Mom told me. Please, Ty, I've accepted us. I promise, when it comes to us and being together, I've accepted it."

"Really?" Tyler whispered hopefully.

"Really."

"It won't make you feel badly?"

"No, it won't." He held out his hand, and Tyler shot forward, appearing in front of him in a split second.

"Thank God," Tyler murmured, cupping Zacky's jaw with both hands and tipping his face up as he bent close enough to brush his skin. "That was torture." Tyler closed the gap, lips pressing gently to Zacky's mouth.

The sense of relief and happiness was almost overwhelming, and Zacky leaned up, wrapping his arms around his mate's neck to pull him closer, lips parting under the pressure of his kiss. Tyler licked into Zacky's mouth with a quiet groan, pushing right between his legs and rocking up against him.

"Dude, wait till we're on the road."

Pulling back with a growl, Tyler glared fiercely at their three friends.

"Shut up," he snapped.

"Touchy," Jimmy snorted. "At least you're not leaving your lover behind, man."

"I know. I'm sorry," Tyler said, his expression softening.

"Yeah." Jimmy pulled a face and slid into the front passenger seat.

"You two take the back," Matt said. "I'll drive."

"Thanks, Matt," Tyler said with a smile.

"Figured you'd need some time," Matt said with a shrug.

"Yeah." Tyler took Zacky's hand and pulled him into the backseat, wrapping an arm around his waist. Sighing happily, Zacky curled his legs up on the seat under him and leaned against his mate, resting his head on his chest. Feeling better now that Tyler was touching him, he couldn't quite resist a tease.

"Torture, huh?"

"What?" Tyler asked, sounding sleepy.

"A couple of hours of abstinence was torture."

"Yeah, well, I don't know whether you've noticed but I love you, and you pretty much have me wrapped around your little finger."

"You shouldn't tell me things like that. I might take advantage."

Tyler snorted quietly and kissed the top of his head. "No, you wouldn't. You're too good."

"No, I'm not," Zacky whined. Tyler stared at him, a glint of mischief in his eyes.

"Prove it."

"Um, how?" Zacky asked warily.

"I want you," Tyler said. His voice was quiet and husky with desire, and it made Zacky's skin tighten, his mouth going dry.

"Here? Now?"

Tyler's gaze darkened slightly, and Zacky could feel the tension that suddenly gripped his mate. Tyler was testing him.

"Yes."

Keeping his gaze fixed on his mate's eyes so that he could ignore the presence of the other three, Zacky shifted onto his knees and moved around to straddle Tyler's lap.

"How do you want me?"

Tyler stared at him with a mixture of shock and delight, licking his lips slowly.

"Just like this," he murmured, dropping his hands onto Zacky's hips and tugging him closer.

Biting back nerves and embarrassment, Zacky leaned in close, brushing his lips over Tyler's ear.

"I don't want to come in my pants, Ty," Zacky whispered.

"Oh Jesus," Tyler gasped, bucking. "What do you want then?"

Zacky smirked. He couldn't tell Tyler that he loved him. But at least he could prove to his mate that he wasn't going to feel bad or guilty for wanting him or ashamed of it after the fact. He leaned closer and licked Tyler's neck.

"I want you to suck me off," Zacky breathed against moistened skin.

"Fuck," Tyler groaned, fingers digging into Zacky's hips tightly. Tyler swung him around, pressing him against the seat and crushing his lips in a passionate, needy kiss, erection rubbing against his hardening cock. Lifting his head, Tyler stared down at Zacky.

"You sure?" Tyler whispered.

"Yes," Zacky gasped more urgently, his cock dripping pre-cum. "I want your mouth."

Groaning loudly, Tyler pushed him into the seat, tugging at his jeans until he managed to wrench them open and pull them down. The sense of desperation and need from his lover made Zacky feel so good. His cock jerked as Tyler shifted back and buried his face in his groin.

"Yes," Zacky breathed, rocking his hips against his mate until he felt soft lips part over his skin. The wet heat of Tyler's tongue licked over his balls and slowly up his shaft until it reached the tip. Tyler dipped his tongue into the slit of Zacky's dick until he was gasping and writhing, pleasure sparking through his nerves.

"Mmm, you taste good," Tyler murmured, brown eyes flicking up to fix him with a heated gaze. He watched Zacky as he slowly slid his mouth down the length of Zacky's cock.

"Tyler, oh please, yes," he groaned, sliding his fingers into long, dark hair and gripping tightly, urging his mate down. Tyler swallowed hard and lifted up again, swirling his tongue around the head of Zacky's cock before sinking back down.

Heady pleasure filled Zacky's whole body. A tense ache built in his groin as Tyler licked, sucked, and swallowed, moving faster over his erection until his climax ripped through him. Pleasure exploded, making Zacky cry out as his back arched and he jerked helplessly, his mate swallowing as he shot down his throat.

Tyler lifted his head and crawled over, leaning down to kiss him. Zacky forced a smile, holding back sudden tears as he stopped himself from saying "I love you". He kissed back a little urgently, clasping Tyler's face and wrapping his legs around his lover's hips, rocking up against the hard length of cock digging into his groin.

"Fuck yes," Tyler grunted. He jerked into him hard and stiffened as he bit down on Zacky's lip and sucked blood into his mouth. Pained pleasure rippled through his body, and he kissed Tyler again, tasting himself eagerly.

Tyler pulled back a little and stared at him, a slight tension visible around his eyes.

"You okay?"

"Yes," Zacky whispered, slipping his tongue out to lick the gash on his lip.

"Are you sure? I thought I felt--"

"I'm okay," he interrupted. "In fact, I feel good, Ty."

"As long as you're sure."

"I am." He grinned, watching his lover shift back and gently tuck him back into his jeans, zipping him up. "Thank you."

Tyler smiled back at him.

"Sorry I made you come in your pants."

"That's okay, baby. Sucking you off made me so hot I would have come in my pants anyway."

"Need some tissue?" Jimmy leaned over the back of his seat, holding out a handful of Kleenex and leering.

"Asshole," Tyler snorted, grabbing the tissue.

Flushing a little with embarrassment, Zacky shifted around and grabbed the tissues.

"I'll do that," he said, shifting up to straddle Tyler, sitting back on his knees and reaching to open his mate's pants.

"You should use your tongue," Jimmy said with a snicker. "It'd be hot."

Turning his head, Zacky stuck his tongue out. Jimmy laughed harder and nodded.

"Yeah, like that."

Chuckling softly, Zacky turned back to his mate who was smiling widely at him.

"You gonna use your tongue then, baby?"

"Well, I wasn't." He smiled back at Tyler, leering just a little. "But I will if you want me to," he whispered, leaning in slowly to nuzzle his mate's neck. Tyler moaned quietly, fingers clenching against his hips.

"Jesus, baby. What did your mother say to you?"

Smiling again, Zacky shifted and unzipped his lover's pants, cleaning him up carefully with the tissues.

"She just made me realize that hurting you made me feel so much worse than anything else. That maybe I had my priorities skewed." He looked down and slid a fingertip over the head of Tyler's cock, lifting it to his mouth and sucking on it for a taste of his lover. Tyler shivered against him and pulled him into a tight hug.

"She told me not to feel guilty about my nature, that God made me this way for a reason, and that I'd be happier if I accepted it."

Tyler kissed his cheek and took the tissue, zipping himself up as he stroked Zacky's hair.

"Remind me to thank her."

"I will," he said with a laugh. Tyler smiled and shifted them both around so they were sitting curled up together on the seat.

"So, where are we going?"

"We need to find out who's killing the packs," Tyler sighed. "The survivor was an alpha, and we know where they were attacked. We need to see if we can find out what happened."

"What's happened to him?" Zacky asked quietly, feeling his mate's worry. "I mean now that he's lost his pack." Tyler tensed, and Zacky stroked his lover's arm apologetically.

"It's okay," Tyler said. "He's joined the pack of the alpha who turned him, but he lost his mate. I don't know how long he'll survive now."

"What do you mean?"

"We tend not to last long once we've lost our mates," Tyler said quietly, his tone strained, sadness welling through him.

"Oh."

"Yeah, it's a bit of a weakness," Matt said, glancing back at them in the rear view mirror. "A flaw in our makeup."

"A flaw?" Johnny said, sounding a little huffy.

"Liebling," Matt sighed, "I only meant that it's not exactly good for our survival if we can't live without our mates, is it?"

"I suppose," Johnny sighed, still looking sulky. "Would you last long without me?"

"You know I wouldn't, mein Herz," Matt said softly. "I would kill anyone who took you away from me and then follow you."

"Can we stop talking about dying please?" Tyler said tensely.

"No, wait a minute," Jimmy interrupted. "If you lost Johnny, you've still got me."

"That's not the same thing."

"I know that, but I'm your pack. You're my alpha. You can't just leave me on my own you know."

There was a long moment of silence, Matt staring at the road, the steering wheel creaking under his grip.

"You're right," he sighed. "You could join another pack but I suppose I couldn't desert you. I seriously doubt you'd be able to live with me if I ever lost Johnny."

Jimmy nodded slowly. "That's true. That would definitely suck."

"You'd still have us though, Jimmy," Zacky said quietly.

"Really?" Jimmy gasped, turning to look at him in shock.

"Yes, of course."

"Wow, I kinda thought you hated me."

"No, I don't hate you," Zacky said, shaking his head. "You just freak me out sometimes."

"Hehe, cool." Jimmy grinned at him, and Zacky smiled back.

"Thank you, baby," Tyler said quietly. "Now can we stop talking about dying?"

"Yeah." Jimmy winked and turned back around, slinging an arm around Johnny's shoulders and kissing his cheek. "We wouldn't want to lose you Johnny boy. Matt will take care of you anyway, huh?"

"Yeah." Johnny leaned in closer to his mate and nuzzled his neck. "*Je t'aime, Matthias*," he whispered.

Matt turned his head to quickly kiss his mate. "*Ich liebe dich, Jean*."

"That's what you were saying, isn't it?" Zacky gasped.

"What, baby?"

"You've been saying 'I love you' since... Oh, Tyler." His heart tightened painfully, he'd been so blind to both their feelings and now he wanted so desperately to be able to tell his mate how he felt. "Say it to me."

Tyler stared at him a little uncertainly. "Why?"

"Please, Ty."

"*Mä rakastan sua.*"

"It means 'I love you', doesn't it?"

"Yes," Tyler sighed.

"In what language?"

"Finnish."

"It's really beautiful," Zacky whispered. "*Mä rakastan sua.*"

"I love you," Tyler said fiercely. He pulled Zacky back onto his lap and kissed him, stroking his face tenderly. Zacky wrapped his arms around his mate's neck and held on tight. He kissed back softly, trying to put all the feelings he couldn't express out loud into the touch.

* * * *

They traveled in almost total silence for the rest of the day, barely even speaking when he and Tyler swapped places with Matt and Johnny. Zacky leaned against his lover's shoulder, absentmindedly stroking his thigh and turning occasionally to watch the other couple in the back. After the depressing conversation they'd had, the other couple couldn't keep their hands off each other. It wasn't a big change to their normal behavior, except that it wasn't sexual. They just clung to each other, stroking faces and arms, kissing sweet and soft as if they needed to confirm and reconfirm each other's presence.

He knew how they felt. He wanted to beg them to stop the car so he could drag his mate somewhere private and reconfirm their bond in a much more intimate way. But he knew that they couldn't stop, that they had to find out what was happening as soon as possible. People, Pack, were being killed. They couldn't afford to take any extra time.

He lifted his head and fixed his gaze on his mate's face, saying a silent "I love you" as he smiled and leaned close to kiss Tyler's cheek.

"What was that for?" Tyler asked glancing at him and smiling.

"I just wanted to," he said with a small shrug. "Having had the option taken away from me, no matter how briefly, I want to take advantage whenever I can."

Tyler looked a cross between pained and surprised, and he frowned slightly in confusion. "You do?"

"I wasn't joking when I said I need you to touch me. I need to touch you too," he said softly. "I know I haven't been very accepting or very demonstrative but I need this, Ty, and I'm sorry it took me so long."

"Sorry, baby, I'm just getting used to it." Tyler smiled at him again and turned his head for a quick kiss. "It's nice."

"Good," he said, licking his lips happily. Maybe he could convince Tyler of his feelings. He couldn't take hiding them anymore.

Chapter Fifteen

It took a few days, but they finally made it to a suburb on the outskirts of a small town in Washington, pulling up outside a dilapidated old house. The windows were boarded, the garden overgrown, and the walls were covered in graffiti- none of it particularly artistic.

"What the fuck was Rob doing bringing his pack to this shithole in the first place?" Matt growled, staring at the house in disgust.

"Matt, this was their bolt hole. They were on the run. What would you have done?"

"Run farther or fought."

"You really think we'd have done any better?" Tyler snorted. "They did fight, remember?"

"Yeah," Matt sighed. "Sorry, I'm just pissed."

"When aren't you?" Jimmy said with a nervous giggle. Matt didn't reply. Instead, he smacked Jimmy on the back of the head.

"Yeah, I didn't think you'd like that," Jimmy said softly. "I just hate when everything is so serious."

"There's not a lot we can do about that, Jimmy," Tyler said. "Things *are* serious, and unless we sort them out quickly, things are going to stay serious for a long time."

"Yeah, I know," Jimmy said, pouting just a little. "Okay, who's doing the *CSI* thing?"

"Zacky, should do it. Start training," Matt said, glancing at Tyler.

"Yeah, that's true." Tyler nodded and climbed out of the car, holding out his hand. Zacky took it and let his mate help him out of the car to stand next to him. "Come on then."

"What, Ty?" He asked.

"You seen *CSI*?"

"I don't even know what that means."

"It's a TV show."

"Do I look like I was allowed to watch TV, Tyler?" He said with a touch of sarcasm.

"Oh, yeah. Right." Tyler trailed a hand slowly down Zacky's back. "It's a show that dramatizes forensic investigations of crime scenes."

"That sounds boring."

"Nah, it's pretty cool, but Jimmy's obsessed." Tyler grinned. "We do our own version. You use your enhanced senses already."

"Well yes, I guess, but not deliberately."

"You just have to learn to focus."

"So, what do you want me to do?"

"Climb up." Tyler got up on the wall, and Zacky followed. "Take a look at the ground. What do you see?"

Zacky glanced at his mate with a raised eyebrow. "Dirt?"

Tyler rolled his eyes. "Funny. Seriously, look."

"Okay, okay." Sighing, he stared at the ground, trying to focus. As he looked, he realized that he could discern different impressions in the dirt-footprints mostly. A lot of them trailed directly in and out of the house, along the path, and they were fairly smooth. As he looked closer, he could see three more sets that were different- booted feet that had been running.

"Is that from Pack?" Zacky asked, pointing.

"More than likely. The walking imprints are probably from the police."

"How many were in the pack?"

"Six. Three mated pairs."

"Then why are there only three sets of prints?"

"They may have come a different way, if they split up for safety." Tyler grimaced and shook his head. "Didn't do them much good though." He jumped down into the garden. Zacky jumped down to join him, taking his mate's hand briefly to squeeze his fingers.

"Do you smell anything?" Tyler asked.

Closing his eyes, Zacky took a slow, deep breath.

"Blood," he whispered with a shiver, "Pack blood from the house."

"Anything else?"

"Sort of..." He paused, inhaling again. "Metallic or sulfur-like, I think."

"Gunfire," Tyler said quietly, sadness infusing his voice.

"Guns?" Zacky gasped, eyes snapping open to stare at his mate in horror.

"The hunters shot them." Tyler's lips pressed together in a tight line. "Come on." He led Zacky around the perimeter and pointed at a line of trees along part of the wall.

"The metal smell is strong. Not quite like sulfur," Zacky said quietly. He wrinkled his nose as a strange, acrid scent hit him. "Is that sweat?" he asked.

"Yeah. You can smell the anger and fear," Tyler said as his lips drew into an unconscious snarl.

"There were people crouching and lying here?" Zacky ventured.

"Yes," Tyler said with a nod. "They were lying in wait."

"Is that bad?"

"It's disturbing," Tyler sighed. "They shouldn't have known where the bolt hole was in advance." Shaking his head, Tyler led his mate around to the back. "This is far more organized than I've ever seen the hunters before."

"More Pack prints here, Ty," Zacky said, pointing at the track of ground leading to the back of the house. "But didn't you say there were six in the pack?"

"Yeah, why?"

"I can see four sets of prints running towards the house."

Tyler moved over and crouched down, scanning the ground closely.

"You're right." He frowned, pulling his cell phone from his pocket and quickly selecting a number. He stood again, pacing as he waited for an answer. Zacky glanced at the house and stood. There was an incongruous scent that had started to nudge at his nostrils, and he walked slowly over to the door. It was open, and it didn't look like it had been forced, yet slow, scuffed footprints led from the trees to the door, suggesting that it was the point of entry. Had someone let the hunters in? If so, why?

"Albie? Yeah, look I'm here. Is Rob around?" Tyler said into his phone, still pacing. "Well get him up, Albert. It's important." Glancing over, Tyler frowned and walked over.

"Rob, hey. Listen, we're here... Yeah, I know... No, listen to me," Tyler said softly, sorrow darkening his eyes. "Who else was with you?"

Zacky walked closer to the back door, still curious about the ever-strengthening scent. He was about to enter the house when his mate grabbed

his arm and stopped him. He glanced up in surprise, and Tyler shook his head.

"No, there are seven sets of prints. Four around back." Tyler pulled a face. "Okay, okay. I'm sorry, Rob. Calm down... Oh, Albie. Is he okay? Yeah, I know. See you." He hung up with a sigh and looked over.

"He doesn't remember an extra person, but his mate mentioned getting a warning from another Pack." Tyler sighed, and Zacky pulled him into a hug.

"Did he get upset?"

"You could say that, yeah."

"But he never saw this other Pack?"

"No, and not knowing who it was is really going to piss me off."

Nodding, Zacky glanced at the door. "Why didn't you let me go into the house?"

"There's people in there, baby."

"Oh. Is that what that is?" Zacky asked in surprise. "Smells a little weird."

"Smells like dirty teenagers," Tyler said, his nose wrinkling in disgust. "But maybe potential witnesses. Let's get the others over. We might as well feed while we've got the chance."

Zacky barely stopped himself from grimacing, nodding slowly. He was hungry, and if he was going to accept himself for who he was, he had to learn to deal with the fact that he needed to feed.

"You okay?" Tyler asked carefully.

"Yes." Zacky leaned up and kissed his mate, gently nipping his bottom lip for the sweet burst of a droplet of blood on his tongue. Tyler groaned quietly, clutching him for a moment before pushing him back and slipping his tongue out over the bite.

"Don't tease me, baby."

"I wasn't trying to tease," Zacky said with a sigh. "I just want..." He stopped, sighing again. It wasn't working, but, considering how long it had taken him to realize how he felt about his mate, it was hardly surprising that it was taking Tyler time to adjust.

"Just want what?"

"I want you, Ty, okay? I just want you."

"Get a room."

"Fuck off, Jimmy," Tyler snapped, pulling back. "What are you doing back here anyway?"

"We figured it was time to go in the house. You might want some help with the occupants."

"Where are Matt and Johnny?"

"In the front."

"Okay, let's go. Jimmy take point."

"Yeah, yeah," Jimmy sighed, shaking his head and rolling his eyes. He tiptoed in an exaggerated manner towards the entrance, and Tyler followed with a snort.

Garbage and broken pieces of furniture were strewn everywhere, and paint was peeling off the walls except where more graffiti was sprayed. The whole place had a cold, strangely dead atmosphere that made him shiver. He clung tighter to his mate's hand, his heart pounding more with nerves than lust as they met up with Matt and Johnny at the base of the stairs.

Matt pointed up, and Tyler nodded, all of them ascending cautiously.

"Come any farther, and we'll kill you." The voice floated down the stairs, strong, aggressive, and surprisingly young. With their heightened level of hearing, Zacky realized he could detect a tremor of fear. He could certainly smell tension and fear, hear a multitude of heartbeats pounding and blood flowing through veins. He could feel his hunger growing, and the rush of adrenaline and anticipation took over his senses.

Matt growled loudly and laughed. "You could try."

"I mean it, man. We will *cut* you."

"I think he's giving us a come on, chéri," Johnny murmured, his brown eyes glittering dangerously.

"Be nice boys. They're only kids," Tyler said, a warning tone to his voice.

"Kids who are threatening us, Ty," Matt snapped. Before Tyler could reply, Matt howled and pounded up the last of the steps, followed closely by his mate. Jimmy whooped and ran after them as they heard the sound of many pairs of sneaker-clad feet scrambling around.

Before they could move, two figures came flying out of one room, heading straight for the stairs.

"Stop them," Tyler exclaimed, grabbing one as he tried to streak past, spinning around to twist the boy's arm behind his back and wrapping an arm around his throat whilst, somehow, not falling off the narrow step.

Almost distracted by his mate's elegance and grace of movement, Zacky barely managed to grab the collar of the second boy trying to run past him, yanking hard so the boy fell back and slammed heavily into the stairs.

"Ow. Fuck, man. You trying to kill me?" The kid groaned as the one Tyler was holding cursed and struggled uselessly.

"Let go of me."

"Shut up, kid, and I won't hurt you," Tyler growled softly. "You got that one, baby?"

"Yeah," Zacky said. He dragged the second one to his feet and held his wrists tightly behind his back.

"Premises secure," Matt shouted.

"He better not have killed anyone," Tyler muttered. "This house has seen enough death."

"You talking about those freaks who got shot up?" The second kid asked as they pushed them both up the stairs.

"Those freaks were our *friends*," Tyler said tightly. "Move it."

"Fuck you, man," the kid yelled, still trying to escape.

"Will you shut up?"

"Ty, that's enough," Zacky said softly. "They didn't kill the pack."

"Yeah, I know. I'm sorry. I'm just frustrated."

"Fucking assholes," the first one spat.

"I've had enough of you," Tyler said with a frown. He shoved the boy into the room where Matt and the others had secured the rest of the kids. They were all in their late teens, wearing gang colors, shaven heads, and varying levels of facial hair. Two were unconscious. Matt had one against the wall, a hand around his throat, and Jimmy was sitting on another. Tyler twisted so he could wrap his hand around the kid's neck who, after a second, collapsed.

"Mouthy little fucker," Tyler said in response to Matt's raised eyebrow.

"Dude, what'd you do to him?"

Zacky pushed the kid he was holding into the room and patted his back.

"Don't worry. You didn't hurt him, right Tyler?"

"Of course not, baby." Tyler flashed a smile, and Zacky couldn't help smiling back. He wanted to say "I love you" but he held it back with a pang of bittersweet sorrow.

"I can't believe you let your mate speak to you like that," Matt said with a shake of his head.

"I like the way he speaks to me, okay?"

"You guys are some freaks. Just like those others," the second kid said with a grimace.

"What's your name?"

"Rodney."

"Shut up, man," the kid Jimmy was sitting on whispered harshly.

"Dude, ain't like we gotta choice. Look at these guys. They're like the others."

"Did you know them?" Tyler asked.

"Nah, saw them though. They were doing some weird, freaky shit in here," Rodney said. "We stayed away when they came around." The kid shrugged and glanced around. "You guys some kinda homo cult or something?"

Tyler chuckled as Jimmy burst out laughing.

"Yeah, man. You wanna join?" Jimmy asked with a leer.

"Hell no," Rodney exclaimed, rearing back in horror.

