



SHIELA STEWART

Desiring
THE
DARKNESS

BOOK 2 IN THE DARKNESS SERIES

Desiring the Darkness

by Shiela Stewart

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Desiring the Darkness
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*To Marlene and Steve
I don't know what I
would do without you.
You're the best!
Keep on Truckin'.*

CHAPTER ONE

Jacob's Cove, 2025

Three days after the total eclipse of the sun

It had been three days since the sun had been blotted out from the ritual that raised the king of all vampires. Three days and nights of total darkness. Three days and nights of absolute mayhem. Humans were looting anything and everything they could get their hands on, and vampires were scooping the humans up like free candy. But despite the dangers lurking outside, people were still stupid enough to venture out of doors. No businesses were open due to the looting so no one had to go into work. Well, except for the cops and the National Guard that had been called in to help. Neither was being overly successful. Why? Because the vampires were smarter than the humans.

And that was just damn scary.

But not everyone was as uneducated in the ways of the vampire. Dante was one of them, along with his friends, Jonah Moore, his wife Ariel, the queen of all vamps Trinity, and her mate Basil.

It still blew his mind to think Trinity was an all powerful and mighty vampire queen. Four days ago she'd been your typical blood sucking, fang bearing, night dwelling vampire. Now, a simple stare could put a person in temporary immobilization status.

Damn freaky.

Since the rest of the city was unequipped to handle the vampires scavenging the city, he and his band of vamp hunters were left to do the job.

Well, that and bringing down the last person responsible for blotting out the sun.

Chaos.

Dante was particularly interested in finding Chaos because he knew Chaos would lead him to his brother. Twenty years ago, Dante had witnessed his twin brother being attacked by a vampire and dragged away. He hadn't seen his brother since.

Until three days ago.

Now, aside from protecting a defenseless city and trying to take out the one vamp responsible, Dante was also in search of his long lost brother.

"Remind me again why I have to be the bait?"

Dante heard Jonah's voice in his ear as he hid behind the dumpster. Lowering his voice, he replied, "Because I was bait last time."

"Right. You'll tell Ariel I love her if I don't make it?"

"You'll be just fine, Jonah. I've got you covered and Basil is lurking about, ready to jump in and snatch the bastards. Just stay calm."

"Yeah, easy for you to say. Oh shit! Bloodsucker, eight o'clock."

Dante swiveled in his spot behind the garbage bin, looking in the direction Jonah instructed. He saw the chubby guy heading Jonah's way and prepared himself for the attack. The vampire's ugly yellow eyes caught sight of Jonah and Dante could imagine what was going through his mind.

Fresh meat.

Not this time.

"Get ready."

"I'm ready." Pulling the tranquilizer gun from his belt, Dante aimed it at the vampire and waited. Because Jonah had the microphone pinned beneath his jacket, Dante could hear everything, including the vampire's comments.

"Well, looky here. What have we got? Oh, and I smell lots of fear. Gonna be a nice snack for me."

"You don't want to drink me. I'm anemic. I won't satisfy you much," Jonah added with a great deal of quiver in his voice.

"Oh, I'm betting you'll be just what I need."

He heard the growl, heard Jonah scream, and took his shot. The dart hit the vamp right in his backside and as Dante stood up, he saw the vamp pull back in shock. He didn't waste any time and took another

er shot. This time he hit the vampire in the arm. The vamp looked up, searching for where the shot had come from as Dante raced towards him.

"Took your time. He was about to bite me." Jonah took a couple steps away from the vamp.

"I had to make sure I got a good shot." The vampire hissed as he approached, then his knees gave out and he went down. "Damn, I was hoping to knock him around a bit first."

"You'll get your chance later."

"Jesus Christ, Basil! I hate when you do that." His heart pounding, Dante aimed a steely glare at Basil. The guy loved to make an entrance, but did he have to appear out of nowhere without warning and scare the living shit out of him?

"Good shot," Basil stated as he lowered down to the vampires body. "But next time, aim higher. If you can get the neck or near the heart, he'll go down with one shot."

"Yeah, thanks for the advice." He'd only known Basil a few short days and was still on the fence about him. The guy was the last of the true vampires and had several advantages over the rest of the vamps. For one, he could materialize at the blink of an eye and transport himself anywhere. Two, he could transform into any creature and blend in everywhere. And anyone that didn't know him personally would think he was your typical average human being. Until he bore his fangs and his icy blue eyes began to glow. Only the truest vampires had the icy blue eyes, all the others were yellow.

A sign of their impurity.

"He one of Chaos' men?" Dante asked, looking down at the unconscious vampire.

"Won't know until he wakes up and talks. Let's call it a night for now and get some rest." Basil hoisted the vamp over his shoulder. "You can ride with me, Jonah, and make sure this guy doesn't wake up before we get to the castle."

"Gee, thanks, boss."

"You can follow us in your car, Dante."

While the sun was nonexistent they had all agreed to stay at Basil's castle. It was a smart idea, keeping them all under one roof, but Dante was feeling the crunch of hanging around the same people day and night. He needed a bit of a break now and then, and though Basil's place was huge, he still managed to run into someone often enough. He was used to living on his own, having no one around but himself.

He missed his privacy.

But he climbed into his car, ready to follow them anyway. Glancing in his rear view mirror, he watched them pull away and saw what looked like a woman, running towards him. He turned around to get a better look, then hustled out of the car. It had been a woman running towards him, clad in only a bra and panties.

And two burly men were right behind her.

"You've got to help me. Please, help me," she screamed as she ran.

Running towards her he pulled out his revolver. "Get behind me," he ordered to her and took aim. It utterly shocked him when the two men halted then spun around and took off in the opposite direction. "Fuck!" He turned to the woman who was shivering in the cold air. "Get in the car and lock the doors. I'm going after them."

"No, no, please, don't leave me."

She grabbed hold of his arm and pressed her body so tightly to his he could feel the curve of her breasts through the thickness of the suede jacket he wore. "I have to go after them."

"No, please, just let them go. I don't want to be alone." She clung to him even tighter.

What was he going to do, shake her off of him and drag her to his car? Not likely. So the only chance he had was to stick by her. "Okay. I won't go after them. You can give a description of them to the cops—"

"NO! No police. Please, don't take me to the cops."

He didn't know what her deal was but she sure was adamant about not involving the cops. And that worried him some. "You have to tell them you were attacked."

"I don't want to follow up on this. Please, don't make me. I don't trust the cops," she sighed, still clinging to him.

He could feel her body tremble and he wasn't sure if it was entirely from the chill in the air, or from fear. "Okay, I won't take you to the cops. You're cold. Let me give you my jacket." When she didn't release him, he patted her arms. "I need you to let me go so I can take off my jacket."

"Oh, okay." She released him and wrapped her arms around her chest.

He stripped from his jacket then held it out to her. "Here, put this on before you catch a cold."

She took the jacket and hurriedly slipped into it. "Thanks."

"No problem. So why don't you tell me where you live and I'll give you a ride home."

"I don't have a home." Dante's brow lifted and she continued. "I was evicted a few days ago."

He heard glass breaking in the distance and assumed someone was breaking into yet another building. "This isn't the safest place to be right now. Why don't I take you to my place and we can figure out what we're going to do next." He held his hand out to his car then walked with her to it, holding the passenger side door for her. After she'd settled in, he hurried to his side and climbed behind the wheel. He got them rolling and was damn glad they were only three blocks from his office/apartment.

"My name is Dante, Dante Vega."

"Gypsy Dawn."

"Pleasure to meet you, Gypsy." Neither spoke as he drove and as he pulled into the parking lot of his building, he scanned the area before opening his door. He hurried to her side, holding the door for her then locking it up after she was out. "Right this way." He led them to the back door and after keying in the code, he let them in. "Upstairs."

"What is this place?"

"My office and home," he explained as he unlocked the door to his suite. He hadn't been here in a few days, not since Trinity had insisted he gather his things and go live with her and Basil at the castle. It was good to be home.

"You want something to drink? Shit. I'm not sure what I have. I haven't been here in a while."

"How come?"

"When the lights went out, I went to live with some friends out of town. Um...I have coffee, instant," he told her as he scanned the cupboards.

"I'm fine actually. I just need to sit."

"Oh, sure." Since she was still standing in the doorway, he held his hand out to the living room.

She was a thin woman, and despite the circumstances, he had to check her out. He was a man after all and she was clad only in skimpy black panties and a bra. His brown suede jacket swallowed up her delicate frame. It hung past her hips and the sleeves covered her hands. Her short hair was an odd shade of moss green with white highlights that spiked up on top and was shaved around the ears and back of her head. The make-up she had put on was smudged and running down her soft, pale face.

"Can you tell me what happened?" He took a seat across from her in the chair while she sat on the sofa.

She chewed her bottom lip, which he noticed had a stud through the center. "I'm really not feeling well right now. Can I just lay down for a bit?"

"Sure. I guess. You could take my bed." He wanted to get behind what had happened to her, but he could clearly see she was drifting. Her eyes—obviously tinted in purple contacts—were drooping. "It's right down here." He led her down the short hallway to his room. "You sure I can't get you something to drink? I could see if I have some crackers or something. When was the last time you ate?"

She entered his room and went straight for the bed. "I'm okay, really. I just need to rest."

He watched her crawl under his covers and curl into a ball. How old was she? If he was to guess he would say no older than twenty. At best. "Okay. But after you've had some sleep, we need to talk about what happened to you."

"Kay."

He left her to sleep and went to the couch. When his cell phone jangled he knew perfectly well who it was. He answered it without looking. "I'm okay."

"Where the hell are you, D?" Jonah inquired.

"I...uh had to get some stuff from my place. I'm running out of clothes. I think I'm just going to crash here tonight."

"That isn't going to go over well with Trin."

"Yeah, well, she'll deal with it. I'll be fine. My place is wired and if anyone tries to break in, I'll hear it. I can handle myself for one night. Catch you tomorrow, Jonah." He disengaged the phone and set it on the coffee table. Feeling oddly restless, he walked to the balcony window and looked out into the darkness. It was just past eight in the evening but looked like it was midnight. He missed the sunlight. Missed the warmth of it on his face. He wondered if this was what vampires felt. Did they ever miss the sunlight? Sure, they could go out in the daylight without being set on flames, but the sunburn was a bitch. Trinity explained it to him and equated it to sticking your face in a five hundred degree oven. It wouldn't kill you instantly, but it hurt like hell.

So they stuck to the dark. And that was why Chaos had gone to the Dark Mystics for the ritual to blot out the sun. He didn't completely understand it, but he knew it was physically impossible to turn the sun off. Basil told him the Dark Mystics had put a cloak over the city that would blanket it in darkness. If you drove out of the barrier the sun was shining as bright as ever.

It was all Greek to him, but he couldn't deny the fact that darkness reigned in Jacob's Cove and until Chaos was killed, it would remain.

Unfortunately the bastard had gone into hiding. They had yet to be successful in finding out where he was hiding out from the vamps they caught. Maybe it was time to do a little of his own investigating. Sure, he knew it was dangerous out there alone, but he was smart enough, and quick enough to protect himself. Plus, he was desperate to find his brother.

Since seeing Danny only briefly three days ago, he'd been on Dante's mind constantly. Where was he? Why hadn't he sought to find him? Where had he been all this time?

He'd sent his sister, Lexi, and her hubby out of town when the shit had hit the fan, and they'd gone willingly, though it had taken some talking for them to agree to go without him. He hoped by the time he and the others brought the sun back, he would be able to tell his sister he'd found their brother.

Stretching his arms over his head, he rolled his neck and turned away from the window. He checked on his guest, saw that she was fast asleep, then left her to take a nap on the sofa.

It had been a rough couple of days.



"He's waking up," Jonah advised Basil and Trinity who were currently curled up on the sofa together. He cut them some slack because he knew how much they loved each other and how rough the past few days had been. Not just for them, but everyone involved.

Forget the fact that the sun was gone and that vampires were running wild in the city, feeding off of the idiotic humans stupid enough to venture outside their home. He was still trying to grasp the whole, "my best friend is the queen of vamps" deal. He'd known Trinity for six years and all that time had known she was a vampire. But she'd still been...well, normal. Now, her eyes were a translucent blue like her lover's, and she had some wicked ass powers that he wasn't afraid to admit scared the shit out of him. Not that he worried she would kill him—well, not deliberately—he worried what it did to her. She had a lot to deal with since being brought back to life and granted infinite powers by the queen of vampires.

And seeing her alive and well was also something he was getting used to. He'd witnessed her death, saw her crumble into a pile of dust, and had felt the grief of losing a woman he thought of as family. And now, here she was, alive and well and sporting a whole new persona. Oh sure, she was still Trinity on the outside, but she was also different in so many ways.

Like that scary vacant look she got when she was in a trance-like state, which she tended to get into now and then. She said it was her body's way of regenerating, but she didn't have to look into her white eyes and see her stare blankly at nothing at all.

"You want first dibs or can I have this one?" Basil asked getting in one last smooch.

"Why don't we play good vampire, bad vampire. I'll be the bad."

"Why do you get to be the bad?" Basil grumbled.

"Because no one suspects the woman of being a bad guy." She kissed his sulky lips as she stood. "Ariel still sleeping?" she asked Jonah as she walked passed him.

"Like a baby. She's having a tough time with this all darkness crap. Screws up her system."

"Well, let's hope we can get the info we need so we can bring the sun back and get everyone back on track."

He followed them both down the back stairs that led to Basil's dungeon. It was a freaky place equipped with cells and torture areas which Trinity told him Basil's father had used on Basil. Despite the fact that he'd once hated Basil, Jonah didn't wish torture on anyone.

"I'll stay outside the cell and look hostile while you go in and talk to him."

"Got it." Basil nodded to her then unlocked the cell doors. "Good day, young man. Did you sleep well?"

The vamp sat up on the cot he was laying on and snarled at Basil. "Get bent."

"Aw, now that's not nice. Especially when I was going to ask if you needed feeding. I have a lovely plasma bar down here with only the finest blood laced wine. But since you're not being nice, you don't get to share." He sat beside the vamp on the cot, only to have him scramble away. "I wasn't going to bite. No pun intended," Basil laughed.

"That was really bad," Jonah whispered to Trinity.

"Stop wasting time and just beat the crap out of him, Basil," Trinity growled as she glared at the vamp through the bars.

"Now now, dear, let's not resort to violence. Maybe he'll tell us what we need to know," Basil said calmly and Jonah had to bite his tongue so as not to chuckle.

"Yeah, like he's going to talk." She snorted, still glaring. "Ask him if he knows who I am?"

"I know who you are, Trinity," the vamp snarled.

"Now where is your respect, young man? You do not greet Her Majesty that way."

The vamp stared at her with narrowed yellow eyes then sucked in a wad of spit before sending it flying towards her. "That's what I think of Her Majesty."

"That's it. Let me at him." She jumped at the bars hard enough to make them rattle and not only did the vamp jump, but Jonah nearly shit himself with fright. Damn, she was scary when she wanted to be.

"Dear, calm down. If I were you, I would tell us what we want to know before she gets really mad. And trust me, you don't want her *really* mad. Are you one of Chaos' men?"

"I'm not telling you shit."

"Okay, that's it. My turn."

Jonah stepped out of the dungeon as Trinity sent herself inside the cell with Basil and the young vamp. He didn't like to watch when she interrogated the vamps. It sickened him to watch her or Basil smack them around. Sure, he wanted to know where Chaos was so they could take him out and get the sun back. But he wasn't up for the means they use to get that info.

He took the stairs up to the second level and down the hall to the suite he and Ariel had been given. Entering the room, he saw she was still asleep. Stripping out of his clothes, he climbed in beside her. She moaned and rolled to face him.

"Hi. Is it morning?"

"Not yet." He took her mouth in a possessive kiss, then took her body on a slow ride to ecstasy.



She had the sweetest body he had ever seen. Her breasts were small firm and pert and tasted like heaven in his mouth. Her waist was slender giving way to curvy hips that gyrated as he massaged the silkiness between her legs. She was wet and wild and all his.

She slid along his body, her mouth hot and her tongue gifted as it lapped him up. She took him into her mouth only to twirl her tongue around his shaft twice before releasing him. Then she crawled up his body, kissing her way to his neck. When she sat up and smiled at him, he thought how truly beautiful she was.

Then she dove down and clamped her teeth into his neck.

Dante woke to the feeling of a hot poker jabbing into his neck and someone on his chest. Opening his eyes, he saw Gypsy overtop of him, and she was sucking the life out of him.

Holy fuck! She was a vampire.

CHAPTER TWO

She had him pinned to the sofa and was sucking on his neck like there was no tomorrow. His head was beginning to swim but Dante knew he had to stop Gypsy before it went too far. Planting both hands on her shoulders, he pushed at her with as much force as he could muster. It did nothing to budge her.

His thoughts were starting to go fuzzy. With one hand, he tried to pry her off of him, and the other, reached out behind him for the lamp. After fumbling around, he finally managed to grab hold of it. Lifting it over his head, he slammed down onto hers. She screamed, which caused her to lose her grip on his neck and gave him enough leverage to shove her to the floor.

Bolting off the couch, he pulled the gun from his holster and fired at her neck. As the gun went off, he hoped to God he'd chosen the dart gun and not his revolver. He staggered, fell back onto the sofa, and saw through bleary eyes as she began to twitch, then lay still. A red dart protruded from Gypsy's neck.

He dropped the gun and put a hand to his neck. Pulling it back, he felt the sticky substance and knew he was bleeding. Damn it! She was a fucking vamp.

Though he felt weak, he knew he had to contain her somehow.

His mind a little foggy he stood and staggered to the hall closet. He needed something to tie her up with. Rope. Maybe not strong enough. Handcuffs. He had those. Grabbing the metal box on the top shelf, he pulled out the two pairs of cuffs he had and, spotting the extension cord hanging on the hook, decided that would work as well.

The more the better.

Hurrying back to her, still woozy and unsteady, he picked her up off the floor and felt his shoulder burn. The wound he'd attained when Trinity had accidentally staked him was still pretty damn sore. Ignoring the pain, he carried Gypsy to his bed then dropped her. She bounced but stayed face up.

Grabbing her wrists, he pulled them over her head and slapped the steel cuff around first one, and attaching it to the metal railing on his headboard, then doing the same to the other one. And to be safe, he wound the cord around both wrists, then attached it to the post, securing it in as tight a knot as he could.

Feeling dizzy, he sat down on the edge of the bed and breathed through the sickness. He needed help. Picking up the bedside phone, he dialed Trinity and Basil's. It seemed to ring forever before someone answered.

"Basil?"

"It's Jonah. That you, D?"

"Yeah. I...uh...need some help. Where are Trinity and Basil?"

"Busy with the prisoner. What sort of help?"

Shit. "How fast can you get here?"

"What's up, D? You sound funny."

"I'm injured. Can you get here ASAP? I'm in my apartment."

"I'll be right there."

"The code is thirty-one, ten, fifteen."

"Got it."

Dante dropped the phone then slid off the bed to the floor. He put his head between his legs and kept his breath even. When he felt the liquid trickle down his neck, he crawled on all fours to the bathroom and pulled a towel down from the rack. Applying it to his neck, he pressed down on it to stop the bleeding.

He hoped Jonah didn't take too long.



It seemed like hours before Jonah finally showed up. He crawled out of the washroom when he heard the doorknob rattle and if his

head had been thinking straight, he might have worried that it was a vamp who had broke in instead of Jonah.

"Jesus, D!"

Jonah crouched down beside him instantly and Dante shook his head. "I'm okay."

"The hell you are. You're bleeding up a storm here. You popped the stitches in your shoulder. Wait...your neck's bleeding too. What the hell happened?"

"After we parted ways, a young woman came running towards me, two brutes on her trail. Long story short, I took her here. She fell asleep and so did I and when I woke she was sucking on my neck." He pulled the towel away. "How bad is it?"

"Shit. She bit you? It stopped bleeding but it looks red. Jesus, D, what were you thinking?"

He let Jonah take the towel and hissed when he pressed it to his sore shoulder. "She didn't want to go to the cops. She seemed scared of them and I thought I could handle a puny female. How the hell was I supposed to know she was a vamp?"

"Um, the yellow eyes are usually a dead give away."

"Hers are purple. Jesus, that smarts."

"Well yeah, you opened the wound. And what do you mean she has purple eyes?"

"She's obviously wearing contacts. When you see her you'll understand."

"Where is she?"

Dante replaced Jonah's hand on his shoulder then pulled himself up using the wall for stability. "My bedroom. I have her tied up. Last time I checked she was still out of it. I hit her with a dart."

"Did you drink from her?" Jonah demanded, stopping him before he could enter the bedroom.

"What do I look like to you? Of course I didn't drink."

"Good. Okay, let's take a look."

Dante pushed the door open and flicked the light on as they entered.

"She's half naked. Jesus, Dante, you didn't—"

"Okay, now you're pissing me off. She was like that when I found her." And seeing his jacket lying on the floor, he figured she'd tossed it at some point.

"Sorry. I had to ask. She has green hair."

Dante chortled. "Yeah, weird, huh?"

"She looks like she's twelve."

"I'd say twenty, at best."

"And obviously she's been bit recently," Jonah stated as he inched closer, leaning over her. "Neck wound still looks fresh. How did you not see these?"

"Well, for one, it was dark, and two, I gave her my jacket which was pretty big on her and covered her neck. I need to sit." And since the floor was the closest, he dropped down and put his head between his knees.

"You need a doctor. Okay, we need to dose her up so she doesn't wake up while we transport her back to the castle. Where's your tranq gun?"

"Living room floor." He heard Jonah shuffle from the room and seconds later, shuffle back. When he felt him nudge his arm, he lifted his heavy head and looked down the barrel of the gun. "What the fuck are you doing aiming that at me?"

"Sorry." Jonah turned it so he held the barrel and the handle was out to Dante.

"What do you want me to do with that?"

"Shoot her."

Dante's brow lifted. "My vision's a little double at the moment. Go ahead."

"I can't shoot her." Jonah wiggled the gun at Dante.

"Why not? It's not hard. Aim for the neck, pull the trigger and you're good to go."

"I hate guns. I've never fired one and I don't intend to start now."

"Jesus, Jonah. Get some balls. Aim the fucking thing and fire."

"I'm going to hate you for this."

"I think I can handle that." He waved his hand indicating Jonah should take the shot already. One look at Jonah and you could tell he had never handled a weapon. It wasn't just the pretty boy face or those big, brown eyes with heavy lashes, but the way he held the gun. It was like he held onto a slimy creature or something equally as disgusting. And as he held the gun out, Dante saw him close his eyes. "You need to see where you're shooting, Jonah."

"Damn it." Opening his eyes, Jonah crunched up his brow, then pulled the trigger. He immediately dropped the gun and backed away. "I am not doing that again. You can not make me do that again. Did I hit her?"

Shaking his head, Dante pulled himself up, leaning against the wall and looked over at the woman lying on his bed. Jonah's dart lay

pierced into the second pillow beside her. "Not even close, D. Pick up the gun."

"I'm not firing it again. I meant what I said. Never, never, and let me emphasize the NEVER, going to fire that thing again."

With a heavy sigh, Dante held out his hand. "Just pick it up and give it to me."

"Oh, okay." Leaning down, Jonah grabbed the gun then quickly handed it off to Dante.

Shaking his head, Dante aimed the gun just as Gypsy stirred. He pulled the trigger and the dart hit right below the other one at the side of her neck.

"See, you're a better shot than I am, even when you're running on half empty. Okay, let's get her to my car."

"Mine's bigger. But you can drive. I don't think I'd get us there safely enough."

"Sure thing. Jesus, where am I supposed to grab her? She's half naked."

"Just take her feet." Dante rolled his eyes as he untied the cord around her wrists.

"I'm a married man, D. The only woman's tits I grope are my wife's, which you happened to interrupt when you called."

"Sorry. Wait—no I'm not. What the hell were you doing answering the phone then if you were getting it on with your wife?" Though his shoulder was killing him, he managed to untie the cord. He'd done a damn good job of knotting it.

"I thought someone else would get it first. I let it ring ten times before I answered it, figuring it was important if the person hadn't hung up yet. I'm glad I did. You look like shit, buddy."

And he felt like it, too. "The keys to the cuffs are in the lock box in the hall closet. Can you grab them for me?"

"Yep."

Looking down at her sleeping now, she didn't seem so bad. Yet he remembered the feel of her teeth stuck in his neck.

And her half-naked body pressed to his.

"Here you go."

"Thanks." He took the keys and unlocked the bracelets from the frame only, then secured her wrists together. "Ready?"

"You bet." Jonah grabbed her by the ankles and when he slid her down, Dante was able to grab under her arms and hoist her up. He hissed at the burning pain in his shoulder and neck.

"You're going to need that restitched, D."

"Like I don't know that." Gypsy wasn't extremely heavy but she weighed enough that it did pull on his shoulder. They carried her down to his car, tucking her in the back seat then Dante engaged the alarms on his building before climbing into the back seat bedside her. "We'll get your car later."

"If it's still here," Jonah grumbled as he pulled out of the lot. "It's quiet out there right now."

"Yeah, now." He reached for his cell phone and remembered he'd left it inside. "Hey, I forgot my cell, you got yours on you?"

"Never leave home without it." Dante handed it back to Dante.

He took it, and dialed Trinity. When Basil answered breathlessly, Dante rolled his eyes. "Please don't tell me I interrupted the two of you in the middle of hot monkey sex?"

"I rarely change into a monkey," Basil said with humor in his voice.

"What the hell is with everyone today and getting it on. I've got a female vamp, unconscious. Jonah and I are bringing her in. Please be done when we get there." He shut the phone down, then dropped his head on the back of the seat behind him. "You damn horny couples."

Laughing, Jonah headed out of town.



The halls were silent as his men rested for the moment before heading back out. He wasn't a stupid leader and knew rundown vampires would do him no good. It would only get them killed or captured. And too many of his men were being captured not just by the law, but by Trinity and her merry misfits.

That pissed him off.

Chaos stalked the quiet halls, feeling restless and yearning to get out and hunt with his men. But while he was a wanted man, he had to stay underground. And that was exactly where he planned to stay. There were so many tunnels under the city, he could hide out for years without being caught. And thank God for the underground caverns that led from the tunnels. He and his men spent time there resting and feeding and no one bothered them. Not even the cops, and he doubted Trinity and her misfits knew they even existed.

Which gave Chaos a leg up.

"Chaos, sir."

He turned to the young man racing up behind him and came to a stop. "What is it, Daniel?"

Coming to a stop in front of Chaos, Daniel took a breath before speaking. "Um...most people call me Danny."

"I'm not most people. What's the problem, *Daniel*?"

"One of our new recruits got away."

"What? How was this possible?"

Danny ran a hand through his dark disheveled hair. "My men weren't paying attention and she broke free of the ropes."

Chaos kept his temper in check as he spoke. Daniel was still new at being in command and it would take time for him to learn how to discipline his men properly. "Which one got away?"

"The female. Gypsy. The one I'd hoped to...well, make my own."

"Then you should have been the one to watch her. How long since her transition?" Daniel was still young, barely seventeen and had a lot to learn. But Chaos was hoping that by him being so young, he would be easier to control. Chaos had, after all, been the one to create him.

"A day."

"Did she feed off of only you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you should be able to track her. Find her, Daniel. We don't need her giving up any information."

"Um...she saw where we took her, well, saw after she left."

Chaos' jaw tensed. "Burn it."

"Yes sir. I'll get right on it."

"Make sure you do. And Daniel," he placed his hand on the young man's shoulder, and dug his nails in, "do not disappoint me."

He watched the young man scurry off and hoped he hadn't made a mistake by making him his first in command.

But if the boy didn't shape up, Chaos was going to have to show him, once again, just who was the boss.

CHAPTER THREE

"What the hell were you thinking bringing her to your apartment? Why the hell didn't you bring her back here as soon as you found her?"

It was hard to protest the verbal slaps Trinity was dealing out to him while Basil's all around butler and handy to have around guy, Cooper, was stitching his shoulder back up.

"You are so fucking lucky she didn't rip your throat open. I can't believe how stupid you are."

"Keep up the insults and you'll find out just how stupid I can be," he warned, showing her the fist of his free hand.

"Don't you even go there with me, buster. I will *so* take you down."

"Try it."

"Okay, let's just calm down here and take a step back." Jonah tried to reason with them. "Let's just chalk this up as a lesson learned and move on from it."

"I've finished," Cooper announced as he put a fresh bandage over Dante's wound. "Try not to open it again, sir."

Everyone was just being so fucking helpful. Dante pulled on a fresh shirt, careful of his tender arm, and wondered how Basil was doing with Gypsy. "I'm going down to see how she's doing."

"Basil has it under control. No more of this macho shit, Dante. I can't use you if you're dead."

He glared at Trinity as he buttoned up the shirt. Saying nothing in response, he headed down to the cellar. He knew there were still castles in the world, and some of them even still had dungeons, but he would have never thought there was one in his home town. And did they have to make the corridor leading to the dungeon so dark and gloomy? It gave a person the chills.

"How is she?" he asked Basil as he entered the cell area. Gypsy was asleep on a cot, covered in a blanket.

"Still out like a light. How much you give her?"

"Two shots. But she doesn't have much meat on her bones so..." He held his hands out. "What about Mr. Fang there? He give you any info yet?"

Basil rattled the vampire's cage. "Not yet, but he and I have been getting acquainted. Haven't we, Tyson old boy."

"He gave you his name?" That surprised him a great deal. The last few vamps they'd snatched up still hadn't given up their names, or Chaos' whereabouts.

"Tyson's weak and as soon as we break out of here he'll pay."

Dante turned to the vamp who'd spoken. The guy was as tall as he was thin and as ugly as sin. "And what makes you think you'll be breaking out of here any time soon?"

"I don't think. I know."

"Yeah," Basil drawled as he walked to the vamps cage. "Gonna be pretty hard to break into this fortress when I have the place wired."

"My master can do anything."

"Shut the hell up, you dumbass," the other vampire chimed in.

"Your master wouldn't dare step foot on my property because he knows it would be his death. But you keep dreaming."

"Every day our legion grows. And before long, we'll be stronger than you."

"Yeah," Basil vanished only to reappear inside the vampire's cage, his hand clutching the vamp's throat. "I'm betting we'll handle ourselves just fine. Now sit down there and be a good boy."

Dante heard Gypsy stirring and walked to her cage. "She's waking up. Can you let me inside?"

"Oh sure. You looking for a matching wound on the other side of your neck," Basil said as he appeared beside Dante.

"She won't attack me, again. And besides, you're here if she does, all you'd have to do is blink and you're in the cell with me."

"Or..." Basil smiled slyly, "I could let her eat you."

"Funny. Let me in." He'd thought the guy had gotten over his jealousy. It wasn't like he was after Trinity anymore. "She knows me. She might open up to me."

After a moment's hesitation, Basil unlocked the cell door and stepped aside to let Dante through. "Be on guard."

He saluted Basil as he stepped into the cell. As he walked towards the cot, Gypsy sat up and rubbed her eyes. "Hey."

She tilted her head then smiled. "Oh, hey." Then her brow furrowed. "Where am I?"

And then he saw the panic click in. "Just relax." He went to her, placing a hand on her shoulder. "You're safe. We had to put you in here because you attacked me."

Her eyes shot wide open. "I what?"

"You don't remember?"

Her head bobbed side to side. "No. I went to sleep, and I just woke up...here. How did I attack you?"

She had no idea. "Give me a second, okay? I just need to talk to my friend over there." When she nodded, he got up and walked to Basil. "How is it she doesn't remember biting me?" he whispered.

Basil leaned on the bars casually and lit a cigarette. "Do you know when she was taken?"

Dante shook his head. "She never got around to telling me what happened to her."

"Let me guess, you saw a scantily clad woman running to you so you thought you would take her back to your place for a quickie?"

Dante narrowed dark eyes. "Don't be a dick."

Basil shrugged, blowing smoke through his teeth. "Then why didn't you get her info?"

"She was tired and scared. I didn't want to push it. I figured a few hours of sleep would do her well and then we could get to it."

"Well, you found out the hard way what a stupid plan that was. Go ask her when she was taken and by who."

He saluted Basil again, only this time with his middle finger. Walking back to Gypsy he sat down beside her again and began. "I need to know what happened to you, Gypsy."

"Her name is Gypsy?"

He ignored Basil and kept going. "It's important we know who took you and when and what they did to you. Please, trust me."

She pulled her legs up to her chest and let out a long breath. "I don't know what day it is."

"Wednesday."

Her brow curled. "Tuesday. It's so hard to tell what day is what with the sun being gone and all. Kinda weird, to have no sun, don't you think?"

"Yeah, it is." He waited for her to continue.

"These two guys came out of nowhere and attacked me. They just scooped me up and the big guy held me while the other guy put tape over my mouth. Then he blindfolded me. The next thing I know, I'm in a car and being held down by the big guy and we're moving. I'm kinda thirsty. Do you think your friend would get me a drink?"

Dante turned to Basil who nodded before leaving. "Then what happened?"

"We drove for a while, not too long, then we stopped. They dragged me out. I kicked up a storm but it didn't seem to make a difference to the guy. He kept carrying me. We walked for a while, felt like we were going up and down and when he finally stopped, he set me down and pinned me against a really cold wall. They took my blindfold off and the tape then chained me to some pipes. I screamed until my lungs hurt. I tugged at the chains, I kicked and I screamed. No damn way they were going to tie me up and have their way with me. Next thing I know I feel this prick in my back and when I turn, I see the big guy holding a needle. It all went blurry after that."

"I have her drink here," Basil announced through the bars.

Dante got up and took the glass of water and handed it to Gypsy. He waited while she gulped it down before asking her to continue. "Then what happened?"

She held the glass out to him then instead of pulling her legs back up to her chest, she got up to pace. He could see Basil watching her closely. "I felt really weird when I woke up. But it was like I was awake and I wasn't. It was pretty foggy, if you know what I mean. Anyway, I wake up and I'm...okay, this is the weird part." She turned back to Dante. "I was sucking on this guy's neck and...drinking his blood, but it was a dream. It had to be a dream. When I woke up, I was laying on a bed in a dark room. I got up, tried the door and when I didn't see anyone in the hallway, I bolted."

"Where were you? Where did they take you?"

She twirled the hair on the top of her head around her finger. "A house. Well, it might have been a house at one time. It was run down, and big. They had me in the basement. They saw me sneaking out the back way and I ran. You know the rest."

Dante nodded, rubbing his chin. "How far was it from where I found you?"

"A few blocks, four at most. Can I get out of here now?"

Dante stood, and walked to her. "Do you have anywhere else to go at the moment?"

She pouted and he thought just how young she looked when doing so. "No—Hey, what about your place?"

"I'll have to talk to my friend."

"Why? Why can't you just let me go? I didn't do anything wrong. I was the one who was abducted."

"Just relax. That dream you thought you had...well, it wasn't a dream. That guy you said you drank from was a vampire." When she burst into laughter, Dante turned to Basil. "Wanna help me out here."

Basil exhaled, disappeared and reappeared beside them in the cell, then calmly showed his fangs. "How's this?"

"Gee, thanks." And now he had a screaming woman to contend with. "Gypsy." He took hold of her shoulders to steady her. "It's okay, Gypsy. He won't hurt you."

"He's...a...they're real. Oh my God, they're everywhere."

When Dante glanced to where her eyes were focused he saw all of the other caged animals had their fangs out. Great, now he had a hysterical female to deal with. "Let me deal with her," he said to Basil and wrapped Gypsy in his arms. "It's okay. I'll explain everything to you. Can I take her somewhere else? Somewhere less...scary."

"You're playing on touchy ground here, human."

"She doesn't even know what she is. I highly doubt she's going to attack me again."

"I won't do anything, I promise. Just get me out of here," she pleaded against Dante's chest, her face plastered into his pecs.

He shot Basil the eye, then was relieved when he opened the cage.

"Can we go somewhere else, too? We're scared." One of the vampires laughed.

They ignored them and headed out of the dungeon.

"Take her to your room upstairs," Basil instructed.

"You live here? I thought you lived in that other place?"

She clung to him like he was her lifeline. He supposed he was. "I have both places. This one is kinda my full-time place for a while now. I can handle her from here." He gave Basil a wide-eyed look before opening his bedroom door.

"Leave the door open, and I'm waiting in the hall."

"No," Dante said plainly.

"Either that or I come inside with you. Choose."

He didn't like either option but chose the former. "Fine." Leaving the door open, he led Gypsy to his bed and sat down beside her. "We need to get you some clothes." But in the meantime, he pulled the knitted blanket from the foot of his bed and wrapped it around her body. "Much better."

"Well, you don't have to say it like that/" With an annoyed look on her face, she moved a little further away from Dante.

"I didn't mean it like that. You look good—what I mean is—Damn. It's easier on me if you're covered up. Okay."

She smiled and her face lit up like a candle. "You like my body?"

"Let's stick to what's important right now. What you saw in the cellar, what my friend is and what you are is what we need to deal with."

"I'm not a...vampire." The last word was said with a bit of a chuckle.

"Open your mouth."

"What?"

"Open your mouth," he repeated.

"This is crazy." But she did as he asked.

"Now run your tongue along your top teeth."

She rolled her eyes and slid her tongue out and over her teeth. And then her eyes went wide. "Oh my God! They're pointy."

"And I'm betting beneath those contacts you have yellow eyes."

"My eyes are hazel."

"They might have been before you were turned. Do you wear them for show or do you need them?"

"For show. I want to take them out. I want to look in a mirror—wait. Do I have a reflection? Can I see myself in a mirror? Can I be photographed? Will I show up on a video camera?"

"Slow down there. Um...I really don't have a clue."

"You're not a...vampire?"

"No. Full blooded human here. Um, scratch the full blooded part."

Her lips pursed. "You think I would attack you?"

"You did once. I want to think no, but... Hey, why don't we ask Basil about these vampire questions you have."

"Who?"

"Me. And yes." Basil swaggered into the room. "You still have a reflection, you can be photographed, and you will show up on video. You're not dead. You are still relatively alive but the vampire gene has now taken over your body. You're still you, just different."

"Then how am I different than I was before?"

Dante wanted to know, too. He knew some of what a vampire was, but not everything.

"You're stronger now than before. Your body won't catch diseases like colds, flu, venereal diseases, cancer, heart disease. Any ailment that afflicts a human won't affect you," Basil explained.

"Can I...do that vanishing thing like you did when you popped into the cell with me?"

"No, only I can do that."

"And Trinity," Dante piped in.

"Yes, let's not forget me." Trinity sauntered into the room. It didn't matter that she was taken, Dante still thought she was as sexy as hell and he loved her blood red hair the most.

"Who is that?" Gypsy whispered it to Dante.

"That is Trinity, queen of all vampires. She and Basil have special powers. Basil is the only descendant of the first two vampires and Trinity was granted a new life and new powers by the original queen a few days ago to help bring back the sun. They can transport themselves anywhere and they can change into any non-human creature. Trinity has other powers, like the ability to stop a person dead in their tracks with a simple look. Literally. Had it happen to me, not a good feeling."

"You're scaring the shit out of her, Dante. I'm Trinity," she said, turning to Gypsy. "How long have you been a vampire?"

"One day. Should I bow in your presence?"

"Only if you want me to smack you around. Do you know who sired you? Who made you a vampire?"

Gypsy shook her head. "Not personally at least. And I never saw his face."

"Okay. Has Dante filled you in on what to expect now?"

"I hadn't gotten to that yet," he expressed.

"Then I'll fill her in. You'll want to feed often this next week because your body is going through a tremendous change. And it's going to make you feel a little strange. Lightheaded at times and achy. If you don't feed often enough, you could end up losing your mind and becoming a blood thirsty zombie type person. So, feeding often is good."

"You mean...blood?" Gypsy asked with her nose scrunched up.

"Yeah. We can mix it with something to start you off with, but believe me, you'll think you're drinking water instead of blood. Being

freaked out by it is only in your mind. I think it would be best if you stayed here with us until you can acclimate yourself to your new life."

"Works for me. I don't have anywhere else to go."

"You don't have family?"

She shook her head again. "I've been on my own since I was fourteen. Foster homes aren't all they're cracked up to be."

"Okay. We'll set up a room for you and get you some clothes and such."

"Can't I stay here?" She turned to Dante. "With you?"

Now wasn't that an interesting question. "I'll be here most of the time, but I think it would be best if you had your own room. Don't worry. We're all friendly here."

She let out a long sigh. "Okay. I guess so."

"Great. Let me show you to your room."

Dante nodded when she hesitated, letting her know it was okay to go with Trinity. When she finally got up and followed her, he could tell she was extremely leery.

"She might be attracted to you because she fed off of you."

"Huh?" Dante shook his thoughts clear.

"Male and females of my species bond through blood, and the more blood they take from their mate, the stronger they bond."

"But wouldn't she be feeling that from the guy who sired her?"

Basil shrugged his shoulders. "Usually, but since she was only sired yesterday, could be your blood is what's fueling her and not his. Just a word of caution. She could become attached to you."

"Got it." And wasn't that weird to think about. Guess he was going to have to keep his eyes open around her from now on.

CHAPTER FOUR

Three days ago she'd been sitting in a jail cell wondering how she could have been so stupid as to have gotten caught by the police. Now she was sitting in a luxurious, hotel-like room with satins and silks on the bed and what looked like antique tables.

And she was a vampire.

Standing in a bathroom that was big enough to be considered its own suite, Gypsy stepped up to the mirror. She looked like hell. Which, she supposed, was understandable. Considering what she'd been through the past few days.

Leaning over the sink, she touched a finger to her eye and pulled out the contact, then did the same to the other one. Lifting her head, she looked at her reflection. Her eyes were yellow. No, not just any yellow but a vibrant, sunlight yellow. She rather liked the look. She'd never thought of wearing yellow contacts before. Now seeing herself with yellow eyes, she wished she had. The yellow went well with her green hair.

Stripping from her bra and panties, Gypsy stepped into the shower, which could easily hold four people, and started the water. After getting it just right, she stepped under the spray. The water felt like heaven. The last time she'd showered had been in the jail when they'd hosed her down. She was going to take her time in this shower.

Picking up one of the fancy looking bottles, she sniffed it, saw that it was body wash, then added a huge dollop to the cloth hanging ready on the rack. She scrubbed it over her body, scrubbing away the prison soap and the stench of the men who had grabbed her. It felt so good to wash everything away.

And being a vampire wasn't such a bad thing. So far.

She lathered up her hair with a shampoo that smelled like roses. Then she simply stood under the showerhead letting the warm water splash over her face. When the water started running cold, she shut it off and wrapped herself in the white towel that was as soft as wool. She dried off and began to dress in clothes that Trinity had lent. They were going to be more than a little baggy on her and she was sure she was going to have to roll up the pant legs, but at least she had clothes.

And as soon as she could, she was going to get out and grab something more pleasing to her.

She wished she had her make-up.

Sticking her tongue out, she removed the stud, then brushed her teeth and rinsed her mouth. She washed the stud in some hot water before replacing it in her tongue. Then she stepped back and took a look at herself.

Not bad, she decided, even without make-up.

Rolling the legs up on her jeans, she stepped out of the bathroom to find Trinity sitting on her bed, waiting for her.

She wasn't entirely sure how to act around Trinity, seeing as she was a queen.

"Hey."

"Enjoy the shower?"

"Yeah." She smiled. "It felt really great."

"I imagine. I brought you a drink. I wasn't sure what your tastes were like so I decided to bring up some wine. Wine works the best when mixing blood. Well, and Bloody Mary's."

"For real?"

Trinity shrugged. "The tomato juice and the blood blend well." She held the goblet out to Gypsy.

She wasn't really a wine drinker and probably would have preferred something stronger, but she took the glass. She looked down into the deep red liquid, hesitating. She couldn't really see the blood in it, but she knew it was there.

"Trust me, the first time the blood hits your tongue, you'll be drinking it down like water. Your body now requires it just like it would any other fluid you drank as a human. You won't notice it."

She wasn't so sure about that. "How do you know?" Her eyes lifted to Trinity. "No disrespect, your highness, but you're not human."

"I used to be, seven years ago. And I was about your age when I was turned. I was as leery as you the first time I had to drink blood. That's why I say you really won't notice it."

She took comfort knowing that the woman before her now had been human like her not too long ago. And trusting her, she lifted the cup to her lips and cautiously took a sip. Then another. And before she knew it, she was emptying the goblet.

"See?"

Yep, not bad at all. "I couldn't even taste anything. Are you sure there was blood in it?"

Trinity smiled and lifted the blood pack from the nightstand. "It's in there. Want to try a bit of the hard stuff?"

"You mean straight blood?" She wasn't sure she was ready for that.

"We could try a tiny drop on your finger if you like?"

That might not be so bad. She had on a few occasions, sucked on her finger when she'd cut it. This would be the same. "Is it...good blood? I mean, how do I know it doesn't have some sort of disease or something."

"The blood I get is pure, and even if it wasn't, you wouldn't contract anything from it."

"I know, but the thought of it gives me the willies. Okay, drop me." She held her hand out, index finger out and waited. When Trinity opened the packet and let a droplet of blood fall on her finger, Gypsy stared at it for a few seconds before putting it in her mouth. She could feel it on her tongue, the liquid of it and it had a bit of a bitter taste to it, but it didn't taste like the blood she remembered sucking from her cuts.

"Well?"

"It's a little bitter."

"Because it isn't from your sire. Think of it this way, when a newborn suckles on its mother's breast for the first time, they become accustomed to the taste of their mother's milk. When the child is given milk from someone else, they may not take it, or they become fussy at having to drink it. Your taste buds are accustomed to your sire's taste. That's why a lot of vamps lace a beverage with the wine. To eliminate the bitterness. I used to add cinnamon."

"Basil isn't your sire?" She took a chair, and pulled her feet up to her knees.

"Clothes are a bit big, huh? We'll figure something else out for you." Trinity leaned against the wall. "Basil is my sire, but we broke up for a bit and I had to drink market blood."

"And now you're back together. That's great. So how often am I going to have to drink blood?"

"We call it feeding. Daily. Your body will tell you how much. Some people need more than others. You'll have to figure out what you need."

"How will I know?"

"The same way you knew when you were hungry before. Your body will tell you."

She played with her toes. "You all have been so nice to me. I don't know how I'll ever pay you back."

"We don't expect payment." Trinity stood, leaving the blood bag on the night stand. "If you need anything, don't hesitate to help yourself. And if you need to talk, I'm usually around."

"Thanks." She waited until the door had closed and Trinity was gone before she walked to the bed and lifted the blood packet. Then she opened it and poured a bit into her cup. Lifting it to her lips, she closed her eyes and drank.

Five minutes later the entire packet was gone.



It was mutually decided that the women would stay home while the men went out on patrol. Okay, so Trinity had put up a royal stink but Basil was a pretty persuasive guy and managed to convince her she would do better staying back and keeping an eye on Gypsy and help her with feeding. Ariel was more than happy to stay home, though the idea of having a fresh vamp roaming the halls did freak her out a bit, until she got to know Gypsy.

The girl seemed easy enough to get along with. And as long as she kept her fangs to herself, they'd all get along just fine, Dante decided.

"Here we are again, men, out on the hunt while our women folk keep the home fires burning," Jonah chimed in with his chest puffed out doing a manly walk.

"If Trinity heard you say that she'd slap you beyond silly."

"Yeah." Jonah nodded to Basil. "Ariel would have my hide, too. I just felt like saying it. So what is the agenda today, gentleman? More bag and tag?"

"I want to scope out the neighborhood Gypsy ran from," Basil explained as Dante pulled to a stop along the curb where they'd been the day before.

Jonah opened the car door. "It would be easier if she could have given us a description of the house."

Stepping out of the car, Dante sniffed the air. "Something's burning." He nudged his head up and to the left. The prominent smell of smoke was thick in the air. "You don't think it's—" Basil vanished before he could finish his sentence. "Well, that was rude. Guess it's just you and me, Jonah."

"I'll grab the gear from the trunk."

Dante popped the trunk then helped Jonah with the weapons, strapping on his weapons belt, more than ready to go. "What are the odds, you think, that fire has anything to do with Gypsy?"

"I'm thinking pretty high. How come it's so quiet?"

Dante noticed that, too, but still kept a wary eye open for any danger as they headed towards the fire. "You got me. Well, that's a doozy." The flames shot high into the dark air, illuminating everything around it like a thousand watt bulb. Even half a block down he could feel the heat from it. "There's Basil." He nudged his head to the left.

"He doesn't look happy."

No, he didn't. "What do you think? This the place she was being held?"

"I would say yes." Basil scowled as he stared at the fully engulfed house.

"Why would they torch it? Why not just move out and head somewhere else if they were worried she'd remember the house?" Jonah asked.

"Clues," Basil informed him, still scowling. "Chaos wouldn't want anything to lead to him."

"What makes you think this has anything to do with Chaos?"

Basil turned to Dante wiping the sweat from his brow. "No ordinary vampire would go to this much trouble. They wouldn't give a shit if she led the authorities, or anyone else for that matter, to this house. They'd hightail it out of here the instant she took off and find a new hidey hole. This reeks of Chaos."

"I guess we're out of here," Jonah stated when Basil walked off.

"Guess so." Dante followed. "You think Chaos sired her?"

"More likely one of his men," Basil added as he continued to walk. "She said one of the men who took her was big. Sounds like Moose. He's one of Chaos' men." Fire engines roared in the distance. "She seems really comfortable with you, Dante. She might open up more to you if you got her talking."

Dante shoved his hands in his pockets. "She said she didn't see the guy's face who she was feeding from. Don't see how me talking to her is going to have her seeing a face she never saw." He heard crashing glass in the distance. "Looks like trouble ahead."

"Everyone gear up," Basil instructed as he rushed forward. "Remember, we want to take some in for questioning."

"Guy doesn't waste time. You go left, I'll go right," Dante instructed Jonah.

"Man, I hate this." But he pulled out a wooden stake and a taser and went left.

As always, when Dante got into a situation like this, he scanned the men for his brother. Danny had to be out there somewhere. *Yeah, then how come you didn't see him for twenty years?*

Pulling out his taser gun, Dante headed right. He saw the gang of—he was so hoping it was vamps and not humans—looting a near by store. "Let's make some noise, boys." More than ready for a fight, Dante lifted his arm to aim at one of the looters and felt the fresh stitches pulling on his shoulder, reminding him he was still injured. "Damn it." He wished the damn thing would just heal already.

"Behind you, Jonah." Despite his sore shoulder, Dante aimed his taser at the man racing towards Jonah. He watched Jonah spin around, lift his weapon then freeze. Jonah was not a fighter. The guy had spent his life sitting behind a computer either plucking it apart trying to fix it or figuring ways to break through encryptions and walls. He was soft and Dante couldn't help himself but like the guy.

"Jesus." His hand shaking, Jonah fired the taser...and missed.

Dante was there and, pulling the trigger, sent the electrical jolt right into the vamps body. He did a little twitch ditty, his arms and legs quivering as he went down. The guy didn't scream but gurgled instead. Everyone always had their own sound.

"Thanks, D."

"I've always got your back, Jonah. Two more heading our way. Ready?"

"Hell no." But Jonah lifted his taser anyway.

"So how come you don't mind shooting the taser, yet you cringe when holding a gun?"

"This is different. It's not really a gun. Shit, shit!"

"Just relax. You'll be fine." And to make sure he would, Dante kept an eye on him while he fought his own demon. The guy that came at him was wiry but Dante had a feeling he was not going to be an easy fight.

And he was right. The first shot of the taser did absolutely nothing, and before he could get it ready to shoot another, the guy was on him. The first fist shot hit him square in the jaw and had him seeing stars. But he still kept his senses and pressed the taser to the guy's gut and pulled the trigger. This time he did react, and grabbed Dante by the sore arm and threw him to the side. Dante bounced off of the wall of a building, stumbling before he fell to the hard ground. The taser was knocked out of his hand and flew off into the darkness.

He saw the vamp come at him, saw that he had his fangs ready, and Dante was sure this was the end for him. A split second before the guy reached him, he saw his eyes go wide, then he was dust in the wind. Jonah stepped out of the shadows and held out his hand.

"Now I got your back, D."

Taking his hand, Dante stood. "And I am mighty grateful for that. Where's Basil?"

"Still working the shop. Your arm's bleeding."

Dante glanced to his shoulder and frowned. "Damn it. I am getting tired of having that stitched up."

"We've got a car load, boys. Let's head out of here," Basil stated as he appeared before them.

"I hate when you do that." But he was damn glad they were calling it a night. His shoulder was on fire.

CHAPTER FIVE

"The cells are starting to fill up," Trinity stated as she began to undress in their bedroom. "We're going to have to figure something out."