"Jimmy," Zacky said softly, feeling sorry for the kid.

"Ah jeez, I was just kidding," Jimmy sighed.

"Thank you," Zacky said, smiling.

"Did you see what happened to them?" Tyler asked softly.

"Yeah, man. They was trapped," Rodney said.

"How?"

"Some soldier guys were waiting for them. The freaks ran in here. Soldier guys went in after and *blam*, the freaks were dead."

Zacky flinched at the pain and frustrated anger he felt surge through his mate. He reached out to draw Tyler away from the others. He reached up to stroke Tyler's cheek and smoothed a thumb over the crease in his brow.

"Easy, love," Zacky whispered, wincing when he realized what he'd let slip out. Luckily, Tyler was too distracted to notice. "It wasn't your fault."

"I just," Tyler sighed heavily and held onto him tightly for a moment. "I know, but I still *feel* responsible. I'm the oldest, you know?"

"Yeah, which is why I know you won't give up until you find out who's responsible and stop them."

"Are you actually encouraging me to kill?" Tyler asked, sliding one arm around Zacky's waist and gently stroking a fingertip over his bottom lip.

"No, but we can't let them keep killing *us*, can we?" It was a dilemma that should have been tearing him apart, but it wasn't. Like Johnny had said, it was kill or be killed, whether he liked it or not.

"You don't know how much that means to me," Tyler said, smiling and leaning in to press a gentle kiss to Zacky's lips.

"Man, that is some sick shit," the boy Jimmy was sitting on mumbled. Jimmy slapped his ass, and the boy yelped.

"Shut up, Tigger. These guys could kill us, man," Rodney snapped.

Matt finally let go of the kid he'd been holding, who dropped down to his knees and coughed, rubbing his throat.

"Yeah," the boy muttered, coughing again.

"Did you see how many there were?" Tyler asked.

"Nah, man. I just saw three of them running in the front," Rodney said.

"Did you see how many soldiers there were?" Matt asked.

"Like, ten maybe."

"All armed?"

"Heavy, man."

"You seen them before?" Tyler asked.

"Nah. First time," Rodney replied. "Never seen anyone but your guys here before. Thought they was cops at first. They looked like swat, but all in black. Then the shooting started and we got the fuck out."

"Nothing else weird recently?"

Rodney shrugged. "Just the creepy new guy."

"What new guy? What did he look like? How long was he hanging around?" Tyler asked quickly.

"Whoa chill, dude. He was one of you guys- freaky looking, red hair. I don't know," Rodney said, rearing back in surprise. "Been around a couple of times with one of the others."

"Why was he creepy?" Matt asked.

"He was intense, you know? Seemed to know we were watching. Didn't feel safe when he was around." Rodney stared at them all, warily. "What are you?"

"You don't need to know," Tyler said. "Thanks for your help, Rodney."

"Ty, is it time or what?" Jimmy asked suddenly.

"Yeah, sure."

"Time for what?" Tigger asked nervously, twisting his head to look up. Jimmy grinned and shifted until he was lying on top of the kid.

"Don't worry. I won't hurt you," Jimmy whispered, nuzzling into his neck.

"Dude, what's he doing?" Rodney exclaimed.

"Nothing you need to worry about," Tyler said. "Baby, you want to take Rodney?"

"Yeah, okay," Zacky sighed, grabbing the young man again.

"What the fuck, man?" Rodney said, starting to sound panicky. "What are you doing?"

"It's okay," he whispered, pulling the kid closer. "Don't struggle. We won't hurt any of you."

The kid's hazel eyes fixed on him, wide and dilated, as Zacky lifted his wrist to his mouth and bit down. Sweet, hot blood spurted into his mouth, and he groaned, managing to catch Rodney as he passed out.

"God, you look sexy when you feed," Tyler murmured as he knelt by the mouthy kid and bit his wrist. Zacky watched the line of his mate's throat as he swallowed, and his groin tightened as lust surged through his body along with the blood.

Letting go of Rodney, Zacky leapt at his mate, pushing him back against the floor. The presence of the other three men did not affect his need.

"Yeah, baby," Tyler groaned, yanking him closer. Zacky sliced through his own tongue with his canine and kissed his mate hard, moaning happily when Tyler sucked his tongue. He could feel his lover's cock hardening against his groin as he straddled and rocked into him.

"No way," Jimmy shouted, interrupting them. "I am not going to sit here on my own and watch you have sex. I will not!" A sob burst from his mouth, and he shot to his feet, running out of the room.

"Shit," Matt sighed. "I didn't think."

Zacky buried his face in Tyler's neck, feeling guilty for a completely different reason.

"Do you want me to go after him, chéri?" Johnny asked.

"We both will."

Zacky heard the other couple leave, and he lifted his head.

"You okay?" Tyler whispered.

"I feel bad for him, and for you, for having to wait so long."

"It was worth it," Tyler said softly. "I got you, and I loved you from the first moment I saw you."

Biting back tears, Zacky pressed a desperate kiss to his lover's lips and pulled away, getting up and adjusting himself with a groan.

"We'd better go, Ty."

"Yeah, I know." Tyler smiled a little tightly and got up, taking Zacky's hand as they left the kids in the room and headed down after the others.

The three Pack were sitting in the back of the car. Jimmy was in the middle while Matt and Johnny hugged him tightly between them. Johnny was nuzzling Jimmy's cheek with the tip of his nose, and Matt was petting his hair. Tyler paused in the doorway, his breath hitching.

"What's wrong?"

"I miss our pack," Tyler whispered, eyes bright with tears. With a sigh, Zacky slid an arm around his mate's waist and hugged him.

"I know. You'll have to tell me about them."

"Yeah?"

"Of course. Maybe," Zacky smiled hesitantly, "you could tell me about your tattoos sometime too?"

"Yeah, I'd like to. Thank you, baby." Tyler kissed his temple and led him over to the car.

"Motel?" Tyler asked as he climbed behind the wheel. Zacky got in next to him and curled up against him, sliding his arm back around Tyler's waist and putting his head on his shoulder.

"Sounds good," Matt said quietly. Zacky turned around and reached over the seat to pat Jimmy's knee.

"I'm sorry," he whispered.

"It's okay," Jimmy said, smiling tightly at him. "I'll get over it, or used to it, or something."

"It's a bit more 'or something'," Tyler said softly.

"Thanks a lot," Jimmy snorted. "When does the next one turn twenty-one, Ty?"

Tyler chuckled softly and glanced back. "We've got the odd, new one you haven't met yet, Jimmy, don't forget. Otherwise it's a few years. Let's wait and see, okay?"

"We can go see them, right?"

"Once we find out what's going on here, okay?"

"Yeah, okay. I know."

"Would you know?" Zacky asked softly.

"Know what?"

"If an unturned Pack was your mate, even if he was still young?"

"Yes," Tyler said with a nod. "Young Pack were often specifically mentored with their future mate to strengthen their bond."

"Are you kidding?"

"No. Why?"

"Well, that's kind of sick, isn't it?"

"God, no!" Tyler exclaimed, looking horrified. "We're not perverts. You *know* that. Pack would never do anything that might hurt a future mate. The love mates share is there even before the bond is made with blood, and its depth prevents *any* abuse. Even though cubs have often been known to try and push for more when they think they're old enough." Tyler smiled softly, eyes distant with remembering.

"At least they have someone, even if they have to wait," Jimmy sighed. "Joining the pack of an alpha who's already mated kinda leaves you high and dry unless there's another unmated Pack around."

"Oh." Zacky felt his eyes widen. He couldn't imagine what would have happened if he hadn't been mated from the start. The thought of becoming sexually aware and needy without Tyler, to have had to deal with wanting sex outside of a committed relationship, made him balk. "No. I wouldn't want that. Not with anyone else."

"Dude, believe me, you would have," Jimmy snorted.

He shook his head, completely unconvinced. "No, it's not because of the blood. It's because of how I feel about Tyler."

There was a moment of utter silence. Tyler inhaled sharply, tensing next to him.

"What?"

"Well, I. I..." Zacky stuttered helplessly. He had no idea what to say, he hadn't meant it to come out quite like that, and he didn't want to take that last step in front of the others. "I just meant that I..."

Tyler pulled into a motel parking lot and stopped the car before turning in his seat and frowning.

"Zacky?"

"Well, you know," he continued to stutter, desperately trying to think of something to say.

"Oh for fuck's sake, Zacky, would you tell Ty how you feel? You're making both of you miserable," Matt snapped.

Eyes wide, mouth closing abruptly, Zacky stared at his mate who had gone even paler than usual.

"What?" Tyler breathed.

"Nothing," he squeaked. Johnny leaned over the seat and shook his head.

"Tell him, or I will."

Zacky stared in surprise. Johnny looked completely serious despite the sympathy he could detect in his eyes.

"Zacky, please, what's going on?" Tyler whispered. Swallowing hard, Zacky turned back to meet the wide, concerned gaze of his mate. His throat tightened, and his eyes burned as he slipped his tongue out over his bottom lip.

"I love you," he whispered.

"Oh."

Despite knowing that his mate loved him in return, the almost non-existent reaction from Tyler was terrifying, and he felt his heartbeat speed up until he almost couldn't breathe.

"Tyler?"

"Matt, go get us some rooms. Right now," Tyler snapped. Matt, Johnny and Jimmy jumped out of the car, heading into the lobby and leaving them on their own.

"Tyler, please talk to me," Zacky begged, reaching for his lover's hand.

"Don't," Tyler said, his voice choked and a little harsh. "Don't touch me right now."

Tears spilled over, and he couldn't quite prevent a sob from tearing its way from his throat. He should have known better, and now he'd just hurt his mate again.

Scrabbling at the car door, he fell out when Tyler suddenly appeared and opened the door for him. He landed on the ground.

"Where are you going?" Tyler asked quietly.

"I don't know," he whispered painfully.

Tyler turned his head and held out his hand to someone out of Zacky's line of sight. Something was slapped into Tyler's hand and he bent down, hauling Zacky into his arms. Tyler carried him to a room and let them inside, setting him gently on his feet and throwing one of their bags towards the bed before he closed, locked, and chained the door.

Before he could say a single word, Tyler clasped his face gently between both hands and kissed him with such unutterable tenderness and reverence that he was overwhelmed with emotion. His knees seemed to buckle under him.

Tyler caught him, lips still moving in a soft kiss as he carried Zacky to the bed. Warmth flooded Zacky's body, his heart pounding with nervous anticipation and lust. He opened his eyes as his mate laid him down, pulling back with a series of smaller kisses. Standing by the edge of the bed, Tyler slowly stripped. Every single inch of skin he revealed left Zacky more and more breathless and needy. His groin tightened until his cock pressed painfully into his zipper.

He didn't make any move to undress himself, still full of uncertainty from the way Tyler had spoken to him. He waited, digging his fingers into the mattress when his mate pushed his shorts off. He didn't reach out, the thick length of Tyler's cock made his own pulse with desperate need.

Zacky groaned quietly, biting his lip as he waited for his mate to move. Tyler climbed onto the bed and crawled over, knees either side of Zacky's hips, hands resting on either side of his shoulders as he stared down. His brown eyes were almost eaten away by dark desire, and they were so full of emotion that it took Zacky's breath away.

Bending his elbows, Tyler leaned down and nuzzled Zacky's cheek, inhaling deeply as he moved back slowly, kissing cheek, mouth, and jaw. The soft slide of lips over Zacky's skin left trails of tingling nerves, and he groaned as his cock pulsed, the pressure of his need increasing.

Tyler shifted his weight and lifted his hands to stroke Zacky's chest and. Tyler's touch was warm and soft. He writhed needily, lifting up as Tyler yanked his shirt open and wrenched it off.

"Tyler," he whispered.

"Shh." Tyler put a finger over his lips and bent to kiss him again, tongue sliding into his mouth for a teasing, breathless moment.

He whined helplessly when his lover pulled back again. Tyler smiled, shifting lower as he trailed fingertips over his chest and around one nipple. Zacky's skin tightened under the light touch, shivers spreading through his whole body, making his balls ache.

"Ty, please," he groaned. His dick hurt from pressing so hard into his zipper, eager for his lover's touch.

"Shh," Tyler repeated, bending his head and sliding his tongue slowly down Zacky's chest until he reached his navel.

"But I need you," Zacky whispered desperately. Tyler kissed his stomach and looked up.

"Mmm," Tyler murmured against his skin. "Tell me exactly what you want me to do."

"I already told you that I need you."

"You can do better than that, my love," Tyler whispered, licking along his waistband. Breath shuddered from Zacky's lungs, and he arched up helplessly.

"I might consider it if you take my jeans off," he said, smiling down at the older man.

"That's a good start," Tyler said with a leer. He knelt back, straddling Zacky's thighs and popping his button, grinning as he slowly slid the zipper down.

Zacky groaned in relief as his dick pushed out, finally free of constriction, and Tyler smiled wider as he tugged his jeans down around his hips, rubbing his cheek along the length of his cock. Shuddering as pleasure tightened his stomach, Zacky grabbed Tyler's hair and pulled gently.

"Too much," he gasped. "Don't want to come without you inside me."

"Fuck, Zacky. I love you so much," Tyler groaned, sliding up the length of his body to catch Zacky's mouth in a hard kiss. Still holding onto Tyler's hair, Zacky held him close, deepening the kiss urgently. He was so needy,

pleasure throbbed through his whole body, and his groin ached. Most of all, he felt so empty that he just couldn't wait any longer.

"Tyr," he whispered against his lover's lips, tracing his fingers down the sharp planes of his cheeks. Tyler's breath hitched, and he pulled back, eyes wide and startled.

"Say that again."

"Tyr," he said softly.

"Tell me you love me," Tyler whispered, sounding a little desperate.

"I love you, Tyr."

"Oh Zacky." Tyler clasped his face gently and kissed him hard, urgently, practically lifting him from the bed in his passion.

They both shoved hurriedly at Zacky's jeans and underwear, needing to be skin to skin as they continued to kiss, lips fused and tongues tangling, teeth nipping at mouths. He could barely breathe, but he didn't care, clinging to his lover, dragging him down on top of him. The drip of pre-cum onto his stomach and the hard length of cock against his groin almost seemed to burn into him, and he wrapped his legs around Tyler's hips, arching up to press himself harder into his mate, clutching desperately at his shoulders.

One hand moved from his face down to his hip, rocking him against him, their cocks sliding together, hot and slippery. He groaned again, biting down harder on his mate's tongue and sucking on his beautiful, addictive blood.

Tyler jerked harder against him, moaning into his mouth, fingers digging into his hip. He lifted his head with a gasp and stared, eyes dark and intense as he licked his bottom lip, spreading the blood from the gash over his mouth.

"Please," Tyler whispered, soft pleading in his voice. Zacky smiled and lifted his hand, swiping a finger over the blood on Tyler's lips, sucking it into his mouth.

"Fuck, Zacky," Tyler groaned, bucking harder into him. "Please."

"I need you, Tyr," he murmured, rocking his hips helplessly, his cock dripping onto his stomach with every pulse of pleasure. "I need to feel you inside me. Stretch me out with your fingers. Fuck me hard with your beautiful cock. I want you to fuck me so hard that I'll feel you inside me every time I move."

"Fuck yes," Tyler gasped, yanking himself back to reach for the bag beside the bed. He pulled out a tube and quickly squeezed lube onto his fingers.

With a groan of anticipation, Zacky pulled his legs back, opening himself up to his lover. Tyler leaned over him again, kissing him as slickened fingers trailed down the crease of his ass, almost tickling, definitely teasing.

"In me, Ty. Right now," he gasped, pushing down with his hips to try and get his mate to touch him properly.

"Easy, baby. I want you to feel this one, but I don't want it to hurt," Tyler whispered as he pushed a finger inside him.

He groaned at the penetration, a small possession of his body that made him shudder. His eyelids fluttered shut. Tyler pushed deep, then pulled back, repossessing him with two fingers, stroking in and out of his body, rotating and scissoring until he was panting and gasping, writhing against his lover as his feelings of need grew unbearable.

"Ty, more. I need more," he begged.

"Give me your hand."

Tyler pulled his fingers free and shifted between Zacky's legs, leaning over and kissing him softly as he took his hand. He squeezed lube into Zacky's palm and wrapped it around his cock. Tyler's skin was hot and soft under his fingers, and he lifted his head to kiss his lover harder, stroking his cock tightly.

"Mmph, baby," Tyler gasped, pulling back. "Stop, or I'm gonna come."

"Better fuck me now then, hadn't you?" Zacky whispered, letting go and grasping his mate's hips instead.

"Oh, fuck yes," Tyler said with a soft smile. He balanced on one hand, grasping his dick with the other, guiding himself down to Zacky's ass, pushing slowly into his body and filling him in one, strong stroke.

It felt so right, so good. Zacky found it hard to remember why it had ever made him feel badly. Just the feeling of completion was enough to overwhelm him, and he clutched Tyler's ass, lifting his head to catch his mouth in a deep kiss, licking between his lover's lips as his mate rolled back and plunged into him, grazing his prostate and lighting every nerve, every cell, with pleasure.

They moved together, rocking, thrusting, kissing, in growing passion and desperation. Tyler moved faster, fucking him deeper and harder, and Zacky slid a hand between them, grasping his mate's cock and stroking tightly as tension built in his whole body.

"Harder," he gasped into Tyler's mouth.

Groaning, Tyler shifted slightly, slamming into him, hitting his prostate again. The tension exploded, pleasure ripping as he came, spurting over their stomachs.

"Yes, fuck, Zacky," Tyler cried out, back arching as he shuddered and filled him with heat.

Tyler collapsed on top of him, burying his face in his neck and kissing him gently. He wrapped his arms around the older man, stroking his sweat-slick back slowly.

"I'm sorry," Tyler whispered. "For scaring you. For what I said, I just," Tyler sighed. "If you'd touched me, I'd have lost it. I'd have taken you right there in the car."

"I couldn't *feel* you," Zacky whispered. "That's what scared me."

"I know, baby. I just had to shut down for a moment. Hearing you say it, finally say it was overwhelming, you know? After twelve hundred years, it was overwhelming."

"Say what?" Zacky whispered, teasing gently.

"Asshole," Tyler snorted, lifting his head to smile. "Don't tease me."

"I'm not."

"So say it."

"I love you."

Tyler smiled wider.

"I love you too." Tyler kissed him on the lips and slowly eased out of his body.

Zacky grunted quietly with the feeling of loss, holding onto his lover as he shifted to the side and laid half back on top of him. Tyler licked his neck, slow, soothing laps and Zacky felt his eyes grow heavy, muscles relaxing as sleep started to take over.

Chapter Sixteen

When he woke, Zacky was shocked and hurt to find himself alone. He sat up and blinked sleep out of his eyes, sliding a hand over the sheets while he looked around the room. The bed next to him was warm, and he could detect his lover's scent quite strongly in the room. Both their bags were now by the bed but Tyler's clothes were missing, and Zacky frowned, wondering where the other man was.

He didn't know whether to get up or wait for Tyler, had no idea where he could have gone or how long he'd be, but he didn't want to just sit around in bed. At the very least, he needed a shower.

He stood and stretched before grabbing his wash bag and walking slowly to the bathroom. He relieved himself, washed his hands and face, and brushed his teeth. Switching on the shower, he waited a moment for the temperature to settle then slid under the spray with a blissful groan, hot water pounding his muscles.

He ached, but it was a good ache that filled him with warmth. It was like he could still feel his lover inside him, which was exactly what he'd wanted.

Tyler was right. Accepting himself had made him happier, especially now that his mate knew how he felt. He should probably thank Matt and Johnny for forcing the issue. All that was missing now was his mate.

Turning around, he leaned forward, letting the water flow down his back as he dropped his head onto his forearms with a quiet sigh. He felt another ache with his lover away from him- an unpleasant, lonely feeling in his heart that dulled his happiness just a little. Even as he thought about it, he could feel that ache lessening, and he turned his head when he felt a draft.

"Hey, baby," Tyler said quietly. "Sorry I wasn't here when you woke up."

Zacky was silent, waiting for his lover to explain. There was movement on the other side of the shower curtain, and Tyler climbed in with him,

naked and beautiful, quickly sliding up behind him and wrapping his arms around his waist. The press of hot, wet chest and groin against his back made him smile.

"You're not mad at me, are you?" Tyler murmured, kissing his neck.

"No," he said softly. "But it would have been nice to wake up with you."

"I know, I'm sorry." Tyler kissed him again, stroking his stomach gently. "I went out to get a newspaper and buy some orange juice but I ran into Jimmy. He's not doing so well today."

Zacky turned and wrapped his arms around his mate's neck, resting his cheek on a firm pectoral.

"Did he sleep on his own?" he asked, feeling strangely guilty.

"No. Matt and Johnny looked after him."

"Looked after him?" Zacky asked.

Tyler snorted and kissed his forehead. "When one of us needs comfort, the rest of the pack will wrap around them and lick them till they sleep, then snuggle with them."

"Matt and Johnny did that for Jimmy?"

"Yeah. Which was why he was up so early, so they could have sex."

"They lasted that long without?"

Tyler drew back to stare at him in amusement.

"What?" Zacky asked.

"Nothing. It's just that I think we've really corrupted you."

"I wouldn't call it corruption," he said with a smirk.

"Oh really? What would you call it then?"

"Acceptance."

Tyler sobered suddenly, staring at him seriously. "How long have you known?"

"Since I spoke to my mom," Zacky admitted with a small grimace.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

Zacky sighed and smiled a little tightly at his lover. "I didn't want you to doubt me."

"Why would I doubt you?"

"I didn't want you to think that I was just saying it to get you to touch me again," he whispered, ducking his head.

"Zacky, I would never have thought that," Tyler sighed, slipping a finger under Zacky's chin to tip his head back up, meeting his eyes seriously. "You're not a liar. You don't manipulate. Why would I not believe you?"

"I don't know, but I didn't want to risk it, you know? It's too important."

"I know," Tyler said with a nod. "But why didn't you tell me afterwards?"

"I still didn't want to risk you not believing me." He shrugged helplessly. It sounded ridiculous now that he thought about it, but at the time, it had scared him to think that Tyler might not believe him.

"Did you tell Matt and Johnny?"

"Of course not. I don't even know how they knew," he exclaimed. "I can't believe Johnny threatened to tell you like that."

"He's pretty hard headed when he wants to be." Tyler smirked. "Matt loves it."

"Really?"

"Oh yeah. I told you they love loud, wild sex and provoking Matt is a great way for Johnny to get seriously fucked."

"Tyler," he exclaimed, mouth dropping open in automatic shock. Tyler smiled softly.

"We obviously haven't completely corrupted you, my love."

"Sorry," he sighed, flushing lightly.

"Don't be," Tyler whispered, dropping a soft kiss onto his lips. "I love the fact that you're so innocent, yet when we have sex, you come out with the filthiest things."

"Your fault you know," he said, leaning up to kiss his mate again. "You make me want to *do* the filthiest things."

"Oh really?" Tyler said with a smirk. "Could I inspire you to do something filthy with me now?" He rocked his hips up, thrusting the hard length of his erection against Zacky's groin. Zacky grinned at his mate.

"Only if it involves you coming on my face," he murmured into his lover's ear. Tyler jerked hard against him, fingers digging in as he groaned loudly.

"Fuck, Zacky," he breathed. "I think I might be persuaded if you used your mouth."