"Yeah, and we need to get a truck. Hauling five vamps in a small compact car just doesn't work well. But I think I have an idea what to do about the overcrowded cells. Damn, you're sexy."

Basil came up behind her and wrapped his arms around her body, nuzzling her neck with his nose and Trinity felt the love pour out of him with that simple gesture. "What's the idea, Basil?"

He skimmed his hands over the length of her body, stopping as he cupped her breasts in his hands. "Trackers. You smell delicious."

Smiling, she let him arouse her. She loved his hands and what they did to her. "What do you mean, trackers?"

Nibbling on her neck, he slid his hands down her hips before dipping them into her silk thong underwear. "I figure Jonah would know how to create some that we could inject under the vamps skin. Then all we'd have to do is monitor where they go."

"Great idea. *Oh...*" She leaned her head back on his shoulder as his fingers toyed and teased her clit.

"You like that?" He swirled his fingers, rubbing her nub.

"You know I do." She spread her legs a little wider, hoping he would slide a finger inside and finish her off. Then she could toss him on the bed and fuck his brains out.

"I'll talk to Jonah later and see if he can manage it. You want something more, my love?"

He was tormenting her and knew just how much it drove her crazy. "Yes. You." But when she tried to move, he pulled her against him harder and the feel of his erection pressing to her butt only made her wetter.

"In a moment. I'm having too much fun." Now he used both hands on her, spreading her lips with one set of fingers while the others stroked.

"Basil, finish me." She pumped her hips against him, the feel of his hard-on making her crazy, the touch of his fingers driving her wild. "Now!"

"So demanding." He slipped the thong over her hips, sliding along the length of her body as he drew them down. His mouth kissing all the way down before stopping on her ass. When he bit her left buttock she screeched. "Spread," he demanded.

She was more than happy too and slipping one foot out of the thong, she spread her legs wide. Then his tongue slid out between the folds to dip into the crack and she moaned with delight. She bent at the waist to allow him easier access.

"So tasty."

His tongue was so hot she wanted it to touch her everywhere. Then his hand came up between her legs to touch her dampness. He penetrated her with his fingers as his tongue flicked over her anus. She gyrated, wanting him to finish her but wanting it to never end. "Yes, sweet fucking yes." He pumped his fingers inside of her while his tongue did wonders to her ass. She felt her climax building and bending completely over, let it wash over her. "More, more." She panted.

Releasing her, he scooped her up in his arms and carried her to the bed. "You want more?" He undid his pants and let them drop to the floor. "Then more you will get."

He lifted her legs and spread her wide then plunged. "God, yes!" she cried out as he drove her over and over again.



Gypsy was restless and tired of sitting in her room. She felt like she had ants under her skin, crawling aimlessly through her veins. She needed to move, needed something to stop this restless feeling

inside. She'd always been an active person, but now she felt like she might just go insane if she didn't do something.

She had all this energy inside that needed dispersing.

She wondered if the guys had come back from patrolling yet. They'd explained it to her, including why the sun was hidden and what had caused it and it all kinda fogged her brain. She couldn't help but wonder if maybe she had died in that cold basement a few days ago and that this was all a dream.

What a fucking bizarre dream it was.

In bare feet, she walked down the long hallway from her room. Maybe she'd take a stroll on the grounds and get the lay of the land. Or maybe she'd just head out and do some shopping. She was dying to wear something that belonged to her and that fit. These jeans and t-shirts she'd been lent weren't really her fashion.

She heard the sound of moaning coming from a door to her left and was curious enough to stop and listen. Her hearing seemed to be keener now since she'd become a vampire. Without having to press her ear to the door, she could hear just fine what was happening behind it. Someone was having sex.

The sounds of penetration were evident by the slapping of bare flesh upon wet slippery flesh. She could hear a male grunting and a female panting. And she could smell the scent in the air.

It went right to her core and her body reacted as it normally would. She was aroused and the longer she stood there listening, the more it affected her. Running a hand over her body, she had a fleeting thought to run back to her room and get herself off.

Then she heard a noise down the hall, coming from the room where Dante slept, and she changed her plan. Why go it alone when you had a healthy hunk of a man for the taking.

With a deep breath to steady herself, she walked to his room and knocked. Her tongue nearly fell out when he answered the door. All he wore was a pair of navy pajama bottoms that dipped low enough on his hips to tease the viewer to the core. The hair covering his broad chest was dark and curly and she longed to run her nails along his flesh. It looked like he'd just stepped out of the shower. His hair was still damp and slicked back from his face. She loved his eyes. So dark and fanned by thick, black lashes. And his sculpted face wasn't half bad to look at either.

"Hi," he said to her in that low gravelly voice that shot right to her loins.

"Hi. I heard you moving about in here and thought I would come by and say hi. How's your arm?"

"Sore. I opened it up again." He shrugged wide shoulders. "Shit happens. Wanna come in?"

She was so hoping he would ask that. "Yeah, I'd like that." He smelt spicy and so damn tempting. He closed the door when she'd entered and her body lit up like a rocket. "I was bored in my room, so I thought I'd take a walk. I have all this energy inside of me that I don't know what to do with." Yes she did, but men liked women who were coy, who seduced.

"Trinity said you fed. Probably the reason why you feel juiced."

She walked about the room in a slow swagger, running a finger along the wall, then over his bedside table before turning to him. "Yeah, it wasn't as bad as I thought. I actually liked the taste of it. I was worried about drinking it, but Trinity was very patient with me while I sampled it." She stroked her hand along the silk cloth on his bed. If that didn't give him the hint as to what she wanted, then he was a very stupid male.

"Yeah...um...Trinity's a great gal."

"She really is. I like her, and Ariel. Basil's pretty decent, too." She sauntered towards him with full intentions of making him want her. One look at the tent in his pajamas told her he wanted her just as much. "I like you the most." In a bold statement, she slid her finger nail along his bare chest. It was with absolute delight that she felt him quiver.

"Uh...I like you, too."

Smiling, she leaned up on her toes and wrapped her arms around his neck. He was quite a bit taller than her, but not enough to make it awkward to kiss him. And when her mouth touched his, her body came alive with need. She could feel his erection pressing between them and from the size of it; she was in for a delightful event. She twined her fingers at the back of his neck and angled her head to deepen the kiss. He kissed like a pro.

Slipping her tongue between his lips, she touched the tip of his, then went all the way. She shoved her tongue in his mouth, toying with his, scraping it on his teeth while her lips drank him in. Between them, she felt his dick twitch.

She lifted one leg and hooked it around his waist, then pumped her hips against his rock hard cock. "Touch me," she demanded breathlessly against his mouth while her hips rocked back and forth

against him. It hadn't been that long ago that she'd had sex, yet she felt like it had been ages. She was incredibly horny.

His hands skimmed under her t-shirt and up her back. Then she felt them move to her sides and under her arms. Every pore in her body seemed to be so alive. Sensitive. Alert. And when his thumb brushed the side of her breast, the sensation shot right into her belly. "Jesus."

She had to feel him, now. She shot one hand down between them and pushed her way beneath his pajama bottoms. The instant she felt the tip of his member she knew she had to taste it. Yanking the drawstring open, she drew herself away from his mouth and slid down his body.

"Sweet God, Gypsy."

She was sure if she could see his face now, his eyes would be crossed. She was proud to admit she gave good head, and men loved her pierced tongue. It scraped along the shaft as she licked her way to the top. Then opening her mouth wide, took him all the way in. He gripped her head as she bobbed up and down on his cock. She loved the feel of a man in her mouth, loved the sounds they made when she sucked on them, loved to bring them all the way to the verge, then drink them down in one, long gulp.

Dante didn't disappoint her when he shot his load into her mouth.

She sucked him dry as he grunted with his release. And when he was finished, she released him and slid her way back up his body. "My turn."

"Sweet fucking God! I don't know if I have anything left to give you."

"I'm betting you do." She drew the zipper of her jeans down then kicked herself free of them. It was convenient that she didn't have any underwear because it made jumping him so much easier. With her arms wrapped around his neck, she pulled herself up while he grabbed hold of her ass. Then she sunk down over his throbbing dick.

He penetrated her and the sensation was like nothing she'd ever felt before.

"I need the bed." He panted against her neck as he walked them to his bed then laid her on it all without losing much rhythm.

"Fuck me hard," she demanded, and lifting her legs high, she rested them on his neck.

"Holy fuck!"

That move always astonished the men she'd fucked. It wasn't just pleasurable for her, but for the man as well. She enjoyed being folded

like a sandwich and pounded into delirium. And Dante didn't disappoint.

The headboard clanked with every hard thrust and the bed shook. She felt crazy with need and having him deep inside of her was driving her crazy. He wasn't just long but thick as well and spread her wide. Feeling the orgasm approaching, she slipped a hand between them and massaged her clit.

"Yes, yes, like that. Harder, harder." He pumped himself into her in rapid fire motion and the wave crashed through her. "Oh...my... God..." It was a never ending pulsating wash of wave after wave of sensations. Her hand worked feverishly on her clit, rubbing side to side. She didn't want it to ever end and the way things were going, it might never end.

"Oh, Christ!" He grunted and with one final thrust, pumped himself into her.

She felt him spurting inside as her own orgasm stilled. Then he fell on top of her and she spread her legs, sliding them down his arms until they rested around his waist. "That was incredible."

"And then some. I can't feel my legs."

She laughed and turning her head, saw the blood trickling from beneath the bandage. Instincts kicked in and she slipped her tongue out to lap it up.

And the flavor of him hit a familiar taste bud inside of her that wanted more.

He jerked away, then bolted back as if he'd seen a ghost. "Were you just going to bite me?"

She sat up on her elbows, her body suddenly coming back to life. "I...uh...no, I just...your arm is bleeding. I...tasted it. You don't taste bitter like the blood Trinity gave me."

He glanced over at his shoulder and swore. "Fuck. It's open again. No biting. Got it?" He aimed a stern look in her direction.

"I wasn't going to bite you. The thought never even occurred to me. I like the taste of you." She smiled, wishing he would come back and give her more of his honey, and his cock. "I like the feel of you."

"Just as long as you know I won't stand for you biting me."

"I promise. I won't bite you, Dante. Now come here and fuck me."

"Jesus," he laughed. "Girl, you just fucked me dry."

One look told her he wouldn't be up for that particular challenge anytime soon. "There are other ways of satisfying me." She spread her legs and ran a hand over her still damp pussy.

He got the hint and with a wicked smile, dropped to his knees and lapped her up.



Chaos was feeling claustrophobic and wanted desperately to go out in the fresh air. What good was blotting out the sun if you couldn't go out in the dark and hunt? As he'd planned. But the king was supposed to have killed Basil and Trinity for him. The king was supposed to be here now. But instead, he was gone and Trinity and Basil stalked the darkness taking out anyone and everyone with fangs in hopes of finding him. He wasn't worried his men would rat him out, because they had no idea where he hid out. Sure, he was in the tunnels with them often enough, but his home, where he hid, was kept a secret and only one man knew where it was.

Daniel.

He was proving to be very resourceful. Daniel had instructed his men to take digital photos of Basil's home as well as a video of the property. The stone walls didn't go all the way around the property, which was good. He could get a crew together to stalk in through the forested area behind the castle and sneak up to the house. Then it was as simple as breaking in and attacking.

That plan was currently being formulated and perfected. Everything had to be right when they tried.

He'd been informed that the house on Baker Avenue had been torched. Good. Leave no evidence behind that could lead Basil and Trinity to him. So far his men had accumulated fifty humans. That was fifty more vampires in the city. And when they were ready to go out, they'd gather more. Even though his original plan had gone horribly wrong, he still had a secondary plan. But without the king, it made it so much more difficult.

Chaos wished he had the king's ability for mind control, and if he'd been sired by him, he would have had some of it. But no, Basil had been the one to take him and make him into a vampire. Chaos remembered it well. Basil had been half out of his mind with hunger, and rightfully so as his father had starved him for five days. He'd been chained down to a steel cot and Chaos had been led to him in only a black robe. Basil had latched onto his neck and had drunk him nearly dry. He didn't remember drinking from Basil because he'd blacked out. But when he'd woken, blood still on his lips, he knew he had finally achieved what he'd wanted.

He was a part of the king.

And when Basil had banished the king, Chaos had been furious. He would have taken him out then and there, but Basil had gone into hiding and since he'd only drank from him once, the power to find him wasn't strong enough. And when Basil had finally surfaced, Chaos decided the best plan would be to watch his father take him out as payback.

And it would have been nice if Trinity hadn't sent the king away. She would pay for that.

In the worst way.

CHAPTER SIX

They gathered in the study at just after four in the afternoon. He was still trying to get used to the lack of sun and his body was beginning to feel the effects. His sleeping patterns were out of whack and he felt sluggish and achy. But Jonah kept it to himself because he didn't want to worry his wife more than she already was. He knew she hated when he went out on patrol and, truth be told, so did he. But without him, there was only Basil and Dante and a few of Basil's vampire friends, which weren't many. They were a sad number against a rapidly growing vampire race.

So he went out, night after night, and helped to bring in more vamps in hopes one of them would lead them to where Chaos was keeping himself hidden.

So far, they'd had no luck.

He loved his wife for how strong she was in such a trying time. His Ariel, his light. She was feeling the effects of the lack of sun and bizarre sleeping patterns as well. But she was holding up incredibly well, and even now, as the four gathered to talk their plans over, she was keeping Gypsy company and occupied while they worked.

"I need your computer expertise," Basil said pointblank as he drew a cigarette from the gold case on the desk and lit it with a black lighter he kept in his shirt pocket.

It had been days since he'd had anything computer related and hearing Basil ask for his help now was music to his ears. He laced his fingers together and stretched his hands out, smiling like a kid in a candy store. "Yeah, now we're talking my language."

"Can you come up with a homing device that we can insert under the skin of a vamp, something he or she wouldn't detect but would allow us to trace them?"

"Do you have any idea what you're asking me to do? There is major technology involved in creating a homing device especially something undetectable, not to mention the time and energy involved in creating such a device."

"He likes to do this," Trinity explained to a confused Basil. "Just go with it."

"It would take hours of meticulous work, finite detail, the proper tools and equipment and chips, not just any chips but the best chips. That is a lot to ask a guy."

"Can you do it?" Basil asked with absolutely no humor in his voice whatsoever.

"Hell yeah!" Jonah's face stretched wide with the smile. This was right up his alley. He missed working with electronics and computers.

"Why didn't you just say that in the first place?" Basil asked in a disgusted tone.

Jonah smiled and threaded his fingers through his sandy hair. "Where's the fun in that?"

"Told you. He lives for moments like this."

"Moron." Basil rolled his eyes. "Give me a list of what you'll need and I'll get the items for you."

"What are you thinking with these devices?" Dante wanted to know. He stood near the window, leaning against the wall casually.

"I want them small enough so that we can implant them somewhere under their skin, where they won't notice them and then track them. If we get lucky, one of them will lead us to Chaos."

Jonah nodded in agreement with Basil. "In the scalp would be a good place to insert it. It would be hidden by the hair and the irritation it might cause would be stroked off as scalp itch."

"That's a good idea." Dante nodded with a smirk.

"That's why I'm the brain of the group."

"Or, as we like to call you, the nerd."

Jonah frowned at Basil, not liking that term at all. "Who is this we?"

"All of us?" He thumbed first to Trinity then Dante. "Even your wife."

Jonah snarled at Basil. "Okay, that I don't believe. Ariel would never call me a nerd."

"She calls you a nerd," Trinity verified, laying a hand on his shoulder.

He huffed. "I'm going to have a talk with that woman. I am not a nerd. I am highly intelligent when it comes to electronics and computers but that does not make me a nerd."

"Okay, geek, whatever you say," Basil sneered.

"Pissing me off won't get you those chips you want, Bastard—oops, I mean Basil."

"Okay, boys. Let's not get into a pissing contest right now. Get Basil the list as soon as you can, okay." Jonah nodded, still giving Basil the evil look. "What have you learned from Gypsy, Dante?"

"Huh? What? Me?"

Trinity's brow lifted. "Unless you've decided to change your name? Has she told you anything?"

"No, no she hasn't. We didn't talk much...I mean, we haven't talked much." He ran a hand over his mouth.

Everyone just stared at him.

"What?"

"You're having sex with her," Basil stated.

"Dante. You didn't?" Trinity sighed.

"What? Why is it so bad if I did? She's a hot chick and more than old enough to consent and I'm a big boy." He justified.

"She could be the enemy."

"Which, I highly doubt," he responded to Basil with a snarl.

"We don't know enough about her yet to determine that," Trinity advised.

"Maybe D had this planned. You know, sleeping with the enemy to get the answers." Jonah piped in with a bit of humor. He could see where this conversation was headed and they didn't need to piss off their best man right now.

Dante shot Jonah a sneer. "I did not plan this and she is not the enemy. She was an innocent victim in this insane war right now and you all might remember that before you persecute her." He left in a huff, slamming the door in the process.

"I don't think that was a good idea." Both Basil and Trinity looked over at Jonah. "Pissing him off."

"You just worry about getting me that list, Jonah." Like Dante, Basil stalked out of the room in a huff.

"Well, it's just you and me kid. Unless you want to storm out too?"

She walked over to him and sat down on the brown leather sofa he sat on. Her hand came up and she touched his face. "You've got bags under your eyes."

"What's with the mother act? You're scaring me, Trin." She had never been the kind to be all sweet and worried.

"It all part of this new queen thing. Kind of sneaks up on me sometimes." She shuddered as if shaking it off. "Okay, straight up, Jonah. How are you holding up?"

He relaxed beside her. They were as close as if they'd grown up together. "I'm tired. I'm not sleeping so well, but none of us are."

"Yeah, but you're human. You need sleep." She waited a beat before continuing. "You don't like going out to fight, do you?"

"Hey, I'm a lover, not a fighter." When all Trinity did was sneer at him, he let out a breath and continued. "I hate it. But I'm needed, so I go. I want this all to stop and I know the only way to do that is to find Chaos. To find Chaos means going out in search of someone who will rat him out. It's a viscous cycle but it's what has to be done."

"Well, from now on you're of more use here working on those chips." She rested a hand on his shoulder, gave it a squeeze as she stood.

"Ariel will like that. She misses having me around all the time."

Trinity snorted. "Man, do you even know your wife? She loved it when you were gone."

He threw a heavy leather cushion at her as she left the room.



It was none of their business if he wanted to have sex with Gypsy. He was a grown man, with needs that she so happened to fulfill beyond expectation. And she wasn't the enemy. She was a victim and he wasn't going to interrogate her like she was some criminal.

The sound of crashing glass caught his attention as he was sulking his way through the monstrosity of a house Basil called home. Rushing in the direction it came from, he heard voices that he didn't recognize, and getting closer, saw the vamps climbing through the broken living room window.

"Shit! Shit! We're under attack," he yelled as loud as he could while searching for something to use as a weapon. His fists would

have to do for the moment. He saw three rushing towards him and hoped he could hold his own until someone came to his rescue.

In a boxer's stance, he held his fists up, his feet separated and ready for the fight. He managed to duck from the blow the one vamp sent to him and jabbed him in the gut with a hard upper right. From the corner of his eye he saw the other two darting off behind him. He knew the guy he was fighting with was a diversion and it pissed him off.

Then he heard the footsteps on the stairs and was overjoyed to see Basil coming to his aid. "Behind me, two vamps heading to the study." The vamp he was fighting didn't seem fazed by the blow and caught Dante in the chin with his elbow. It felt like he'd been stabbed by a cleaver in the jaw and he saw stars explode before his eyes. But he didn't give up.

Behind him he heard Basil fighting his own and then Trinity's voice mixed in the bunch with her own battle sounds. They'd manage the two and he'd take care of the third. Spotting a crystal statue to his right, he darted out of the vamps hold and grabbed it. Dante sent it through the guy's heart with one hard push and was satisfied when he crumbled to the ground.

As he turned, he saw Trinity had subdued the other two and had them hanging in mid air, unconscious. "Damn, woman, you are scary."

"And I love her for it." Basil grinned foolishly.

"Where's yours?" she asked as calmly as ever.

"Toasted. Had to, couldn't get enough of a lead to subdue him."

"These will do just fine. We'll lock them up with the others and hopefully get some answers."

"You think these are Chaos' men?" he asked Basil as he rotated his sore shoulder. Cooper was going to be so happy to see him, again.

"Probably. But I'll have fun beating the info out of them in any case. Can you send them to the cells, darling?"

"Right on it."

"They came in through the window. And if they did this once, they'll do it again," Dante informed Basil after Trinity carried her prisoners away.

"Then I guess we'll need to remedy that. I'll see if Jonah has any ideas. You okay?"

"Shoulder's sore, but I'm alive."

"Get Cooper to check it out."

"He threatened to staple my arm if I came back for another round of stitches. So I think I'll pass. Catch you later."

"If you're going to hump your woman, try slipping some questions in while you pump her."

"Fuck off, Basil."



He waited until everyone was in bed before he snuck down to the cellar. He wanted one moment alone with the vamps without anyone questioning his reason why. The hallways that led to the dungeon were always dimly lit. It gave it a creepy air about it that he was sure Basil did on purpose. Reaching the door, he keyed in the code then yanked it open.

"Hey, Jimmy. How's it going?" he asked the burly vamp sitting in the chair at the back of the room. Jimmy was one of Basil's friends, one of the ones that hadn't deserted him yet.

"Quiet night, so far. What's up with you?"

"Restless. This lack of daylight is screwing with my body. Why don't you take a coffee—or blood—break for a while and I'll sit with our boys?"

"I could use a walk, stretch my back. Thanks, Dante. Buzz me if you need me."

"Will do." He waited until the steel door clicked shut before he walked to the cages. "Good evening, boys. How are we doing tonight?"

"Get bent, fleshie."

Dante shifted his gaze to one of the newest inmates, a tall, bony looking creature with a shaved head. "Not liking your accommodations?"

"You won't hold me for long."

Shoving his hands in his jeans pockets, Dante sauntered to the cage. "Yeah, why is that?"

"It's only a matter of time before we rule and you'll be one of our slaves."

"Well, I would like to see you try that from in there. So, any of you boys know a vamp named Danny?"

"Daniel?"

He shifted his gaze to the younger looking vamp they'd had in their custody for a few days now. "You know him?"

"Depends if we're talking about the same guy."

"Young guy, younger than you I suspect. Dark hair, has a cleft in his chin."

"Yeah, I know him."

Dante headed to the younger vamp's cell, excited now because he was getting closer to finding his brother. "How do you know him?"

"We work with him. How do you know him?"

"He's my brother." The laughter of all the vamps filled the empty space in the room and had Dante's attention. "Why is that so funny?"

"How come you're looking for him?" The young vamp asked through the laughter.

"Because he's my brother. I haven't seen him in twenty years."

"Twenty years, huh? Daniel's never talked about a brother. How can we be sure you really are related?"

That hurt and it was already a sore spot. He'd asked himself so many times since seeing Danny on the day of the eclipse why he hadn't seen his brother before then. Why hadn't Danny sought him out, let him know he was alive? It hurt even more now hearing them say that Danny never speaks of him.

Dante pulled out his wallet, then slipped out the picture taken twenty years ago on their thirteenth birthday. He held the picture out for the vamps to see. "Proof enough?"

"Guess he doesn't like you much then, if he hasn't contacted you in twenty years. That's gotta be rough, considering you're twins." The burly vamp laughed.

Yep, just twist that knife a little more in my heart. "How do you know him?"

"How do we know him, boys? Should we fill the poor fleshie in?"

Another vamp chortled. "Sure, what the hell."

The burly one smirked as he spoke. "Your twin, Daniel, happens to be our boss."

"Come again?"

The vamp moved right up to the bars, grabbing two as he leaned into them to speak. "Your twin is our boss and Chaos' right hand man."

Dante narrowed his eyes. There was no way he was going to believe that. "Why did I think I would get any real answers out of low-lives like you?"

"Don't believe me. See if I care. But Chaos has taken a liking to him, so much so he relies on him for nearly everything. He's taken over where Magnus left off."

He'd heard enough. Marching to the door, he keyed in the code then made sure it was secured before he headed down the hall. There was no way his brother was Chaos' right hand man.

Or was he?



With a six pack of beer in hand, Dante headed to his room. Jimmy was once again sitting in the dungeon on patrol, and Gary and Hide were monitoring the house in case someone else tried to break in. The window had been boarded up but the other windows were still vulnerable.

Dante hoped they all got at least a few hours reprieve.

What he needed now was to drown his brain in alcohol so it stopped going over what the vampires had told him about Danny. He didn't want to believe what they'd said, even though deep inside he very much believed them.

For twenty years he had devoted more than half of his time researching the black arts and the creatures that came from it. For twenty years he had searched for his brother, always wondering if he was out there somewhere. And when he finally found him, Danny slipped away from him again. All he wanted was some time alone to ask the millions of questions that have been plaguing him for years.

Dante knew sleep wasn't going to come to him easily tonight, and that was why he hoped to drown himself in barley and hops.

Opening his bedroom door, he flicked on the lights to find a very naked Gypsy lying on his bed.

"What took you so long?"

CHAPTER SEVEN

She was a sight to behold, all milky white skin still so young and fresh. Her pert nipples were a stark difference against the rest of her body, standing out with a ripe rose color. And as he scanned the length of her body lying seductively on his bed, he noticed that she was a natural blond. He wondered what made her decide to color her hair green?

“You just going to stand there or what?”

The last time she’d come to his room she had turned his mind into mush. The woman was a hellfire in bed—well—not just the bed since the first encounter had been standing up in the middle of the room. The memory of her mouth around his shaft instantly made his already hard dick throb. The stud in her tongue was the most erotic thing he had ever felt.

Reminding himself he was a grown man not ruled by his penis, he pushed himself to walk to the tiny table by the window and set the beer down. “How long have you been waiting for me?”

“What time is it now?” She rolled over giving him an excellent view of her ass, and the butterfly tattoo on her left hip as she checked the time. “Two hours, give or take.” She rolled back. “I heard about the commotion earlier. Is everyone okay?”

"Three vamps are no problem for us. They're currently locked up in the dungeon." And for the life of him, he couldn't stop staring at her. He'd seen plenty of naked women in his life, and not just the ones he'd had sex with, but in his line of work, you saw everything. Yet having Gypsy lying on his bed, naked and ready, left him brain dead.

"Are you just going to stand there staring at me or are you going to get undressed and join me on this big, lonely bed?" She ran her hand along the black silk with such easy seduction he wondered how many lovers she'd had in her young life.

"You know, it's not that I expect you to be a virgin, but something tells me you've a long history with men."

"I haven't been a virgin since I was fourteen."

That he was not expecting. "Were you raped?" She'd said she lived in foster homes. Maybe one of them hadn't been the greatest.

She chuckled and the sound was utterly girlish. "No, I wasn't raped. I have a healthy sexual appetite. I was living with a foster family at the time. They had four boys, ranging in age from eighteen to ten. One night as I was getting a drink after lights out, I walked by Reggie's bedroom door and heard him masturbating. He was fifteen. Being the curious type, I snuck through the door and watched. He had a porno magazine open and was busy stroking himself. I felt myself instantly get wet. I couldn't help it and I started to rub myself. I moaned and he heard me. At first he freaked out, jumping from his bed and trying to cover himself. Then he noticed I had my hands in my panties. Long story short, I walked into his room and asked if he wanted to have sex with me. He did, I did, so we got it on. We taught each other a lot."

He'd been seventeen when he'd finally managed to lose his virginity. At fourteen he was masturbating but never once did he picture himself actually fucking a woman. He supposed everyone was different.

"So, now you know. Come get me, big guy?" She teased him with a sultry smile and a stroke of her hand along her body.

He supposed having sex was a better way to drown his mind out, rather than soaking his liver in alcohol. And hell, she was waiting for him. He stripped out of his jeans, t-shirt, and underwear, then walked to the bed. He clicked the bedside lamp on, walked to the door, and shut the overhead lights off. He locked his door and went back to the bed.

"What do you want first? Blow job?"

Dear God, yes. But before he could acknowledge her, she grabbed hold of his member and put it in her mouth. She scorched him with her, hot wet mouth and the scrape of metal from her stud drove him wild. He had never had a woman blow him with a tongue piercing before. He might never want anything else from now on.

She was gifted with her mouth and didn't just bob up and down on it, but swirled her tongue around the base and all the way up as she sucked. When she reached the top, she skimmed her teeth over the edge before engulfing him completely in her mouth. He'd never been deep throated before either. Christ this girl was a dream.

"Slow down, sugar, or you'll make me come." She looked up at him with such a wicked look he nearly blew his load. Then she slid her mouth up his shaft and replaced it with her hand. When she released him, he had a moment of regret for asking her to go slow. Then she moved between his legs and began licking his balls. Her hand stroked him as she licked and toyed with him, bringing him to the brink. "Jesus, Gypsy. I'm going to come."

She took him in her mouth as he let himself go. She sucked him dry as he pumped the last drops into her throat. "Fuck."

"Yes please." She sat up on the bed, kneeling, then sat back and spread her legs. "And hard."

"You have more faith in me than I do."

She grabbed his dick and gave it a good hard squeeze. "Feels fine to me." She inched forward, pressing the tip to her clit. "Real fine."

She wasn't kidding. It did feel fine, fucking phenomenally fine. She was wet and warm and as she rubbed his cock from tip to opening he felt himself hardening once more. Guess he had more in him after all. But when he leaned over to penetrate her, she pushed him aside and crawled on all fours.

"From behind."

Sweet God, yes. She had such a fine ass, all white and smooth and spankable. He wondered what she would think if he smacked her butt. Instead he grabbed her by the waist and positioned himself to her hole. The instant he sunk inside, she began to gyrate. With her head on the bed, her butt up in the air, he pumped himself into her.

"Yes, yes, harder, Dante, harder."

He did his best and pumped her harder and faster, and the urge got the best of him and he smacked her ass.

"God! Yes! Do that again."

Smiling, he obliged. And each time he taped her ass with his hand he felt her pussy clenching hold of his dick. It was such an erotic

rhythm that he never wanted to stop. Then he felt her begin to twitch and he knew her orgasm was fast approaching.

"Yes, yes, do it, do it," she pleaded as her body clamped onto his and sucked him into her cavern of heat.

He pumped her pussy and smacked her ass until he felt his own orgasm explode. Grabbing her by the waist, he pushed deep inside and let himself go.

"Holy crap!" She panted with a laugh, collapsing on the bed. "My orgasms never felt this good before."

Neither had his. "I've never had multiple orgasms before," he said as he dropped down beside her on the bed.

She rolled over onto her side and rested her head on his chest. "It's an incredible feeling, isn't it?"

"And then some." Smiling, he felt himself drifting off. His mind was a complete blank.



Time meant nothing without the sun. Dante never would have believed it, thinking the human body would still be able to regulate itself. But without the sun to tell you it was morning, the body had no clue. It had only been a week, but that apparently was long enough. His body was beginning to ache and felt sluggish.

What would normally be the beginning of summer was now cold and dry. And the eerie thing was, there weren't even any stars and the moon was absent as well. That was a mighty fine Cloak of Darkness the Dark Mystics had evoked over the city.

And he wasn't the only one affected. None of the trees and flowers were budding. Plants weren't popping out of the ground, and the grass was turning brown. It seemed even the animals were feeling it. Not just the dogs and cats that roamed around, but outside wildlife as well. They needed to get the sun back and soon or he, along with most of the city, might just go a little insane.

Dante checked his watch and had to do a double take at the time. It was five fifteen, in the morning, a time when the sun should be rising. Yet they were cloaked in darkness. Why'd he even bother with a watch now?

"Look alive, Dante. Unless you're looking to get dead."

He snarled at Basil and continued to walk beside him. They'd left Jonah behind this time, per Trinity's orders, which was fine with him. Jonah wasn't a fighter and Dante worried one of these times the guy

was going to get himself killed. So he and Basil went one way on patrol and two of Basil's men went another.

"Your mind's on full stream tonight. What's up?"

"Are you looking into my head?" Dante barked it. He didn't like the idea of someone reading him mind.

"I don't read minds. I just control them. You have major frown lines in your forehead. You need a clear head to do this, Dante."

"I know what I need. It's the dark. I guess it's getting to me."

"You and half the city. You see the news yesterday. Two more people committed suicide."

"Fuck. If it isn't the vamps getting them they're taking themselves out. Why the hell doesn't the army just evacuate?"

"I heard they were planning it."

"Would make our job easier."

"That it would. So...you're enjoying our new house guest quite a bit."

Dante shifted his gaze, his forehead creasing a little more. "What do you mean by that?"

"The two of you have been going at it hot and heavy since she showed up."

"How the hell do you know what we've been doing? Do you have surveillance in our rooms?"

Basil laughed as he lit a cigarette. "Now that is a thought. No, I don't have you on surveillance. I can hear the two of you, everyone can. She's a screamer."

Yes, she was, and yet Dante had never given it a thought to whether anyone could hear them or not. "Your walls aren't very soundproof then."

"It's old, what do you expect. Has she told you anything more about her captors?"

"No."

"Have you asked?"

"She's told us all she can remember."

"Why are you so reluctant to question her? You afraid she'll get annoyed and take off on you, leaving you without someone to fuck."

Dante spun on him, fists ready. "Don't make me mess up that pretty face of yours."

"Like you'd have a chance." To prove it, Basil vanished and appeared several feet behind him. "Then what's the real reason?"

He turned around, more annoyed now. "She was victimized. You can't just interrogate someone who was abducted and assaulted."

"Did she say she was raped by them?"

"No, but when I found her all she had on was panties and a bra. A bunch of vampires holding her and they don't want to touch doesn't sound right to me."

"Then just ask her if she was raped. I doubt she was because she wouldn't be so eager to boff your brains out if she had been."

He hadn't thought about that. "Okay, so then...they didn't have sex with her. Still, she was traumatized."

"She seems to have come out of it all right to me. I'm just saying, she doesn't seem too fazed by it."

No, she didn't. She was holding up remarkably well. But that didn't mean he was going to push her for answers. "Let's stick to our agenda for the night, shall we." Walking off, Dante ended their conversation.



Damn, it felt good to be out. It seemed she'd been incarcerated for so long, in one way shape or form. First it had been the jail cell, then the crazy vampire guys and now at Basil and Trinity's. Sure, she had her freedom to go wherever she wanted in the house, but she wasn't allowed to leave the grounds alone.

No one told Gypsy Dawn no.

She'd spent a lifetime being told what to do and when to do it by strangers claiming to have her best interests at heart. All they'd been seeing when looking at her was dollar signs. As long as the families she stayed with got paid, they kept her around. And made her life hell.

She'd run away more times than she could remember, lived in so many different homes she couldn't even keep track. The last time she'd run off was when she'd been caught by Reggie's parent while they were having sex in his bedroom. She knew they'd call the authorities to drag her to yet another home and she wasn't going to have it. So she ran out and never looked back. She'd hitched a ride to the nearest town and been moving ever since.

Then she'd come to Jacob's Cove three months ago, hoping to stick around long enough to get some decent money and found herself being thrown in jail for burglary and theft.

Hell, she'd done it so many times before and never got caught, but this time, she had. And it sucked. They'd stuck her in a cell pending arraignment and locked the doors. On the day of her trial, the sun

had mysteriously vanished and all hell had broken loose. She should thank the sun for that, because it was enough of an opportunity for her to break away from the officer transferring her to the courthouse.

With the city going ape shit, she was able to blend in—well, after stealing some clothing she found hanging on a line in someone's back yard. She'd been more than ready to hitch a ride out of this hell hole when someone grabbed her from behind and shoved a cloth in her mouth.

But she was free now, and she didn't want to dwell on the past. Life was too short to dwell on something you had no ability to change.

She wondered how long she could live now that she was a vampire.

Wouldn't that be bitchin' if she lived forever? Imagine the money she could accumulate in her lifetime. Hot damn!

She pulled to a stop in front of a boarded up clothing shop. She was tired of wearing hand me downs. She'd worn nothing but for most of her life. She missed her clothes but she knew those were long gone since she'd been evicted from her apartment when she'd been hauled off to jail.

Hiking around the back of the shop, Gypsy searched for some sort of entryway that wasn't locked or boarded up. She doubted very much that any of the shops in the city would have their alarms engaged. Seeing a small window near the rear of the building, she jumped for joy. Then she searched for a rock or something to break it with. Seeing a piece of wood lying in the alley behind her, she grabbed it, then swung her arm back and sent it flying through the window. It shattered in nice little pieces and, again, she jumped for joy. Using her elbow, thankful for the long sleeves, she broke away the rest of the glass. Then she shimmied her way inside.

She stood in what was probably the boss' office, then quickly made a dash for the front. "Oh yeah, come to momma." She ran to the racks of clothing, leafing through them for clothes in her size. When she found something she liked, she hung it over her arm. In no time flat she had an armful. Carrying her loot to the front, she grabbed one of the bigger shopping bags from under the counter and stuffed her clothes inside.

Now shoes. Thank God this shop had it all. By the time she was finished she had enough clothes to last her a few months and shoes for several of the outfits, her own underwear and some lingerie. She was looking forward to wearing them for Dante.

He was such a sweetie, and a damn good lay. The guy had stamina and she so loved a man with stamina. She was considering asking him if he thought his friend Jonah and his wife would be into having a foursome. That Jonah was a cutie with those big brown eyes and long lashes. She imagined he was the type of guy who liked to take his time on a woman.

Carrying her bags of clothing and accessories, Gypsy pushed through the back door and hurried to her car. Well, someone's car. She'd slipped the keys from the rack and had taken it without permission. She was sure no one would mind, or notice as Dante and Basil were gone and the others were in their rooms or dealing with the vampire prisoners. She felt sorry for the bastards—okay, maybe not so much. As long as they were locked up, she was happy. And if she had enough nerve, she might go down and see if any of them were the ones that abducted her.

She heard someone screaming in the distance and hurried to her car. She unlocked it, threw her bags inside then climbed behind the wheel. She sped off and headed back to the castle.



"You hear that?" Dante asked, running towards Basil.

"I have ears don't I? It came from the east." Saying nothing else, Basil took off in the direction of the scream.

Dante was right behind him. Though he was fast, he didn't have vampire speed. Doing his best to keep up with Basil wasn't easy and when Dante finally caught sight of him, Basil was already negotiating with the vamp holding a woman by the neck. Dante decided to sneak around the back of the guy and hopefully get a shot off with the taser before the vamp knew he was there.

"Look, if you're hungry, there are other means of getting blood. I could invite you to my place where I have a stocked plasma bar ready for the taking."

"I like my blood fresh."

"Yeah, well this lady doesn't want hers spilled at the moment. And besides, she looks a little sickly. You wouldn't get anything worth while from her anyway."

"I'm betting I would."

Dante took the shot just as the guy leaned down to the woman's neck. He got him in the back and the volts shot through him making the guy do the funky monkey as he released the woman. He went

down on his knees, gurgling. The woman ran to Basil, crying and Dante walked to the twitching vamp.

"That really smarts, I know." He pulled the barbs out of the guys back then tucked the gun in his weapons belt. "It'll subside soon enough. In the meantime, I want you to listen to me. I'm going to let you go, but you have to do me a favor. You don't agree, I let my friend over there take you to his dungeon with the rest of your pals. Wanna know what the deal is?"

Still shaking, the guy nodded. He had spittle sliding down his pointy chin.

"You know who Danny Vega is, right?" The vamp's head bobbed up and down. "You are going to give him a message for me. Tell him his brother Dante wants to talk to him, tomorrow four a.m. at Vega Investigations. Got it?"

The vamp nodded.

"Good. Now, you're going to hit me in the jaw and make it good. I'm going to fall back and you make like a rabbit and run. Got it?" The guy nodded again. "Good. Do it."

Even though you expected the hit, it didn't make it any easier. And the guy had boney knuckles to boot. Dante saw stars as he fell backwards, hitting the pavement. He just hoped the wailing woman kept Basil distracted long enough so he couldn't go after the vamp.

It was just his luck that another vamp came out of nowhere to distract Basil. He wiggled his jaw as he got to his feet. Glancing back, he saw his vamp scurrying off in a staggered run. By the time he turned back to Basil, the guy had the vamp subdued and the weeping woman under control. He really was a smooth operator.

"Where the hell's your vamp?" Basil scowled; his prey unconscious on the ground.

Dante rubbed his jaw as he walked towards Basil. "Clipped me when I went to take the barbs out. Last thing I saw was stars and a blur running past me."

"Shit. Okay, we got this one at least. Let's give this nice, hysterical lady a ride home."

The woman looked like the slightest noise would send her to the moon. "Sure. Where do you live, ma'am?"

"T-taylor S-street," she stuttered, wrapping her arms around her body.

"We'll stick him in the trunk." Basil hoisted the sleeping vamp from the ground and slung him over his shoulder.

"I-in the t-trunk? Won't h-he s-suffocate?"

"You don't have to worry about him," Dante advised, taking her arm and leading her to his car. It was down four blocks but the walk did her good. Even though she clung to his arm, her body wasn't quaking as badly as it had been when she'd first touched him. And by the time they dropped her off at her door and made sure she got inside okay, she was feeling much better.

"What did you do to her?" Dante asked while driving back to Basil's.

"Just a little soothing mind control. By the morning she'll think it was all a dream."

"You do that often?"

Basil smiled and it actually gave Dante the creeps. "When necessary."

"Don't ever do that to me, 'kay? Don't mess with my mind."

"Please, you actually need a mind for me to mess with." Basil vanished before Dante could smack him.

CHAPTER EIGHT

They got the newest vamp locked in the crowded cells, and since his shoulder was screaming like a bitch, Dante decided a nice, hot shower should help alleviate the pain. He stripped from his clothes, tossing them in the corner of the bathroom knowing they'd be gone in a few hours when the maids made their rounds. It was rather nice having maids. He'd never in his life pictured himself being waited on but now that he was, it was kinda nice.

He knew better than to get used to it though. It wasn't going to last. And soon enough he was going to have to go back to his day job and live above his investigations office like a normal Joe. Just as soon as the sun came back.

Dante stepped under the hot spray of water and let it massage his aching muscles. His chin was a splash of color already, but it was well worth the pain. As long as the vamp gave Danny the message it was worth it. He really hoped he did.

It was time he and his brother had a conversation.

He had so many questions for him but, mostly, he just wanted to see him again. That brief moment outside Chaos' compound hadn't been enough. He just couldn't understand why Danny hadn't come to him sooner. Sure, he could factor in that maybe Danny hadn't wanted

him to see him as a vamp. Or that Danny didn't think he would believe that his brother had become an animal. Okay, so the more he thought about it the more he understood. Danny more than likely figured his family thought he was dead, why tell them otherwise?

Turning off the water, he stepped from the shower and toweled off. He changed the bandage on his shoulder and noticed that—miracles of miracles—he hadn't torn any stitches this time. The bitch better heal soon because he was getting tired of being a human pin cushion.

Throwing on a t-shirt and sweats, he glanced at the TV with a fleeting thought to check what was on, then said screw it and headed out of his room. He had too much energy to sit still and watch crap on TV. What he needed was Gypsy.

Dante was pretty sure he was perilously close to becoming a sex addict. He'd enjoyed the act before, but nothing compared to sex with her. She was a goddess in the sack and it didn't hurt that she gave him multiple orgasms.

He never would have thought he would be screwing a vampire. Sure, he'd had the hots for Trinity, but that was before he knew she was a vamp. And, he could admit it to himself if no one else, that having sex with her, knowing that at any time she could bite him, was a huge turn on. Even though he constantly told her no biting. There was always the danger factor that maybe this time she wouldn't listen. Not that he wanted to become one. It was just the allure of the possible biting. Who knew he was a sadist?

He knocked on her door, his dick already throbbing with anticipation. And when she opened it wearing a skimpy, red, see-through nightie, he almost lost it.

"Well, hello, big guy. I was hoping it was you."

What did she just say? "You answer the door in something that would be illegal in most states without knowing it was me?"

"Sure. Why not?"

He pushed her inside and closed the door behind him. "And if it hadn't been me, then what?"

She shrugged delicate shoulders clad in only a thin silk strap. "Depends who it was that was on the other side."

He couldn't believe what he was hearing. Then he saw the pile of clothes on her bed and the bags on the floor and his mind was suddenly occupied by something else. "Where did you get all of those clothes?"

"Um....my place."

"I thought you said you didn't have a place?"

"Right...I don't. A friend lent them to me."

He walked to the bed and having her race him to it was a dead giveaway. He grabbed a blouse and the tag that dangled from it clued him in. "Your friend leaves the purchase tags on? I don't think so, Gypsy, so you had better come clean with me."

She huffed, then plopped down on the bed right on top of the clothes. "I borrowed them."

"Borrowed? Okay, let me explain to you what I do for a living. I am an investigator. I investigate things for a living, which gives me a pretty keen eye and a good sense of when crap is being handed out to me. You didn't borrow shit, Gypsy."

"Okay, fine. I stole them. Happy?"

What a stupid question. "Happy? I am anything but happy. When and where did you grab these?"

"Don't you like my little nightie, Dante?" She stood up, running her hand over the see through material.

His dick twitched and he reminded himself what the important business was right now and it was not easing the ache in his balls. "Answer my question, Gypsy."

Sulking, she plopped back down on the bed. "I don't know the name. One of the shops on Galley street."

"You don't even know the name?" He squeezed the bridge of his nose. She was beginning to give him a headache. "You have to give these all back."

"Nuh uh." She stood up crossing her arms over her chest. "And you can't make me."

Oh, Christ, listen to how young she sounded. "Let me see. Investigators license says, yep, I can."

She lifted her chin defiantly. "What are you going to do, arrest me?"

Oh, she was pushing him now. "Damn straight."

She narrowed her eyes. "Right. You'd give me up to the cops. Please." She snorted.

"What is that supposed to mean?"

She stepped right in his face and grabbed hold of his balls. "And lose the one person who makes your eyes cross? I don't think so."

He was not ruled by his dick. "There's plenty more like you in this city. I could have anyone I chose."

She snorted again and this time, slid her hand up to cup his hard-on. "None of them give you what I can."

He was not ruled by his dick. "Sweetie, I hate to break it to you, but you are nothing special." Oh, now that was just nasty.

Her eyes went wide. "How dare you."

She made a move now that completely took him by surprise. She grabbed his arm, twisted it behind his back and pushed him to the door all before he even had a moment to realize what was happening. The next thing he knew, she opened it and shoved him out. He turned just as the locks clicked on the door.

"Open the door, Gypsy."

"Go to hell, Dante."

"Woman trouble?" Jonah asked, coming up behind him. He had a tray in his hand with two glasses of milk and two sandwiches. It reminded Dante he hadn't eaten in several hours.

"Yes. Do you know where Basil and Trinity keep the room keys?"

"Not off hand. Why'd she lock you out?"

"Long story." He left Jonah in the hall and marched to Basil and Trinity's room. He hammered his fist on the door, then waited impatiently for someone to come to the door. When Trinity answered, he spoke gruffly. "I need the key to Gypsy's room."

"Why?"

"You don't need the particulars. Where is it?"

"I am not giving you the key to her room without a damn good reason."

He jammed his hands in his pockets. "She somehow snuck out and stole a shit load of clothes. I want her to take them back."

"Are you serious?"

He slanted his eyes. "Perfectly."

"We have bigger fish to fry right now, Dante."

He couldn't believe what she was saying. "She stole from someone and you want me to let it go?"

"Yes."

"Well, I can't."

"And what are you planning on doing? Drag her to the cops?"

"Take the clothes back."

Her brow lifted. "Dante, it's just some clothes."

"She probably had five hundred dollars worth of stuff in her room."

"Wow. Okay, I'll deal with it."

He didn't like that idea at all. "I am more than ready to deal with it myself."

"Dante. I know you're thinking with your cop brain, but think about what's important right now. You think that shop keeper is even in town? And if he or she is, you think they've been to the shop recently? I doubt it. So they aren't even going to know anyone stole from them."

"And that makes it alright?"

"No, it doesn't. I'm just saying in the grand scheme of things, that's small potatoes. Get the sun back and you'll be the city's hero. No one will care if some clothes are missing. Now, go get some sleep. You look like hell."

She closed the door in his face and he stood there a moment with his jaw open. Then he spun around and stomped his way to his room. He was a man of the law. He upheld the law. He couldn't just sit by while someone broke it.

Okay, so he wasn't going to hand her over to the cops, and not because she was a good lay. He couldn't do it because she'd been through enough lately. She was still young, and impulsive. She just had to be taught that you can't just take what you want whenever you want it. And if she wasn't going to return the items, then maybe he would.

Good idea!

The only problem was, how was he going to get all the clothing and items out of her room without her knowing about it? Never mind returning them. Okay, so maybe he was thinking too much about this. Still, he had to uphold the law. Wasn't that why he went out every day to protect the city from the blood sucking animals that were preying on the innocent?

The sound of crashing glass shook him out of his thoughts. He threw his door open and darted out into the hall as Trinity and Basil flew from their room. "Where did it sound like it came from?"

"Main floor, dining hall." Basil vanished and, before Dante could say another word, Trinity followed.

"Well, that's just cheating."

"What's going on?" Jonah asked, coming out into the hall.

"My guess is more invaders. Stay up here and protect the women."

"Happy to."

Dante flew down the stairs to see Trinity and Basil with their hands full of vamps. Basil was fighting two and Trinity had three. Two more were heading his way. He could hear footsteps running up the cellar stairs and he prayed to God they came from one of their

own. "We need back-up." And he wished he'd brought his weapons with him.

Looking around the room, for anything he could use, he saw the ornate table against the wall and leapt for it. Grateful he still wore his boots, he gave it a solid kick and splintered the thin wooden legs. He managed to kneel down and grabbed one just as he was attacked. The arm came around his neck in a massive choke hold. Gasping for breath, he clawed at the splinters on the floor and finally managed to grab one. Though he couldn't see the man holding him, he could judge where his face was. Lifting his arm, he jabbed the wooden splinter over his shoulder and right into the guy's face. He could only hope it was an eye.

With the way he was screaming, Dante figured he hit his mark. The instant he was released, Dante spun around and sent the vamp to dusty land. He stood, ready to take on another one only to see Trinity hold her hand up and yell freeze.

Only problem was, she didn't just freeze the vamps. He had enough thought to know he wasn't in control of his body any more, but that was it. Oh, and he was sure he was drooling.

"Damn it! Move!" She chanted and Dante nearly fell flat on his face. "Sorry. I'm still trying to figure all these powers out."

"Practicing on the prisoners might be a good idea, love," Basil advised as he fought his assailant. "Screw capture. Take them out!"

"You got it, boss." More than happy to do a little jab and dust, Dante positioned the wooden leg and ran into the crowd Basil was fighting with. By the time they were done, they were all a little bloody from the fight, and covered in vampire dust. "Okay, explain to me why you guys disintegrate?" Dante asked while dusting himself off.

"You want the long or short version?" Basil picked up the table Dante had smashed. "This was a priceless heirloom."

"And it worked well. Short version."

"In humans, vampire blood is like a virus. It infects your blood, eating and destroying all the good cells that used to belong to you as a human. Where does your blood go as it runs through your veins? The heart. When the heart is pierced and stopped, the blood stops flowing and attacks the body causing the cells to explode and essentially burns it up from inside out."

Dante dropped his chin and stared at Basil in disbelief. "First, that was the short version? Second, you're kidding me?"

Basil shrugged. "I speak the truth. That's why in order to kill one of my kind, you need to stab it in the heart. Stop the blood flow."

"Shit!" Dante rubbed his chin in thought. He was learning something new every day. "So why do you have to drink blood? I never got that?"

"Human blood has everything a vampire's doesn't but did at one time. Your blood consists of hemoglobin, which is the protein molecule in red blood cells that carries oxygen from the lungs, which in turn sends it to the body's tissues and returns carbon dioxide from the tissues to the lungs. The iron in hemoglobin is what makes your blood red and the whole reason why vampire's blood is a sickly gray. Because at one time your body as a human consisted of hemoglobins, it now craves it as a vampire. And the more a vampire drinks, the stronger he or she will feel."

"Man, it all makes sense now. So actually, it's not an animalistic thing but more of necessity."

"Right on the nose. Vampires need blood to survive because at one time, it was what made them survive."

"What about a transfusion? Could that cure a vampire?"

Basil shook his head. "No, because as fast as the blood would come into the body, the vampire virus would eat it up. There is no cure for vampirism."

"This has been entertaining, but we need to figure out something to stop Chaos' men from constantly breaking in here."

"Her Majesty is right." Basil ducked out of the line of fire before Trinity could deck him. "We need Jonah to rig some sort of alarm system for this place. And the sooner the better. I'll contact Gage and see how soon they'll be back with the supplies."