Zacky's cock twitched against his lover, and he moaned as lust welled up, his heart pounding and his legs trembling.

"My thoughts exactly," he murmured, kissing Tyler hard until he was breathless. He let his knees give way so he slid down the length of his lover's slim body. He kept his hands on Tyler's hips just watching the water streak down his lover's chest and stomach to bead in his pubic hair. Tyler looked so gorgeous and sexy it took his breath away. He smiled up, meeting hooded brown eyes as he leaned forward, licking droplets of water from his mate's balls.

Tyler moaned, slipping his fingers into his hair and clutching tightly. The scent of his lover rose on the steam, and Zacky closed his eyes, burying his face in his mate's groin and rubbing his cheek along his cock.

"Yes, baby, please," Tyler whispered.

The skin of Tyler's cock was soft and slick under his cheek, and he turned so he could run his lips along his mate's dick and taste him. It was amazing how quickly he'd become addicted to his lover's body. Taste, scent, the feel of smooth skin over hard muscle, *everything*, filled him with deep love and unbearable need.

With a soft moan, he turned his head so he was fully facing his lover, sliding his lips over the head and lapping up droplets of pre-cum. The taste was heady, and he licked eagerly for more, sliding his lips farther down the thick shaft, and sucking gently.

"Yes, baby," Tyler groaned. "Harder."

He wrapped his fist around the base of his lover's cock and slid down till his mouth met his fingers, and he worked the length harder, sliding up and down and swallowing happily with every spurt of pre-cum onto his tongue. His cock was so hard it hurt, and it jerked helplessly with the pulses of his lover's shaft in his mouth.

"Fuck, so close," Tyler grunted, hips thrusting slowly against him. Zacky pulled back and looked up at his lover with a small smirk. Seeing Tyler, lips parted, cheeks flushed, and eyes glittering with lust was amazing. He knelt back to stare.

"Come on me," he murmured, dropping his other hand to his groin and wrapping his fingers around his cock.

"Fuck," Tyler gasped, fisting Zacky's hand and encouraging a faster stroke. "Don't come yet, baby. I want to touch you."

Need shuddered through him, but somehow, Zacky managed to pry his fingers from his shaft, ignoring his increasingly painful need.

"Ty," he whispered. "I need you."

"Oh fuck, Zacky!" Tyler cried out, bucking into their combined grip as hot cum splattered over Zacky's face and chest, burning pleasure into his skin.

"Please," Zacky whimpered. Tyler let go of his hand and bent down, hauling him to his feet and practically throwing him against the wall, pressing into him with the full weight of his body. Tyler rocked hard against his cock and crushed his lips with his mouth, tongue forcing them apart and plunging deep inside. Zacky arched against his lover, rubbing his cock into his groin as he bit down on Tyler's tongue. Blood spurted into his mouth, filling him with heat, and pleasure burst through him as he shot over his mate's groin and stomach. He swallowed the blood happily as Tyler pulled his head back, panting for breath, eyes glittering as they fixed him with a joyful gaze.

"You are a beautiful, dirty man, my love," Tyler whispered, smiling widely at him.

"I'm only dirty because you came on me," Zacky said with a chuckle.

"Maybe I should clean you off. Huh, baby?"

"Well, that's what showers are for," he said, arching an eyebrow.

"I was thinking more along the lines of using my tongue, but okay."

Zacky's stomach tightened with renewed need, but he shook his head.

"Don't tempt me."

"Why not?" Tyler whispered as he nuzzled into his neck.

"I feel badly leaving Jimmy on his own," he explained, gently pushing Tyler back. The older man sighed and nodded.

"Okay, I suppose you're right."

"Thank you." He smiled and kissed his lover.

They washed, dried, and got dressed quickly, packing and hauling their bags to shove in the trunk of the car. Then Tyler wrapped an arm around his waist, and they walked down the road, following Jimmy's scent to a bar.

Inside, Jimmy had a bottle of Jack by his elbow and was downing a shot.

"Little early to be drinking, don't you think?" Tyler said gently, sitting down next to him. Zacky sat down on the other side and stroked Jimmy's back.

"Not like I'm gonna get drunk, is it?" Jimmy snorted.

"That's not the point, Jimmy," Tyler sighed. "I know it's hard. Matt and I both know what it's like to be unmated. This isn't going to help."

"Maybe it didn't help *you*," Jimmy said, jutting his jaw out stubbornly.

"Come on, Jim," Tyler said, standing up again and taking his arm.

"No. And don't call me Jim. Only Henry got to call me Jim."

"Sorry," Tyler said with a grimace. "Come on. Matt and Johnny are probably done by now."

Jimmy sighed heavily. "Oh fuck off."

"Hey asshole, you want me on your back, or Matt?"

Zacky smiled at his mate and shook his head. "Ignore him. You and I both know that Matt's bark is worse than his bite when it comes to us."

Jimmy snorted. "Yeah, true."

"Yes, okay, that's true," Tyler said, half-smiling. "But you don't want him in a mood for the rest of the day, do you?"

"I guess not." Jimmy poured himself another shot and downed it before standing up and throwing some cash onto the bar. "Let's go."

Tyler put an arm around Jimmy's back and Zacky went around to the other side, slipping his arm around Jimmy's waist. They walked back to the car where Matt and Johnny were waiting, leaning against the hood, arms wrapped around each other.

"You okay?" Matt asked quietly.

"Sure," Jimmy said shortly, not looking at his alpha.

"Jimmy..."

"It's okay, Matt. We'll sit with him. Can you drive?"

"Sure, okay." Matt got in the front with Johnny. Zacky and Tyler climbed in the back with Jimmy, cuddling up to him.

"Who was Henry?" Zacky asked quietly, stroking Jimmy's chest gently. Jimmy sighed, leaning over to rest his cheek against Zacky's hair.

"Henry McCarty," he sighed again. "Henry was my first love, my first passion." Jimmy shook his head. "My first everything." He laughed bitterly. "Including my first disappointment."

"Jimmy..."

"It's okay. It's been over a hundred and twenty years. I met him when I was seventeen years old, and I rode with him. He was the first person to treat me like I was normal. He let me call him Henry even when he made everyone else call him Billy. I loved the son of a bitch."

Zacky stared. "Wait, are you talking about Billy the Kid?" he exclaimed.

"Yeah."

"You rode with Billy the Kid?"

"Yeah." Jimmy smiled tightly. "Even after the Lincoln County War ended, I rode with him. Until one day I woke up and he'd just gone. He left me without a word. He died before I found him again, and I... Matt found me in jail, framed for a murder I didn't commit, about to be hanged." Jimmy grimaced and buried himself deeper into their arms.

"Got him out and turned him. Had to take him to the other side of the country before he'd even talk to us," Matt said quietly.

"Really?" Zacky asked. "That doesn't sound like you, Jimmy."

"Took me a while to trust a bunch of freaks like this lot, you know?" Jimmy said, laughing softly.

"Thanks a lot," Johnny snorted, looking back and reaching over the seat to pat a bony knee.

"You're welcome, asshole," Jimmy said, smiling finally.

The car stopped and Zacky looked up curiously.

"Where are we?"

"Library."

"You're kidding."

"No. We need to do some research. This happened a week ago. Everything is still fresh," Tyler said. "I want to know what happened and if the police have any leads."

"How are we going to find out if the police have any leads from the library?"

"Because we happen to have a master hacker in our midst," Jimmy said with a snort.

"I wouldn't go that far," Tyler said quietly.

Zacky lifted his head to stare at his mate. "You?"

"What Tyler doesn't know about computers isn't *worth* knowing," Matt said with a firm nod.

They all climbed out of the car over the doors and headed up sweeping steps to the library.

"You guys go scour the newspaper articles. I'll find the computers," Tyler said. Matt nodded, leading Johnny and Jimmy away.

Tyler took Zacky's hand, and they walked together to one side of the main floor where banks of computers sat. Grabbing a spare chair, Tyler sat in front of one, beckoning for Zacky to sit next to him. He sat, shifting the chair closer and leaning against Tyler's shoulder to watch him work. It didn't seem to take long before Tyler was scrolling through the police department files.

Tyler quickly found the crime scene report, and they read through it together, Zacky rubbing his lover's back as he got more and more tense.

Five bodies had been found and, from their positions, they had been kneeling when they were shot. One in the head and one in the heart of each, the five Pack had been summarily executed. All shell casings had been removed, the bullets dug out of the bodies, leaving practically no evidence. A sixth blood sample had been found, and Tyler nodded.

"They shot Rob," he said softly.

"That doesn't make sense. Why kill the other five so professionally and leave Rob alive? What about the other guy Rodney mentioned?" Zacky asked.

"None of this makes sense, baby," Tyler sighed. "How are the packs being found? They're being overwhelmed by gunmen. None of them stood a chance. None of them got to fight back, yet Rob lived. Why?"

"It was deliberate?" he ventured. "Somebody wanted you to know?"

"The 'creepy new guy' perhaps?" Tyler mused, nodding slowly. "But I still don't understand. Why would any Pack work with hunters, and for that matter, why would the hunters work with Pack?"

"I don't know, Ty," Zacky whispered, kissing his mate's cheek gently. "Come on. Let's find the others and see what they've found."

"Yeah, okay." Tyler stood up and held out his hand. Zacky took it, and they walked together to where the other three Pack were trawling through microfiche copies of recent newspapers articles, or rather Johnny and Jimmy were while Matt paced agitatedly.

"Anything?"

"No," Johnny sighed as he and Jimmy got up to head back to the car. "It's being dismissed as a gangland slaying- no clues, no suspects. How about you?"

"No suspects, little evidence. They found Rob's blood, so he might be considered a suspect, but they don't think so," Tyler said. "It's like Rob's a

messenger. Every other Pack was killed ruthlessly and efficiently. Messing up with Rob doesn't match the M.O. It has to be deliberate."

"Someone wants us to know," Matt growled.

"No," Johnny said suddenly, stopping on the steps. "Not just know. They let Rob survive to tell the alphas because they knew we'd come and investigate."

"Someone wants us *here*?" Zacky said tentatively.

"No," Tyler whispered in a tone that filled Zacky with sudden fear. "Someone wants *me* here. Anyone who knows Pack well enough to kill so many of us knows that I would come straight out here to find out how and why."

"Which means us too," Matt said.

"True, but not guaranteed, Matt."

"Then he doesn't know me too well, does he?" Matt snorted.

"Possibly not. Think about it, Matt. If they get me, they have the potential to find every family we still know of that carries the bloodline and wipe us out."

"You'd never give that information up," Matt exclaimed.

"Not willingly, no."

"But why not attack us at the house or the motel?" Johnny asked.

"Yeah, and you went out on your own this morning, Ty. Why not grab you then?" Matt said, musingly.

"I don't know," Tyler sighed. "But I think we should stick together and assume we're under observation."

"Do you think we should leave?"

"Not yet. I don't know about you, but I'm feeling a little confrontational."

Matt started to smirk. "Hell, yeah. Sounds good."

"I'm not happy with us staying at the motel," Tyler started.

"I doubt hunters would attack us in such a public place though," Johnny said. "A bolt hole might be more dangerous."

"It would lead them to us," Tyler said.

"But they'd kill us," Zacky exclaimed, frowning worriedly.

"Not if we're expecting them."

"They lie in wait. They're not going to walk into a trap."

"Well, neither are we. We're ready for them."

"But you said that we're probably under observation--"

"Zacky, enough," Tyler snapped, glaring at him. Zacky flinched at his lover's tone and the swell of frustrated anger he felt.

"Let's just calm down," Johnny said quietly. "Maybe we should go back to the motel and feed. Then, we can decide what to do next."

"We can find the hunters," Tyler said harshly. "I want to know who the fuck is betraying us. None of Rob's pack would have anything to do with a rogue."

"Ty, calm down," Zacky whispered, starting to feel desperate.

"I want to *find* them."

"So do we, but you need to stop taking this so personally."

"Someone's killing off *my* family in an attempt to get to me, and you don't think I should take this personally? What else am I supposed to do?"

Zacky stared at Tyler in dismay. He could feel the complete confliction of emotions in his mate, the struggle for control, and he didn't know what to do.

"Don't look at me like that," Tyler said a little sharply.

Zacky turned and started to walk back up the steps towards the library.

"Where are you going?" Tyler called after him.

"I just need a minute, okay?" Zacky said softly, still walking.

"Okay," Tyler sighed.

Zacky could feel his lover's misery, but he really did need a moment to just gather himself. He knew Tyler was angry and scared of losing more family, but he didn't know what to say or do to help him. He made his way to the restroom and bent over the sink to splash his face. A scent hit him, a Pack scent that confused him for a moment- a stranger's scent. He looked up, meeting crazed green eyes in the mirror.

"My, my, aren't you a pretty one?"

Before he could do or say anything, the stranger lunged forward and smashed him face first into the mirror, punching him hard to the floor. His head spun, pain filling him as he started to black out.

"That'll only damage you for a bit, boy. Let's go."

The strange Pack hauled Zacky over his shoulder and carried him from the restroom. Zacky opened his mouth to scream but nothing came out as the stranger wrapped his arm around his throat and squeezed. Everything went black.

Chapter Seventeen

Zacky woke to total darkness, cold and naked, lying on what felt like a bare, stone floor. His right side was sore, aching as though he'd been lying there for a long time. He had no idea how he'd gotten there. The last thing he remembered was walking away from Tyler.

Trying to shift his legs, he realized that large, metal cuffs enclosed both ankles, chaining them tightly together. The smell of ammonia was nauseating, but despite that, his stomach was cramping with hunger. He pulled himself up carefully, trying to peer through the darkness for some clue to where he could be.

He couldn't feel his mate, and that terrified him more than anything else about the situation.

"Hello?" he whispered. He should never have gone off on his own like that, not when he'd known the danger they were all in. It just hadn't occurred to him that he might be a target. But what better way to get to Tyler, if the intent was to find out where the families were, than through him?

His mate would be beside himself. Pained guilt filled him, stinging his eyes with tears and tightening his chest until he almost couldn't breathe.

There was no reply, the silence almost as claustrophobic as the darkness. He reached out to one side, touching a cold, brick wall before his arm was even straight. The wall was just as close on the other side, and the third wall of his possible prison was right next to his feet, but as he reached out in front, he encountered solid wood. The space was barely large enough for him to lie down in.

Shivering with the chill seeping through his body and the overwhelming hunger, he tapped on the door.

"Hello!" he called out more loudly. Something slammed loudly into the door, and he scrambled back against the opposite wall, heart pounding fearfully. He stared forward, trying to see something, *anything*, to give him

some clue, but there was nothing, not even a sliver of light around the frame of the door. The smell of sweat and urine was too strong for him to discern any other scent, and his hunger was affecting his ability to concentrate and think straight.

"Tyler, I'm so sorry," he whispered. He bent his legs, wrapping his arms around them, resting his head on his knees, and squeezing his eyes shut against the continued threat of tears.

He hated the loneliness and emptiness inside heart, body and soul when he was apart from his mate, hated not being able to feel Tyler in the back of his mind. It wasn't right, and more than ever, he could understand why Pack didn't last long if they lost their mates.

He was still himself without Tyler, but that had never been enough. It wasn't so much that he was half of a whole without his mate, but that he didn't actually feel quite alive without him.

* * * *

The silence, cold, and dark continued but, in the total blackness, he couldn't tell for how long. He was freezing and starving. He'd been without blood for long enough that he couldn't even pee anymore. He hurt all over from lying on the stone floor. There was no give. No way to get comfortable enough to sleep. He'd passed out a couple of times from sheer hunger, pain, and exhaustion but, otherwise, he lay curled up, trying to find a position that didn't hurt.

Heartbroken tears came regularly and worse than anything else about his situation was the hollow, aching emptiness of being apart from his mate.

He started awake when his cell was suddenly flooded with light. It blinded him, and he screwed his eyes up against the sheer brightness that seemed to sear across his retinas painfully. Scrambling against the wall, he cowered nervously, covering his face with his hands.

"Oh, you look like shit." The harsh voice was familiar somehow, but he didn't know why. All he knew was that the tone was terrifying and implacable, and he was in more trouble than he'd already anticipated.

A strong hand gripped his arm and yanked him up, slinging him over the man's shoulder. The bone dug into his stomach painfully, pushing bruises into the only part of his body that had thus far been undamaged.

He was carried into a small, bare room and shuddered with fear as he saw the chains on the walls and a low-slung table with cuffs attached to two of the legs in the center. Part of the room was blocked off by a curtain and he could only dread what might be hidden behind it.

"Zachariah, isn't it? Your wallet was a little bare but your ID picture was very pretty. So tell me, how have you enjoyed your stay so far?" the man said with a cackle.

"Please," Zacky whispered, wincing as his dry lips cracked. He licked them quickly, desperate for a taste of blood even if it was his own, and groaned as it made his stomach clench and roil.

"You're pleased?" The man snorted with laughter as he put Zacky on his feet and shoved him face first into the wall.

"Why?" Zacky managed to whisper.

"Why?" The man loomed closer, hot, harsh breath blowing over his ear as his wrists were cuffed to the wall. His legs weren't strong enough to hold himself up, and he slumped down, the cuffs digging into his wrists and splitting his skin. The scent of blood was tormenting, especially knowing he couldn't reach up to lick it away. "Because you're Tyr's mate."

"But..."

"But *nothing*," the man screamed at him, smacking the back of his head hard enough to smash his face into the wall. He whimpered as he felt his nose crack and more skin split open across his forehead, torturing him even more with the scent of blood.

"Tyr, fucking Tyr," the man ranted. "Let's join the packs together and fight the hunters, get them off our backs once and for all he said. Yeah, great idea, Tyr, you arrogant, fucking prick."

Zacky flinched fearfully as the man paced closer and closer to him.

"I lost my mate," the man breathed in a pained whisper. "I lost my beloved Jamie."

"Wait." A sudden horrifying thought occurred to him. "You're Connor." If he'd thought his situation was dire before, he now wondered how *long* he was going to survive.

"Oh so he deigned to mention me, did he? Fucking son of a bitch."

"You killed our pack," Zacky whispered.

"He killed my *mate*," Connor shouted, wheeling around to punch him in the back.

"The hunters killed your mate."

"Shut up, shut *up*!" Connor shouted. Then suddenly, he went quiet, and Zacky's breath hitched in fearful anticipation.

"This has been a long time coming, Zachariah. I have kept myself alive, waiting for you with as much anticipation as Tyr so that, finally, I can take *everything* away from him."

"It wasn't his fault," Zacky breathed.

"Yes, yes, it was! Jamie wasn't a warrior. He was a poet. He should never have had to fight."

"He was Pack," Zacky said, wondering even as he spoke why he was risking provoking the older man.

"So that means he had to fight? To die?"

"Yes, same as I would no matter how much I wouldn't want to."

"Bullshit. Tyr would never risk you."

"Yes he would because he knows I couldn't let him fight without being by his side."

"Enough of this shit," Connor snarled in annoyance. "I've waited long enough. By now, Tyr will be frantic, going insane with fear and worry."

"Don't do this. Please don't do this to him," Zacky begged.

"I've lived three hundred years alone, dead inside, waiting to do this to him, and you're just the tool for the job. Let's use your pretty, little cell phone and give him a call."

Zacky heard a beeping noise behind him, and the distinctive sound of a ringing tone.

"Zacky? Oh my God where are you? Where have you been?"

His mate's voice, so full of distress on the other side of the line, tightened his heart with guilt and sorrow, tears pricking his eyes.

"Tyler?" he gasped.

"Baby, what's happened?"

"It's called vengeance, Tyr." There was a long pause, the silence tense.

"Connor?"

"You remember. I wonder if I should be flattered."

"I'm hardly going to forget the mad man who killed my pack and nearly killed me, am I? I thought you died."

"Did you really think that you'd paid enough for Jamie's death?"

"Don't do this," Tyler said tensely. "He's got nothing to do with this."

"He has everything to do with this," Connor snapped. "He's *your* mate."

"He's only twenty-one," Tyler whispered, voice breaking with tears.

"That doesn't concern me, Tyr. Your pain is all that concerns me. Are you ready?"

Pain cracked through the top of his back unexpectedly, and Zacky cried out.

"Zacky!"

"I'm okay," he managed to whisper.

"Oh, I assure you, he is far from okay, Tyr. He hasn't fed since I took him. You know what that does to our healing ability, don't you?"

"You son of a bitch!" Tyler shouted.

"Now be nice. You wouldn't want me to really hurt him... would you?"

"No, please," Tyler begged.

There was another loud smack and pain smashed between Zacky's shoulder blades. Zacky grunted, trying desperately to hold back his cry of pain and not worry his mate. But there wasn't a pause, and the punches came hard and fast, all over the rear of his body with no rhythm or pattern. Each blow shocked him until he was slumped against the wall, all his weight taken by his wrists, crying out with his scream-worn voice.

Finally, the blows stopped, and he could hear something other than the blood rushing through his ears. What he could hear caused him more pain than anything physical Connor could do to him.

Tyler was sobbing on the other end of the phone, crying and pleading for Connor to stop.

"Ty," Zacky whispered. "Don't let him hurt you."

"How can I help it?" Tyler whispered. "He's hurting you, and it's killing me to hear it. I should have protected you."

"It's not your fault."

"How touching. You can't bear to hear it? Just wait till I show you," Connor said with a loud snicker. "Call you right back," he said in a sing-song voice. The phone blipped behind him then started to ring.

"You son of a bitch!" Tyler shouted as he answered again.

"Now, now, Tyr. Don't insult my mother."

"You look the same," Tyler said quietly.

"So do you," Connor said. "So, how about a little video camera moment? Your boy doesn't look so pretty now."

"Oh God," Tyler groaned. "Oh my God, what have you done to him?"

"Oh shit!" Matt's voice suddenly took over. "You always were a sick fuck, Connor, but this is too much."

"Oh, what are you going to do about it, Matthias? Suck Tyr's cock for him?"

"Don't try provoking us, Connor. We're both mated now."

"Yes, I saw your mate," Connor said with a snort. "You're letting him feed too much. He's a fat, little frog bastard, isn't he?"

"You fucking asshole," Matt snarled. "When Ty finds you, he'll rip you to shreds, and I'll be there with my *beautiful* mate to chew up your remains and spit them out."

Connor started to laugh. "Always so melodramatic, Matthias. You're not going to find me. I've been planning this for three hundred years. Do you really think I won't have taken *everything* into account?"

"You were never the brains of your pack Connor," Matt snorted.

Connor suddenly grabbed the back of Zacky's head and smashed his face forward into the wall. Zacky screamed as he felt his nose break again.

"Matt, be quiet," Tyler said, taking over the line. "Connor, please, what do you want?"

"I want you to suffer a great deal more before I tell you what else it is I want, Tyr," Connor said, laughing again. "I'll call again tomorrow."

"No, don't hang--"

Tyler's voice was cut off, leaving Zacky feeling utterly bereft. He let himself sag completely, not caring when one of his shoulders popped out, and the bones in his wrists sheared and crunched. He couldn't hurt more than he already did.

"Now then, Zachariah, time to go back to your room."

"No please," he gasped as Connor unlocked the cuffs and let him slump to the floor, ankles giving way and spraining, a pain shot up his legs. Connor yanked Zacky up, jolting his shoulder even more and threw him back over his shoulder.

Zacky tried to fight back, but he was too weak, not even able to find a purchase to try and bite the alpha. Not that he wanted to. The thought of drinking any Pack's blood other than Tyler's, *especially* Connor's, was abhorrent to him. Besides, if he even tried, it would most likely only earn him more pain.