"I'll go let Jonah know it's safe to come out of hiding," Dante said as he sauntered from the room.

"Hey! What about helping me clean up this mess?" Trinity yelled at them.

"That's women's work." The next thing he knew she was in front of him and her fist was slamming into his gut. Dante buckled over, coughing, and watched as her feet stomped up the steps.

Clutching his belly, he couldn't help but smirk.



Dante was dosing off and drifting into a dream when he felt the bed give beside him. In his daze, he ignored it. Until he felt someone on his chest. Opening his eyes, he saw Gypsy over top of him, looking down on him. His first thought was, "Shit, she's going to bite me

and get even for earlier." In a quick move, he grabbed her arms and flipped her over onto her back and pinned her to the bed.

"You were going to bite me."

"I was not!"

"Then why were you on top of me while I was asleep?"

"Well, duh, dummy. I was going to have sex with you."

He paused in thought. "I thought you were mad at me?"

"Well, I was, but I figured one way to get you to come to your senses and not hand me over to the cops was to fuck your brains out."

Was she for real? "You think I'll give up on making you return those clothes because you fucked me?"

"It worked when I got a speeding ticket once."

His jaw dropped. "You had sex to get out of a ticket?"

"Sure."

His jaw dropped a little further.

"If only it had worked last week, but no, that cop had to be by the book."

"Excuse me?"

"Crap. You weren't supposed to know that."

He sat back on the bed as she sat up. "Know what?"

"Well, like I'm going to tell you now. Shit. I gotta boogie."

He grabbed her arm before she could dart off the bed. And that was when he noticed she was still wearing the see-through nightie. "Not until we discuss this further."

"I am not discussing anything if it means you're carting me off to jail. I will not go back there again."

"Again?"

"Yeah, again. Back off, Dante."

She unsheathed her teeth and it was the first time since that moment in his apartment that he'd seen her vamp come out. "Let's call a truce for the moment and just talk this out like rational adults."

"Promise me you won't take me to jail?"

We have bigger fish to fry right now, Dante. Trinity's words came back to haunt him. "All I want to do is talk."

"Fine." She sat back down but continued to scowl at him.

He relaxed at the foot of the bed. "Why don't you tell me why you were in jail?"

She crossed her arms over her chest. "I was arrested for breaking and entering, and robbery."

"Of?"

Her yellow eyes narrowed. "A clothing shop."

He slapped a hand on his face. This hadn't been her first time. "Have you ever been arrested before?"

"No."

He removed his hand to stare at her. "Please don't tell me you had sex to get out of it?"

"No, I was just never caught." She held her hand up when his mouth opened. "You wanna start on me, let me tell you how hard it is out there for someone my age who doesn't have an education or job or a family. I was raised in one foster home after another. My life wasn't easy."

"And that's supposed to excuse it. Come on, Gypsy. There are plenty of people in the world that had a hard upbringing but they manage to make something of themselves."

"I don't need a lecture," she snarled and again the fangs came out.

"Fine, no lecture, but I will say this, I am going to help you turn yourself around."

"Are you now?" It was said sarcastically.

"Yes I am. And from now on, no more stealing."

"Are you going to make me return all my stuff?"

He chewed on it a while. "No, but only because there would be no point. The city is beginning to be evacuated. But no more, got it?"

She saluted him, dryly. "Yes, sir."

"You're young, Gypsy. There's still time to make something of yourself."

"My hero," she said as she slinked her way towards him. "Did you know your lip is bleeding?"

He touched a finger to his lip and felt the sting. "Yeah, got it from a couple of vamps that broke in. We're taking turns patrolling the house tonight. What are you doing?" She took his hand in hers, then lifted his finger and stuck it in her mouth. It was an erotic motion of sucking that went right to his dick.

"I like the way you taste," she said, licking the tip of his finger. "Familiar."

"You're talking about my blood?"

"Yeah." She looked into his eyes now. "You worry that I might bite you and make you into a vampire?"

"Well, yeah." He could easily admit that.

"I wouldn't," she promised, climbing right onto his lap. "I've already told you that."

"Yeah, but the way you look at me sometimes, and when you do stuff like that, licking my blood, it makes me worry."

"I promise I will never bite you." She kissed him and he felt her sucking on his bottom lip.

And then she began to gyrate against his already growing hard-on. He was damn glad he liked to sleep in the nude. She straddled him and took him inside. The instant her soft, silky lips wrapped around his shaft he was a goner. She kissed him deeply, sucking on his lip, licking it with her tongue. The pain was somewhat erotic.

He wanted to latch onto her breasts in the worst way, but every time he tried to pull away, she sucked a little harder. And the more she sucked, the faster she moved over top of him.

"Holy hell!" she cried out, finally releasing his mouth. She had blood on her lips. His blood. She threw her head back as she worked her hips back and forth over him. And he was finally able to take her breasts as he'd wanted.

"I can feel it, inside of me. Oh wow, it's like...like...euphoria. I'm coming, yes, yes, yes."

She bucked over him so hard he had to brace himself to prevent them from falling off the bed. Then he felt it. She clamped onto him with a vise like grip and began pumping him from inside. With each contraction of her orgasm, she sucked him in and it was the most incredible thing he had ever felt. "Sweet fuck." He grabbed her hips and pressed her down onto the bed. He needed leverage as he came and knew when he was done he wouldn't have an ounce of energy left in him to hold them both up.

Then he just let himself go.

"Yes, more, more, more." She pulled his head down and took his mouth in a hard possessive kiss.

She sucked him dry on so many levels.

Collapsing over her, he panted as the final drops spilled from him into her.

"I think your blood is an aphrodisiac for me."

"Okay." Was all he managed then drifted off to sleep.

CHAPTER NINE

They'd received the shipment of electronic equipment Basil had ordered and had his men pick up. Now all they needed was for Jonah to work his magic and hook the house up to an alarm system that would not only alert them of someone on the premises, but if they attempted to access any entry, would receive a very nasty jolt. Dante didn't know what Jonah was doing, computers were an absolute mystery to him, but the guy seemed to understand what he was doing.

They'd set everything up in the study and computer parts and electronics were strewn about the room. It actually reminded Dante of Jonah's computer shop after Basil had taken his hissy fit when Trinity had been killed by the king.

"How long do you think this will take?"

Jonah didn't bother to look over his shoulder at Basil but kept working as he responded. "Longer if you keep watching me like this."

Basil huffed, folding his arms against his chest, and began to pace. "You've been at it for five hours already."

"You know what, Basil?" Jonah pushed from his chair and stood up. He was obviously pissed. "You think you can do this faster? By all means, have at it."

"Both of you calm down," Trinity interjected from her spot across the room, working on her computer. "Before I bash your heads in."

"Her Majesty has spoken." Dante shriveled back when Trinity sent him a seething glare. Why she hated being called that was beyond him. "I gotta ask, man, because it's been nagging me since we started all this. How the hell do you make your money? You don't have a job, yet you live in a castle, have endless amounts of money, especially for this kind of equipment."

Basil scowled at Jonah as he replied to Dante. "Investments."

"Okay, but how do you get the money to invest?"

"I've been around for centuries. You think I started out rich? Hell no. I worked my way up. Yes, in my youth I stole money and I used my gifts to attain money, but I managed to invest a great deal of it. I've bought properties over the years, invested in companies and I've gained and I've lost. But it's been centuries in the making. And why are you just sitting there, Jonah? Work!"

"I swear, Basil, if you don't back off I'll send you to dusty land," Jonah warned in a quiet yet no less deadly tone.

"Yeah, I would like to see you try."

Jonah stood and that was when Dante decided it was best if he distracted Basil and got him out of the room. "I have a problem that only you can help me with, Basil. Can I have a minute with you?"

"A minute," he grumbled as he left with Dante. "What?"

Dante closed the study door both to keep Basil from glancing inside and worrying and from anyone hearing what he was about to say. "What happens to a vampire if they drink someone's blood while having sex?"

Basil's brow lifted as he leaned his back against the wall. "I still smell human in you so she didn't turn you. Tell me what happened."

Dante glanced down the hallway, making sure no one was lurking about. "Last night, she tasted the blood from my lip and it did something to her. She said it was like my blood was an aphrodisiac and her orgasm was way beyond extraordinary. I have never felt a woman's pussy contract like that before."

"Hm..." Basil rubbed a hand across his face.

"Hm, what?"

"Typically, a vampire's sire's blood is only capable of doing that."

"I'm lost."

"Think of birth. When a vampire takes a victim for their own, they are giving birth to a new being, and drinking their blood is the equivalent of a mother nursing a newborn. The more the new one drinks from their sire, the closer they are connected. And if the two remain

close, and they feed from each other during sex, it can be an extraordinary high. Like an aphrodisiac."

"But I wasn't the one that sired her."

"Thus the conundrum. How much did she drink from you that first day?"

"Enough that I felt weak and lightheaded but not enough to make me black out."

"Hm..."

"Again with the hm. What?"

"And that was the only time she drank from you?"

"Yes. You're worrying me now, Basil." The look on his face was enough to bother him.

"She shouldn't be reacting to your blood that way. I'm as confused as you are."

"Great." He was as clueless now as he had been before.

"Has she tried to bite you since?"

"No." He shook his head. "And she says she never will because I saved her."

"But it worries you that she might?"

He shrugged. "It doesn't keep me awake at night, but it's on my mind when we're together."

"And that's the turn on." Basil laid a hand on his shoulder, grinning. "You're not the first human who enjoyed the dangers of vampire sex."

Dante stood there as Basil went back into the study. Yeah, it was a turn on. Did that make him a sick man?



With delicate precision, Gypsy aligned each item of clothing in order of color, blouses first, then dresses. And when she was finished, she stepped back for one more look. She'd had twice this many clothes before she'd been evicted from her apartment. Damn landlord. Okay, so she'd been three months behind in her rent, but the least he could have done was let her get her stuff out before changing the locks. All she'd had on her was the clothes she'd been wearing. Who could live with only the clothes on their back? Of course she'd had to break into a store to get more to wear. Damn store for having a security system fully equipped with lockdown bars.

She'd been a trapped rat.

Gypsy hated being trapped. It reminded her of her youth when she'd been locked in her room for disobedience. She liked her free-

dom, like to come and go as she pleased, do as she pleased. Funny thing was, she didn't feel trapped right now. She rather liked this monstrosity of a home, liked being waited on, liked that she could lounge in bed all day if she wanted to and not worry about being booted out for not having money.

And that's exactly what she was doing now.

She knew everyone was downstairs working on some sort of security system to keep the bad vamps out. But she was just fine where she was. Stretched out on her bed, wearing nothing but a t-shirt dress, Gypsy watched TV. Basil's satellite kicked ass. He had all the best channels, even porn. She liked watching other people have sex, imagining herself right there with them.

She liked sex. Especially now. Since she'd become a vampire, everything felt a hundred times better. It was like every pore on her skin was open, alive. Her erogenous zones were more sensitive and the orgasms...well, those were beyond phenomenal. Especially the ones she'd had the night before. It had definitely been the blood. Dante's blood.

She picked up her glass of blood, examining it for a moment. When Dante's blood had touched her tongue, she'd felt something tingle inside of her. And when he'd been inside of her, and she'd sucked on his wounded lip, her body had been electric. She felt high from it. And when she'd orgasmed her body had felt like a rose bud, opening in the sun as it began to bloom. Then it had crashed over her in wave upon wave of hot, glorious delight.

And just thinking about it now was stirring her up.

She took a gulp of the blood in her cup and frowned. It tasted bitter. Not sweet like Dante's had. Setting it aside, she slipped off the bed and decided to see if Dante was up for another round of good, hot sex.

Shutting the TV off, she left the room and headed down the hall to his door. She knocked, twice and when he didn't answer, she stepped inside. His lights were out and he wasn't in his bed. Pursing her lips, she pulled her t-shirt dress over her head then crawled under the covers.

She'd just lay here and wait for him to come back.



There had been a time when he'd been free to come and go as he pleased. Now, he was resorting to sneaking away without letting anyone know where he was going. Thank God Trinity, Jonah, and Basil

were still busy trying to get the alarm system up and running. When he'd left an hour ago, Jonah was filling them in on how the system would work. It was all above his head so he'd bowed out.

What they didn't know was that he hadn't gone to take the shower he'd said he was heading to. And if he had his way, they wouldn't even know he was gone.

He drove into Jacob's Cove, and like all the times before now, he was struck by the deathly silence of the city. It wasn't a large city, only consisting of fifty seven thousand people, give or take. But entering it since the sun had been blocked was like entering a ghost town. It always gave him the creeps.

He drove along the darkened streets only lit by street lamps, and even some of those weren't working. His eyes, always on alert, scanned the area for any activity. That, too, was non existent. Maybe they'd dwindled down Chaos's legion and there weren't enough of his vamps to send out to cause trouble.

It was a nice thought, but he wasn't going to hold to it. He had a feeling Chaos had more than enough men under his power.

Including his brother.

He still didn't want to believe that but since he was pretty damn sure it had been Chaos that had sired Danny, it stood to reason that he was under Chaos' control.

Pulling into the parking lot at Vega Investigations, he did one more scan before slipping out of the car. So far his shop had held up. It helped having the alarm system, and another factor in his favor was the lack of money or valuables in his shop.

He disengaged the alarm and was about to open the back door when he heard a noise. Always on alert, his hand slipped to his belt and the taser that sat ready.

Then he saw him step out of the shadows.

"Danny?"

"You called?"

He couldn't help but stare. His brief encounter days before hadn't awarded him enough time to actually look at his long lost brother. Though, by rights they were both thirty-three years old, Danny looked no older than seventeen. His hair was dark and long coming past his shoulders and tied back from his face. His eyes were the yellow of his kind, and his body was thin and lean.

And all Dante wanted to do was take him in his arms and give him a huge bear hug.

"I can't believe it's really you."

"In the flesh, bro." Danny slipped his hands in the pockets of his jeans and gave Dante the once over. "So that's what I'll look like in sixteen some years. Huh. Could be worse." He grinned.

"I'm...man, I'm just at a loss for words yet I have so many. We should do this inside." His brain was a whirlwind of thoughts. He yanked the door open and stepped inside, Danny right behind him. He clicked on the hall light then headed to his office. He sat behind his desk and clicked on the lamp beside him. He watched his brother take his chair and still he couldn't stop staring.

"So...."

He blinked, shook his thoughts away, and cleared his throat. "Sorry. I just can't get over the fact that I'm sitting here, with you. That you're really alive. I hoped, yet...well..."

"You never expected me to be a vampire. I get that, and that's why I never contacted you. Well, for the first few months I really had no choice. I was kinda locked away until I surrendered myself."

Dante sat forward now. "Chaos locked you up? Jesus, Danny."

"It's not as bad as you think. I panicked when I came to. I thought, shit, Mom and Dad are going to kill me. So I...uh...went a little crazy. They had to subdue me. They kept me like that for...shit...I think it was a few months."

"I can't believe this." Dante got up and sat on the front edge of the desk. "He locked you up and you still stuck with him?"

Danny shrugged a thin shoulder. "Chaos is my master. He saved me."

"Saved you? He's the one that made you the way you are today. He's a monster."

"You only say that because your friends are filling your mind with lies. Chaos is a true leader, more so than the ones you cling to."

"My God, Danny. You can't believe what Chaos wanted to do, what he is still trying to do is right?"

"Of course I do. And if you had what I have inside of you, then you'd feel the same way. I am more alive now than I ever was when I was human."

"How can you say that?"

Danny stood and now they were nearly face to face. "I have not been sick one day in twenty years. I have more energy inside of me now than I ever did before. And strength...you would not believe the strength I have. I always felt like my skin was too small for me. I felt

like I didn't belong, like there was something else for me but I never knew what it was. Until I was turned. I finally feel like I belong."

Dante's chest burnt and the hurt from that statement clogged his throat. "Why didn't you ever tell me how you felt?"

Danny wandered the room, looking down and kicking the files piled up on the floor lightly. "You wouldn't have understood. You were comfortable with yourself. You knew who you were and you knew what you wanted." He turned back to Dante and shoved his hands in his pockets. "And you became exactly what you set out to be. You always said you wanted to help people, and you have. First as a cop, now as a P.I."

Why hadn't he seen it? He should have, with his brother's rebellious behavior, always running with the wrong crowd, never being satisfied with anything. Yet he'd thought they had been so close.

Now, looking back, he saw it differently.

"I wish you'd have talk to me."

He shrugged again, still moving about the room. "We're both happy and things worked out for us both. I don't see a need to dwell on the past."

The past was all he'd had for so long. "I've heard, from sources, that you have become Chaos' right hand man. Is that true?"

"Sources," Danny said, looking over at him. "Don't you mean prisoners? And yes, I'm Chaos' next in command. I guess that puts us on opposing sides."

Yes, it did. "I wish you would come join our side."

Danny's lips curved up as he shook his head. "Weren't you listening when I said I was happy? I like where I am. Why would I leave?"

"Because we plan to take Chaos out and I don't want you caught in the crossfire."

"Well, bro, I would have to say good luck trying. We outnumber you and our legion grows daily. What do you have but a few stragglers who cling to a hope for something that can never be?"

He couldn't believe what he was hearing. "I don't want to fight you, Danny."

Now his mouth lifted in a wide smile. "Then I suggest you leave town. Great seeing you again, bro." Stepping over a pile of files, Danny headed out of the room.

Dante sat on the edge of his desk, feeling absolutely disillusioned. He'd spent the better part of twenty years looking for his brother, trying to find out who had taken him, ready to avenge him. He'd clung to memories of a young boy who he apparently hadn't really known.

He'd been lost when Danny had been taken, had felt like a part of him had been taken as well.

Now, all he had was a hole in his heart.



Gypsy watched as Jonah typed away on his laptop and imagined what those fingers would feel like playing over her body. He was such a cutie, and those big brown eyes of his really could melt a girl's heart. She wondered what he would say if she asked him to participate in a threesome with her and Dante. She wasn't interested in his wife, had never been interested in women. Maybe they could do it sometime when Ariel was asleep. She was asleep now.

It seemed that was all she did.

Sleep was an afterthought for Gypsy now. She could do without it, and managed to go with only a few hours sleep a week. It had surprised her that she'd fallen asleep in Dante's bed. And disappointed to wake up without him beside her. So she'd gone in search of him.

She'd stumbled upon Jonah, Basil, and Trinity working to get the alarm system running.

"Okay, explain this to me again."

"Gee, for someone who's been around as long as you, I'm surprised you're so dense."

"Jonah," Trinity warned him, stepping in front of Basil before he could pummel Jonah. "I think we're all on edge from lack of sleep and being together all the time," she explained, planting a palm on Basil's chest.

"I know I'm tired. I've been at this for nearly twenty hours now. Okay, listen up because I'm not explaining it again. Every sensor that is connected to the house is attached to this baby here." He patted his laptop then continued. "When someone enters the property, it's alerted and the computer sends out a blip indicating a presence. It automatically engages the security function on all entryways. Each one of us will have a keypad, much like a car remote, and all we have to do is punch in the code as we enter the property and it alerts the system of our presence. Anyone else enters will be in for a shock. Anyone who touches the door knob or door will be given a nice 50,000 watt jolt that will immobilize them long enough for one of us to get to them. Same goes for the windows."

"What if someone kicks in a door or window open?" Gypsy inquired, getting in right beside Jonah. She liked the fact that he always smelled like soap. No cologne, just soap.

"The alarm system lets out an ear splitting siren that will not only scare the living shit out of us, but alert the intruder that we are armed and ready. If they so much as put one hand on the glass or door frame, they will be jolted," he explained to everyone. "Your boys did a wonderful job installing the devices, by the way. Who knew that vamps could be handy with tools?"

"Yeah, they left a hell of a mess. Cooper's not impressed," Basil supplied.

"When his life is saved because of the alarm system, he'll be happy. So, do you get how it works now?"

"Pretty much. But how do we know it works?" Just as Basil finished his sentence, the computer made a blipping noise.

"That's how." He tapped the keyboard and brought up a view from the front entrance. "You need better lighting out there for me to make out who's approaching."

"I'll get someone on that right away. He's approaching the front door."

"It's Dante," Gypsy said without having to look at the computer.

"Dante's in his room," Trinity supplied, leaning into the screen to get a closer look. "It is too dark."

"He's not in his room. I just came from there."

"Then you must have just missed him," Trinity advised.

"He's not in the house. I'm telling you, that's Dante. I can sense him." She headed to the front door and was halted by Basil.

"Until we can be sure it is, we don't open that door."

"So you're just going to let him get zapped? That's insane. I'm telling you, it's him. Let go of me," she growled, showing her fangs at Basil when he grabbed hold of her arm. She heard another ping from the computer, then a gurgled scream and then a thud. "You fried him." Breaking Basil's grip, she tossed him across the room and ran for the door. "Disengage it," she screamed as she reached for the door knob. She yanked the door open and saw Dante slumped on the ground, twitching.

CHAPTER TEN

"He's dying." She ran to him, falling down beside him and took his head in her hands. His body shook as she stroked his face, wiping the drool from his mouth. "Call an ambulance. Get a doctor. Help him, someone help him." She couldn't lose him. She just couldn't lose him.

"He's not dying, Gypsy," Trinity supplied, coming up beside her as Jonah and Basil followed. "He's not going to be feeling too swell when this wears off, but he'll be alive. Take him inside."

"I have him." She pushed both Jonah and Basil aside and lifted Dante in her arms. She carried him not just inside, but up the stairs to his room. She knew they followed her though she wished they'd leave them both alone. "What did that do to him?" she asked, laying him on the bed, watching his body slowly calm down.

"You ever been shocked by a light switch or outlet?" Jonah asked.

"Yes." She continued to stroke the hair from Dante's face. His eyes were open yet she felt like he wasn't looking at her.

"Imagine that tiny jolt 50,000 times worse. It's the same voltage that's in a taser gun. Rarely lethal but damn potent in bringing a perp down. Dante will be feeling weak and sore when he wakes up, but nothing that warrants a hospital stay."

"Cooper can help him with whatever aid he needs," Basil supplied.

"Get some damn lights out there so no one else gets hurt. Leave us alone now," she snapped, laying down beside Dante, resting her head on his chest. She took comfort in hearing his heart beating, even if it was a little erratic.

"He'll be fine, Gypsy. Trust me."

Gypsy didn't reply to Trinity and hoped by ignoring her she'd get the hint and leave. She wanted them all to leave. And when they finally did, she let out a long breath. "I'm sorry that happened to you, baby."

"I...gr....mo..."

She lifted her head to see him rapidly swallowing. "They say you'll be fine. Just relax, baby, just relax." She kissed his mouth, stroked his face then kissed his face over and over again.

"Ho...hoo...hol-ly-y...fu...uck."

She sat up when she felt his arm lift. "Are you back?"

"Sweet fuck. I feeell like I aatee a live wire. What the hell happened?"

"You got zapped by the new alarm system. Where were you?"

"Water. I need some water."

"Sure." She hurried off the bed and ran to the washroom. When she came back with a glass of water, he was sitting up in bed. "Here you go."

His hand shook as he took the glass. "I'm going to kill those bastards."

She held the bottom of the glass while he lifted it to his mouth and drank. "I knew it was you but they didn't believe me. They refused to turn off the alarm. I'm so sorry this happened to you."

"I've had worse, but hell, I'd just as soon never feel this again." He set the glass on the bedside table then drew in a deep breath. "Apparently Jonah got the alarm system working while I was gone?"

"Yeah." She stroked his hair gently. He was such a babe, and he was all hers. "Where did you go?"

He let out another long breath. "I needed to see my brother."

"You have a brother?" She cuddled up beside him, lifting his arm to slide it behind her neck as she cuddled his chest.

"Yeah, and a sister, Lexi. Danny's a vampire. Happened twenty years ago but I didn't really know for sure until last week. This was the first time I've been able to talk to him since he was taken."

"Everyone thought you were still here. Why didn't you tell anyone where you were going?" What she wanted to say was, "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I knew they wouldn't let me go. We're not supposed to go out alone. But I had to see him."

"I understand." She unbuttoned his shirt and stroked her fingers along his chest. She loved the feel of his skin, the silkiness of his chest hair. "How did it go?"

"I don't know him. I guess I never did know him. We were identical twins but we were exact opposites. Danny and I used to be inseparable. I thought we were close, but from what he told me tonight, I was clueless."

"Did you say his name was Danny?"

"Yeah. Why?"

"It's kinda funny. No, never mind. Go on."

"What's funny? Tell me." His fingers played with her hair.

"It's just, well, the guy I drank from, they were calling him Danny. They kept chanting, Danny, Danny." He sat up abruptly, and she fell back onto the pillow.

"Are you sure that was his name?"

She sat up on her elbows. "Yeah. I didn't remember that until you mentioned the name. Weird."

"What did he look like?"

There was an urgency in his voice now. "I don't know. I don't remember his face. I didn't see his face, just the top of his head."

"What color was his hair?"

She sat up cocking her head to the side. "Black, like yours but longer. A lot longer. You don't think —"

"That my brother was your sire? Hell yes!" He climbed off the bed and his legs wobbled. "It makes sense. Fuck. It makes perfect sense."

She watched as he rushed to the phone, completely baffled as to who or why he would be calling.

"I need you in my room," he said simply then set the phone down and turned to her. "Christ, it all makes sense now."

"Not to me it doesn't." Maybe his brain was damaged from the jolt he'd received. Something that strong had to affect the brain.

The door flew open and Basil and Trinity raced into the room.

"I understand now," Dante blurted out.

"Are you okay? Do you need a doctor?" Trinity asked touching a hand to his face.

"I'm fine. Okay, no, not really. My body is as jittery as that time I drank three pots of coffee while on a stake-out but that's beside the point. Gypsy was sired by my brother," he exclaimed, turning his attention to Basil.

Gypsy had no idea what the hubbub was about and decided to just sit on the bed and wait it out.

"Makes sense." Basil rubbed his chin. "But how can you be certain?"

"Gypsy remembered his name. I went to see my brother tonight. Yeah, I know, save the lecture. Anyway, I mentioned his name and she said the guy who sired her was named Danny. It all makes sense why my blood stimulates her, why she is drawn to me. Danny and I were identical twins."

"Damn!" was all Basil said.

"This is bizarre," Trinity spouted.

"And then some."

"I'm lost," Gypsy piped in finally having had enough of being left in the dark.