Connor threw him into his cell, and the door slammed shut, leaving him once again in the utter blackness of the tiny room. The whole of his back, ass and the back of his legs throbbed like one enormous bruise covered the rear of his body. His skin was welted, every movement tugging at the clotting wounds and sending fresh trickles of blood over his skin that he couldn't feel, only smell.

He wanted to throw up, but there was nothing left. He'd barely even had water, only a tiny trickle from a leak sustaining him. He shifted up into a semi-kneeling position, the ankle cuffs making it difficult, trying to protect his back.

Trying to gather moisture in his mouth, he lifted his hands and licked at the shredded skin around his wrists. The tang of blood and metal from the cuffs made him shiver, stomach painfully tight from hunger. His own blood did nothing to nourish him especially in his weakened state. At least his saliva was helping to heal his wrists if much more slowly than he was used to.

It wasn't the physical pain and hunger that really hurt him, but the knowledge of how badly this would hurt his mate. He curled up on his side, grimacing with pain as the cold stone seemed to press bruises into his bruises and irritate his broken skin. There was no way he could sleep, but maybe he'd pass out eventually.

* * * *

The light blinded him again, and Zacky felt his throat close up and his stomach drop from fear.

"Time for some fun, my boy."

"Fun for whom?"

"Well, me of course. I honestly can't wait." Connor grinned at him, yanking him to his feet with his bad arm, wrenching his shoulder even farther out of its socket, and tearing the muscle. Tears burned his eyes, but he could barely even cry anymore. He felt like a husk- dehydrated and shriveled.

He was hauled up over Connor's shoulder again, bouncing uncomfortably on the sharp bone.

"I think the table will be fun today. What do you think?"

Zacky tried to shrug. At least on the table he wouldn't be supporting his weight with his wrists again.

"Yes, the table." Connor flipped him over the table, smacking his chin on the edge. The cuffs around his ankles were pinned to one end, and Connor forced his wrists into cuffs already attached to the other. It stretched him uncomfortably, tearing at the welts on his back and ass.

"Somehow your blood still smells sweet," Connor chuckled. He leaned over and inhaled deeply. Zacky shuddered. Connor flipped his phone open and sat down on Zacky's back. He gasped, pain racking his joints and shooting through his bruised and welted skin.

"Connor, what are you doing to him?" Tyler demanded immediately through the phone.

"Sitting on him."

"Get off him," Tyler snapped.

"No."

"Get. Off him." Tyler's voice was quietly dangerous, and it made Zacky shiver, wishing he could be there to calm his mate, make him feel better.

"Make me." Connor snorted loudly. "Oh that's right. You can't."

"You bastard," Tyler whispered. "I will find you, Connor. And I will kill you. Don't think that I won't."

"Tyr, Tyr, don't you think killing me would be doing me a favor? After all, poor little Zachariah would die before the unlikely event that you did ever find me. Then even if I don't carry out the rest of my plans, my revenge would be complete. Killing me will do nothing but send me to my Jamie."

"What do you want?" Tyler asked, voice tight with anger and pain.

"I want to listen to you suffer some more," Connor drawled. "I have a new game. Today I shall be using my belt."

Zacky froze in horror. His beating the day before on top of his enforced starvation had been bad enough, but a belt? Even worse was the memory of the beatings he'd received from his father over the years, filling him with feelings of guilt and self-loathing again.

"Don't do that to him," Tyler whispered. "Please don't do that to him."

"I'll be okay," Zacky managed to whisper.

"No. No, it's too much, I can't--"

"I'll be okay," he repeated. "Just find me."

"Hold on for me, baby. Just make it through today, *please*."

"Enough, you make me sick," Connor shouted, pulling his belt from his pants with a loud hissing noise that made Zacky shiver fearfully, his nausea increasing. Connor moved around beside him, trailing the end of the belt over his broken skin. Before he could brace himself, Connor suddenly brought the belt down on Zacky's back, the loud smack almost as painful as the blow itself. He wanted to reassure his mate that he could cope with it, and he bit back a scream and swallowed hard so he could speak.

"Thank you, sir," he whispered. Tyler sobbed brokenly over the phone.

"Oh God, Zacky," he breathed. "I'll find you. I swear."

"What's going on?" Connor growled.

"Just leave him alone, please leave him alone," Tyler begged.

"Don't be ridiculous, Tyr. You haven't suffered nearly enough."

The belt lashed him again, and Zacky cried out, his pain growing to agonizing levels.

"Thank you, sir," he gasped.

"Stop doing that," Connor growled at him, hitting him again.

"Thank you, agh!" He screamed as Connor hit him again, even harder, across his ass. He swallowed back nausea so he could speak.

"Thank you, sir."

"Stop it, stop it!" Connor screamed, smacking him over and over with the belt, not pausing or giving him any chance to breathe. He could hear himself screaming, Tyler crying, and Connor laughing. It was starting to drive him insane.

"Stop it!" he cried out, unable to take the pain any longer. "Connor, please stop. I can't bear hearing Tyler's pain. I can't."

"Oh, baby, no," Tyler breathed. "Don't worry about me. It'll be okay. Just hold on for me."

"Ty?"

"Yes?"

"I love you."

"I love you too."

"How touching," Connor snorted. "Be quiet." The belt flicked over and smacked him in the mouth, ripping his lips open. Zacky moaned, slicing pain radiating across his face.

"Oh, that's so pretty," Connor murmured, reaching down and rubbing a finger over his lips before sucking it into his mouth. "Your mate's blood tastes so sweet, Tyr."

"You fucking prick!" Tyler shouted. "Don't you dare touch him."

"Stop threatening me, you arrogant fucking bastard," Connor said with a snort. "There's nothing you can say to stop me. You're boring me now. I'll call you back."

"No--"

Tyler was cut off again, and Connor moved away from Zacky, out of his line of sight. Suddenly, he heard a hissing noise and smelt gas before there was a quiet whoosh and the smell of a gas flame and metal heating.

"What are you going to do?" he whispered.

"And give away the surprise?" Connor chuckled. "Don't be silly, cub. I'm not going to tell you. Now be quiet. It's time for another video call."

"Connor."

"Tyr, I have a little gift for you." Connor walked slowly round Zacky's body until his feet came to a stop near his head. "Look up for the camera, Zachariah."

"I can't."

Connor grabbed his hair and yanked his head up.

"Nothing pretty about your boy now, eh, Tyr?"

"He is beautiful, and he will always be beautiful to me," Tyler said softly.

"Not for long," Connor said harshly, smashing Zacky's face against the table.

"The more you hurt him, the more you're going to suffer before I kill you, Connor," Tyler growled.

"Blah, blah, blah." Connor chuckled quietly. "Like I said, you have to find me first, and that's never going to happen."

"What do you want, Connor? Please tell me. I'll tell you anything, give you anything."

"Can you give me Jamie back?"

"Ah, Connor. I didn't want him to die. I didn't want any of us to die. Please, let Zacky go."

"You're such a lying, fucking, asshole bastard, Tyr. All you care about is being leader of the Pack, the big dog. Well, not for much longer. I'm the one who's going to be giving orders soon."

"What do you mean?"

Connor snorted, sitting down on Zacky again. He groaned, not even strong enough to cry as his ribs cracked.

"Who exactly do you think is helping the hunters?"

"How could you?" Tyler gasped.

"Loki was very interested in forming an alliance with the hopes of getting to you. They want to find the families that carry the gene. Information that you have. They want rid of us once and for all."

Zacky frowned in confusion. Tyler had told him that Loki had been his human brother. How could he still be alive?"

"Loki?" Tyler whispered.

"Oh, the *current* Loki I should say. As mad as every Loki before him of course, obsessed with being the one to find you and kill you and the packs once and for all."

"How does that help you lead?"

"Loki will kill off the packs and families for me. Now that I know where all the hunters are stationed, the rogue packs I've found will get rid of them for me, then I will be alpha of alphas."

"You can't lead rogues. They're out of control."

"And I'm insane, remember? They're young, easy enough to control. Besides I've already beaten the alphas into submission."

"And Zacky?" Tyler whispered, his tone horrified.

"In the unlikely event that you do manage to track me down, he dies before you even get near. Otherwise, he gets to remain my property for the rest of time."

"He is nobody's property, you asshole."

"Oh but he will be." Connor got up again, wandering over to where Zacky could hear the hissing flames.

"Time to become my property, Zachariah," Connor said almost conversationally. "You know, the English did this to me when I was younger. Trouble was I always healed without scarring, and that pissed them off, so they did it to me every day. I'll probably have to do it to you every day too."

Zacky shivered fearfully, anticipation closing his throat. He didn't know what Connor was going to do, but he guessed it was going to be worse than anything he'd done so far.

"No," Tyler gasped suddenly. "No, not that, Connor, don't, please."

"Ready?" Connor said, ignoring Tyler's pleas.

White-hot metal pressed into the base of Zacky's neck, searing into his skin. It was the worst pain he'd ever felt, every muscle tightening, body shaking and convulsing as he screamed and screamed.

"Oh, don't be so pathetic," Connor snapped, throwing the brand across the room. Zacky could hear the sounds of his friends trying to calm Tyler through the phone.

"I'll heal," he managed to pant.

"Eventually," Connor said with a chuckle. "Besides, we've got all the time in the world to make it stick."

"I'll kill you, I'll kill you," Tyler sobbed over and over. His voice was broken and choked, and it hurt Zacky so much. He wished he could cry because he wanted to release the pain so badly.

"Don't be ridiculous, Tyr. Just accept that I'm going to see you suffer and then I'm going to see you dead."

"Please. I'll tell you where the families are if you let him go," Tyler begged.

"Oh, you'll tell me where the families are long before that'll happen, Tyr," Connor said with a soft snort. "Now, as amusing as this conversation has been, I have things to do. Until tomorrow, gentlemen." The phone snapped shut, and Connor sat on him again, leaning leisurely on the brand and crossing his legs. Zacky whimpered as his burned skin was crushed and squashed under the alpha's hand.

"I'm debating leaving you here tonight. What do you think, Zachariah? Will it be more or less uncomfortable than the cell?"

"I don't know."

"Well, at least you're honest." Connor got up. "I'll leave you here, I think, more convenient for tomorrow."

The light went out, and Zacky was alone again. There wasn't a single inch of him that didn't sear with pain. He was bruised, cut, welted and, now, branded. His face throbbed. His lips ached. He tried to lick them, but his

mouth was so dry it didn't do a lot of good. At least his blood offered some sort of moisture.

Dropping his head against the table, he closed his eyes and prayed for unconsciousness.

* * * *

The light came back on, and Zacky gasped in shock as he was sprayed with ice-cold water. In his current state, it almost hurt as much as the belt.

"You were starting to stink up the place."

"So sorry to offend you," he whispered.

"You've got a mouth on you," Connor said with a loud snort. "I'll bet Tyr enjoys it, but it's going to get you into trouble."

Pressing his lips together, he looked back down, staying silent. He wanted to say something, but he couldn't provoke the alpha. He needed to survive and give Tyler time to find him. Somehow, he didn't doubt that his mate would find him. Tyler must have had a plan. He'd been so specific asking him to hold on for that day.

Knowing that Tyler was looking for him and that things weren't completely hopeless, made it almost easier to bear than his father's beatings. He just seemed to feel less empty, and he hoped that meant that Tyler was close to finding him because Connor was upping the ante each day, and he dreaded to think what the mad alpha had planned for that day.

"That's better," Connor said. "Now, then, I have a little preparation before I call Tyr so stay quiet."

He couldn't see what Connor was doing, but the long, slow scrape of metal against metal filled Zacky with nausea and fear.

"What are you going to do?" he whispered.

"Now, now, let's leave the reveal for Tyr for maximum effect, shall we?"

"Please," he whispered. "Stop hurting him."

"Don't you mean hurting you?"

"No," Zacky said quietly. "His pain hurts more than anything you can do to me."

"We'll see if you still feel that way after today," Connor said with a laugh. "Time for a video conference. Good morning, Tyr."

"Connor," Tyler said anxiously. "What are you doing?"

"I want you to *see* what I'm doing today. It doesn't have the same aural impact as fists and belts you see." Connor straddled his ass, sitting on him heavily, and Zacky groaned, pain weakening him further. "Can you see your boy okay?"

"Yes," Tyler whispered. "Please don't hurt him."

Connor tutted. "Of course I'm going to hurt him."

Connor leaned over him, and suddenly, hot pain sliced through Zacky's back as a sharp blade carved into his skin. He screamed almost silently, his voice failing because he'd screamed so much over the past two days.

The pain didn't stop. It was sharp and agonizing as Connor drew the blade over his back, up and down and around with no discernible pattern.

Tyler was strangely silent throughout, no crying or begging, just harsh, hitching breath that sounded more like he was running than watching. Despite the increasing pain, Zacky started to feel warmer, the terrible, hollow ache in his heart easing, and he couldn't help the feeling of hope that swept through him. He relaxed against the table, letting his cheek rest on the edge, and he tried to breathe into the slashes of the knife.

As if he sensed the change, Connor started to cut him deeper, grunting as he pressed the knife into him harder. He cried out, and Connor laughed.

"How're you feeling, Tyr?"

"I feel pretty good actually."

"What?" Connor stopped, sounding shocked. "I just carved my name into your mate, and you're feeling good?" The alpha paused. "Oh, I see. You're trying to get me to stop by pretending it's not affecting you. Well, it won't work."

"No, I feel good," Tyler said.

Connor got up, starting to pace agitatedly. "You lying son of a bitch. You just earned your boy another beating."

"I don't think so," Tyler said in a quietly dangerous tone.

"Oh really? Well, you obviously haven't learnt yet--"

The door slammed open, welcome howls filling Zacky's ears as Tyler and the others streamed into the room.

"But... how... *no*!" Connor screamed, lunging at Zacky with the knife. Tyler jumped on the insane alpha, shoving him back into the wall, one arm ramming straight into his throat. He smashed his other fist into Connor's chest and stomach over and over.

"Stop, Ty. We need him alive," Matt shouted, dragging Tyler back.

"Chain him up," Tyler said shortly, shoving Connor onto the floor towards the other three. Then he dropped to his knees on front of Zacky and gently lifted his head.

"My love, I'm so sorry I didn't get to you sooner."

"S'okay," Zacky whispered. "I knew you'd find me."

"Don't talk." Tyler unpinned the cuffs round his wrists and carefully eased him up, reaching back to uncuff his ankles as well.

"Oh, baby, oh God," Tyler sobbed quietly. He sat and pulled Zacky into his lap gently, stroking face and chest, lips kissing him so softly, he could barely feel it.

"My poor, beautiful Zacky," Tyler murmured, biting his wrist open and holding it to his mouth. The scent overwhelmed Zacky, and he groaned, licking and sucking eagerly, lips clamped tightly around his mate's wound. The taste was blissful, and he swallowed quickly.

"Easy, baby," Tyler said softly, pulling his wrist away. "Don't take too much straight away."

"I found a..." Tyler snarled, and Johnny stopped abruptly. "...a blanket," Johnny finished, holding it out but not making any move closer to them.

"Thank you," Tyler whispered, taking the blanket. He lifted Zacky, supporting him carefully as he wrapped the blanket around him. The movement and the pressure of the cloth against his wounds were painful and he whimpered.

"I'm sorry, baby."

"It's not your fault," Zacky said softly, grunting quietly with pain as Tyler lifted him into his arms.

"I should never have let you go off on your own," Tyler said.

"Let me?" Zacky murmured in annoyance.

"Now, baby, I didn't mean it like that," Tyler sighed. "Let me just get you out of here, okay?"

"What about him?" Zacky nodded at Connor. The alpha was hanging from the cuffs in the wall, grunting and groaning as Matt worked him over with his fists.

"Don't you worry about him," Tyler said firmly. "Guys, come on. Let's go."

"What about Connor?" Matt asked.

"He stays here."

"But--" Jimmy started to object.

"He stays here. Zacky is my only concern right now," Tyler growled.

"He can stay here and starve. Treat him just like he did Zacky."

"Okay, okay." Matt shook his head and held his hands out to his mate. Johnny smiled softly, taking them in his and bending to lick the torn, bruised knuckles slowly and lovingly.

"Better, mon amour?"

"Thank you, Liebchen." Matt wrapped his arm around his mate and held out his other hand to Jimmy. They walked out, and Tyler carried Zacky out after them. Zacky buried his face in his mate's neck, inhaling deeply as he slowly lost consciousness.

Chapter Eighteen

When he woke again, he was still enveloped in his lover's embrace. He could hear water running and Tyler and Matt whispering.

"No."

"But, Ty--"

"Not yet okay? I can't, I just can't."

Matt sighed. "Okay, we'll be back later."

"Thanks."

"Tyler," Zacky murmured, shifting painfully in his mate's arms.

"Easy, baby. Don't move if you don't have to."

"I need to... feel you," he managed to whisper.

"And I need to make you better, okay?"

"Okay." He gritted his teeth against the pain as his mate slowly unwrapped the blanket from his body.

"I need to pop your shoulder back in first, baby. I'm sorry."

"Stop apologizing," he sighed. "None of this is your fault."

"I know, I just--"

"Argh!" Zacky gasped as Tyler shoved his shoulder back into its socket mid-sentence.

"I'm still sorry," Tyler whispered. Breath hitching, Zacky dropped his forehead back onto his mate's shoulder. "You okay?"

"I will be now."

"Brace yourself for me."

Pain racked him as Tyler lifted him into his arms again and gently lowered him into warm water. The water seemed to burn his wounds and bruises, and he groaned, muscles tensing against the pain.

He breathed in slowly, trying not to jar his ribs. Eventually, the water actually started to feel good, and he lay back against his mate's arm, which

was supporting him and keeping his back from touching the surface. He kept his legs bent so only his ass hurt from the contact of the bath.

"I'm going to wash you," Tyler said softly. "I'll try not to hurt you."

"You're going to hurt me no matter what, Ty. Just try not to feel bad," he whispered. "I want to be clean."

"I know." Tyler shifted over, easing him back against the bath and leaning over for some soap. He lathered up his hands and gently started to run them over Zacky's body. The soap stung, and even the softest touch hurt him. Zacky sucked on his bottom lip, trying to stay relaxed, trying not to whimper so Tyler didn't stop. He needed to get rid of the smell of the cell and the feel of Connor's hands on him. The scent of fear, blood, dirt, and ammonia washed away by his lover's touch, and everything that Connor had done was replaced by the tender strokes of long, loving fingers.

Once Tyler had washed his whole body, he emptied the bath and helped Zacky to his feet, supporting his weight easily and carefully rinsing off the soap residue with the shower head. The spray felt harsh against his raw skin, but he tried not to flinch, holding onto Tyler's shoulders tightly.

"I'm sorry," Tyler murmured, lifting him back into his arms and switching off the shower.

"I'm okay, Ty," he said softly. "I feel so much better already."

Tyler kissed his forehead and carried him out into the motel bedroom. There was a cotton sheet over the bedspread, and Tyler lay him down carefully before lying next to him.

"I need you to feed a little then sleep, okay?"

"Okay." He was already feeling exhausted from the bath, and he curled up against his mate. Tyler bit into his wrist and held it to his mouth. He grasped his mate's hand, licking delicately at the blood that flowed freely. The taste made him moan happily, his mate's blood eased his cramping hunger and filled him with warmth and a sense of comfort. He swallowed slowly until Tyler drew his wrist back and carefully spooned up behind him.

Zacky fell asleep to the soft, warm licks of his mate's tongue over the back of his neck.

* * * *

Zacky drifted in and out of consciousness several times over the next few days, and Tyler fed, kissed, stroked, and licked him until he was starting to feel like himself again.

The first time he woke up actually feeling normal again, he was warm, wrapped in strong arms that didn't belong to Tyler.

Frowning in confusion, he opened his eyes and looked around. At the end of the bed, Matt and a naked Tyler were wrapped up together in a tight embrace, and his heart froze for a split second until he realized that his mate was feeding from the younger alpha.

"Okay, enough, Ty," Matt said, pushing him back.

"Thank you, Mattie." Tyler turned to the bed. "Thank you for keeping him warm for me, Johnny."

"You're welcome." The body holding him shifted, and Zacky blinked at his friend as he got up from the bed. Johnny smiled at him.

"Hey, you're awake."

"What's going on?" he whispered.

"Tyler won't leave you so Matt's feeding him so he can feed you."

Suddenly realizing he was still naked, he flushed and curled up further.

"You don't have to hide from us," Johnny said softly.

"I know but..."

"It's okay. We're gonna go now," Matt said, clapping Tyler's bare shoulder. "See you later."

"Yeah, later, guys."

Tyler climbed back onto the bed behind him and stroked his shoulder gently.

"How are you feeling?"

"A bit better I think," he said. "My skin doesn't feel like it's going to burst open and peel off my body anymore."

Tyler flinched and buried his face in the back of his neck.

"God, baby, I wish I could have found you sooner."

"How did you find me?"

"Traced your phone," Tyler murmured, starting to lick Zacky's neck again. "I don't think Connor was counting on me being able to hack into the police systems." He sighed. "I'm sorry I had to ask you to hold on like that."

"No, Ty, that's what gave me hope."

"Okay," Tyler gasped softly, sniffing as hot tears trickled over the back of his neck.

"Ty, don't cry, please," he begged, grunting painfully as he turned over and buried himself in his mate's arms. "I'm okay. I'm here. You've got me, and I love you."

"*Mä rakastan sua*," Tyler breathed, stroking his neck and back whisper-soft. His breathing slowed, the tears easing as they held each other close. "You hungry, baby?"

"Yeah."

Tyler tipped his head to the side, exposing his neck. Moaning happily, Zacky licked his mate's neck, his mouth watering at the taste of salt, sweat and musk. He bit down, groaning as the thick, hot, coppery fluid flooded his mouth. He swallowed quickly. Every time he fed, he felt stronger and could feel his body healing through his mate's strength, his blood nourishing. He felt good, whole, and loved. He smiled as he pulled back.

He kissed his mate and let Tyler turn him around, arms wrapping around him as his mate started to lick his neck and shoulders.

Still, even though he was healing and knew he wouldn't scar, Zacky felt strangely unclean, like he needed something more of Tyler to replace the violation.

"Ty, I need you to mark me."

Tyler stiffened behind him. "No. You can't ask me to do that. You can't," Tyler gasped, tears back in his voice.

"I need something of you. I might not be your property, but I do belong to you," he whispered. "And I need to feel that."

"Even if I could bring myself, it wouldn't stay," Tyler said quietly.

"Your tattoos stay."

Tyler pulled back and lifted himself onto one elbow.

"You want a tattoo?"

"I don't know. Maybe?"

"Zacky, we might heal fast, and well, but tattoos are definitely permanent."

"I know," he sighed. "But I know I need something, and you have tattoos. Oh I don't know."

"Would you like me to tell you about mine?"

"Yes, I would."

Tyler helped him roll onto his other side and lay down to face him.

"The tree is Yggdrasil, the tree of life that connects the different planes of existence. I got it to represent the life I grew up in and the family I lost. It means I'm always connected to the past and the people I loved then."

Zacky smiled at his lover, reaching up to stroke back long, dark hair.

"That's beautiful," he whispered. "What about the wolves?"

Tyler sighed, dropping his gaze for a moment, then he sat up so Zacky could see his arm.

"I didn't have a pack for many centuries. I thought it would interfere with looking after all the Pack. Then I found Piotr. He was such a beautiful, sensible Russian boy, so reliable, such a romantic. I didn't want to give him to another alpha. He was... special. His mate was his own great-great-great nephew, Mika." Tyler's gaze dropped, his lips trembling.

"My beautiful Mika," he whispered. "The sweetest, most soft-hearted, loving boy I have ever known. He adored Mattie. He would have loved you so much." Tears escaped sad, brown eyes, and Zacky's heart clenched with sorrow for his mate's loss.

"Tyr," he whispered, "maybe we should stop."

"No, it's okay. I did promise I'd tell you about them," Tyler sighed.

"I would like to know," Zacky said gently, reaching to stroke the tattooed arm.

"My second pack member was actually Wilhelm," Tyler sniffed as he almost laughed. "German, gruff, stocky, very strong in both body and mind, filthy sense of humor. He and Pi used to fight all the time when they weren't fucking, of course. All three of us were lovers, until we found Mika and he mated with Piotr. Then it was just me and Wil for many, many years."

The heartache and sorrow so visible in his mate hurt Zacky, and he drew Tyler onto the bed, snuggling in close and stroking his hair gently. Tyler sighed and kissed him.

"And finally, there was Daniel. We found him in England, tall and skinny, as sharp as his bony body. You should have seen Wilhelm when he saw Danny the first time. I've never seen such a transformation. He would have done anything for that boy."

"So the wolves are our pack?" Zacky whispered painfully, squeezing his lover's hand.

"Symbolically, yeah. As soon as I healed from the fire, I had Yggdrasil re-inked, and the wolves done to commemorate them."

"Oh Tyler," he whispered, tugging at his lover's hand to pull him closer. He wrapped his arms around him and kissed him softly. "I'm so sorry you had to lose so many people you loved."

"Baby I..." Tyler stopped and clasped the back of his neck, dragging him into a kiss that felt desperate and urgent. Zacky gasped as need and warmth swept through him, hardening his cock slowly. It was the first time he'd had the strength to respond physically.

"I'm sorry, Zacky. I just need you. I need to know you're here and alive."

"I need you too," he said softly, pulling Tyler back in, kissing him harder, lips parting eagerly to his mate's probing tongue. Tyler tasted so good it just made him need more, and Zacky rolled onto his back, clutching his lover to him so he didn't break the kiss. He'd missed this love and lust, warmth and connection, and he wanted Tyler badly. His mate's cock slid over his groin before Tyler lifted himself up slightly.

"Tyler?"

"Don't want to hurt your ribs, baby."

"But I want your weight on me, Ty. It feels good."

Tyler shook his head, starting to shift backwards.

"Maybe this was a mistake. It's too soon, baby. You haven't finished healing yet."

He recognized the stubborn tone in his lover's voice and, in desperation, Zacky bit through his tongue and leaned up, kissing his mate hard. He plunged his bleeding tongue into Tyler's mouth and pulled him on top of his body.

"It's not too soon," he gasped when he finally released his lover's mouth. "I need you too. I want you to fuck me, please."

"Oh fuck, Zacky," Tyler groaned, jerking against him, warm pre-cum trickling onto Zacky's stomach as their cocks rubbed together slickly. "I want you so bad."

"So take me," Zacky whispered, wrapping his legs around Tyler's hips and arching into him. His dick pulsed and ached, and he already felt desperately empty.

Tyler pulled away again, but only for long enough to dig lube out of the bag on the bedside cabinet and coat his fingers.

"Fuck yes, Tyler," Zacky groaned as his lover slid slickened fingers down the crease of his ass, teasing the entrance. "Stretch me out. I want you inside me."

"God, you make me so hot when you talk like that," Tyler panted, rocking against him and pushing a finger straight inside him, working against the tightness of his ass. Zacky bit his lip, clutching at his lover's shoulders, breathing into the discomfort until it felt good.

"More," he gasped.

"Yes, love," Tyler whispered, easing his finger back and pushing two inside him, stroking in and out, stretching him, filling him with more and more pleasure and need.

"Fuck," he moaned. "Tyler, now. I need it."

"Oh God, fuck." Tyler lifted up, carefully pulling his fingers free. He knelt up between his legs and spread more lube over the length of his cock. "You ready, my love?"

"So ready, Tyler."

"You are so beautiful, Zacky," Tyler whispered, crawling over him and leaning down to kiss him gently as he settled between his legs, guiding his cock down to press at the entrance to his body.

He groaned quietly and pushed down. Tyler's cock slid into him, stretching him open, and he started to feel complete again as he breathed into the slight burn. Tyler moved slowly, holding most of his weight on his elbows as his cock stroked in and out of Zacky's body. Tyler filled him again and again, brushing over the sensitive spot inside him until he was writhing and begging for more.

"Please," he groaned, sliding his fingers over his lover's smooth, soft skin, clutching and urging him on faster and harder. He squeezed around his mate's cock, tightening his legs to pull him deeper.

Tyler groaned, thrusting faster into him. He clasped Zacky's face and dipped down, tongue stroking his lips, kissing him tenderly and gently as he fucked him harder.

"Feels so good," he moaned, pushing a hand between them so he could fist his aching dick. "Mark me, Tyr. Come in me. I'm yours."

"I love you," Tyler groaned, hips bucking hard against Zacky who felt heat fill him. Pleasure overwhelmed him, and he shuddered, back arching as he came over his hand. He fell back against the bed gasping for breath, and

Tyler lay carefully on top of him, kissing and sucking his lips before nipping through his tongue and letting the blood drip into Zacky's mouth. Zacky swallowed happily and stroked his lover's hair back.

"I love you too," Zacky whispered. Tyler kissed him once more, gently, then eased back, softening cock sliding from his body. He moved down, slowly licking the sweat from Zacky's chest and the cum from his stomach.

"Tyler," Zacky murmured, comfort and sleepiness starting to take over.

"Hush, baby," Tyler said, looking up at him. "Just relax and enjoy, it's okay if you fall asleep."

"Okay," Zacky sighed, closing his eyes and enjoying his mate's gentle tongue bath. Tyler shifted lower, pushing Zacky's legs apart as his tongue slid down to his groin. His eyes shot open again, and he groaned. It felt too good, Tyler's slick, strong tongue licking him clean, teasing him until he was starting to feel breathless.

"Tyler, stop," he whispered. "I'm too tired to get turned on again. Please just cuddle with me."

Tyler nodded, kissing his way back up his body then lying down next to him and pulling him into a close hug, nuzzling his neck.

"Sleep, my love. I'll be here when you wake up."

Suddenly, Zacky's eyes burned and his breath started to hitch as everything that had happened overwhelmed his emotions, and he clung to his mate, burying his face as he started to cry.

"Oh, now, baby," Tyler whispered, stroking his hair and easing him back to cup his cheeks, thumbs sliding over his cheekbones. "Why are you crying?"

"Because of *everything*. I was so scared without you, so empty and alone, and I missed you so *much*."

"I know," Tyler whispered, kissing Zacky's forehead, nose, cheeks, eyes, and lips over and over. "It was the same for me."

"Really?"

"Yes. I've never been so scared, my love. Never."

"Tyler, I can't be without you," he whispered. He wasn't sure if that scared him more than when he'd actually been apart from his mate.

"I know," Tyler murmured, kissing his mouth tenderly. "I wouldn't survive without you. You are my everything, Zacky, and I love you so much. I will always be here. I'm yours. I promise."

"I want a tattoo," he blurted out suddenly.

"Are you sure, baby?"

"Yes. I want *your* tattoos. These ones," he said quietly, running his fingers over the symbols that dotted over Tyler's chest like a necklace.

"These are *you*."

His mate blinked at him in surprise.

"How did you know that?"

"I don't know," he said with a shrug. "I just feel it."

"You're right," Tyler said, smiling and dotting a kiss on the tip of his nose. "They're runes, and these ones in particular are known as Tyr's *aett*. This one," he pointed at a symbol that looked like an arrow, "*is* Tyr."

On impulse, Zacky leaned forward and kissed the symbol that adorned his lover's breastbone.

"I want that where he..." Zacky swallowed back a moment of nausea. "Where the brand was."

"Oh, love." Tyler clasped him close, kissing him desperately hard. "Okay, when we're finished with all this, we'll get you tattooed."

"Finished with what?"

"Well, as much as I'd like to, we can't just leave Connor hanging from that wall. We need information from him," Tyler said quietly. "And I want..."

"What?"

"Nothing."

"What, Tyler?" he asked more firmly.

"I want to kill him. I want to hurt him until he begs for death, and then rip his fucking throat out."

Shivering, Zacky wrapped himself tightly around his mate.

"I don't want you to," he whispered, feeling tearful again.

"You can't be serious, Zacky."

"If you do that, you'll be no better than him. Please, Ty, for me," he begged.

"I can't let him live, baby. You know I can't."

"I know, and I know you want to hurt him for what he did to me. *I* want to hurt him for what he did to you." He touched his mate's mouth gently, tracing a finger over his bottom lip. "But you don't have to descend to his level."

"I want to descend to his level," Tyler said stubbornly, jaw clenching.

Zacky almost wanted to laugh. His *twelve hundred* year old mate was pouting like a child throwing a tantrum.

"Really?" he said softly.

Tyler sighed heavily. "No, I guess not. I still want to hurt him."

"I know." Smiling, Zacky kissed his lover gently and buried himself in his arms again, closing his eyes, finally exhausted.

"Sorry I kept you awake, my love."

"That's okay. Just be here when I wake up."

"Always," Tyler murmured, kissing the top of his head.

* * * *

Zacky was getting used to waking up warm and comfortable again, for his stomach not to be tight and pained with hunger. But he was still hungry and groggy when consciousness resumed. Mumbling quietly, he pressed his face into Tyler's neck, licking at his skin needily.

"Baby, wait," Tyler said softly, easing him back and kissing him. "I need to feed first."

"No, don't go," he murmured, clinging onto his mate tightly.

"I'm not going anywhere, my love." Tyler reached up and pounded on the wall. "Matt!" he yelled. There was a thud, and Tyler settled down again.

It wasn't much later when their door opened, and their three friends stumbled in, all dressed in boxers and looking sleepy.

"Hey, you two okay?" Matt asked with a jaw-cracking yawn.

"I need to feed," Tyler said.

"Okay." Matt crossed the room and climbed onto the bed with them, spooning up behind Tyler and offering him his wrist.

"Can we?" Johnny asked.

"Zacky?" Tyler said.

"Can they what?" Zacky asked in confusion.

"Join us," Tyler said. "It's a Pack thing. They want to cuddle with you, make sure you're okay, and maybe lick you, if you don't mind it."

"Oh, okay." He wasn't sure about the licking part, but he didn't mind a group cuddle.

"Thank you, Zacky," Johnny said earnestly, crossing the room quickly to get on the bed with them. Johnny lay down behind him and wrapped him in

a hug, and Jimmy crawled over them, sprawling across the top of the bed so he could reach all of them.

Zacky smiled happily, suddenly feeling like he really belonged, like he'd not only found his other half but his true family as well. Tyler kissed his nose then leaned back against the other alpha so he could get to his wrist more easily. Zacky watched slim lips redden with blood as Tyler sucked and swallowed, and he wasn't sure if he was turned on or jealous.

"Hey, don't take too much," Matt murmured, pulling his wrist away and moving his arm to wrap it around Tyler's waist. Then, he took Johnny's hand from around Zacky's waist.

"I like puppy piles," Jimmy sighed, gently stroking Zacky's hair and kissing the top of Johnny's head.

"Only because you're usually in the middle of them," Matt snorted.

"Yeah, because you're a good alpha," Jimmy said softly, reaching across to Matt who took his hand for a moment.

It was nice snuggling as a group, feeling his mate's warmth in front of him, Johnny's behind him, arms wrapped round him, and Jimmy gently petting his hair. Still, he was hungry, and now that Tyler had fed, he was strong enough to feed from.

He shifted even closer to his mate, pressing their lips together, not quite a kiss, just a touch.

"Ty," he whispered, brushing his lips over his mate's mouth. "Hungry."

"You want to feed?"

"Yeah but..."

"You want us to go," Johnny said softly.

"Please."

Johnny kissed his shoulder gently and sat up. "Come on, Jimmy. Matt, love, wake up."

"Mmm?" Matt murmured.

"Time to go back to our room, mon chéri."

"Okay." Matt yawned and sat up, patting Tyler's arm. "Let's go then boys. See you two later."

"Thank you," Tyler whispered as he wrapped both arms around Zacky and tipped his head to expose his throat. "Feed from me, love."

The scent of blood made Zacky's mouth water. Seeing the pulse under his skin, hearing the rush of blood through veins and arteries made him

groan needily. He licked his lover's neck, nuzzling with his lips until Tyler was gasping.

"Mmm, you taste perfect, my Ty," Zacky whispered, pressing his teeth hard against his lover's skin. Tyler shuddered against him as he pierced through, and blood spurted into his mouth, hot and thick, rich life fluid that filled him with love and desire. Zacky's cock hardened against his mate's hip, and he rocked into him, moaning against his neck as he sucked and swallowed. They rocked and thrust together, cocks pressing and sliding against each other. It felt so good, surrounded and filled by his lover's warmth and love, heated desire throbbing through his groin with every pulse of blood into his mouth.

Tyler groaned suddenly, hands clutching him tightly as he bucked against him, cum flooding over his stomach. Zacky's cock slid more quickly, the lack of friction taking him back from the edge. He whimpered, and Tyler pulled back, licking the blood off his mouth and kissing him gently before pushing him onto his back and slipping down his body.

Pleasure shocked through Zacky as his mate sucked his cock straight into his mouth, swallowing him down as one hand clamped onto his hip and the other slid down between his legs, spit-slick fingers teasing the entrance to his body.

"So close, Ty." He needed to come badly, and he pushed down, trying to get his lover inside.

Tyler moaned around his cock, the vibration sensitizing him further. Two fingers pushed straight into Zacky's body, reaching deep and rubbing against his prostate. Ecstasy overwhelmed him, and Zacky arched up, feet pressing into the mattress as he came hard in his mate's mouth.

Tyler sucked gently until his hips stopped jerking. Slowly, he slid back and eased his fingers from Zacky's body.

"I love how you taste," Tyler sighed, crawling back up his body and kissing him. He nipped Zacky's lip and sucked gently. "I love *you*," he whispered, licking a drop of blood from his mouth.

"Love you too," Zacky murmured happily, cuddling close and burying his face back in his mate's neck, lapping the rapidly healing bite mark.

"Do you think you're well enough to get up today, my love?"

"Yeah. I feel pretty much normal I think," he said quietly.

"I think you've healed fully. You just need to build up a bit more strength. Why don't you take a shower then we can grab the others and go get you some juice or something."

Smiling, Zacky nodded and stroked his lover's chest with his fingertips.

"I'd like that."

"Come on then," Tyler murmured. He eased them upright and pulled Zacky carefully into his arms, standing and carrying him to the bathroom.

"Ty," Zacky chuckled, clinging onto his lover until he set him down on the toilet seat.

"What?" Tyler said with a small pout. "I'm just taking care of you."

"I know. It's nice."

Tyler flipped on the shower and pulled him to his feet, slipping both arms round his waist and walking him under the spray. Zacky leaned against his lover, resting his head on his chest, just letting the warm water stream over them.

His legs still felt a little weak but Tyler was right, he'd pretty much healed. He just needed to build up his strength. Which, given their nature, would only take a day or two.

What he wasn't looking forward to was the confrontation with Connor. He knew how much pain the renegade alpha had caused his mate, and he knew Tyler would have a hard time dealing with him. He really *didn't* want Tyler to go too far, to descend to that level. And Zacky was afraid that when he saw Connor *he* might descend to his level because of what the insane alpha had done to him and his mate. He wasn't normally a violent man but, when it came to his mate, it was like Matt said- all bets were off.

He let Tyler wash him and dry him and carry him back into the bedroom and set him on the bed.

"Ty, do you mind if I call my mom?"

"Oh, um, yeah, actually I was going to suggest that you should." Tyler looked so oddly guilty that Zacky frowned at his mate.

"Oh?"

"When we couldn't find you, when I couldn't even," Tyler paused, swallowing hard as his voice cracked, "couldn't even feel you, I didn't know what to do, what to think."

"What's that got to do with my mom?"

"I called her," Tyler whispered. "I hoped she'd heard from you or that maybe you'd gone home."

"Gone home?" he whispered in disbelief. "You really thought..."

"I didn't know what to think, baby," Tyler sighed. "I called her after we found you, to let her know you were safe."

Zacky sighed. He pulled on a pair of boxers and sat on the bed. "Have you got my cell?"

"Yeah." Tyler sat on the bed and handed it to him.

"Sit with me," Zacky whispered, holding out his hand. His mate smiled and crawled over to lie on the bed next to him, resting his head on his stomach. Zacky sank his fingers into long, dark hair as he dialed home.

"Hello?"

His mother's voice filled him with a momentary sense of homesickness, and he blinked away the stinging in his eyes.

"Hey, Mom."

"Oh, Zach, oh my boy," she gasped, bursting into tears. "I was so worried."

"I'm sorry. I'm okay. Tyler found me," he whispered.

"Found you?" she said, sounding confused. "What do you mean?"

"I was abducted."

"Abducted?" she gasped. "Oh, Zach, are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Mom, really. Tyler's taking good care of me like he promised." He stopped and smiled at his lover's long arms, tight around his waist.

"I'm glad," she said softly. "He was so devastated when he couldn't find you. I just wanted to reach through the phone and hug him."

"Thanks, Mom."

"You're sure you're okay?"

"Yeah- safe, well, and happy I promise."

"And did you tell him that you love him?"

Zacky sighed happily and nodded even though his mother couldn't see him.

"Yeah."

"And he believed you, didn't he?"

"Yeah," he said with a wry chuckle. "I should go. I love you, Mom."

"I love you, too, darling. Call me soon, okay?"

"Of course I will. Bye."

"Bye, darling."

He hung up with a sigh.

"Okay?" Tyler asked, sitting up in front of him.

"I'm fine, beloved. Will you let me wear one of your t-shirts today?"

Tyler didn't move, sitting frozen, the weight of his gaze making Zacky look up. His mate's eyes were shining, a soft smile played on trembling lips.

"Tyler?"

Tyler smiled, leaning in to kiss him softly. "Love you."

Frowning a little in confusion, Zacky stared up at his mate.

"I love you too. Are you okay?"

"Very okay. What t-shirt do you want?"

"Something you've worn please, I need your scent around me."

Tyler smiled at him again and went to dig in his bag, pulling out a well worn t-shirt and throwing it at him. It landed on his head, and he couldn't help a chuckle even as he breathed in deeply.

"Sorry, baby."

"No, you're not, but that's okay." He pulled on underwear, jeans, Tyler's t-shirt, and his boots and stood slowly. "Come on. Treat me to some juice."

"Spoiled."

"No, I'm not," he said with a quiet snort.

"I know." Tyler slipped an arm around Zacky's waist and they left the room, knocking on the next door as they passed.

"What?" Matt yelled.

"We're going to the diner."

"Okay, see you there."

In the diner, they sat next to each other, and Zacky leaned against his mate.

"What can I get you kids?"

"A black coffee and an orange juice. Thanks."

"Anything to eat?"

Tyler grinned. "No thanks. We've eaten."

"Okay, sure, whatever." She snapped her chewing gum and poured Tyler a cup of coffee from the pot she was carrying. "I'll bring the OJ over."

"Thanks."

"Hey, boys," Matt mumbled sleepily, sliding into the booth. Johnny and Jimmy slid in beside him, his mate stroking his shoulder gently.

"Are you okay, Matt?" Zacky asked in mild concern.

"Tired," Matt said with a shrug. "Been sustaining Ty too much."

"I'm sorry," Zacky whispered.

"Hey, no problem. It's what we do, okay?"

"Thanks."

"I think we should get our own food tonight," Tyler said quietly.

Zacky couldn't quite help a grimace, but he nodded. He knew it was time. Tyler couldn't keep feeding him, just like Matt couldn't keep feeding Tyler. Besides, fresh blood would boost his healing.

"OJ." The waitress plunked a glass in front of him and pulled out her pad. "Rest of you boys ordering any food?"

"Just coffee all around thanks."

She sighed and nodded, filling up the cups in front of them and heading away.

"So Connor's softened up pretty good," Jimmy started.

"Good," Tyler said with a scowl. "You think he's ready to talk?"

"I think he's ready to die," Jimmy sighed.

"He can't die until we know where the hunters and the rogue packs are based."

"I know, I know. I'm just saying physical torture isn't accomplishing anything."

"He's right, Ty," Matt said with a sigh.

"It'll accomplish me feeling better," Tyler growled.

"Oh, it's made us *all* feel better," Johnny said in a low growl. Zacky glanced up in surprise. He hadn't realized the other three Pack had been questioning Connor. That must have hurt Tyler. He slid a hand over to his mate's thigh, squeezing gently.

"It's okay baby. We're going today."

Zacky's gut tightened in fearful denial, and he breathed heavily, taking a quick swig of his drink before he could speak.

"Oh," he managed.

"I mean, if you think you can," Tyler said, cupping his cheek gently.

"Tyler, we need the information," he said determinedly as the beginning of an idea occurred to him. "I can handle it."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, finish your drinks, and let's go."

"Ooh, the beta just got bossy," Jimmy said with a snort.

"Well, you know he is *Tyler's* mate," Johnny said with a soft smile. "Kinda makes him the boss."

"No beta is the boss of me," Matt said with a derisive snort. "Tyler's the boss. He's the alpha."

Johnny smiled, dropping his gaze.

"Of course, mon chéri." Johnny glanced up and winked, and Zacky could barely hold back a snicker. Matt might have been the alpha *and* the dominant partner, but Johnny was definitely the boss. Tyler put an arm around his shoulder and kissed his temple.

"Hush, baby, Matt is blissful in his ignorance."

Pressing his lips together, Zacky nodded, still holding in giggles. The other three men drained their coffees and got up.

"You relax. We'll get the stuff organized."

"Thanks, Matt."

Zacky leaned against his lover and sipped his orange juice slowly.

"Are we going to head off after this then?" he asked.

"Yeah, it's safer. Matt's had to feed a lot to keep us going. It's going to start drawing attention."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be ridiculous, baby. None of this was your fault."

"Hush, love," he said, quickly stopping his lover with a press of his lips against his mouth, fingertips under his chin to coax him closer.

"Hey, what the hell do you think--"

Tyler jerked out of the kiss, head snapping around as he snarled at the waitress, teeth bared. She blanched, squeaking as she backed slowly away.

Tyler turned back and kissed Zacky quickly before getting up with a sigh. "I guess it's time to go then."

"Yeah," Zacky said with a soft laugh. He got up as Tyler dropped far too much cash on the table before taking his hand. They strode out of the diner as the others drove up in the car.

"Whoa, what did you do?" Jimmy asked as they jumped into the car, followed by shouts from the diner.

"We had the audacity to kiss," Tyler said, making a rude noise.

"Be fair, Ty. You did scare that waitress."

"Yeah, I guess."

"Sorry I missed it," Matt said with a laugh as he drove them away.

Chapter Nineteen

They parked in front of a very ordinary looking house. It looked like a cottage where a little old lady might live, not a psychotic killer. Of course, being a little old lady didn't preclude you from being a psychotic killer, but still, the white picket fence and carefully maintained garden certainly gave no indication of the torture that had gone on inside.