Dante joined her on the bed and took her hand in his. "I told Basil about last night, and what my blood did to you. He said that only a sire's blood acts as an aphrodisiac, but of course, I'm not a vampire so that was impossible. But because Danny and I are identical twins with the same DNA and everything, your body would think my blood was his. That's why you're attracted to me, why you feel so close to me, why having sex with me is so explosive."

"I'm attracted to you because you're hot," she snickered, squeezing his cheeks together.

"It's more than that, but thanks. You drank from Danny, and then a day later you drank from me. The more you drink from your sire, the closer you feel to that person. In this case, me. Jesus, this is so weird."

"You're telling me." And it was a little over her head.

"Well, now that we've settled that, we'll leave the two of you alone. If you need anything—"

"I don't think it's anything we can provide, my love," Basil joked, taking her hand as he led them from the room.

"Do you think he'd be interested in a threesome?"

"What? You want a threesome with my brother?"

"Is Basil your brother too?"

Dante cocked his head to the side, a confused look on his face. "You were talking about Basil?"

"Yeah—Oh, you thought I was talking about your brother. Well.... hm, is he as cute as you?"

"He's seventeen."

"I'm twenty. So what? It would be fun."

"NO! God no! Wait...you want to have a threesome with Basil?"

"Basil, Jonah. Either or both, maybe we could have a foursome." Ooh, that sounded fun.

"Are you for real?"

"Don't I look real? Think about it. The three of you taking turns with me while I take turns with the three of you. It's making me hot just thinking about it."

"I..." He blinked his eyes several times, then turned away. "This is too much for my brain to handle. I need a shower."

"Can I join you?" Even if he said no, she intended to.

"If you're thinking of doing it in the shower let me warn you I'm as flaccid as a soggy noodle."

"I can remedy that." She laughed and raced to the washroom.



Jonah slid in beside Ariel, careful not to wake her. She worried him, with her constant need to sleep. And she was looking so pale, too. The lack of daylight was really doing a number on her.

"Hi," she mumbled groggily.

"Hi. I didn't want to wake you." He stroked her hair, then her brow when she rolled over to face him. She was the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen. Her sandy hair curled erratically when she didn't control it, but he loved it. Just as he loved the mole at the side of her right eye.

"What time is it?"

"Nearly six."

"In the morning?" She yawned.

He smiled. "Yeah. I'm wiped. I thought I would catch a few hours sleep before I start on the trackers. I got the alarm system up and running and it works. Just ask Dante. He got zapped by it."

"Is he okay?"

He ran a finger along her jaw line, loving how strong it was. How strong she was. "He lives to tell the tale. Have I told you lately how much I love you?"

She smiled and her brown eyes lit with glee. "Not often enough."

"Well, let me remedy that. I love you, Mrs. Moore."

"Well, that's handy because I love you, Mr. Moore."

Her lips were warm and felt like home when she kissed him. He'd been dog tired when he'd slid in beside her moments ago, but now he was fully awake.

And utterly aroused.

He slid his hand down along her waist to her hip then down the length of her thigh.

"I thought you were wiped?" She smirked against his lips.

"I was." He dipped his hand beneath the cotton nightie she wore and slid his hand up her hip. She was a simple woman with simple needs. No silk for his girl, she preferred cotton. Crooking his finger beneath her panties, he inched them down. "But I'm suddenly wide awake."

"Hm....me too."

He loved to touch her, loved to see the reaction on her face, and as he slid his hand beneath her panties to touch the warmth she emitted, her face showed her arousal. She lifted her upper leg and hooked it over his hip. They lay face to face, lips touching while his fingers sought the familiarity of her moisture.

Her hand slipped between their bodies to slide beneath his underwear. She surrounded him with her fingers and gently gave him a squeeze.

"Awake indeed," she murmured against his mouth.

Smiling, he kissed her nose then dipped a finger into the heat. She moaned, closing her eyes as she rocked her hips against his. He loved to watch her as her body awoke with needs. Her breath quickened as did her hips, and so he gave her more. She rocked against him, stroking him as fast as he stroked her. He wanted to see her go over before he let himself go.

Then she lifted her leg higher and pressed herself to him.

"Get on top of me," she panted, writhing.

"Let yourself go first."

"Jonah, please. I need you."

He kissed her lips, then her neck. "You'll have me after you let yourself go."

"Then go faster," she pleaded and gripped him tighter.

Smiling, he nibbled on her lips and gave her just what she wanted. In no time at all he had her begging for more and exploding over him in a gush of exotic fluids. He took her panties down, then removed his own underwear before climbing on top. She spread for him, and as she looked up at him with a satisfied look in her eyes, he fell in love with her all over again.

He positioned himself then slipped into the heat.

"Yes." She bowed her back as he entered her.

She was moist warm and welcoming. He didn't want fast. He wanted it to last forever. Unbuttoning her cotton nightshirt, he split it open

then took one taunt nipple into his mouth. She moaned as he began to suckle, her hands stroking his back. He moved inside of her in a slow hypnotic rhythm while he suckled her breasts. He knew if he took it slow, and aroused her even more, she would go over with him.

He took his turn on each of her breasts, enjoying the fullness of them and the tightness of her nipples. She loved it when he flicked them with his tongue and doing so now set her right off.

"I love that," she panted, cupping his head in her hand to hold him to her breast.

He continued to tease her nipples with his tongue until he felt her legs widen and her back arch. She was about to have another orgasm. Releasing her breast, he lifted himself up and pumping her faster, sent them both over.

He fell on her breasts, her heart thumping beneath his ear and he felt absolutely content.

"I think I'm pregnant."

He jolted up, his eyes wide. "What?"

She smiled. "I haven't had my period in two months."

"You're just telling me now? And I'm crushing you." He flipped off of her then sat up just looking at her. "Two months?"

She laughed, sitting up and touching his face. "Yep."

"We need a pregnancy test."

"That would be nice."

She was pregnant, or suspected, at least and he couldn't be happier. "We've been trying for so long."

"I know."

"This could be from lack of sunlight." But he didn't want to believe that.

"The sun's only been out a little over a week."

"Right. Two months?" he said again in amazement.

She laughed and took his hand in hers. "Two months."

"Jesus, Ariel." He lifted her hand to his chest. "A baby. Finally a baby."

"Finally a baby."

He took her in his arms, then took her lips. He clung to her for a good long time before he released her. "I love you."

"I love you, too."

He held her in his arms as they lay in their bed and all he could think about was being a dad.

He was going to be the best dad ever.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Chaos paced his room in the underground hideout, feeling antsy. It had been nearly a week since he'd first come down to his hideout and he not only missed his freedom but his authority as well. He could only trust that his men were being led well by Daniel. He really had no way of knowing if he was doing a good job or not.

Oh, how badly he wanted to get out and go to his men. How badly he wanted to rule. But he knew it was best that only Daniel know where he was hiding. So many of his men had been caught already, and he knew it would be only a matter of time before they would divulge his whereabouts to Basil or Trinity.

Just thinking of the two of them made his blood crawl. He wanted desperately to wrap his fingers around both their necks and squeeze until their eyes popped from their sockets. He didn't want a quick death for either of them, but a slow torturous one.

Especially Trinity.

He paced his room, the steel gray concrete walls felt like a tomb to him. And the stench of the sewer drains was a constant aroma that stung his nose. He longed for his bed, his home, his domain. He was better than this. Living in a rat infested tunnel like a coward. Damn Trinity for taking away his freedom. Damn her for ruining all his plans.

He came to full alert when the door handle to his room rattled. Only Daniel knew he stayed here but there was always the off chance someone else could wander down and find him here. He realized then just how helpless he was. He had no weapons, nothing to protect himself. And as he began to panic, the door swung open and Daniel entered the room.

But not alone.

"I brought you a treat." He tossed the elderly man into the room then shut the door behind him. "Thought you might need a kill.

"And you thought I was too weak to take someone who might put up a fight?" He narrowed his eyes at Daniel. How dare he think such a thing.

"Not at all, master. But most of the residents have fled the city. Only a few stragglers remain. This was all I could do at the moment."

Chaos relaxed marginally and turned his attention to the quivering old man now slumped on the floor. "He'll probably have a heart attack before I can drain him." But, he was better than nothing. Diving down onto the man, he sunk his teeth into his warm flesh and bit down. It surprised him that the old man had as much fight in him as he did. But he was no match for Chaos, and as he drank down the blood, the old man began to waver.

The elderly blood always tasted stale, polluted. He longed for something fresh, someone who hadn't polluted his body with carcinogens and fats and alcohol. It had been so long since he'd tasted fresh blood that he nearly forgot what it taste like.

Draining the old man, he dropped him to the floor then stood, wiping the remnants from his lips. "Tell me about our progress." He sat down on his cot while Daniel leaned against the wall.

"Our attempts thus far to penetrate and release our men has failed."

"It infuriates me that five measly individuals continually thwart our plans."

"In all fairness, sir, they do have two very powerful individuals on their side."

And thinking of those individuals only infuriated him more. "We need to find a way to take them down. A means to subdue them."

"What about some sort of gas? A sleeping gas. Would something like that work on Basil and Trinity?"

Chaos leaned back on the bed, back against the wall. "It might. I'm not entirely sure what sort of powers she possesses now. But I do know that the king was susceptible to sleeping agents. That might

work." He looked up at the young man before him, proud of the man he was becoming. "See if you can arrange it."

"I'll get right on it, sir."

"How are the men fairing in my absence?"

"Some are getting restless and they worry me. But I have things under control so far."

"Make sure you keep it that way. You weren't followed down here?"

"No, sir. I made sure of it. No one knows where you are being kept."

"I'm not being kept, Daniel," he chastised sternly.

"Sorry, sir. That wasn't what I meant," Daniel amended, hanging his head down.

That was what he liked about Daniel, he knew his place. "I grow tired of this place, tired of my seclusion. I want this ridiculous war over with. I want Basil and Trinity stopped. By any means possible. It is time, Daniel..." he stood, "that I rule."

"Yes, sir. I'll step up the plan."

Chaos paced his tiny room after Daniel left, still feeling like a caged animal.

Perhaps he was being kept after all.

By Trinity and Basil.



Trinity watched as Basil hooked up a spotlight to the front entrance. It was a temporary remedy that would work until they could come up with something better. She was thinking a motion sensitive light would work best for the entrances. It would give the intruders the illusion of darkness but the instant they stepped within a few feet from the door, the light would come on. Maybe that alone would be enough to deter them from attempting to break in.

"There, that should do it." He stepped off the step ladder looking up at his handy work. "Bright enough, don't you think?"

"We're being watched." She was still trying to get used to all her new abilities, and she particularly had to watch her temper. When she was angry, her powers were uncontrollable. The tingling inside her mind warned her of a presence, and they weren't friendly

"Maybe they're admiring my handiwork?" Folding up the ladder, he glanced through the darkness and into the distance. "You want to go to them or have them come to us?"

"Might be a perfect time to try the alarm system."

"Zapping Dante wasn't enough for you?" He grinned.

"He's human. We don't know what it will do to a vamp. I think now would be a perfect time to see if it works." She opened the front door, holding it for him.

"I should put the ladder away first."

"I highly doubt they're here to steal your ladder. It'll be fine." She held her hand out to the open doorway.

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"Do you want me to kick your ass?"

He stopped directly in front of her and smiled. "Darling, now might not be a good time for foreplay." He kissed her quickly, then avoided the slap. "Engage the alarm."

With a narrowed look at Basil, she shut the door and keyed in the code. "Now we just wait."

"What do you suggest we do to pass the time?"

"I thought you said now wasn't the time." But she went into his arms anyway.

"It could take a while for them to attempt a break in." He kissed her gently, simply lingering on her lips, making her moan. She so loved when he took his time.

"We have house guests, remember." Still, she found no reason to stop his hand from wandering under her shirt.

"They're occupied." He nibbled on her ear while his hand cupped her breast.

They both jumped when the alarm sounded in a loud shrill screech. "Jesus, what happened to the beeping?" Trinity covered her ears as she asked.

"Beats me. Jonah must have changed it. Damn that's loud."

"It needs to be to wake us all up," Jonah shouted, entering the room. "We have visitors."

"Really, what was your first clue?" Trinity snarled at him. "Can we tone that down a few notches?"

"I'll work on it later." He went to the window and glanced outside. "I see four. Wait...one of them is going to the door. Ah, you put out a spotlight. Brightens it up a lot."

"I thought so," Basil said proudly. They heard a click as the taser was engaged, then a thud which could only have been a body dropping outside the door. "We got one."

"And the rest are running like yellow bellied cowards. Man, can they move. You're clear," Jonah advised, leaving the window.

Trinity keyed in the code then stepped aside when Basil opened the door. She was ready if anyone had the notion of jumping out at them.

"He's not out cold but he's subdued," Basil explained as he carried the twitching vampire inside. "Help me drag him downstairs, love. You, get on the trackers," he ordered at Jonah.

"The guy has no patience." Basil snarled at him. "I'm going."



Chaos heard the familiar sound of footsteps leading towards his door and as he stood, Daniel entered the room. He could feel the frustration wavering off of him like steam and the look on his face was not one of joy. "You bring me bad news?"

"I have both, actually."

"Start with the worst then." Chaos motioned with his hand.

Daniel ran a hand through his hair as he spoke, a sure sign of his nervousness. "Some of our men attempted another invasion at Basil's home. They've set up some sort of alarm system. One of our men was shocked and captured."

Chaos frowned. "What do you mean, shocked?"

"Like an electrical shock, I'm told. He touched the door and dropped to the ground, convulsing."

"Damn it! Why are they always one step ahead of us? I should be in control now, I should be reigning as king, yet I am stuck here like a jailed rat while Basil and Trinity take out more and more of my people."

"Um...that's part of the good news, sir," Daniel said sheepishly.

"Do explain."

"I've found a secured place for you. It's a small farm house just outside the city. It has an underground bunker complete with a lock down mechanism. I've instructed two of my men to patrol it and one will remain with you at all times as well as a servant. We can have you moved today."

Chaos smiled, feeling joy for the first time in far too long. "You do me well, Daniel."

"Thank you, sir. I can take you there now if you like."

"I would like that very much. But first, let's discuss what to do about our problem. Set up a surveillance team down the road from Basil's property. It's time we started taking them out. If capture is possible, then bring them in. A little leverage is always nice."

"Yes, sir."

"Now, get me the hell out of here."



"What's with the grin?" Dante asked. Jonah had been sporting a sloppy grin all day and it was driving him nuts.

"I'm just a happy man, Dante. A very happy man."

"Yeah, and why is that?"

Jonah lifted his head and pulled off the magnifying goggles he wore and looked up at Dante, that sloppy grin still on his face. "Because life is good."

Dante's brow lifted. "Are you on crack, man?"

Jonah laughed as he placed the goggles back over his eyes. "I don't need drugs to make me happy."

"Okay, now you're freaking me out." And his quick bolt of laughter didn't make it any better.

"Ariel thinks she might be pregnant."

"What?" Dante grabbed the nearest chair and sat down beside Jonah. "For real?"

"Yeah." Jonah looked up, still grinning like a fool. "But we kinda want to do the test before we tell everyone, so keep it to yourself, okay."

"You bet. Man, this is wild. We need some good news."

"What good news?" Ariel asked as she entered the study.

"That you're preggers. Congrats," Dante said in a low voice, standing up to give her a hug.

"You told him?" She hugged Dante back. "I thought we agreed to keep it to ourselves until we knew for sure?"

"He made me tell him," Jonah confessed.

"I only wanted to know why he was grinning like a fool. He gave up the info pretty fast. He can't be trusted with a secret." Dante laughed, ruffling Jonah's hair.

"You should see him at Christmastime. He always gives away what he bought me."

"You tortured it out of me. Damn it!" Jonah lifted from his crouched position and ripped off his goggles. "I need my laser scope."

"That's the second time he's said that but I have no idea what it is. He said something about it being a high tech device for precision something or other that went right over my head. He really is a geek."

"Yeah, and he's my geek." Ariel kissed the top of his head. "That's back at the shop dear."

"I know where it is. And I need it for these trackers." Jonah stood. "I have to go get it."

"Not alone," Ariel stated firmly.

"I'll go along. Watch his back," Dante supplied.

"Go along where?" Gypsy asked entering the room and walking up to Dante to plant a firm kiss on his lips.

"Jonah needs some sort of tool from his shop. We were just heading out to get it."

"Can I come along? I'm bored out of my mind here. I need some fresh air."

Dante shrugged, wrapping his arm around her waist. Since he'd been zapped, she'd been sweet with him, gentle and he found himself rather liking it. "I don't see why not."

"Maybe you'd like to come along too, babe?" Jonah hooked his arms around his wife's waist and drew her to him. "Get some fresh air."

"I would love that. It's been far too long since I've been out of the house."

"Then it's set. Let's rock and roll," Jonah cheered, arms in the air.

"I'm driving," Dante informed them.

Jonah nodded. "I'll let Trinity know we're heading out."



"It's three in the afternoon yet it looks like midnight," Ariel proclaimed as they drove along the lane from the house.

"Is it really?" Gypsy angled in her seat to look back at Ariel. "I don't remember the last time I looked at a clock. What day is it?"

"I lost track."

"Tuesday," Dante informed them, turning on his signal light to head onto the highway. "May seventh."

"It's May already?" Gypsy gasped. "Hey, my birthday is in four days."

"Oh, really?" Ariel leaned forward as she spoke. "I should bake you a cake and make a big meal."

"I've been dying for spaghetti. I haven't had that in forever. What does garlic do to vampires?" Gypsy asked Dante.

"You're asking the wrong guy. I'm still learning about vamps and what makes them tick. Jonah?"

"Trinity eats pizza so I'm guessing garlic isn't a no no."

"Perfect. I'll make a cake and spaghetti and we'll have a celebra-

tion. We need something to liven us all up." Ariel leaned back in her seat.

Headlights flashed in the rearview mirror, blinding Dante right before the car was rammed from behind. The women screamed but Dante kept his cool as he tried to keep the car steady.

"What the hell is going on?" Jonah asked, undoing his seat belt to swivel in his seat and look out the back window.

They were rammed again and this time Dante had a little trouble correcting it. "Hold on!" he ordered as he swerved to the side of the road and back.

"I'm scared."

Jonah took his wife in his arms. "I've got you, babe."

"Here they come again," Dante called out just as they were hit. He swerved to the right and before he could correct, they were hit from the side.

The screech of metal, the broken glass, and the screams all melded inside his mind as they headed into the ditch. He tried to correct the car but lost control. It was all a blur of flashing lights and darkness as they tumbled head over bottom into the ditch.

He hit his head on the window, felt his knee burning after it smashed into the steering wheel. And then everything stopped.



"Dante! Dante wake up!" Gypsy gave him a hard shake but he still didn't wake up. "Come on. I know you're alive. I can feel your heart beating. Wake up. Jonah, Ariel, are you guys okay?" When all she heard was moaning she looked behind her. She could see the two of them crumpled together but couldn't make out who was on top. "Shit."

Dante's door was yanked open, and in her shock, Gypsy watched as Dante was ripped from the car. "Leave him alone." She tore off her seat belt, shredding it, then crawled out the driver's side. She saw three creatures, one of which had Dante in his grasp. Her heart leading her, she ran at the man, ready for a fight.

"There's two more in the back," someone called out.

"Let him go!" Gypsy screamed as she lunged at the vamp holding Dante. She jabbed him in the face with her fingers, clawing at skin with her nails. She'd rip his eyes out of their socket before she let him do anything to Dante.

"The woman's dead, but the man's alive."

"Drag him out."

The conversation was a blur in her mind. All she could think about was saving Dante. "Let him go." Lifting her foot, she kicked the vamp in the side, knocking him over still holding Dante.

"Ariel."

"This one's coming to."

"Take him to the car."

"Ariel! Let me go."

"She's dead, man, but she'll make a nice snack."

"No! Ariel!"

"Jonah..." Dante mumbled, fighting to keep his eyes open. "What's...what's happening?"

"Leave him alone." Gypsy tore into the vamp's throat that had Dante and ripped it open. She heard the squeal of tires and saw the car speed off. Looking over, she saw Dante stagger to his feet. She jumped up and caught him right before his knees gave out.

"What..." He crumbled in her arms.

She sunk to the dry grass, cradling him in her arms. "Don't leave me, please don't leave me. I can't live without you. Please, Dante, don't leave me." She cried, her tears falling onto his face.

"Call...for...back-up," he mumbled.

She sniffled back her tears and searched his jeans for the cell phone. "Just hang on, okay, just hang on." Relieved to find it, she pulled it out and flipped it open. "Shit, what's the number? I don't know the number."

"Speed two," he groaned.

Sniffing again, she dialed and waited nervously as it rang. "Just hang on to me, baby, just hang on. We need help," she ordered when the line was answered. "We were attacked. On the highway just outside the driveway. Hurry. Dante's hurt bad." She clicked it off then pressed her lips to his head. "Please don't leave me, Dante. I'm begging you, don't leave me. Everyone always leaves me, please, not you too."

CHAPTER TWELVE

It took no more than a few seconds before both Trinity and Basil appeared before her in the ditch. Gypsy was damn glad they both had special abilities, because she was scared shitless sitting alone with Dante.

"What happened?" Trinity asked, rushing to her side, instantly checking Dante's pulse.

"We were rammed and knocked off the road. Dante's been in and out. They took Jonah, and I think Ariel is dead." Gypsy sniffled, still clinging to Dante. "We need to get him to a hospital."

"The local hospital shut down days ago. Cooper can look after him."

"What do you mean, they took Jonah?" Trinity asked, racing to the car.

"They took him. One of them said Ariel was dead and then they took Jonah. I didn't see it all. I was trying to save Dante."

"You do that?" Basil thumbed towards the pile of dust off to the side.

"He was going to hurt Dante. Is Ariel okay?" Gypsy asked when Trinity came back.

"No. She's gone. Which way did they go, Gypsy?"

"That way." She pointed east then continued stroking Dante's face.

"Gypsy?"

"Yes, yes, it's me, Dante. Stay awake now, okay?" she pleaded, caressing his hair.

"What happened? Why am I out here?" He tried to sit up but she kept him down.

"Just relax. We were in an accident, remember?"

"Right. They hit us. Is everyone okay?"

She shook her head. "Ariel is dead and they took Jonah."

"What?" He sat up faster than she could react. "Are you sure she's gone?"

"Trust me, she's gone." Trinity sighed. "I might be able to track Jonah. I have to try. Get them home," she ordered, then vanished.

"Cooper's on his way with the car. Was it Chaos' men?" Basil asked.

"Yeah. I don't remember anything after we rolled. I tried to correct the car but...fuck...I should have turned us around."

"It's not your fault, baby. Don't get upset, okay? Your head is bleeding and you have blood on your left knee. Do you feel anything inside?" She placed a hand on his ribs and pressed.

He hissed. "A little sore. Nothing more than a bruise I would say. Are you sure Ariel's dead?"

Basil nodded as he stood. "One of them snacked on her. I shouldn't have let you go off on your own." He waved in the air as the car approached.

"I can't believe she's gone. Jonah's next, you know."

"Don't think that way. Maybe he'll break free." Gypsy wanted to believe that, had to believe that. She liked Jonah, he was cute and he was a nice guy and she didn't want him to die, too. Ariel was her friend and had been nice to her. She was going to bake a cake and make her a birthday meal. Now she was gone and all she felt was a pain in her chest like nothing she'd ever felt before.

"There are only two reasons why he would have been taken. Blood and information. Can you stand on your own?" Basil asked Dante.

"I've got him." Getting to her feet, Gypsy lifted him up and hooked her arm under and around his waist. He wobbled, but she was strong enough for both of them and carried him to Cooper's car. "What do we do about Ariel? We can't just leave her there."

"I'll wait here with her. Cooper, bring something to wrap her in when you come back."

"Yes, sir."

Sitting in the back seat, Gypsy clung to Dante. She was not going to lose him. She had already lost enough.



She couldn't find him. Everything in the air smelled of rotten garbage and dead animals. She'd been sure she could sense him or smell him at least. Yet she came up with nothing. There was no way in hell she was going to lose him.

Standing in the middle of the street, Trinity didn't give a damn about being an open target. Jonah was all that mattered now. She was not going to lose him. Closing her eyes, she shut everything off around her and focused only on Jonah. If she couldn't sense him, maybe she could call out to him and find him through her mind. What good were all these damn powers if she couldn't help her best friend?

She saw his face, it was bloody, and he was lying down. It was utterly dark. She could sense his breath, felt his heart beating, but she couldn't tell where he was. Opening her eyes, she let out an earsplitting scream.

There was no way she was going to lose him. In the blink of an eye, she sent herself to the queen's temple. It hadn't been that long since she'd come here begging for help in regards to another man she loved.

"Your highness. I need to speak to you," she called out and the room went absolutely white. She felt the slight shift as she was transported to the Realm of Mystics.

"What is it, my lady?"

"I come asking a favor."

"Have you brought an offering, my lady?"

Damn offerings. "No, I have not. I didn't have time. Jonah has been taken and his wife has been killed. I need help finding him."

"Without an offering no favor shall be granted."

"Please, Your Highness. I can't lose him. Name it, name anything and I'll give it to you. Just help me find him. He's all the family I have."

"You have your prince now, and more powers than the gods themselves. I can not help you, my child."

"Can't, or won't?" Trinity boldly demanded. The smack she felt now was a sucker punch from the inside and sent her flying across the room.

"Do not question me, child. Until an offering is made, no help will be granted."

She felt the shift, then looked around in a daze as she settled down in her bedroom. Her insides felt bruised and she felt more than a little queasy, but she shook it off and thrust the bedroom door open.

"Trinity? When did you get back?" Gypsy asked when she entered Dante's room.

"Just now. How are you doing?" she asked Dante.

"My head is pounding and my knee is throbbing like a bitch in heat. But other than that, fine. Did you—"

"No." She cut him off. She hadn't found Jonah and was pissed about her encounter with the queen. "Where is Basil?"

"He stayed by the car. With Ariel. Cooper's on his way back there to bring her home. We need to go out and search. Door to door if need be." Dante got to his feet a little wobbly, holding his ribs. "We have to find Jonah."

"You're not going anywhere and you won't do anyone any good in this shape. I'll keep searching. I want him back more than anyone." She sighed. "Get some rest and put some ice on that head and knee." She left the room determined to find to her friend.



Though he still didn't have complete freedom, the house was a much better jail then the underground tunnels. Chaos took advantage of his freedom first, by lingering in the shower for nearly half an hour, then sitting on the bed that was big enough for three of him. He did not miss the tiny cot he'd been subjected to sleep on for the past week and three days.