"Come on," Jimmy said, jumping out of the car.

"You gonna be okay?" Johnny asked, looking over the seat at Zacky.

"Yeah," he said, squaring his shoulders and getting out of the car. Tyler jumped out with him and slid an arm round his waist, steering him into the house.

In complete contrast to the outside of the house, the inside was bare and undecorated, unlived in except for a few necessities in the bathroom and an airbed in the sitting room.

"It's downstairs," Matt said with a grimace.

They walked down narrow, slightly rickety steps into darkness. Zacky's heart pounded hard in his chest, and when the light flicked on it startled him badly. He gasped in fright, turning and clinging to his mate.

"Are you sure you're ready for this, my love?" Tyler asked, gently stroking his hair and back.

"Yeah, I was just having a moment," he sighed, holding onto his mate but straightening up again. "Let's go."

They walked down the tiny corridor, past a door. He glanced in and shivered, realizing it was the cell he'd been kept in. One of the others must have cleaned it out, because there was no sign that it had ever been occupied.

At the end of the corridor was the room where he had been brutalized by Connor. The alpha was hanging limply from the wall, his wrists tightly

bound by the cuffs. He was covered in cuts and bruises but, as soon as he saw them, he smiled sickly.

"You're looking pretty again, Zachariah."

"You're not," Zacky said quietly.

"No thanks to Matthias and his baby pack," Connor snorted.

"Fuck you, Connor. How many times do I have to tell you to stop insulting my pack?" Matt growled, stalking across the room and smashing his fist into the renegade alpha's jaw.

Zacky flinched as blood sprayed across the wall behind Connor, and the alpha started to laugh.

"You call this torture?" Connor said, still laughing.

"Tell us where the hunters are based, Connor," Tyler said.

"Never. You'll just have to kill me."

"You're not getting off that easy," Tyler said softly.

"Do whatever the fuck you want! Nothing you do to me could hurt worse than my Jamie's death," Connor said with a sneer.

"Really?" Zacky murmured, staring at his former captor. He felt Tyler shift, and his mate's brown eyes fixed on him quizzically.

"Baby?"

Zacky didn't miss the tiniest flinch from the renegade, and he smiled a little regrettably. He didn't want to cause anyone pain, but they couldn't let the hunters continue killing off Pack.

"Matt, Johnny, Jimmy," he said, glancing at their friends.

"Yeah?"

"Go for a drive."

"I don't wanna miss anything," Jimmy whined.

"It's not open for discussion," Zacky said firmly.

"The cub's got teeth," Connor said with a chuckle.

"But-"

"Tyr, please," Zacky whispered.

"Guys, clear out," Tyler said, raising his eyebrows at them.

"Fine," Matt snapped. "We'll be outside."

"Thank you," Zacky said quietly. He couldn't go through with his plan if they had an audience.

"Don't do anything you'll regret," Johnny said quietly, patting his arm on the way past.

"I won't."

When the three had left, Tyler turned to him.

"What are you up to?"

Zacky tilted his head slightly and smiled, leaning into his mate and clasping his cheeks gently.

"Just wanted to get you alone."

"You're not alone," Connor snorted.

Zacky ignored him and stroked his lover's lips gently.

"I am yours, my beloved," he whispered softly. "We're going to be together for the rest of time."

He heard Connor inhale sharply, and he leaned closer to Tyler, kissing his mate tenderly. Tyler moaned and slid an arm around his waist to pull him closer, his other hand sinking into his hair.

"You make me sick," Connor spat, his voice trembling slightly.

"Baby, what are you doing?" Tyler whispered, ignoring the other alpha.

"I want you, my Ty, my mate," Zacky said, leaning up to brush his lips over his lover's mouth. "Make love with me."

"Here?"

"Yes."

Tyler frowned in confusion. "Are you sure?"

"Yes," Zacky breathed, sliding a hand under his lover's t-shirt, stroking soft skin and tight nipples. "I love you, Ty. I want you here and now." Despite the situation, the place, and the company, Zacky still felt his cock harden when his mate groaned and bent his head to kiss him again, possessing his mouth deeply.

"Oh get a room, you stupid fucks."

"Shut up, Connor!"

"Ignore him," Zacky murmured, tugging him back, round and pushing his t-shirt up. "Take it off."

Tyler pulled his t-shirt off. Zacky sighed happily and pushed his mate against the table, stroking his chest. He moved to stand between Tyler's legs and leaned up, kissing his lover, smiling against his lips as he heard Connor groan.

"I love you," Zacky whispered, sliding his hands down between their bodies to unbutton and unzip Tyler's jeans, tugging and pushing at them until his cock sprang out, hard and ready.

"You are so beautiful. I want to touch you all the time, worship you with my hands." He wrapped one hand around the thick length of his mate's cock and stroked slowly, kissing him harder. Tyler moaned and rocked into him.

"My beautiful mate," Tyler whispered.

"Stop it," Connor said quietly.

"My love," Zacky said with a nod. "I'm yours, forever." He kissed the centre of Tyler's chest and sank down to his knees in front of him.

"Stop it."

Leaning forward, Zacky licked over the head of his mate's cock and groaned.

"I love the way you taste," he said, dick straining against his pants as he licked away more pre-cum.

"Stop it, you fucking bastards!" Connor shouted.

Ignoring the alpha, Zacky sucked Tyler's cock into his mouth, sliding down as far as he could, backing up and lapping over the head.

"Fuck yes, baby," Tyler gasped, fingers clasping his hair tightly. "I love you. I love you so much."

"Stop it!" Connor screamed. "Stop it!"

Zacky sucked and swallowed, stroking slim hips and flat belly before he slid back and looked up.

"I love you too, Ty," he whispered, pushing himself up and wrapping his fingers around his mate's cock again, leaning up to kiss him and share his taste with him.

"Let me touch you, baby," Tyler begged softly.

"Yes," Zacky gasped, moving back just enough to let Tyler unbutton his shirt and jeans, pushing the pants down to release his aching cock.

Connor groaned, his breath hitching. "Please stop."

"God, you feel perfect, my love," Tyler groaned, sliding his fingers up the length of his shaft. Zacky arched into the touch, kissing his mate desperately as Tyler fisted his cock and started to stroke.

"Make love with me," he whispered against soft lips.

"Oh yes, my love." Tyler turned them around and pushed him up against the table, kissing him again.

"No!" Connor gasped. "Please no. I'll tell you anything if you stop, *please*."

Zacky smiled at his mate as comprehension suddenly dawned in Tyler's deep brown eyes.

"You're a genius," Tyler whispered before looking over at the other alpha. "I don't know, Connor. Why should I believe you'll tell me the truth?"

"You'd know," Connor sighed. "You always know. I can't bear to see you two together. Please, just let me tell you, and let me die."

Zacky bit his lip, tears unexpectedly springing to his eyes in sympathy for the heartbroken and shattered man. He buried his face in Tyler's neck and breathed in deeply. He couldn't afford to feel sympathy towards the madman, not knowing that they *had* to kill him.

"Go on then, Connor," Tyler said quietly. "Let's hear it."

* * * *

They strolled hand in hand through the house, back outside to join the others.

"You got it out of him?" Matt asked.

"Yeah."

"Already?" Jimmy exclaimed.

"What can I say? My mate is a genius," Tyler said with a smile. Zacky flushed and shrugged under three shocked gazes.

"We've been working him over for days and he's said nothing, you were in there for about half an hour, I don't get it," Jimmy whined.

"He used Connor's weakness against him, that's all. He actually thought about what would make him break."

"Remind me not to get on your bad side," Jimmy said, eyes wide.

"So what did he say?" Matt asked.

"It's militant fanatics. There's one main base for the hunters, and there are around twenty currently operating," Tyler said softly.

"Great," Matt said with a heavy sigh.

"Yeah, get this. For at least half of them, this is the family business."

"What do you mean?"

"Handed down from father to son, like Loki."

"Ah, Ty," Matt said with a regretful grimace.

Tyler snorted. "Yeah. The rest apparently are non-Pack brothers."

"Do you want us to take care of him?" Matt asked softly.

"Yes," Tyler said with a slow nod.

Zacky grimaced, turning to his lover and hugging him tightly. He didn't want to be involved in death, but they had no choice. If they let Connor live, he'd just come after them again.

He and Tyler got in the back of the car and curled up together while they waited. He buried his face in his mate's neck, trying not to listen to the howls and cries. What exactly they would do to kill Connor, he had no idea, and he neither wanted to know nor imagine, pretending that it was all over. He was safe, Tyler was with him, and they were both okay. That was all that mattered in the end.

Eventually, the other three Pack emerged, Matt wiping blood from his mouth and chin. Bright red was emblazoned across all three, their t-shirts spattered with copious amounts of blood. Zacky flinched at the visible evidence of Connor's death and turned away. He knew it was something he had to learn to deal with, but he hoped he'd never get used to it. That would be a step too far away from humanity.

"Thank you for not killing him yourself," he whispered. "I know you wanted to."

"I wanted you to love and respect me more," Tyler said softly. "Besides you did a pretty good job of punishing him yourself."

Zacky flinched again.

"Don't take it the wrong way, baby. After all, you didn't lay a finger on him."

"Isn't psychological torture worse?" he whispered.

"We did what we had to in order to survive, Zacky, and you know it," Tyler sighed, kissing the top of his head.

"Yes, I know."

They climbed into the front seat so the other three could get in the back and change their clothes. Tyler drove away from the house and back towards the highway.

Zacky tried not to watch as Johnny bent over his mate and sucked his cock deep into his mouth while Matt jacked him, and Jimmy watched, his hand wrapped tightly around his own erection. Zacky squirmed against his mate, his groin tight.

"Relax, baby," Tyler murmured.

"I can't," he groaned, eyes fixed on the backseat, watching Johnny's overstretched lips slide up and down Matt's thick cock.

"Need me to touch you?"

"I don't know." They hadn't finished making love after torturing Connor, and he still wanted his lover desperately regardless of the terrible circumstances. The exhibitionism behind them wasn't helping at all despite his continued level of embarrassment with public sex.

"They're all too busy with each other to notice if you want me to."

He glanced up at his mate. The heat in Tyler's dark, brown eyes made him shiver, and he nodded.

A wide grin spread over slim lips, and Tyler slid his arm from around his shoulders, stroking down Zacky's chest and stomach to his waistband. Zacky groaned as his mate popped his button and drew down his zipper, reaching into his pants to palm his erection. Tyler teased the head with the heel of his hand and sliding over Zacky's balls with his fingertips.

Shuddering needily, Zacky arched up, trying to shift his pants down so that Tyler could touch him properly, but his mate pushed him back down, keeping his grip restricted by the crotch of his jeans.

"Ty?"

"Hush, love. Let me do it my way."

"Okay," Zacky managed, rocking up into his lover's touch urgently as moans and cries from the backseat got louder and made him want even more. Tyler increased the pressure, rubbing the flat of his palm up and down the underside of his rigid cock.

"Fuck," he groaned, the edge of frustration burning through him, his muscles tightening with need. "Please, Ty, harder."

"Change gear for me, baby."

"What?"

Tyler pressed harder against his cock, twisting his hand to curl his fingers around the underside of his shaft.

"Change gear."

"I, fuck, I don't know how."

"Learn fast or I stop."

"Fuck," Zacky groaned, staring wide-eyed and pleadingly at his lover.

"Take the stick and push it right and up when I say."

Panting and a little panicked, Zacky reached over for the gear lever, placing his palm over the round knob.

"Ready?"

"Yeah," he gasped.

"Now."

He pushed right and up, and the car shifted up a gear, accelerating steadily.

"Thanks, love," Tyler murmured, squeezing and rubbing his cock harder and faster.

"You're welcome," he squeaked. He shuddered as sparks of pleasure started to burst under his skin, his balls tightened and he came with a gasp, soaking his briefs and his mate's hand.

"Fuck that's hot," Jimmy gasped.

Zacky looked up in time to see Matt bucking into his mate's mouth as Jimmy came all over his own hand. A second later Johnny shuddered and came over Matt's hand.

"Wow." Jimmy giggled. "Mass car orgy."

"Yeah, except I didn't get off," Tyler said with a snort. Zacky flushed again and glanced at his lover.

"It's okay, baby, not while I'm driving."

"Thank you," he whispered as Tyler pulled his hand free. The other three men redressed and settled in the back while Zacky found some tissue in the glove box and wiped himself off. He looked up to offer some tissue to his lover but found Tyler licking his fingers clean. Zacky shivered, a tendril of lust winding down his spine again at the sheer sexiness of the gesture.

"Later," Tyler said with a soft smile. Zacky kissed his cheek and settled against the seat as the others got dressed.

"So," Matt started, "we going after hunters then?"

"We need to stop them," Tyler said seriously. "By whatever means necessary."

Zacky frowned. "But couldn't we try... if we could reason with them..."

"It wouldn't do any good," Tyler sighed.

"Shouldn't we still try?"

"Have you ever tried dealing with fanatics, Zacky?" Johnny said, touching his shoulder.

He raised both eyebrows and glanced back at his friend.

"Are you kidding me? Didn't you go to my church?"

Johnny pulled a regretful face. "Ah, Zacky, I'm sorry, you've been so... I forgot."

"Mark accepted me when he saw that I was still me."

"Mark loved you like a brother. Loki *was* my brother, but he still hated me enough to try and kill me. It's not going to be easy."

"I didn't think it was going to be easy, Ty," he sighed. "I'm saying we should at least try. I don't want to just kill humans if I don't have to, you know?"

"I know." Tyler glanced at him for a moment before turning his gaze back to the road. "We might not even get that option, you know that, don't you?"

Curling his feet on the seat, Zacky leaned against his lover, head on his shoulder.

"Yeah, I do," he said softly.

"You're pussy whipped, Ty," Matt snorted. Zacky felt his cheeks heat up, and he turned his face into his lover's neck.

"Shut up," Tyler snapped. "He's got a point, and if I can remind you, he's not a girl."

"Fine, cock whipped."

"Matt," Johnny started softly, murmuring something in French.

"Oh all right," Matt said with a loud huffy sigh. "Zacky, I was only teasing."

"I know," he muttered against Tyler's skin. His mate shivered, and the car lurched.

"We'll be making a stop soon then," Jimmy drawled.

"Yeah, I think so," Tyler chuckled softly. "I think we should find somewhere to hole up, get something to eat and go to bed."

"Bed good," Matt murmured.

"*Mon pauvre, chéri*," Johnny said softly, stroking his mate's chest and lying against him to rest his head on his shoulder.

"Somewhere near a bar. I need sex so badly right now," Jimmy said with a slight whimper.

"Yeah, I know," Tyler said softly. "Okay, we'll stop soon. I just want a reasonable distance between us and..."

"Yeah, me too," Zacky agreed with a sigh. He stroked his lover's stomach and chest gently, not trying to arouse just soothe and pet and love. He was just happy that Tyler was willing to listen, to be flexible. He knew he'd love Tyler no matter what, but it made him feel better that the man he loved wasn't just a killer and that he wasn't trying to turn him into a killer either.

"I love you," he whispered.

"*Rakastan sua*," Tyler said, kissing his temple.

"Matt?"

"Yeah, Jimmy?"

"If we stop the hunters and the rogues do you think maybe we could go hang out in New Orleans for a while?"

"Sure," Matt said softly.

Zacky felt Tyler stiffen and leaned up to kiss his cheek. "Hush, love. He's lonely. Let him make his own mistakes. You know he has to."

"Ugh, why are you so smart sometimes?"

"Only sometimes?" he asked, quirking a smile up at his mate.

"All the time," Tyler said with a soft laugh.

* * * *

They continued to drive for some time, despite the increasing sense of need he could feel in his lover and the frustration that was steadily growing in Jimmy. The single pack member tapped and fidgeted and sighed unendingly until Matt suddenly exploded.

"Just stop it, Jimmy!"

Jimmy looked up, a little shocked.

"Wh-what?" he whispered.

"Keep still and shut up, would you? You're driving me insane," Matt growled.

Zacky looked back, heart tightening in sorrow.

"Jimmy, why don't you come and sit up front with us?"

"Really?"

Zacky glanced at his lover with a raised eyebrow. Tyler smiled and nodded, and Zacky looked back again.

"Yeah, come on."

"Thank you!" Matt huffed.

Sniffing, Jimmy climbed over the front seat and sat next to Zacky, squishing himself back up against the door. He was the picture of abject misery, and Zacky sighed, lifting an arm. He didn't entirely understand why but he felt the need to comfort him.

Blinking at him in surprise, Jimmy shifted over, snuggling, resting his head on his shoulder. Zacky wrapped an arm around him and nuzzled his nose gently into messy, black hair. A soft hand touched the back of Zacky's neck, and he glanced back.

"Thank you," Johnny mouthed silently. Zacky smiled and stroked Jimmy's hair gently, soothing him as he felt the warm trickle of tears down his neck.

"It's gonna be okay, Jimmy," Zacky whispered. "No matter what, you've always got us."

"I know," Jimmy whispered. "It's just that sometimes being around you guys is what hurts the most. I love you but... Sometimes it's just too much, too lonely."

"I know," Tyler said quietly, sliding an arm round Zacky's shoulders so he could pat Jimmy's hair.

"I know you do," Jimmy sighed. "I don't know how you dealt with this for so long. I'm being such a pussy."

"Don't be ridiculous," Matt sighed, sitting forward and wrapping his arms around both him and Jimmy. "You're not a pussy for having a heart and wanting to use it. I'm sorry I shouted at you."

"I know," Jimmy sighed.

"*Merçi, mon amour*," Johnny whispered to his mate.

"Come and sleep with us later, cub," Matt said softly.

"Thanks." Jimmy sniffed and looked up. "Don't call me cub," he said with a pout.

Chuckling, Matt ruffled his hair then sat back again, pulling Johnny into his lap and Jimmy rested his head on Zacky's shoulder again.

"Thanks, Zee," he whispered.

Turning his head, Zacky kissed Jimmy's forehead.

"You're welcome."

* * * *

As it grew dark, they found a motel with the customary bar and diner next door and got three rooms. Dumping their bags inside, they made their way to the bar and sat down at a table while Tyler went and bought four beers and an orange juice.

His mate sat next to him and kissed his cheek gently. He smiled and leaned against Tyler, tipping his head up so his lover could kiss him on the lips.

"Mmm," Tyler murmured against his mouth. "Do you know what you're doing, baby?"

"Kissing you?" he said with an innocent smile.

"Zacky," Tyler started.

"Okay, okay, of course I know," he said quietly. "I just don't care. I want to be with you without shame or guilt, and if that draws attention, so be it. At least we won't have to worry about dinner."

Tyler's expression was a mix of shock and delight, and he cupped Zacky's cheek, kissing him fiercely as Matt and Johnny chuckled.

"Planning on take-out, boys?"

"Well, as fun as it might be," Tyler said. "I think taking on the whole bar might be pushing it."

"Ah, we could take them," Matt said with a snort.

"Yeah, but I'd like a shot at hooking up here, guys. I *really* need a fuck now," Jimmy said softly.

"Why don't you go challenge that cute blond who keeps looking over here to a game of pool?" Johnny said softly.

"Oh, pretty," Jimmy murmured, getting up with a sharky grin and slinking over to the pool table.

"You think he's cute?" Matt said, his eyes narrowed and dark.

"Aesthetically, yeah, I guess so," Johnny said with a shrug.

"Uh huh."

"Chéri, you're not jealous, are you?"

"Jealous? Of a human?" Matt curled his lip in disgust and snorted rudely. "You belong to me. You're *mine*."

"Of course I am, mon amour. Since the day we met, I've only been yours."

Matt smiled slowly and leaned in, cupping Johnny's cheek and kissing him passionately.

"Mmm, I think it's time for bed," he whispered. Johnny grinned and picked up his beer, downing it in one go.

"I'm ready."

Matt grabbed his beer and swallowed it quickly, slamming it on the table before he stood and tugged at his mate. Matt hauled Johnny into his arms, carrying him from the bar as Zacky watched with a mixture of amusement and mild horror.

"Well, I guess it's just the two of us then," Tyler said.

"Just how I like it," Zacky replied, smiling up at his lover.

"We do still have to eat though."

"I know," he said softly. "Just can we not take our... food back with us today? I don't want anyone else in the room with us."

"We can grab a bite on the way back."

Zacky winced, pulling a face and smacking his mate's leg.

"That's really not funny, Ty."

"I was just trying to keep it light."

"I'm getting there, but I'm not ready to joke about it yet, you know?"

"Okay, baby. Come on, you ready to go?"

"Yeah." He finished his orange juice and got up, holding his lover's hand. Tyler squeezed his fingers gently, and they strolled towards the exit.

"See you later, Jimmy," Tyler called out. Jimmy glanced over from the pool table and waved.

"Will he be okay?" Zacky asked as they left the bar.

"Yes, of course, and even if something happens, Matt and Johnny will know."

"How?"

"Matt's his alpha. He'll feel it if Jimmy's in trouble. So will I to a degree, due to the proximity, but only because I'm so much older than he is."

"You mean like you did with me when my father..." He paused to swallow a little painfully.

"Yeah," Tyler said softly. "Not as intense as with a mate, of course, but an alpha can always sense if one of his pack is in trouble or in pain."

"So." Zacky stopped as a terrible thought occurred to him and he pulled Tyler to a halt, tugging him round. "You felt them die?"

Tyler's gaze dropped, his breath exhaled sharply.

"Yeah," he whispered.

"Oh, Ty," Zacky gasped, tears stinging his eyes. "Oh, my love." He flung his arms round his mate's neck, hugging him tightly, kissing him desperately as he cried. "You've suffered so much pain over the years. I can't even imagine, and to know that I've contributed to that pain..."

"No, stop right now, Zacky, that's not true," Tyler said firmly.

"Yes, it is, and I regret it with every beat of my heart." Zacky clasped his mate tighter, kissing him again, desperately trying to convey his feelings.

"My love," Tyler said softly. "As easily as you can hurt me, you can take the pain away with just a look or a touch or a word. You're my mate. Nothing really hurts knowing you love me."

Zacky's heart tightened, chest clenching with happiness until he couldn't breathe.

"Ty, I love you. I'll love you forever."

Tyler smiled widely at him, eyes lit with love and joy. Long fingers clasped his cheek gently, and Tyler bent his head, lips moving tenderly and softly over Zacky's mouth.

"Take it off the street, you fucking queers!" A man sneered as he shoved past. Zacky snapped his head round and snarled at the man, hand flying out to grab him around the throat and yanking him forward.

"You just volunteered," he growled. He caught Tyler's hand, pulling him with him as he carried the man into an alleyway.

"Baby?" Tyler whispered.

"He just interrupted one of the most beautiful moments of my life," he snapped, slamming the man into the wall. "He's lucky he's only going to wake up with a headache."

Lunging at the man, Zacky bit down on his neck, groaning as the thick, hot blood spurted into his mouth.

"Oh fuck, baby, you're so fucking hot," Tyler gasped.

His mate's solid, warm body pressed against his back and the hard length of his cock dug into Zacky's ass, as Tyler slid his arms round his waist. Leaning over his shoulder, his lover kissed his cheek before biting the other side of the man's neck.

Groaning happily as his cock hardened with need, he swallowed a last mouthful and dropped his head back on Tyler's shoulder, rocking his ass back against him.