And it was so nice to be waited on once again. He desperately missed that. He had fresh linens on his bed, fresh towels in his bath and all the blood and wine his body required.

"Enter," he called out at the knock on the door.

"Sir. I have a present for you."

Chaos acknowledged Daniel with a nod. "Is that so? And what sort of surprise is it?"

"If you would come with me, I'll show you. Believe me, you won't be disappointed."

There were times his youth came out in leaps and bounds. Now was such a case. The boy's eyes absolutely lit up with excitement. "All right, Daniel. Lead the way." He thought of the boy as his son, had taken him in the beginning stages of his teen life and had raised

him as his own. He felt as akin to Daniel as he would if the boy had come from his loins.

He was led down the stairs to the main level, then down to the cellar. He didn't need the lights to guide his way but they were on none the less. And he didn't need to be told there was a human in the room. He could clearly smell the blood.

"We captured this one just for you."

Chaos turned the corner and the delight at seeing the human male hanging from the shackles in the wall filled him. "What a wonderful surprise indeed. I take it he's one of Trinity's?" The man was unconscious as he hung from the wall, stripped to nothing but his flesh. Blood was running a line down his face from the crack in his head, and bruises were beginning to bloom on his chest. He was injured but he smelled of a healthy human.

"Not just any one of Trinity's people. This is the guy she worked for," Daniel explained as he took the face in his hands. "This is her best friend, Jonah Moore."

"Well..." Chaos grinned as he moved closer to the male. "Isn't that perfect. How was he taken?"

"Three of my men ran them off the road just out of Basil's estate. One of the females was dead on the scene but was sampled nicely. Another male, my brother, was injured, but a female vampire attacked one of ours in protection of him. She's the one I had hoped for my own," Daniel said.

"Ah, and she was protecting your brother? Interesting. Perhaps next time you'll keep a closer eye on your chosen. I like this one." Chaos turned back to Jonah. Dipping his finger into the blood along his face, he slipped it in his mouth and sighed. "So fresh."

"He had the computer shop that Basil destroyed when the king took out Trinity. So, I was thinking he might know how to get into Basil's place, how to disable the alarm system."

"You truly do me proud, my son." Chaos laid a hand on Daniel's shoulder. "It has been much too long since I had some fun. I think I'll enjoy torturing some answers out of this one."

"I thought you would. We'll leave you to him now, but before I go, I wanted to make sure everything was well enough for you here."

"Everything is perfect, Daniel. You chose well. Thank you."

Daniel beamed. "You are welcome, sir." He hurried up the stairs and away.

"Oh yes, you will do me perfectly well. Let's see if we can't wake you." Walking to the laundry area, Chaos grabbed a dirty bucket from

the floor and ran water into it. He carried it to the body, then sent the water crashing over Jonah. He sputtered, coughed and his eyes fluttered open. "Good day, young man. It's time we got to know each other."



"It's all my fault." Dante's head still throbbed and he couldn't put pressure on his left knee, but that wouldn't stop him from looking for his friend.

"It's not your fault. Come here and sit back down. You're not going to make your knee better if you keep walking on it."

He didn't want to sit, but he let Gypsy lead him back to the bed in any case. "If I'd turned us around the first time they bumped us, Jonah wouldn't have been taken and Ariel... would still be alive. She was going to have a baby." She'd had a whole life ahead of her.

"What? She was pregnant?" Gypsy gasped.

"They hadn't done the test yet but Jonah said she was pretty sure. He was grinning like a fool in love. Damn it, I have to find him." He stood again, only to have her pull him back down.

"What good will you be out there when you can't even stand on your own two feet for more than a minute. You need to relax and rest."

"I need to find him."

"And we will. Trinity said she was going to go back out and Basil was going to go with her. They have a better chance of finding him that you do." She stroked his face, kissing his head. "You need to relax."

"How can I relax, Gypsy, when my best friend is missing and his wife is dead? She was so excited about getting out and I end up getting her killed."

"Stop it!" she demanded, turning his face to her. "You did not get her killed. The bastards that rammed us did. You lost control of the car, which would happen to anyone. That doesn't make it your fault."

"I just can't believe she's gone." He fell against her, taking comfort in her loving arms around him.

"I know. I know." She kissed him softly, then just lingered against his lips until the door opened.

"How are you doing?" Basil asked. Trinity was right behind him.

"He's feeling guilty but I told him it isn't his fault. Did you...bury her?" Gypsy asked shyly.

Basil nodded. "She has her place of rest. Trinity and I are going out again. I do not want either of you leaving this house. Got me?"

"I could help," Gypsy piped in boldly. "I'm pretty strong and I can take care of myself. I handled that nasty vamp that had Dante. I want to help."

"You're better off here keeping an eye on our boy. You and I both know he'll bolt as soon as we're gone."

They knew him pretty damn well because yes, he most definitely would bolt.

"You're right." Gypsy turned to Dante, cupping his face in her hands. "He won't get away with me around."

"We have our cell phones with us. If you hear anything—"

"I'll call. Same for you."

Basil nodded, then taking Trinity's hand, left the room.

"She was awfully quiet."

"Jonah was like a brother to her. Listen to me, talking in the past tense. He *is* like a brother to her. They have to find him."

"They will. Now, you lay back and let me make you better."

He lay back, but even the sensual stroke of her hands on his body couldn't take his mind off of what they had just been through.



"Well, here we are again. You and I, out alone, in search of someone."

Trinity nodded. It hadn't been that long ago they had worked side by side looking for five innocent females being used as a ritual to raise the king. "We have to find him, Basil. I can't lose him."

"I know, my love, I know."

She took comfort in the squeeze of his hand. "He'll be devastated about Ariel." She was devastated. Ariel was the closest thing she had to a sister. And now she was gone.

"In every war there are always some casualties."

She stopped dead in her tracks and turned to him with fury in her blood. "How can you say that, how can you be so cavalier about it? She's dead, Basil. *Dead.*"

"I didn't mean it to be cavalier. It was just a thought, a senseless thought." He cupped her face in his hands now and kissed her nose. "I'm sorry, love. I can only imagine how hard this must be for you."

"I lost my real sister not that long ago. It was a car accident then, too. I feel like the fates are laughing in my face. And damn it, I hate to cry." Yet now she couldn't seem to stop the tears.

He held her against his chest while she wept. She loved Ariel like a sister and losing her was breaking her heart.

"She was with child."

She lifted her head abruptly and glared into his blue eyes. "What?"

"She was pregnant. I could sense it when I went to her. There were two distinctly different scents of blood."

"Oh my God." She fell into his arms again and continued to let the grief wash through her. Not only was Ariel gone, but so was the child she'd been carrying. "I asked the queen for help." Trinity sniffled as she lifted her head from Basil's shoulder.

"You went to the queen?" He wiped her tears away with the palm of his hands.

"I needed her help. She wouldn't help me. What sort of offering did you bring her when you visited?"

"You went without an offering? Oh, Trinity."

"I didn't think. She wouldn't help me and it pissed me off. I kinda insulted her and she smacked me. I still can feel the bruise." She placed a hand on her belly.

"Oh, love." He kissed her nose then kissed his hand and placed it on her belly. "The offering has to be worthy of the request. You're asking her to help you find a human. The gift has to be big, meaningful."

"She took my pendant last time. She seemed happy with it."

"If it was the one you wore all the time, then I can understand it. That was a spiritual gem worthy of the queen. And you gave your life for me. Another worthy gift. She won't settle for just any gift now. Don't go to her again, Trinity. Promise me."

"I just want to find Jonah." She couldn't lie to Basil but she knew telling him she would most definitely go back to her would only infuriate him.

"I know, and we will."

She took his hand in hers, not feeling any better for her tears.

"You know, this could also be a diversionary tactic to get you out in the open."

She shrugged. "I have my mind tuned in to my surroundings. I'll know if they come at me."

"Good. Because I lost you once, I won't go through that again."

She knew now what he must have felt when she'd died. She was feeling pretty torn up right now herself.



His body was on fire with pain. It seemed that every organ, every bone was crying out to him and there was nothing he could do about it. And all he wanted was to die.

He was strung up to a cement wall by steel shackles that cut into his wrists and ankles. The creature before him was a gnarled beast of a man with jet black hair against a pale, aging face. His yellow eyes bore into him with an intense glare that did nothing to scare him.

Jonah welcomed death. He'd lost the only thing he'd ever loved.

His wife.

"Let us try this again. What is the code to the alarm system on Basil's property?"

"Go to hell," Jonah spat.

"Your nobility is honorable. I am so enjoying this torture session, but I wonder how long you will be able to last."

He didn't bother to look up as Chaos spoke, but he did hear the rustling of something that he hoped was a gun. He didn't want to live anymore. Not without his Ariel.

"We'll see how long you last with this."

He heard it then, right before the slash of fire erupted across his chest. The tip of the whip slashed through his skin and, God help him, he screamed like a girl.

"Still brave?"

Jonah panted through the pain and wished to God he could just die. "Go...to hell!" He screamed again when the whip caught him, stripping away another slice of flesh. He felt the room sway, felt himself tipping over, then bolted awake when the icy water hit his face.

"Can't have you blacking out yet." Chaos took his face in his hands and gave it a good hard squeeze. "Was that your wife my boys sampled? They tell me she was absolutely scrumptious. She and the child inside of her."

Jonah lifted his head and the fire in his chest was matched by his fury. "Don't talk about her. Don't ever talk about them again."

"Now we found our sore spot." Chaos laughed, releasing Jonah's face harshly. "So not only did you lose your loving wife, but the child the two of you created as well. That has got to be rough."

"Just kill me already. I don't want to live."

Chaos turned and the whip slashed out with a might force.

Jonah screamed and screamed as the leather cut through his chest to rip open another wound. "Hit me again. Kill me, please, just kill me."

"You disgust me. Such a weak male. How is it you and your misfits have eluded me all this time. Raven," he called loudly.

Jonah heard foot steps on the stairs but had no energy to lift his head to see who it was.

"Tend to my slave and make sure he stays alive. I'm not through with him yet."

"Yes, my lord."

He didn't care who saw him crying and let the tears fall. There was more than pain fueling him but a loss no one could understand. He heard water running, heard footsteps and still he didn't lift his head. Then he saw her kneel down at his feet. Lifting his heavy head, he saw a fall of silky black hair and a delicate hand reach up to his chest. He cringed as she touched the cloth to his wounds.

"I'm sorry." She winced as she blotted the wounds on his chest. "I'll try to do it as gently as I can."

He closed his eyes and suddenly felt the shame of his nudity.

"I wish I could do more."

Her voice was gravelly, like she had a sore throat. "Kill me," he said through his own hoarse throat.

"I won't kill you. I promise. I'm here to help you."

He closed his eyes and the last thing he heard her say was, "I'm sorry this happened to you."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Dante sat like an obedient child as Cooper tended to his knee. He'd washed it with warm water and clucked his tongue the whole time. Dante had to admit, his knee was pretty ugly. The black and blue bruises overtook the normal deep bronze tone of his skin and the knee itself had swollen up like a balloon. Cooper had rubbed some sort of liniment over it that had a numbing effect.

"Do you have a medical degree, Cooper?" Dante asked for nothing more than small talk.

"I attained it long before you were even a thought."

"I wasn't criticizing. I was curious. You seem to know what you're doing, not just with my knee but the stitching in my shoulder as well." Which had torn open in the accident. But it wasn't as bad as it had been. At least it only required gluing this time, which made Dante very happy. He was getting tired of having a needle shoved in his arm. "So how come you work for Basil?"

"I've been with Basil since he left his father."

"How long ago was that?"

"Longer than you've been alive," Cooper grinned.

"Hm," Now Cooper was wiggling Dante's knee cap back and forth. It was the oddest sensation. He only had a minimal amount of

feeling in his knee after the liniment had been applied. "How'd you two hook up?"

"I rescued him from his father. You'll want to put plenty of ice on this for the remainder of the day, and keep it elevated. Now, let's have a look at that knot on your head."

He hissed when Cooper tipped his head and examined the lump. "What do you mean you rescued him from his father?"

"You won't need stitches but this is a nasty lump. I would suggest an x-ray if we had the means to do one. How many fingers am I holding up?"

"Three. You didn't answer my question."

"You are correct. If Basil wants you to know about his past, he'll fill you in. Ice on this as well. I'll get some packs prepared for you. Take pain killers as needed and avoid alcohol. And plenty of rest."

"We don't have time for me to rest, Cooper. I need to get out there and look for Jonah."

"Master Basil and Miss Trinity are doing their best to find him. You'll do best resting. Ah, and here is my nurse with your meds."

Gypsy gave Cooper a sweet smile as she entered the room and Basil noticed she was wearing a white lab coat. "Where did you get that?"

"Cooper gave it to me. It makes me feel helpful. Here are your painkillers, sir." She set the bottle on the bedside table then curtsied. "I'm not wearing anything underneath," she whispered with a giggle.

There was no painkiller on earth that could give him the relief she had just provided. Smiling, he watched Cooper leave and not a minute too soon. "Prove it."

She grabbed the front of the coat, slowly unbuttoning it, starting from the top down. Then she whipped it open to reveal her slim, naked body.

"Hot damn! Now that's the kind of nurse I like. Come here, baby."

She closed the coat back up and stepped back. "You're on strict orders from the doctor to take it easy. No hanky panky until you're better."

And the pain came back with a vengeance. "That was just mean."

"It was a glimpse of what you'll get when you're better. How do you feel?"

"I'd feel better if you jumped up on my lap and rode me like a bucking bronco." The bedroom door opened and Cooper stepped in.

"I'll just pretend I've suddenly gone deaf. Here are the ice packs. Keep them on at intervals of fifteen minutes at a time."

Dante bit his lip and nodded. "Yes, doc." He waited until he'd left before he burst out laughing. "I bet he knocks from now on."

"Odds are you're right." She sat down beside him on the bed and touched his face. "Do you know how scared I was out there?"

"I'm sorry. I should have protected you."

"That wasn't what I meant. I was scared of losing you. I thought I was going to lose you. I don't want to lose you, Dante."

"Gypsy—"

"Let me finish." She got up now and began pacing. "My parents died when I was seven. A gang of thugs broke into our home during the night and when my parents tried to stop them, the men gunned them down. They stole everything they could get their hands on before fleeing. I hid under my bed."

"I'm so sorry, Gypsy." He couldn't imagine what that must have been like. The poor child.

"I stayed there even after the cops showed up. I was too scared to come out, even when they tried to talk me out. I was taken into protective custody and handed to social services to be placed into a foster home. My grandparents didn't want me, and okay, they were old, but still... It hurt to know no one wanted me. I was only a baby." She waved it off with her hand but Dante could see just how much that still affected her.

"I bounced from one place to another and I always felt like an intruder. I haven't done anything with my life because, quite frankly, I didn't feel like I had a life. I was living, cruising alone but I didn't have anyone to live for." She turned to him, tilting her head as she spoke. "Until you. So that's why I feel like I need to tell you the whole truth. You deserve to know the truth."

He didn't like how this was going.

"The day of the eclipse I was being led from the court house back to jail. If it hadn't been for the riots, I might still be sitting in that jail cell. I escaped from the cops and took off and that was when I was caught by those vamps. A part of me wished I would die, that they would just kill me. But that little voice inside of me, the one that's been pushing me all my life, told me to fight. So I did. And I found you. I really liked Jonah and Ariel, and being here with you all has made me feel like I belong for the first time in my life since my parents' death. Losing Ariel and Jonah feels like I'm back there with my parents the day they were killed. I don't think I could have lived if you had died." She walked to him now and sat down beside him, taking his hands in hers. "I think I'm in love with you."

No woman had ever said those words to him before and hearing them now, from her, kinda clogged his throat.

"You don't have to say it in return. I just wanted you to know. You should get some rest now and put these packs on your head and knee." She set the pack on his knee, then pushed him down to the bed and laid the other on his head. "You should eat something. I'll go down and make you a sandwich and maybe some soup. Hot soup, yeah, that would be good."

He watched her hurry off and knew he should have asked her to stay. Truth was, he really needed some time alone to think. He hadn't had much of it as of late. Not since he'd found out Gypsy had been sired by his brother. He was trying desperately not to think about that but it was a steady drumming presence inside of his head.

His brother had taken an innocent girl's life and turned her for... what? He wished he knew. From what Trinity and Basil had told him, vampires often took humans as sex or blood slaves. He hated thinking that Gypsy had been turned for either of those reasons, or that his brother was capable of such a thing. And then he had to continually remind himself that the boy he'd once known was not the man Danny was now. Danny had changed, not just in his race, but his humanity as well.

And it just occurred to him that Danny was the very person he needed to see right now. Maybe, just maybe he could convince Danny to tell him where they had taken Jonah.

Pulling the ice pack from his knee, he slid his sore leg off the bed, wincing at the pain. His head throbbed as he attempted to stand, and though the room spun a little, he brushed it off and attempted to walk to the door. He made it as far as the door when it opened.

"What the hell are you doing out of bed?" Gypsy gasped, and quickly setting the tray she'd been carrying on the floor, went to him. "You should have called if you needed something."

Because it had taken him nearly two minutes to walk across a five foot space, he knew how foolish it was for him to attempt to go out on his own. "I need to see Trinity. Can you get her for me?"

"Right as soon as I tuck you back in bed. What were you thinking getting up alone?"

Her strength amazed him simply because she was such a frail looking girl. And it irritated at the same time when she picked him up, literally, and carried him to the bed. "Can you just ask Trinity to come here?"

"I'll get her, if you promise not to pull such a stupid act again."

She was like a mother hen, fussing over him, fluffing the pillows behind his back and setting the ice packs back into place. He hadn't been pampered like this since he'd been a kid. "I won't be going anywhere, I promise." He wasn't sure he had the strength to in any case.

She hurried back to the tray and bringing it back set it on the bed beside him. "It's chicken noodle soup and the sandwich is ham. Eat it," she demanded then scurried from the room.

She even sounded like his mother, demanding he fill his belly with hot soup. He'd never been a fan of chicken noodle soup and smelling it now reminded him of all the times in his life he'd choked it down just to please his mother.

He was about to do it again, only this time, to please the woman he was beginning to fall in love with. By the time she returned with Trinity on her trail, he'd polished off half the bowl and half the sandwich. Apparently he was hungry.

"What's the problem?" Trinity demanded as she entered the room.

"I need to talk to my brother."

"Like that's going to happen," she snorted.

He set the bowl down beside the half eaten sandwich and looked up at Trinity with complete seriousness. "He could be the one to lead us to Jonah." He saw her eyes perk up and continued. "I could convince him to tell me where Jonah is being held, or at the least get him to release Jonah to us at some safe location. But I need to get a message to him first. In order to do that, I need to grab a vamp and tell him to tell Danny I need to see him."

"And what makes you think your brother is going to buy it?"

"I have to at least try, don't I? The sooner we get Jonah back the better, right? You're not having any luck tracking him down, and I don't mean that as an insult so chill out." Her narrowed look told him she was not about to relax.

"I think it could work," Gypsy piped in.

"You're in no condition to be going out anywhere. I can't afford to have you down for long and going out and grabbing someone to use as a messenger is risky."

"So why do we need to go out and get someone? Why not use one of the vamps we have down in the dungeon?"

She ran a hand through her hair, which he noticed was not tied back in a pony tail. She rarely let it hang loose. "Okay, so what if I agree to this. There are no guarantees the vamp will pass on the mes-

sage or that your brother will show up. The vamp could hightail it out of here grateful for his freedom and we'd never see hide nor hair of him again."

"Danny will show up. I'm almost certain of that. But you're right. The vamp might not tell him. Hm..."

"What about those trackers Jonah was working on?"

Dante glanced up at Gypsy. She was sitting at his feet, her hands on her lap. He couldn't help but feel a distance from her. Was it because he hadn't reciprocated her affectionate words? He'd bet his life it was. "They're not working yet."

"No, but he doesn't have to know that."

"He won't go for it. Would you? It would mean we would be tracking him to where Chaos might be hiding. That won't work, and besides, we don't want them knowing we're working on tracking them," Trinity supplied, twisting her hair around her fingers now.

"Right, right." Gypsy pursed her lips in defeat.

"We don't tell him it's a tracker," Dante blurted out as the thought came to him. "We tell him it's an electrode that we control via remote and if he doesn't bring Danny to us, at my shop, within two hours, we'll set it off. We can tell him it's a high powered electrical device that will send out enough volts to electrocute him in seconds."

Trinity's eyes lit up. "It could work. But how do we guarantee he doesn't rip it off as soon as he's out of our sight?"

"We make him swallow it," Gypsy piped in, her eyes widening with excitement. "If it's inside of him, he'll be more inclined to do as we ask. Don't you think?"

"You are good, Gypsy." Dante smiled at her and was disappointed when she didn't even look at him. He was going to have to tell her how he felt towards her and soon.

"I like it. Okay, we do this, but I want us all present when you see your brother," Trinity insisted.

"No way. He sets his eyes on you and Basil and he'll high tail it out of there faster than we can say boo."

"Well, I sure as hell won't be letting you go in alone."

"You two could be hiding. You have all those cool powers, right?" Gypsy asked Trinity. "You could be beside us in a flash if things went wrong."

"Us?" Dante asked. "What us?"

"I'll be there by your side," she admitted.

"The hell you will be. I can't risk you getting hurt and have you forgotten this is the guy who sired you?"

"So..."

"So, he could get control over you because of the connection."

"It doesn't work that way. Mutated vamps don't have any powers," Trinity supplied. "He might recognize her, but that's all. She might feel the pull to go to him because of the blood."

"I wouldn't. I only drank from him once," Gypsy stated.

"That you know of," Dante supplied and, again, her head went down and she diverted her eyes away from him. "I'd feel safer knowing you were here and protected."

"He's right," Trinity agreed, then turned her attention back to Dante. "Okay, let's set this up. I'll get Basil. He'll enjoy shoving a device down one of their throats. I'll come back when it's done."

"I'll be ready." He waited until she'd left before he looked over at Gypsy. "I enjoyed the soup and sandwich."

"I'm glad. Are you finished?"

"I am. Gypsy..." He took her wrist as she reached for the tray. "About what you said earlier."

"I said you didn't need to reciprocate."

"I know what you said. It took a lot for you to open up to me and tell me about your family, about not ever having anyone. And it took a lot to admit how you feel for me." He pulled her a little closer. "I care about you more than I have ever cared for any other woman, and—" He put a finger to her lips before she could speak. "I think I might be falling in love with you, too." Her eyes absolutely lit with joy.

"Oh, Dante." She wrapped her arms around his neck then kissed him solidly on the mouth. "Wait..." She pulled away, her eyes narrowed. "You're not just saying that to make me feel better are you?"

He laughed and pulled her down onto his lap. "No, Gypsy. It comes from the heart."

"Goody."

He laughed as she plastered his face with kisses.



"I can't say I like the idea of taking Dante out when he's injured, but I like the idea of shoving something down one of the prisoner's throats."

Trinity grinned, feeling such love for Basil at this moment and feeling foolish for it. "I knew you would. So which one are we going to do?"

"The wimpy one. He's spent most of his time here begging to be released and crying because we won't do it. He'll be the easiest to

convince that the tracker is set to kill." He held the tiny electronic device up between his index finger and thumb. "It baffles me how Jonah constructed these things. I'm lost when it comes to technology, I'm afraid."

"We have to get him back." He stopped and she knew if he took her in his arms now she would crumble. "Let's make this good."

He pushed open the dungeon doors and greeted the guard. "Harley, we need a moment of Tyson's time."

"Sure, but have fun. He's been curled up in the corner all day, blubbering like a baby. Can I just off him? He's annoying the hell out of everyone."

"He'll be out of our hair shortly." Not bothering with a key, both Basil and Trinity dematerialized, then reappeared in the cell with Tyson. "He really is pathetic," Basil mumbled to Trinity, which immediately had Tyson lifting his head.

"Are you going to hurt me? Please don't hurt me. I'll do anything you ask just please don't hurt me."

"Truly pathetic." Basil shook his head as he sat on the cot beside the boy. "Do you want to get out of here, Tyson?"

The boy's yellow eyes opened wide but he remained curled in the corner of his bed. "You're going to let me go?"

"Yes and no. We want a favor," Trinity informed him, leaning on the wall beside the head of the bed. "We're hoping you'll help us."

"It's a trick, Ty," one of the other vamps piped in.

"What do you want from me?" Tyson asked shakily.

"We need you to convey a message to someone in Chaos' gang."

"That's it, I give a message to this person and you let me go?"

Basil nodded. "That's it."

"I'm telling you, Ty, it's a trick."

Tyson glanced at the vamp in the cage beside him, then back to Basil and Trinity. "Is it a trick? I mean, this does sound too good to be true."

"Well, there is one little thing." He grabbed the boy, pinning him to the wall with his shoulders. "See, we need assurances that you'll actually deliver the message. This little baby is going to do that for us." Basil held the chip up in his fingers.

"What is that?" Tyson stammered nervously.

"This is a highly sophisticated device that can send electricity into your body simply by the press of a button. Imagine biting a live wire. The jolt will send enough electrical waves into your body to make you dance the funky monkey, and trust me, it won't feel good."

Trinity grabbed Tyson's head with one hand, then with her other, squeezed his jaw until his mouth popped open. She waited for Basil to drop the chip into his mouth before she clamped it shut. "Now be a good boy and swallow."

"I warned you, my man." The vamp next to him laughed, then laid down on his cot, crossing his feet at the ankles and folding his arms behind his head.

Tyson tried to squirm. He moaned in protest, fighting Trinity and Basil but was held down firmly.

"Come on, swallow it." She shook his face, still clamping his mouth shut with her hand. "Either swallow it or it goes up your ass. You chose." She was pleasantly thrilled when she felt him swallow. "Good boy."

"You'll make a wonderful mother someday, my love." Basil blew a kiss to Trinity then released the boy. "Now, that device we just inserted into you is connected to a mechanism in our control. One press of the button and we'll have your body smoking from the inside out. It'll be a very slow and painful death."

"You won't set it off. Please don't set it off," Tyson pleaded.

"We won't, as long as you do as we ask."

"I'll do whatever you want, just please don't set it off."