"I want you," he whispered. Tyler groaned, hands sliding farther down to push under the waistband of his jeans, cupping balls and cock and rubbing torturously slowly.

"Oh. Yes," he gasped, rocking up eagerly. He barely noticed the man slump to the ground when they let him go. Tyler turned Zacky around to kiss him, pushing him against the wall, hands stroking his dick, cock rubbing into his hip. Their lips and tongues moved together, passionately and deeply. He moaned needily. He wanted nothing more than to shove their pants down so his lover could fuck him right there and then.

"Mmm, Ty, want you," he gasped.

"Need you so bad," Tyler grunted.

"So take me," he murmured, reaching back to cup his lover's cheek with one hand, kissing him again as he slipped his other hand between their bodies, unbuttoning and unzipping Tyler's pants and pushing under his boxers to curl his fingers round thick, hard cock.

"Ah fuck, baby," Tyler moaned, bucking up into his hand. "Now?"

"Yes, now," he begged. His cock was throbbing against his mate's hand, and he was desperate, aching, to be stretched and filled. Tyler moved his hands to his hips, pushing his pants and underwear down to his thighs.

"Lean against the wall, baby," Tyler whispered, kissing and licking his neck up to his earlobe.

Shivering with need, Zacky turned and rested his forearms against the brick. The cold, rough surface sent a chill down his spine, and he reared back with a small cry, twisting to throw himself at his mate.

"Baby, what's wrong?"

"I can't," Zacky whispered, trembling in his lover's arms.

"Zacky?" Tyler said softly. He eased him back and gently stroked his hair, eyes full of concern. "You're shaking. Please tell me what's wrong."

"I'm sorry, I-" Tears stung in his eyes, and he blinked rapidly. "I wanted to, but the brick." His breath hitched, and his throat started to close up. "The cold brick."

"Oh, baby." Tyler quickly pulled his pants up and lifted him into his arms. "It's okay. Don't be sorry, my love. I didn't think."

"Neither did I." He wrapped his arms around his mate's neck and buried his face.

"Come on," Tyler murmured, carrying Zacky out of the alleyway to their room at the motel. He locked the door firmly behind them and carried Zacky over to the bed. Tyler climbed on, still carrying him and held him close as he stroked his hair and kissed him.

Zacky felt warm and comforted, safe and happy, and the background thread of fear dissipated under his lover's tender touches. Tyler undressed them both slowly, stroking his skin with gentle fingertips until he was tingling all over and his cock was starting to harden again. His mate lay them on their sides, wrapping Zacky's cock in a tight grip, and stroking him even as he continued to kiss him so sweetly it hurt his heart.

"No," Zacky whispered, pushing his mate back. Tyler's eyes flashed with concern for a moment, but Zacky carried on pushing until his mate was on his back. Getting up onto his knees, Zacky straddled his lover's hips and bent down to kiss him, groaning quietly at the press of lips against his and the feel of dick, hard and hot, pushing into the crease of his ass.

"Mmm, God, baby, you feel so good," Tyler whispered into his mouth. He slid his hands slowly up and down Zacky's back, fingers gently pressing into his muscles before they eventually settled on his ass, urging him to rock his hips and rub their erections together.

Whimpering quietly, he grabbed one of Tyler's hands, lifting it to his mouth. He smiled as he nipped his lover's fingertips, lapping the blood with a shiver as the taste made his cock jerk and leak over Tyler's stomach. He grabbed the lube they'd already unpacked and squeezed some out onto Tyler's fingers.

"Want me to touch you, baby?"

"Yeah," he gasped, kissing Tyler again and biting both their tongues until their blood mingled in their mouths. Tyler moaned loudly, reaching down and sliding his fingers over the entrance to Zacky's body. Sparks of sensation tightened Zacky's groin and left him feeling empty.

"Please," he whispered, pushing back urgently. "I need you in me, Ty."

"Fuck, baby, you are so beautiful," Tyler groaned, stretching him wide as two fingers pierced the tight muscle. He pushed in deep, rubbing over Zacky's prostate until he was shaking and whimpering desperately, lust and

pleasure contracting every muscle and lighting every nerve with the need to be filled.

"Fuck me," Zacky growled, biting hard at his lover's lip and shoving his ass back hard. He shuddered with pleasure as Tyler pressed down hard then yanked his fingers free. "Oh yes," he groaned.

He grabbed Tyler's hand again squirted more lube onto his palm.

"You gonna ride me, baby?" Tyler whispered. He slicked up his cock quickly, hand bumping Zacky's ass with each stroke.

"Yes, please yes," Zacky moaned. He pushed back as Tyler guided his cock against the entrance to his body. The head stretched him wide, burning pleasure streaking through his nerves.

"Oh God, you feel so good," Tyler gasped, gripping his hips tightly and easing him all the way down his thick length.

"Yeah," he grunted. "So... full." He sat up, groaning as his lover sank even deeper into his body. "So good." He dropped forward, resting his forehead against his mate's chest and inhaling his wonderful scent, blood, sweat, and musk combining to make his gut tighten and his cock jerk, precum leaking over Tyler's stomach.

"So good," Zacky repeated, rolling his hips forward slowly, shuddering at the slide inside him.

"Oh fuck baby, oh God," Tyler breathed, yanking him down hard. Pleasure jolted through Zacky, and he gasped, back arching, head tipping up as he shivered. Putting his hands on Tyler's chest, he sat up, rocking forward and thrusting back hard, crying out softly with happiness and pleasure. He didn't stop moving, fucking himself harder and faster, moaning with the ecstasy that threatened to spill over.

Tyler pushed up, hands sliding from Zacky's hips to his shoulders, gripping tightly. Tyler kissed Zacky, lips crushing his, tongue probing deeply and leaving him breathless.

"Baby," Tyler gasped. "Come for me. I want to feel it. Squeeze down around me. Come all over me." Tyler yanked him down hard, slamming into his prostate, and Zacky screamed, clutching tightly at his mate as he shook and came, overwhelmed by happiness and pleasure.

"Fuck, baby, ah fuck," Tyler groaned, jerking up again and again before hugging him close and burying his face in his neck as heat pulsed inside his body.

"Love you, Ty," Zacky whispered, kissing his mate's temple.

"*Rakastan sua*, Zacky," Tyler murmured softly, stroking his hair gently. His mate rolled them over carefully, staying inside his body, lifting his head to kiss him gently. "Are you okay?"

"As long as I'm with you, I'm okay," Zacky whispered.

Tyler kissed him again, harder, holding him as close as he could. "I'll always be with you," he whispered.

Joy swelling his heart, Zacky curled into his mate and closed his eyes.

Chapter Twenty

A tap on the door jolted Zacky awake, and he looked up. Tyler stirred but didn't wake, so he carefully extracted himself from arms and legs and went to answer the door.

"Hi."

"Jimmy," Zacky said, frowning in concern. His friend was dressed in boxers and shivering, skin pimpled from the early morning chill. "What is it?"

"Do you think maybe I could sleep with you guys?"

"I thought you were sleeping with Matt and Johnny."

"I was, but they're, um, they need some privacy." Jimmy looked so miserable that Zacky couldn't help reaching out and drawing him into his arms, shifting them both round so he could close the door.

"Come on, let's get you warm," he murmured, walking Jimmy over to the bed. "Tyler," he said, leaning over to gently kiss his mate.

"Hmm? What is it, baby?"

"Move over, love."

"Okay." Still half asleep, Tyler shifted to the edge of the bed, and Zacky urged Jimmy onto the bed with him, curling him up between them and under the covers.

"Jimmy?" Tyler lifted his head, frowning inquisitively.

"I'm sorry. I didn't want to disturb you but I..."

"You're freezing," Tyler sighed. "Zacky, can you move closer, my love?"

"Sure." Zacky shifted forward, sliding an arm over Jimmy's waist to put his hand on his mate's back. They hugged the lonely man between them until his shivers stopped, and he started to relax.

"So what happened, Jimmy?"

"I hooked up, and it was really good, you know? Really hot sex, good feeding." Jimmy sighed, head dropping. "Then, I got lonely so I went to Matt and Johnny and slept with them for a while."

"But?"

"They needed to be alone," Jimmy whispered with a shrug. "I kinda slipped out, but I forgot that guy was still in my room. I didn't wanna face him, and I didn't wanna disturb you..."

"So you waited until you were freezing cold?" Tyler shook his head and sighed. "Next time, just disturb us, okay?"

"Yeah, but it's not your responsibility, not really," Jimmy whispered. "You're not my alpha."

"I'm kinda everyone's alpha, Jimmy," Tyler said quietly, patting messy, black hair. "Just do it, okay?"

"Thanks. Is that okay with you, Zee?" Jimmy asked looking back at him.

"Of course," he said softly.

"Thanks."

"You're welcome."

Tyler reached over Jimmy and stroked Zacky's cheek gently. "Thank you, baby."

"Anything for you, love," he whispered.

* * * *

They must have fallen asleep again because Zacky woke up to Jimmy fidgeting.

"You okay?" he whispered.

"Yeah."

"Why are you fidgeting then?"

Jimmy turned over carefully and grimaced apologetically. "I was kinda waiting to get kicked out."

"Oh Jimmy," he said, sorrow filling his heart for the lonely man. "I'm sorry you feel left out sometimes, but you don't have to go anywhere."

"But you and Ty--"

"Will be fine," he said firmly.

"Ty's already feeling interested," Jimmy said with a nervous giggle, face scrunching up, almost a smile.

"Oh really?" Zacky said with a soft snort.

"Yeah. You might want to swap sides."

"Okay." Sitting up, Zacky lifted the covers and climbed over his friend, realizing for the first time as he did so that he was naked. He paused for a second in surprise with himself, meeting Jimmy's cheeky grin with a slightly embarrassed grimace.

"You got something to tell me, baby?"

Zacky glanced over at his mate, wide eyed, swallowing hard as he realized how it might look. He was essentially straddling Jimmy and naked.

"Um no."

"Really?"

"Really."

"Tyler stop teasing him. He was just moving over to lie next to you, and you know it."

"Yeah, yeah, spoilsport." Tyler reached over, grabbed Zacky by the hips and hauled him on top of him. Zacky shivered happily at the sensation of warm, smooth skin and hot, hard cock against his body.

"What's this?" Zacky murmured, rocking gently into his mate's erection.

"What always happens when I wake up next to you."

"Technically, you woke up next to me," Jimmy said with a snort.

"Shut up," Tyler whined.

Leaning down, Zacky kissed his mate's ear. "Can you save it for now?" he whispered.

"Aw, really?"

"I promise I'll suck you off in the car if you wait."

Tyler's breath hitched, and he nodded wordlessly, mouth open, eyebrows raised in surprise. Settling down on his mate's body, Zacky held out a hand to Jimmy, tugging the other Pack closer again. With a happy sigh, Jimmy rolled onto his side and leaned against them.

"Thanks, Zee."

Zacky squeezed Jimmy's fingers and nuzzled Tyler's neck, relaxing into sleep again.

* * * *

"Come on, guys. Get up," Matt yelled, hammering on the door.

Jimmy sat, rubbing his eyes and sighing quietly. "I guess I should go get my stuff from the room then."

"Okay, we'll see you at the car," Tyler said, sliding his arms around Zacky's waist. He was still lying stretched out on top of his mate, and it felt good and warm. He murmured and rubbed his nose into Tyler's neck as the door shut behind Jimmy.

"Thank you for doing that last night, my love. It really helped Jimmy."

"I couldn't help it," Zacky said softly. "I know what it's like to be lonely. So do you."

"Yeah. I hope the next one will be Jimmy's mate."

Zacky sat up, bending his legs to straddle his lover. "Didn't you say there are Pack he hasn't met, who might turn out to be his mate?"

"Yeah, I did, but to be honest, I doubt any of them are."

"Why?"

"Instinct, experience, and the fact that he was with Jon when we were in New Orleans. If his mate were near, he would have been twitchy."

"He's always twitchy," Zacky said with a quiet snort.

"True." Tyler smiled at him.

Smiling back, Zacky patted his lover's chest and climbed off him. "I'm going to take a shower."

"Without me?" Tyler asked with a pout.

"Yes, we need to get on the road quickly and that won't happen if we share a shower."

"I could control myself," Tyler whined.

"Ah, but could I?" Chuckling at his mate's expression, Zacky winked and locked himself in the bathroom. He took a quick shower, dried off and wrapped the towel around his waist before slipping into the bedroom.

Tyler grabbed him just past the doorway, swinging him against the wall, lips crushing his before he could even cry out. Heat and need surged through him, his skin tightening and tingling with sensation. His cock grew helplessly hard as Tyler's tongue swiped his lips and forced its way into his mouth.

Zacky whimpered and clutched his mate, knees weak with desire. Tyler slid a hand down his chest, fingers digging in, until he reached his waist, yanking the towel from his hips.

Devouring Zacky's mouth, Tyler lifted him up, encouraging his legs to wrap around his waist. Groaning needily, Zacky locked his ankles behind his mate's back and slipped his arms around his neck to hold on tightly. The length of Tyler's cock burned into his skin, sliding easily in the groove between hip and thigh, already slick with lube. The cheap wallpaper was scratching his back, but he didn't care, every sensation just building the tension and need in his body.

"Say it," Tyler growled.

"Fuck me," he gasped urgently. "Right now."

"Yeah." Tyler thrust harder and bit down on his lip. Pain shot through Zacky, and he groaned, cock throbbing and leaking against his lover's stomach.

"Fuck me hard. I want to feel it all day."

Tyler guided his cock down between his cheeks, rubbing over the entrance to his body. It almost tickled, and Zacky squirmed urgently, trying to push down to get his lover inside him, groaning at the slide of his own erection against flat, hard stomach.

Tyler pushed into him, sliding slow and deep into his body in one stroke that stretched and burned and hurt. Digging his fingers into his mate's back, Zacky arched up, shoulders scraping against the rough surface of the wall.

"Okay, baby?" Tyler gasped.

"Hurts so good, Ty. More."

"Yes, my love." Tyler held him tightly, kissed him and, as he pulled back, thrust hard into him. With barely a second to let him breathe, Tyler plunged into him again and again, hard and deep with every stroke, sparking pleasure through his whole body as Tyler rammed against his prostate. Tension built to a peak, Zacky's whole body shaking with the need to come.

"Mmm, fuck yeah, ready, baby?" Tyler breathed.

"Please," he groaned.

"Come for me," Tyler whispered, slicing his tongue on his canine, blood spurting into Zacky's mouth. The taste took Zacky over the edge, and he cried out against his mate's lips, coming and shaking, shooting over Tyler's stomach, every cell and nerve suffused with pleasure.

"You feel so fucking good," Tyler groaned, biting Zacky's lip and sucking hard as he bucked into him- hot, jerky thrusts that stayed deep inside his body until warmth filled him. "I love you so much, baby."

Smiling happily, Zacky buried his face in Tyler's neck and kissed his skin. "I love you too."

"Another shower?"

Chuckling quietly, he nodded. "Yeah, I think so."

"Together this time."

"Oh all right," Zacky said with a mock sigh.

"Good," Tyler murmured, carrying him into the bathroom carefully, still buried inside his body.

"Did you just ambush me to get your own way?"

"Pretty much, yeah," Tyler said, nodding slowly, eyes twinkling with amusement. "I've been waiting to fuck you all morning."

Tyler climbed into the tub with him and flipped on the shower. Warm water flowed over his shoulders and down between their bodies.

"You just forfeited your blowjob in the car."

"Aw, honey."

He laughed softly at his mate's pout and kissed him. "No complaining. Just help me stand up."

"Okay." Tyler eased him off his slowly softening cock. Zacky groaned at the sense of loss, putting his feet back on the ground. He kept his arms around his lover's neck and kissed him again.

"Mmm, I like this. I don't know why I didn't just agree to this in the first place."

"Me neither."

Smiling, Zacky squeezed his mate tighter.

* * * *

"Come *on*," Jimmy whined.

"No."

"*Please*."

"No."

"But..."

"We are *not* stopping for ice cream."

"Come on, Matt, lighten up," Tyler said softly, lifting his head from Zacky's shoulder.

"We're going to find the bastards who killed our friends, Ty. Forgive me for not feeling lighthearted today," Matt snapped, glaring at them in the rearview mirror.

"I'm getting in the back with you guys," Jimmy muttered with a pout, climbing over the seat to fall onto their laps.

"Jimmy!" Tyler exclaimed with a chuckle.

"Ooh, you two are comfortable," Jimmy sighed. "Can I stay here?"

Tyler glanced at him, and Zacky nodded.

"Thanks, Zee," Jimmy said, smiling up at him.

"You're welcome."

Johnny stroked his mate's short hair gently, sliding closer to half wrap himself around him without affecting his ability to drive.

"Matt, you do need to relax," Johnny whispered.

"I'll relax when they're neutralized. Dead or alive I don't care, just so long as they can't hurt anyone anymore."

Johnny sighed and nodded, slipping his hand down to rub his mate's neck. "I know."

Zacky glanced at Tyler with a curious frown. They seemed to have reversed roles, Matt more affected by what had happened to the packs this time than Tyler. His mate grimaced and leaned closer.

"It was a hunter who instigated the mob that killed his parents, after they refused to let him kill Matt," he whispered. "It might have been a long time ago but it still affects him. He hates hunters."

"Oh." Zacky's throat closed up painfully, and he looked at the normally brash alpha, understanding his anger better. Matt was staring hard at the road, but Johnny turned and met his gaze, smiling tightly.

"I'm sorry," Zacky sighed. "I just can't kill if I don't have to."

"I know, but Matt will find it hard to control himself if provoked."

"I understand and I won't try to stop anyone if it's necessary."

"Like you could," Matt snorted.

"Matthias," Tyler said warningly.

"Yeah, okay," Matt sighed. "I'll try not to kill anyone."

"Thanks, Matt."

"Sure."

Silence resumed, and Zacky leaned against Tyler, petting Jimmy's hair as he snuggled in their laps.

* * * *

"What do you think?"

"I think we have to rethink what we're going to do."

Matt grimaced and nodded. "Shame, I would have liked to have blocked the exits and torched the place."

"Matt!" Tyler snapped, punching the younger alpha hard. "Don't you ever say anything like that *ever* again."

"Shit, sorry," Matt whispered, grimacing as he patted Tyler's shoulder.

"Why do we have to rethink?" Zacky asked, trying to distract the two alphas a little, especially his mate. The idea of killing anyone by fire after having been through it himself must have just been too much.

"I could sneak in and-"

"No way, Jimmy," Matt said.

"Come on, you know I can do it," Jimmy said, bouncing urgently. "I wouldn't do anything but disarm, in and out, no engaging the enemy. I used to do it all the time."

"I don't think so," Matt said firmly.

"It might not be such a bad idea," Tyler said slowly. Zacky glanced at his mate and frowned. There was something else going on and he could feel Tyler's tension and thoughtfulness.

"Really?" Jimmy exclaimed, clapping his hands and grinning. "I have a really good feeling about this, you know."

"He's my pack, Tyler, not yours," Matt said.

"I know, but—" Tyler paused and caught Matt's arm, pulling him aside and whispering to him. Matt gestured, and Tyler nodded, crossing his arms over his chest. Zacky exchanged a confused glance with Johnny, who shrugged. The two alphas moved back to them.

"You really want to go in there, Jimmy?" Matt asked quietly.

"You can't seriously be considering it?" Johnny gasped.

"Are you questioning me?" Matt said softly, arching an eyebrow at his mate.

"Of course not, chéri. I'm just worried," Johnny said hurriedly, stroking his mate's arm.

"We have to do something about their guns, Liebling"

"Yes, but-

"Quiet Jean! That is enough. It is *my* decision!"

"*Pardonez moi, mon amour*. I'm sorry," Johnny whispered, bowing his head. Matt wrapped his arms around his mate tightly and kissed the top of his head.

"I know," he murmured. "I'll deal with you later."

"So I can go, right?" Jimmy said, excited.

"Yes," Matt sighed. "But be *careful*."

"Careful is my middle name, guys."

"Oh, just go, you freak," Matt sighed. "If you run into any trouble, we'll be there."

"I know." Jimmy hugged everyone tightly and pressed a quick, soft kiss to Zacky's cheek before hurrying off.

"Is this really a good idea?" Zacky asked.

"Believe it or not, he's actually trained in surreptitious entry," Tyler said with a rueful grin.

"Surreptitious entry?" Zacky said doubtfully. "Trained how?"

"Navy SEALs," Matt said with a slow sigh as he stroked Johnny's arms.

"Pardon me?"

"He joined the navy for a while in the eighties. We all did but he was the best at it."

"Yeah," Matt chuckled and shook his head. "Tyler and I were dishonorably discharged. Funnily enough we had a problem with authority."

"You do surprise me." Zacky laughed.

"Johnny was great though," Matt said proudly.

"I was a cook, *mon chéri*," Johnny said with a soft smile.

"Best cook on the force."

"Thank you," Johnny said, laughing quietly. "Jimmy was *good*, the only one of us good enough to be a SEAL. I think he was kinda sad to leave actually."

"Yes, but the staying young thing isn't great for staying in one place for too long," Tyler sighed. Matt looked up and blinked suddenly.

"What is it?" Johnny asked.

"Something's wrong. He's really upset."

"Should we go in after him?"

"No, it's okay. He's coming."

Jimmy appeared a few minutes later, tears streaming down his face.

"What is it?" Johnny gasped as Jimmy ran up and threw himself in Matt's arms.

"Matt, they..." Jimmy's chin trembled. Fresh tears streaking his cheeks as he started to sob. Matt wrapped him in a tight hug, stroking his hair.

"Tell us."

"They have Pack in there, *kids*," Jimmy whispered. His breath hitched, and he burrowed farther into Matt's arms. "One of them is my mate, Matt. I know it."

"I guess you were right, Ty," Matt sighed.

"You knew," Zacky said in sudden realization. That's why the alphas had changed their plans, why Tyler had talked to Matt, and they'd both let Jimmy go.

"We knew there were kids in there, yes," Tyler admitted. "And I was fairly sure one of them was Jimmy's."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Jimmy gasped. He stared at Tyler, his eyes wide and dark with pain.

"Because I wasn't sure. I didn't want to get your hopes up."

"My hopes?" Jimmy shouted, pulling himself free. "My mate is in there with hunters, Ty! We have to get him, them, out. Matt."

"Did you neutralize their firepower?"

"Of course I did. All locked up and ready to blow."

"Good boy," Matt said softly. "Well, Ty?"

"Our first priority is getting the kids out," Tyler said looking at Matt. The younger alpha nodded vigorously. "Retrieval and neutralization of the hunters."

"Neutralization?" Zacky asked cautiously.

"Take them out whatever way you can so they can't interfere," Matt said, looking a little grim. "Just knock them out, Zacky. Okay?"

"Okay," he said, swallowing back nerves.

"Just stick close to me, baby," Tyler said, taking his hand.

"Like glue," he whispered.

* * * *

The other four Pack knew what they were doing, but Zacky really didn't have a clue. He followed Tyler as closely and quietly as he could when they broke into the building. Matt made a couple of gestures, and Tyler nodded, dragging Zacky in a different direction to the other three.

"Ty?"

"Hush, love," Tyler whispered. He stopped him just before they got to a corner, flattening them against the wall as two uniformed men came around. Both men were unconscious on the floor before Zacky had a chance to blink.

"You're scarily good at that," he whispered.

"I've been a warrior my whole life, baby. I should hope I'm good at it by now."

"True," he said, taking his mate's hand again, letting him lead him down the corridor. "What are we doing? Where did the others go?" he whispered as they snuck through the building, periodically pausing to neutralize hunters.

"We're looking for the kids, and so are they, but we need to remove potential problems wherever we can so we can get them out safely."

"Can you sense them?"

"Yes."

"I can't," he said with a frown.

"It's an alpha thing, my love."

"But Jimmy said--"

"He could sense his mate. That's different. We can all sense our mates."

"Oh I see."

Tyler put a finger over his lips, pushing Zacky into a small alcove. He couldn't quite help a gasp as his lover's solid body pressed into his. Tyler smiled, dropping his finger to kiss Zacky quickly as a door opened just along the corridor and they could hear voices.

"Bring Oliver." The voice was deep and harsh, and it made Zacky shiver. Tyler pulled back slightly, frowning when they heard a whimper.

"No! Please leave them alone." The second voice was young and so full of fear and pain that it broke Zacky's heart.

"Be quiet, Michael, or maybe you'd like Billy to join us too."

"No, I'm sorry, please. I'll do anything just don't hurt them anymore."

"That's better."

The door closed again, and footsteps approached. Tyler pulled back, spinning around and grabbing the man who passed them, one arm wrapped around arms and chest, the other around his throat. The man gasped, legs flailing.

"Who's in that room," Tyler hissed.

"Fuck you," the man managed to choke out.

"Oh, wrong answer," Tyler said with an ugly chuckle. "Zacky, take his wrist."

Biting back the urge to question, Zacky took the man's wrist, unable to resist baring his teeth in a humorless grin.

"What's he doing?"

"He's going to bite down and start drinking," Tyler murmured. "And he'll keep drinking until you talk."

The man's eyes widened in horror, but he still didn't speak so, reluctantly, Zacky lifted his wrist to his mouth and made to bite down.

"Wait," the man gasped. "Loki. It's Loki."

"Thanks." Tyler twisted the man's head to the side and bit down on his neck. Zacky watched his mate, slowly lifting his head, mouth open, heart pounding as desire filled him.

"Ty," he gasped, licking his lips. Tyler groaned, letting the man drop to the ground and yanking Zacky into a hard kiss, tongue pushing deep into his mouth. Zacky groaned softly, grasping at his mate's shoulders, lust weakening his knees.

Then, they heard the cry. Zacky gasped and shoved his mate back. The cry resonated through his heart and mind filling him with horror, fear, and pain. He erupted with fury and stalked across the corridor, slamming the door open.

A short, skinny man with ratty, blond hair was holding a belt, about to smack it across the back of a boy no more than twelve with shaggy, messy brown hair and huge, tear filled brown eyes. The boy was kneeling in front of a chair, his wrists strapped down to the arms by strips of leather.

As the man turned, his pale, watery eyes widened in shock. Zacky darted forward and yanked the belt from his hands.

"You son of a bitch, what the heck do you think you're doing? He's just a kid." He slammed his palm into the man's breastbone, and he flew back, hitting the wall with a grunt.

"He's a murdering, vicious freak like you," the man spat, clutching his chest and bending over to cough harshly.

"He's a *boy*," Zacky snarled. "And I have never killed anyone. Don't tempt me to start with you."

"Baby, calm down," Tyler said from behind him.

"Yeah, *baby*," the man sneered. "Calm down. You're just proving me right."

"Loki!" Tyler snapped. "You don't know what you're talking about."

"How do you know who I am?" Loki asked in surprise.

"Connor."

"That two faced, backstabbing bastard. I should never have listened to him, you're all the same."

"We are not," Tyler snapped.

"You're *not* a killer?"

"Oh, I've killed, Loki, in self-defense and defense of my pack and even in defense of this country, but I, unlike my brother, have never killed, or even hurt, an innocent or a child."

"Your brother?"

"Loki, your ancestor."

"You're Tyr? *You're* the evil one." Loki's tone was sneering.

"Evil?" Tyler laughed bitterly. "Is that what he called me? He called *me* evil?"

"Easy, Ty," Zacky whispered, turning briefly to touch his lover's chest before moving to the boy. The child whimpered, wide, brown eyes staring at him. Instinctively, Zacky crouched next to him and slowly lifted his hand to just in front of the boy's face.

"Hi, Michael," he whispered. "My name's Zacky. You don't have to be afraid anymore. We're going to get you out of here."

"I'm not gonna let any of you out of here," Loki snarled.

"Just shut up, you ignorant piece of shit," Tyler said. "You have spent your whole life killing people, mostly innocent people because of the petty jealousy of a man who's been dead for over a thousand years. A man who killed his and my entire family- men, women and children, including our own mother- because he *wasn't* like me."

"You're lying," Loki said harshly. "The first Loki was a hero who rid the world of a plague that you restarted."

"No, Loki, we were a family. He killed women and children who weren't Pack. He burned them to death because he hated *me*." Tyler was thick with pain and anger, and Zacky carefully shifted the boy he'd now untied onto the chair and got up, wrapping his arms round his mate.

"My love, we have to get the kids out of here first. We can tie him up and deal with him afterwards, okay?"

"Yeah, okay," Tyler sighed. He slipped his arms around Zacky's waist and pressed his face into his neck.

"Come on then." Zacky eased back, kissing his lover then turning to the boy. "Would you like to come with us, Michael?"

"What about Ollie and Billy?" Michael asked tentatively.

"Our friends are going to save them. I promise."

The boy nodded vigorously, getting up from the chair and stumbling towards them.

"You are not getting away!" Loki yelled, lunging at Tyler. Seeing a flash of metal, Zacky reacted purely on instinct, throwing himself between the two and grabbing Loki's arm, twisting as they fell to the floor. He smacked his head hard and grunted.

"Zacky!" Tyler screamed, yanking Loki up and throwing him aside.

"Ow," Zacky murmured, rubbing the back of his head.

"You're okay," Tyler breathed in relief.

"Look out," Michael screamed too late. Loki jumped Tyler and stabbed him in the chest. Crying out, Tyler grabbed Loki as he fell against the wall.

"Tyler," Zacky gasped, forcing himself to his feet. Tyler was struggling with the hunter, fighting one handed while he tried to pull the knife free. He finally wrenched it from his chest and thrust it at Loki who just managed to knock it from his hand.

"Son of a bitch," Tyler grunted as Loki wrapped his hands around his neck and squeezed. Zacky didn't think twice, he grabbed the knife from the floor and ran at them, stabbing Loki in the back. Tyler shoved the hunter away and dropped to his knees.

"No, Tyler," Zacky whispered, tears stinging his eyes. He put his hand over the wound and pressed down hard.

"I'm okay," Tyler said, pulling Zacky close and kissing his forehead.

"He's not." They looked up at the boy who was standing over Loki, relief stark on his pale face. On the floor by his feet, Loki was dead, still bleeding, the knife protruding from his back.

Horried, Zacky turned and buried his face in Tyler's neck, trying not to cry. No matter the circumstances, he'd taken a man's life and he couldn't even begin to work out how he felt.

"Come on, my love. Let's find the others," Tyler whispered. "Hold it together for me, okay? I need you to take care of Michael while I keep an eye out for more hunters."

"Yeah." Swallowing back tears, Zacky gave his mate a quick, desperate kiss then got up, holding out his hand to the boy. "Do you know where the other boys are?"

"Yeah."

"Let's go get them then."

"Thank you," Michael whispered. "I tried to look out for them, but he was so..."

"It's okay, Michael," Tyler said softly, smiling at the boy. "None of this is your fault. I'm sure you did what you could." He paused for a second, and Zacky took Michael's hand, pulling him against the wall.

"It's okay," he sighed. "It's the guys."

Matt, Johnny and Jimmy rounded the corner. A kid with bright blond, almost white hair and blue eyes, about nine years old, screeched when he saw them.

"Mikey!"

"Ollie," Michael exclaimed happily, running forward to wrap his arms around the younger boy, stroking blond spikes gently.

Tyler met Zacky's eyes and smiled softly.

"Future mates?" Zacky whispered.

"I think so, yeah." Tyler wrapped an arm around Zacky's waist and hugged him close.

The third child was clinging to Jimmy, buried so deep in his arms that only a shock of black hair and enormous blue eyes were visible.

"This is Billy," Jimmy whispered, his breath hitching lightly. "He's mine."

"I'm glad, Jimmy," Tyler said softly. "Let's go, guys."

"Tyler, Zacky, you guys okay?" Johnny asked, looking concerned.

"Me? Yeah, oh," Zacky stopped and winced. "It's not my blood."

"Loki's dead," Tyler said with a grimace.

"Oh," Johnny murmured. He shifted to put his arms around the two older boys. "Come on, kids, let's get you somewhere safe."

"Everybody neutralized?" Tyler asked as they headed out.

"As far as we could find, and I couldn't hear any other signs of consciousness," Matt said.

"Good, blow the charges as soon as we're clear."

"What about the hunters?"

"They won't feel a thing," Jimmy said with a shrug.

"Jimmy," Zacky sighed with a shake of his head. It was no use arguing. It had to be done, no matter how he felt about it.

"Sorry, Zee," Jimmy said with a small grimace. "Hey, Billy, you wanna see some explosions?"

The youngest child looked up at Jimmy and nodded solemnly.

"Cool."

They climbed the hill opposite to where they'd parked, and Jimmy sat on the hood, shifting Billy into his lap.

"Press this button for me, sweetie."

Billy lifted a chubby arm and pushed on the remote Jimmy held in front of him. A series of explosions went off and building collapsed inward on itself. A tiny smile crossed Billy's face, and he looked up at Jimmy, blinking slowly.

"Good?"

Billy nodded and shifted round, putting his arms round Jimmy's neck and kissing his cheek.

"Oh," Jimmy whispered. His eyes shone as he wrapped the boy up in a tight hug.

"That's so sweet," Zacky whispered, leaning against his mate.

"Yeah." Tyler cupped Zacky's cheek and drew him around for a gentle kiss.

"All right, everyone in the car," Matt said firmly. "Let's get a motel. These kids need food, clothes, and their wounds checked."

"We're starving," Oliver said, bouncing earnestly.

"They kept giving us vegetables and stuff," Michael said with a grimace of disgust.

"Don't worry," Matt said with a laugh. "We know exactly what you'll like."

He opened the door and pushed the seat forward so the kids, Jimmy, Zacky, and Tyler could climb in the back. Billy, of course, stayed in Jimmy's lap, Oliver climbed into Tyler's and an embarrassed looking Michael shifted to sit in Zacky's.

"It's okay, kid," Zacky said softly. "If you're too old to sit in laps, you can sit in the front with Matt and Johnny."

Flushing, Michael reached out for Oliver's hand and shook his head.

"Can we puppy pile?" Jimmy asked with a slight whine.

"Once the boys have eaten," Matt said, glancing in the rearview mirror. "Sure."

"Cool," Jimmy said with a grin. He petted Billy's hair gently. "You're gonna love puppy piles, sweetie. They're nice and warm, comforting."

Billy snuggled closer, tucking his head against his shoulder and closing his eyes.

"He doesn't speak," Michael said quietly.

"Well, you boys have had a pretty tough time."

"Why did he take us?" Oliver asked.

"Because you're special," Tyler said, smiling at the blond boy.

"Are you special too?"

"Yeah, you could say that," Johnny said, turning to look back at them.

"Are we gonna live with you now?" Oliver said with a hopeful grin.

"Matt?" Tyler said with a raised eyebrow.

"Billy stays with me," Jimmy said, a snarl of defiance erupting low in his throat.

"We want to stay together," Michael said, sounding panicked.

"We won't separate you," Johnny said softly. "You can stay with us, don't worry."

"What about their parents?"

"Ollie and I are foster kids." Michael stopped and grimaced sadly at the youngest child. "We think something bad happened to Billy when they took him, and that's why he doesn't speak."

"Oh." Zacky was starting to need some alone time with his mate. He needed to talk, cry, touch and be touched, kiss and be kissed.

Pulling into a motel, Matt and Johnny climbed out, and Matt turned to them.

"Why don't you two go and get stuff for the boys? We'll get them settled."

Zacky smiled gratefully at the alpha. "Yeah, okay." He and Tyler helped the two older boys out of the car while Jimmy still hung onto Billy, then they got in the front, Tyler behind the wheel.

"See you in a while then." Tyler pulled out of the lot again, putting an arm round Zacky's shoulders to draw him close. He cuddled into his mate's side with a sigh.

"How are you feeling?"

"Like I killed someone."

"Don't be hard on yourself, my love. Not when you did it to save me."

"But I *wanted* him to die."

"So did I, and if anyone deserved it--"

Nausea hit the back of Zacky's throat. "No one deserves it," he whispered.

"I know this is hard for you, but he was a murderer. If we hadn't stopped him, he would have continued to hurt those boys. He might have killed them." Tyler stopped and sighed, twisting his head quickly to kiss Zacky's forehead. "You know I'd never want you to be the one dealing with this, but please, don't feel guilty."

"I'll try," Zacky said with a heavy sigh. "It's just that I think I'm kinda glad it was me," he whispered, trying to work out how he felt.

"What do you mean, baby?"

"I was so angry when I saw what he did to Michael," Zacky whispered. "I wanted to hurt him so much, and I was so angry that I went through so many years of that, thinking I deserved it and that I had to protect my mom."

Tyler pulled over to the side of the road and tugged Zacky onto his lap. "It's about time, baby," he murmured, cupping Zacky's cheek and kissing him softly.

"Ty, I need to get my mom."

"Of course, my love," Tyler said with a nod. "I know you've missed her."

"Yeah," Zacky whispered, sliding his arms around his mate's neck and kissing his cheek. "Thank you. I love you."

"I love you too. Do you feel any better?"

"Kinda. It'll take some time, but I think I'll be okay with this."

"Okay, baby. Come on, let's get the boys some food and clothes, huh?"

Smiling, Zacky nodded and shifted next to Tyler. He found himself looking forward to curling up with the pack.

Epilogue

Zacky extracted himself from several sets of limbs and stood, scratching his stomach as he yawned and stretched.

"Where do you think you're going?"

He smiled at his mate. "Shower. Care to join me?"

"Oh yeah," Tyler said with a leer.

"Make it a quick one, guys," Matt said with a yawn as Tyler stood and wrapped Zacky in a hug, kissing him quickly and hard.

"What? Why?"

"Have you forgotten what day it is, and why we're all here?"

"Of course not. Okay, we'll be quick." Tyler glanced at the two boys who were waking, glaring balefully. "I promise."

"Believe that when I see it," Mikey muttered.

"Aw, guys. Shut up," Jimmy complained, turning to bury his face in Billy's neck.

"It's time to get up, Jimmy. Come on." Matt prodded Jimmy under his ribs, and he squealed loudly, sitting upright and jostling Billy.

"Dude, don't do that!" Jimmy gasped. "Sweetie, you okay?"

Billy nodded slowly and sat up, leaning against Jimmy, kissing his cheek with a soft sigh.

"Sorry, Billy," Matt said softly, reaching up to ruffle spiky, black hair. The youngest of the boys gave a small smile, shaking his head softly.

"Everyone get up and shower. It's a special day," Tyler said before lifting Zacky up into his arms and carrying him out of the room. Zacky chuckled quietly, wrapping his arms tightly around his mate's neck.

"My love, don't forget I have to go to school," he said softly.

"Even today?" Tyler said with a pout.

"Yes," Zacky said with a chuckle. He was happy and complete, and he sighed as his mate carried him to their bedroom and through to the ensuite.

"You could take a day off, you know," Tyler whispered.

"No, I couldn't."

"Aw, but..." Tyler stopped and growled, putting him back on his feet so they could quickly strip out of their boxers. "It's a special day."

"I know, but we're only needed for a few minutes of it."

"But--"

"No," Zacky said firmly. He turned to get into the enormous shower and switched on the water.

"It's one day."

"You say that every day, beloved."

"Yeah, because you say no every day." Tyler got into the shower, pulling him close again, the water soaking them both.

"I'll say yes one day," Zacky whispered, leaning up to kiss his mate gently.

"You promise?"

"I promise."

"You know, it's not like you're ever sick," Tyler murmured, pushing him against the tiles and leaning in. "You're entitled to a couple of sick days."

Zacky gasped quietly at the feel of his mate's erection pressing into his hip, sliding against his water slickened skin. He grinned, slipping his arms around his neck.

"So now you want a couple of days?"

"Baby, I want every day. You know that."

"I know," Zacky whispered, rocking his hardened cock against Tyler's groin.

"Mmm. God, you feel good," Tyler groaned, resting his forearms against the wall on either side of Zacky's head and kissing him hard. Zacky sank his fingers into his mate's long, thick, wet hair and thrust against him again, sucking his tongue into his mouth and biting down. Tyler groaned loudly, bucking into him faster as he swallowed the delicious spurt of blood, his dick throbbing needily.

"Fuck," Tyler moaned, rocking harder into Zacky and biting down on his lip. The stab of pain sharpened Zacky's pleasure. He jerked up with a gasp, splattering his mate's stomach with cum. Groaning and thrusting hard and fast, Tyler started to shudder and more cum shot over them.

"Mmm. What a way to start the day," Tyler whispered, licking over the gash on Zacky's lip and kissing him gently.

"Yeah, love, let's get cleaned off," Zacky said softly, returning his lover's kiss gently.

"Yes, dear," Tyler sighed. Smirking, Zacky pushed his mate back with two fingertips to his breastbone. They washed and dried off quickly, heading back to the bedroom to get dressed.

"You really have to go?"

"Tyler!"

"I know, 'shut up'," Tyler said, huffing out a short laugh.

"Yes." He kissed his mate smartly and led him back to the large sitting room where Michael, Oliver, Jimmy and Billy were already waiting. Matt and Johnny joined them a moment later, and Michael started to bounce excitedly.

"Are you ready, Ollie?" Matt said softly.

"Yeah, please yeah," Oliver said, gripping Michael's hand tightly.

"Ty?"

Tyler smiled and held out his arm to Matt, who grasped his hand and lifted his wrist to his mouth. Matt bit down and swallowed.

Zacky shifted closer to his mate, the scent of blood making his mouth water. His groin stirred again. With a grunt, Tyler pulled away, growling at Matt who just smirked.

"Come here, cub," Matt said, beckoning to the pretty, little blond. Oliver let go of Michael's hand and stumbled forward, taking Matt's proffered arm. "Drink."

Taking a deep breath, Oliver bent his head and bit Matt's wrist. He groaned, clamping both hands around Matt's arm, sucking and swallowing.

Smiling proudly, Zacky slipped an arm around his lover's waist and leaned against him.

"Oh fuck," Oliver gasped as Matt yanked his wrist away.

"Ollie," Michael whispered.

"Oh, Mikey," Oliver whispered, turning and jumping on his soon-to-be full mate. "I don't know how you controlled yourself, but I think I love you even more for waiting for me."

"I love you," Michael said with a small shrug. "I'd do anything for you, you know that."

"Go on, boys," Tyler said softly. "No need to wait any longer."

Grinning, the two young lovers hurried from the room. Despite having had a sexual relationship since Oliver was eighteen, they'd decided to wait until he was turned before taking the final step of penetrative sex. They weren't about to wait a second longer.

"So sweet," Zacky sighed happily.

"Yeah," Johnny agreed. "You okay, mon chéri?"

"Very," Matt said with a proud smile.

"He didn't take too much?"

"He was too horny to take too much." Matt looked over at where Jimmy and Billy were wrapped up in each other. Unlike the other two boys, they hadn't waited. Jimmy had tried to wait, but since Billy had turned eighteen, the boy hadn't taken no for an answer.

Although all three boys had recovered from their ordeal, Billy had always been the most affected, never speaking, rarely separating from Jimmy. He was solemn and thoughtful, smart and reserved, and he balanced out the slightly insane, over exuberant Jimmy.

"Only three more years," Matt sighed, wrapping his arms around Jimmy and kissing his forehead. Jimmy looked up and smiled.

"I'd wait an eternity if it meant I got my Billy."

The youngest boy looked up at Jimmy, his enormous dark blue eyes filming over.

"Aw, sweetie, don't cry," Jimmy whispered, petting dark spikes of hair gently. "I love you." Billy twisted around in his seat, hooking a leg over Jimmy's thigh and kissing him desperately hard.

"I love you too," Billy whispered.

Zacky gasped as Tyler grabbed him tightly, and Matt and Johnny turned to stare in complete shock. While Zacky suspected that Billy did speak to Jimmy, none of the rest of them had ever heard him utter a word before.

"Oh," Jimmy breathed. "Oh my sweetheart." He cupped Billy's face gently, stroking his mouth with his thumb before kissing him again.

"Bed," Billy said softly. Eyes lighting with lust and joy, Jimmy nodded, hauling the younger man into his arms and out of the room.

"He spoke," Johnny said, his tone awed.

"Yeah," Zacky said with a smile.

"Matt..."

"Oh yes, liebchen," Matt said with a soft growl, picking his mate up and carrying him out of the room.

"Well, my love, I guess that just leaves us," Tyler said with a leer.

"Ty, I have to go to school."

"Aw, come on, baby. You're really going to leave me on my own in a house full of fucking mated pairs?"

Zacky shook his head and laughed. "Come on, Ty. Walk me to the door."

Pouting, Tyler slipped an arm around Zacky's waist and walked him to the door. He helped Zacky into his jacket and pulled him close.

"Are you sure you won't stay?" Tyler murmured. He ran the tip of his nose up Zacky's throat and nuzzled his ear.

"I'm sure," Zacky gasped, shivering against his mate. He resisted the urge to jump on Tyler and beg him to take him to bed. "If you're good, you can pick me up after school."

"I still don't see why you *have* to go," Tyler said, pouting again.

"Beloved, I'm the teacher."

THE END

<http://www.sirenpublishing.com/teyamartin/>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My mother likes to boast that I was reading at the age of three. I'm not sure if that's strictly true but my childhood memories are mostly of being indoors with a book of some description. I distinctly remember having a Ladybird copy (English young children's books) of Dracula so I think my tastes were set quite early. Like a friend once said, while other young girls wanted to be ballerinas, I kind of always wanted to be a vampire.

I grew up in Belgium and went to a multi-national school before moving back to England to get my first degree. Microbiology and Virology... what was I thinking? Naturally I didn't do anything with it, in fact the thought of real life was off putting enough that I went and did another degree straight away. Medical herbalism this time, much better although it was in my final year of this degree that I rediscovered writing. Not sure why I ever stopped because once I started again it became a compulsion.

Once the second degree was finished I was stuck, I didn't want to practice herbalism, I wanted to write... only write. So I got a job in a health food shop and that was the first in a long line of short term jobs to pay the bills while I wrote. Some of them were brilliant though. I met some of my best friends ever when I was a barista in a coffee shop and I got many wonderful books and ideas when I worked in a sex shop... okay not technically a sex shop as we didn't sell porn but still an adult 'toy' shop. During this time I lived with my sister which was also brilliant but made me incredibly lazy. It took nearly five years before I actually wrote a full length, complete novel.

Moving to the other end of the country to live with one of my best friends, and I would go as far as to call her my muse, really kickstarted the novel writing and now I have several that are complete, although again it took me a while to actually start sending them out. I don't know if other writers feel the same but they're my babies and rejection is extremely painful.



Siren Publishing, Inc.
www.SirenPublishing.com