"Good. What we need is for you to deliver this note to Danny Vega. You know who he is, right?" Tyson's head bobbed up and down rapidly. "Perfect. Now, if you don't deliver him to the place instructed in the note by the time indicated, that little device inside of you is going to send out a nasty electrical charge. It was tested on a rat and shall we say that there wasn't anything left of the rat that was identifiable. Granted, you are considerably larger than a rat, but not by much. It took the rat fifteen minutes to die. Add in your weight and height, I would say it will take you approximately, forty minutes to die. I can't imagine having your internal organs frying would be a pleasant feeling. Can you, dear?"

"I'm betting it'll hurt like hell." She truly loved Basil now. He was so good at scaring the shit out of a person while still keeping his cool.

"And then some. Do you understand how important it is for you to deliver this message?" He held up the paper.

Tyson's head bobbed rapidly again. "Yes, yes I do."

"Good. We'll escort you out and provide you with a ride into the city."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Dante hadn't expected things to be moving as fast as they were, but he couldn't say he was upset by it by any means. The sooner they found Jonah the better for everyone. Trinity drove the car while he sat in the passenger's side and Basil in the back watching their messenger. The guy was as jittery as a mouse surrounded by cats and Dante could only hope the guy was up for the job.

They dropped him off downtown, then headed to Dante's shop. He missed working, missed keeping active, and he missed the income. But when he stepped into the outer office to see a pile of files scattered on the floor, he quickly changed his mind.

He wasn't looking forward to getting back to archiving those suckers.

"Looks like vandals got in here." Basil stepped over a pile of files.

"No, it always looks this way. The guy's a slob."

"Hey, I resent that." Dante shot Trinity a look. "I keep my room clean. I just haven't been able to get to the files. Been a little preoccupied." Unlocking the front door, Dante propped it open with a chair as a sign that he was there and waiting. He hoped his brother didn't make a liar out of him. "You two can hide in my office back there."

"We'll be out here faster than you can blink if anything happens."

He acknowledged Trinity with a nod. "Maybe while you're in there you could start putting the files on the computer."

"In your dreams."

Dante smiled to himself as they went to his office to hide. He clicked on the lights then sat on what used to be Lexi's desk and waited. They had an hour before the supposed electrode was going to be set off. He imagined the poor guy was probably shitting his pants with fear.

He checked his watch again, then looked around the room. The walls could use a coat of paint, and the waiting chairs were a little worn. Maybe a few plants in the corners or from the ceiling would add a little life to the place. Lexi was always bugging him to make the place more sophisticated. Maybe she was right. Couldn't hurt.

He heard the footsteps and stood up, ready. His knee was beginning to throb again, which told him the pain killers were wearing off. The pain soon became an after thought when he saw Danny enter the room. It was hard for him to look at his brother knowing Danny had been the one to sire the woman he was falling in love with. His brother didn't come alone, though. Aside from the wimpy messenger, he was escorted by two burly guards.

Dante suddenly felt very uneasy.

"I'm glad you came."

Danny shrugged thin shoulders, glancing around the room as if he was bored. "Do you seriously think I'm stupid enough to believe you planted a deadly device inside of him?"

"All we needed was for him to believe it."

"This thing inside of me isn't going to electrocute me?" Tyson asked in a squeaky voice.

"Might make you constipated but it won't kill you," Dante supplied.

"Fuck!" Ty exclaimed. "I'm out of here." He bolted out the door in a blur of scraggly brown hair and denim.

"If you called me here to ask me about your friend, you wasted your time. I've got nothing to say."

"Will you at least tell me if he's still alive?" Jonah had to be alive. He'd never forgive himself if Jonah were dead.

"He's alive."

"Is he still human?"

Danny laughed and it was a sound Dante hadn't heard in years. His brother's laughter brought back memories of the good times they used to share. "I'm still human, bro, but I don't expect you to understand that."

He hadn't answered his question and that terrified him. "What I meant was, is he a vampire?"

"He's not a vampire, but he is serving a purpose."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You can't be that stupid."

Dante gritted his teeth. "Let him go, Danny."

"That's not in my control."

"Chaos has him?"

Danny nodded, then examined his nails. "Is that all you wanted from me, because I've got other things to do."

"Why won't you help me, Danny?"

His yellow eyes lifted and Dante felt the chill of the look. "Do you think just because we share the same DNA that I'm obligated to help you? We may have shared the same womb for nine months but we're not family anymore. You need to understand that. Chaos is my family now."

That shouldn't hurt as much as it did. Yet the pain ripped into him with a devastating force. "If anything happens to Jonah, I'll hold you responsible," he found himself saying and suddenly realized he cared more about a friend than he did his brother. How sad was that?

Danny smiled as he pushed himself away from the wall. "You don't worry me in the slightest, Dante. I've got more power in my little finger than you have in your entire body. I could snap you like a twig in no time flat."

"You lay one finger on him and I'll rip your face off."

Dante spun around to see Gypsy standing behind him. Where the hell had she come from? And why the hell was she here?

Danny glared at her as she stepped up beside Dante. "I'd like to see you try."

"I thought we agreed that you would stay at home," Dante chastised through gritted teeth.

"I never agreed to anything," she said stepping in front of him. "Where is Jonah?"

Danny laughed, crossing his arms over his chest. "What makes you think I'll tell you when I wouldn't even tell him? Grab her boys."

Dante stepped in front of her as Danny's guards moved towards him. "Back off."

"She's mine and I want her back."

"She isn't property. She's a human being and there is no damn way I'm going to let you take her out of here."

"Well well, looks like someone is smitten with her. Did you tell him I was the one who sired you?" Danny's eyes flickered to Gypsy.

"He knows."

"Do you now? Does it give you a boner to know I had her first? That my blood is inside of her? That she will always be drawn to me because of my blood."

"I'm not drawn to you or your blood," Gypsy stated firmly, wrapping her arms around Dante's and hugging him close to her side.

"No? We'll let's test that out then." Lifting his left hand, Danny bit into his wrist then held it up as the blood began to trickle from the wound.

"Gypsy, go into my office and wait for me there." Dante couldn't be sure she wouldn't be drawn to Danny. But Dante knew that if she was, he'd fight to the death for her.

"It's not doing anything to me." She looked up at Dante, her eyes bright. "I don't feel any kind of pull."

"Grab her and let's get out of here, boys," Danny demanded.

Dante stepped in front of her in protection. He didn't care what he had to do or who he did it to but he was not letting any one of them lay a hand on Gypsy. "You touch her and you'll be very sorry."

Danny's laughter cracked the tension in the room. "There are three of us and only two of you, and you're no match for us."

"No, but we are," Trinity pointed out as she and Basil stepped out from the office. "Sleep."

Dante watched in bewilderment as each one of the vamps, including his brother, dropped to the floor. "What did you do to them?" he asked, turning to Trinity.

"I put them to sleep. Let's get them to the car. Basil, check to make sure no one's waiting outside."

"I love a commanding woman." He smiled, then kissed her cheek before transforming into a mouse and scurrying out the front door.

"That is so cool. How does he do that?" Gypsy wanted to know.

"Long story. What the hell were you thinking coming here?" Dante scolded her.

"I had to know. I had to be sure I wasn't drawn to him, that he didn't have control over me and now I know." She wrapped her arms around his waist. "I felt nothing for him, not even when he drew his own blood."

Though he was relieved by that, he still wasn't happy that she'd followed them. "It was still risky."

"All's clear," Basil announced, entering the office in his human form. "Let's get them out of here before someone comes looking for them." He

hoisted one of the bigger ones over his shoulder while Trinity took the other. "Gypsy, take Danny."

"I can take him," Dante snarled it.

"Not with your bum knee." She pushed past him and lifted Danny up then swung him over her shoulder. "I honestly feel nothing for him. Isn't that great?"

He was pretty happy about it, and would be more so if she wasn't carrying Danny like he was no heavier than a sack of potatoes. Sure, okay, he was injured, but give a man his dignity. Feeling insulted, Dante limped his way to Gypsy's car. "We'll meet you back at the house."



Jonah didn't know how long he'd been hanging from the hard cement wall, chained up like an animal. Time had no meaning. He'd blacked out shortly after that woman had come to him. She'd been kind, and her soft voice had soothed him. She had black hair, he remembered that, and soft blue eyes. And unless she wore contacts, he figured she was as human as he was. So what the hell was she doing here with a bunch of vamps?

Probably the same reason he was.

Every ounce of his body hurt. His chest burned from the whip's lashes but it was the pain in his heart he felt the most. He wanted desperately to be with Ariel now, and wished death claimed him soon.

He lifted his head when he heard the cellar door creak open and fully expected it to be Chaos with more torture for him. Instead, it was the woman.

"You're awake. Good. I brought you something to eat."

He watched as she hurried towards him, carrying a tray. He didn't want food. He wanted death.

"Your wounds look really bad." She shook her head then set the tray on the table across the room from him. She picked something off of it then came towards him. "This should help."

"What is that?"

"Ointment. It might sting a little when I apply it. I'm sorry for that."

She squeezed the ointment onto her finger and he winced when she touched it to his wounds.

"Sorry."

Her touch was incredibly gentle and after the initial burning the ointment began to sooth the wounds. "Why are you doing this?"

"It'll get infected if I don't." She continued applying the cream to the slashes on his chest.

"And maybe I'll be lucky enough that it'll kill me."

Her blue eyes lifted to his and he was struck by the sorrow he saw in them. "I won't let you die."

"I wish you would."

Her hand paused briefly. "You want to die?"

"What do I have to live for?"

She finished applying the ointment then closed the tube. "I heard about your wife. I'm sorry."

She seemed to say that a lot. "I'm nothing without her."

"Don't say that. You have plenty to live for."

He snorted. "How would you know that? You don't even know me."

"We all have something to live for. You feel the pain of loss now, but it will get better, in time."

"I hate when people say that." And he hated that he'd said that a time or two as well to people he knew who had lost a loved one. Time did not heal all wounds.

"I know. Most people do when they've lost someone close to them. But it is true. No, you will never forget her, and yes, she will always have a place in your heart. But with each day, the pain will grow less."

He doubted that very much. "She was pregnant."

Her eyes lifted to his again. "Oh, I am so sorry."

"Saying that doesn't make it any better."

"I know. It's all I have right now. I brought a sandwich. I hope you like it."

He clamed his mouth shut when she lifted it to his lips.

"You have to eat, Jonah."

He shook his head, keeping his mouth tightly closed.

"So you're just going to give up then and let Chaos win?" All he did was stare at her. "Is that what your wife would want for you to do?"

"Don't—" The sandwich was shoved into his mouth, and he cursed himself for falling for her trick. He spit it out, then clamped his mouth shut once more. The cellar door opened and he watched as she scurried to the tray and dropped the sandwich down before hanging her head.

"Has he eaten?" Chaos asked entering the room.

"No, sir. He refuses."

"Do you now?" He walked to Jonah, glancing down at his chest. "You applied something to his wounds?"

"Yes, I did, sir."

"Why?"

"I figured you wanted him around for a while. Those wounds are beginning to get infected. If they weren't treated, he wouldn't last long."

"Very smart of you. I'm pleased with you."

"Thank you, sir." She bowed her head a little more.

"Now, why is it you refuse to eat?" he asked Jonah.

"Just let me die." The slap to his face stung but he didn't yelp.

"Coward. How is it someone as spineless as you could outwit someone as intelligent as me? It insults me." He slapped him again.

Jonah tasted his own blood and the sting of his broken lip. But he remained silent.

"What is the code to Basil's alarm system?"

"Go to hell." He'd die before telling him anything.

"I can keep you alive forever and these torture sessions bring me great joy. I'm really in no hurry. I have the upper hand here. Trinity will want you back and I know she'll do anything to get you back. It's only a matter of time before she steps out of her hiding spot and my men take her down. And then victory will be mine."

The cellar door opened again and someone hurried down the steps.

"Sir! Sir, we have a problem."

Chaos turned to the tall vampire and Jonah recognized him as one of the vampires that had run them off the road. Behind him was a scrawny looking young man. "What is it?"

"Danny's been captured by Trinity and Basil."

"What? How did this happen?"

"Danny went to meet his brother at his office and they ambushed him. His guards were taken as well."

"How do you know this?"

The scrawny guy stepped forward. "I saw it. I was there. I was hiding."

Chaos walked to the young man, his shoulders squared. "What was he doing there? I gave him strict instructions to stay away from his brother."

The scrawny guy stepped back.

"What involvement in this did you have?"

"They made me do it. They made me swallow a chip and told me

it would electrocute me if I didn't bring Danny to them by a certain time. I believed them. I was scared. I didn't want to die."

Chaos stepped a little closer, then took the boy's face in his hands and looked up at his guard. "Have him terminated."

"No, no, please, please, don't kill me. I didn't know they were lying to me. Please, don't kill me."

Jonah watched as the guard dragged the boy up the stairs, kicking and screaming. "Let him go," he demanded, tugging at his shackles.

"I am growing tired of Trinity ruining everything I have planned."

Jonah cringed when Chaos threw the chair across the room. He saw the woman cower against the wall and tugged at his shackles to try and save her.

"She took the king from me, took Magnus, and now she has my Daniel." He tossed the table and it narrowly missed hitting the woman. "She will pay for this, and she will pay dearly."

Like a blur, Jonah saw Chaos lunge at him and before he had a moment to register what was about to happen, he felt Chaos' teeth sink into his neck.

"No!"

He heard the woman scream and it rang like bells inside his head. He felt the fangs dig deeper into his neck, felt the slice as they penetrated the vein, then shook as the blood was sucked from his body. He was helpless to defend himself, and with each pull from his neck, he felt himself grow more and more lightheaded. Was this his death now? Would he finally have peace?

"She will not win. Not this time," Chaos said after pulling away from Jonah's neck. "This time, I will have the upper hand."

He felt himself drifting, felt his heart slowing its beat and welcomed the end. It was dark. He expected to see a light as so many had described at the nearing of their death. But all he felt was darkness. There were voices, but they all blurred into one and he couldn't make out anything that was said. His body felt light, relaxed, and free. He felt no pain, felt no sorrow, and as he gave up his last breath, he smiled.

And then he was drinking. Sucking in something that coated his throat like honey and sparkled in his system like wine. He felt it as it slid into his body, revitalizing him, pumping him up, and making him feel high. His heart began to speed up and the darkness began to slip away. And when he opened his eyes, he saw the yellow eyes staring back at him, and the smile on Chaos' face.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Dante hobbled down the stairs to the dungeon as Trinity, Basil, and Gypsy carried their newest hostages to their cells. He had a feeling they were not going to go lightly on the three hostages and had conflicted emotions about what was about to happen. He wanted to know where Jonah was being held, but wasn't about to stand by and watch his brother be beaten in order to get the information.

"You don't need to be here for this, Dante."

He looked over at Trinity and shook his head. "I'm not leaving."

"If you have ideas of letting your brother go—"

"I don't." This was the best place for him. He was away from Chaos and Dante couldn't help but feel he had to try to turn his brother away from the evil fiend that had stolen his life so many years ago.

"He knows where Jonah is being held. You have to know I'll do anything to get that information out of him."

There were other ways of attaining information. "Can I try talking to him first?"

"Yeah, because that went so well the first time," Basil snarled.

"Maybe this time he'll give in. We have him locked up in a cage. He might give it up." Basil shot him a "get real" sort of look. "At least let me try."

"We're running out of time, Dante."

"I know, Trinity. I know. Give me fifteen with him, please." He was relieved when she stepped back, taking Basil with her.

He stepped into the cell as Trinity lifted the spell that had knocked Danny out. Standing over his brother, Dante watched him come awake. He looked so young, so...normal. How had his life turned so horribly wrong? "Danny." Startled, his brother woke and scurried to his feet. "Relax. It's just me."

"What the hell did you do to me?"

"Trinity put you to sleep. We don't want to hurt you, Danny, but we need to know where Chaos is holding Jonah."

Danny backed away, his eyes darting around the cell. "Yeah, like I believe that. I can't believe you did this to me, Dante. How could you!"

"Just tell us where Jonah is being held, Danny, and we'll let you go," he lied. Now that he had his brother locked up, Dante wasn't about to let Danny go until he came around to his side.

"Fuck you," Danny spat, glaring at him.

"You had your chance, Dante. Now let us have ours." Basil stepped forward.

"Just wait." Dante held up his hand. "Give me a few more minutes."

"I'm not going to tell you anything, Dante, so you might as well save your breath."

"Why? Why won't you help me? Help us. Danny, please."

"He's not going to help us, Dante. Enough."

He spun on Trinity. "Start with one of them. They might tell us. Just give me some more time with Danny. Please."

"We're wasting time," she shouted at him.

"Then start on them," Dante shouted back. He loved his brother, no matter who he'd become, and couldn't stand by and watch him being tortured.

"Fine." Basil materialized inside the cage of one of the other new hostages as Trinity woke him up.

"Come on, Danny. Please, just tell me."

"Go to hell, bro." He turned his back and sat down on the cot.

Infuriated, Dante marched to the doors and waited as Gypsy unlocked it for him. He didn't say a word as he stomped from the room. He knew she was behind him, but he was in no mood to talk. He was torn. He wanted to find his friend, but he didn't want to have to torture it out of his brother.

And what hurt the most, was that Danny didn't seem to feel anything towards a brother that had once been his best friend. Dante felt like he was talking with a stranger, rather than his brother.

"What are you going to do, Dante?" Gypsy came up beside him.

"I have to find Cooper."

"Why? What can he do?"

"I'm hoping something that won't involve bloodshed." Finding him in the kitchen, Dante didn't waste any time. "Cooper, can you concoct some sort of truth serum?"

Cooper dried his hand on the towel hooked in his belt and cocked his head to the side. "For what purpose?"

"I want to give it to my brother and find out where Chaos is holding Jonah."

"I don't have the means to concoct such a thing. I'm sorry."

"Fuck! Where would we get what you need?"

Cooper shrugged. "I have no idea where you would be able to attain sodium pentothal here. I'm sorry."

"Damn it!" He stormed from the room, not giving a damn to the ache in his knee. He took the stairs in twos and waited until he was in his room before letting his anger surface. He grabbed the first thing he saw and threw it across the room. Then he cleared the bedside table with one hand, sending its contents crashing to the floor.

"I'm not sure how Basil and Trinity will feel if you destroy their property."

"I don't give a fuck." He tore the blankets off the bed in his rage, tossing them aside. And nothing he did dispelled the anger he felt inside. "Why the hell won't he help me? Why does he treat me like I'm nothing more than another human being and not his blood brother? Doesn't he feel anything towards me?" He kicked the pillows on the floor and felt little relief. "I know they're going to beat him to get the answers out of him and part of me wants to let them, and another wants to protect him."

"Which is understandable. He's your brother."

"He doesn't seem to want to be anymore. I just don't know — God, I'm so fucking torn." He dropped down on the disheveled bed and hung his head in his hands. He felt the bed give beside him but didn't look up. "He thinks of Chaos as his family and not me. Not once has he asked about Lexi or our parents. When he looks me in the eye, I see nothing of the boy I once knew."

"He's been with Chaos for twenty years, right?" Dante lifted his head, nodded. "And away from your family for twenty years. May-

be—and I'm just thinking aloud here—a part of him thinks his family let him down because no one came to find him."

That was an interesting theory and he hated himself for not thinking of it. "The police did what they could to find him, but after a year, his file was put in the cold case vault. No one believed me when I told them Danny had been taken by a vampire."

"You knew about vampires back then?"

"I watched a lot of old movies and *Dracula* was my favorite. I witnessed Danny being taken by Chaos. And I did nothing. I did nothing." He repeated as he stood. He needed to move, to walk off his frustrations. "For years I researched vampires and I knew there were some in Jacob's Cove. Something inside of me told me he was alive, but I could never find him. I'm sure he felt like no one cared. Damn it, why didn't I realize that before now."

"Where are you going?" she asked when he headed for the door.

"To see Danny. I have to tell him I tried to find him. I have to make him understand that I didn't give up on him and that I won't give up on him now."



Jonah felt the hands touching his face as he came to. His body felt...weird. There was a slight tingling feeling, similar to the sensation of pins and needles inside of him. And oddly, he felt empty inside, hollow. He opened his eyes and everything looked fuzzy, blurry. His mouth was dry and when he licked his lips, his tongue scraped over his teeth, startling him. They were pointy, sharp.

What the hell?

"Thank God you woke up."

His head swung to the left to where the female voice had come from and though she looked blurry, he knew who it was. "What... what happened?" His mind was as fuzzy as his eyes.

"Here, drink this."

"What is it?" he asked as she put it to his lips.

"Water."

His lips parted and he drank in the water like he'd been parched a week.

"I worried you wouldn't come to." She took the glass away and picked up a cloth. She dabbed it on his face, then his neck. "How do you feel?"

"Weird. What happened?" The last thing he remembered was Chaos having a tantrum in the room. Then... "He bit me?"

She nodded, dabbing the cloth to his neck.

He remembered that now and, closing his eyes, remembered looking into Chaos' yellow eyes as he...drank from his wrist. "I drank from him."

"Yes."

"He...made me...he turned me into a vampire." No, no that couldn't be. Yet the scrape of his front incisors on his tongue told him otherwise. "No...please tell me it isn't true." He couldn't be...

"It's true. I'm going to get you out of here," she whispered to him as she leaned in to wash his neck.

He heard what she'd said but his mind was preoccupied with what had happened to him. He was a vampire and he'd been sired by the very man they'd been trying to bring down. Did having Chaos' blood inside of him make him evil? He didn't feel evil, he just felt... empty.

"I haven't figured it out yet but I will. Just be patient and wait for me to come get you, okay?" She hurried away from him when the cellar doors opened and Chaos came down the stairs. He didn't like how timid she was around Chaos and wondered what he did to her to keep her here.

"Ah, my newest creation is awake. Wonderful! And how are you feeling, my son?"

"I'm not your son," Jonah stated firmly.

"In time you'll change your mind. I've sent a messenger to Trinity to tell her I've turned you. That should bring her out."

"She's more powerful than you could ever hope to be. You'll never catch her." He had faith in Trinity and he knew there was no way she could be duped into coming out of hiding. She was smarter than that.

"That remains to be seen, my boy. So...are you thirsty? Do you feel the craving clawing at you yet?"

"All I feel is disgust for you."

Chaos put a hand to his chin and clucked his tongue. "So defiant. Let's test that defiance, shall we." He bit into his wrist as he walked towards Jonah.

He had no place to go when Chaos lifted his hand up to his mouth and even when he turned his head, Chaos only grabbed hold of it with his other hand and held it in place.

"Drink!"

He didn't want to but the instant the blood touched his lips, he felt an insatiable need to have it. Though his mind was saying *don't*, his body cried, *take it*. He latched on to the wrist and began to suck on the

vein as it called out to him. He drank the blood, knowing what it was and needing it all the same. And when it was pulled away from him, he nearly begged to have it back.

Nearly.

"You can not resist the temptation of blood now, my boy. It's what fuels you, what gives you life. Without it, your body will begin to destroy itself. And you'll want more." Chaos took his face in his palm and squeezed. "I'm the only one who can give you more."

"I'll never want more from you, Chaos. Never!" he insisted even while his mouth craved one more taste.

"We'll see. We'll just see."



Dante took the steps down on one foot while he braced himself on the railing. His knee was throbbing something awful now, but he was determined to do what he had to do to make his brother understand he hadn't deserted him.

"I could carry you. It would be a lot easier on your leg."

"I don't need you to carry me, Gypsy." She'd been right there with him while he'd had his minor meltdown and still now, as he make his way down the long flight of steps. He'd never noticed how long they were before, but he supposed having an injury made a person more aware.

"It wouldn't be a problem for me. You're not that heavy."

"I am not having you carry me."

"Why not?"

He hopped down the last step then took a moment to catch his breath. It was hard work favoring an injured knee. "Because I'm more than capable of walking."

"But it hurts your knee. I don't mind. Actually, I rather like it."

"Well, I don't, so drop it."

She tilted her head to the side and gave him a baffled look. "Oh, I get it now. You think it makes you look bad if a woman carries you?"

"Looks have very little to do with it, sweetheart. It's pride."

"It doesn't make you less of a man to have me help you."

"Maybe not, but it doesn't make me feel very manly when a frail looking woman can lift a hundred and seventy pounds like it was no more than five."

She grinned, touching a hand to his face. "Aw, did I bruise your ego? Want me to make it feel better?"

His eyes nearly crossed when she clenched a hold of his dick and balls in her hand. "That's not my ego."

"Every man's ego is in his dick." She snuggled in real close and ran her tongue along the side of his jaw to his ear. "Want me to stroke it?"

The loud thud on the front door started them both, and no more than a second later the alarm began to ring. Cautiously, Dante walked to the front door and peered out the peep hole.

"See anyone?" she asked, practically breathing down his neck.

"No. But that doesn't mean someone isn't there."

"What's going on?" Trinity asked, coming up behind him and making him jump.

"Don't know. We heard a thud on the door and the alarm went off."

"No one's out there." Gypsy came back from the front window. "But there's a white thing laying by the door."

"I'll check it out."

Before he could say anything, she vanished and seconds later, reappeared beside him. "What is it?" he asked, nudging his head to the white lump she held in her hand.

"A rock, with a note on it. How original." Trinity rolled her eyes then pulled the elastic away and removed the paper.

"What does it say?" Gypsy inquired.

Dante saw Trinity's hand shake and her eyes gloss up with tears. He took the paper and turning it over, saw the picture taped to it. "Oh, fuck." It was a close-up picture of Jonah chained to a wall, and two distinct holes in the side of his neck. "No!" They were too late. He felt the wind stir up and as he looked up, saw Trinity glowing an eerie blue right before she vanished. "Shit!"

"What?" Gypsy took the paper and gasped.

"Get Basil. Now!"

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

He was a vampire. Jonah ran that over and over inside his mind as he hung from the wall. He'd often wondered what it would feel like, and now he knew. He'd never wanted to become one, never once even thought to ask Trinity to change him. But he'd always been curious what she felt. Now he knew.

He was still himself, but not completely the same. His body ached, sure, but the pain wasn't as intense as it had been before. There was an odd, energetic sensation inside of him. He felt pumped, like he'd had too much coffee and was riding on a caffeine high. But his heart still ached for the lives he'd lost.

He missed his Ariel, and wished they'd been able to raise the child they'd created. He'd been so excited when she'd told him she thought she was pregnant, and now all he felt was despair. They'd only been married a few short years, but he'd thought she was his soul mate. They'd been as one in so many ways. Ariel always knew what he wanted even before he had. She'd show up at the oddest times and simply give him a kiss, then turn and walk away. And it had always been just what he'd needed at the time.

He longed to hear her laughter. She had such a hardy laugh and when she got going, would snort, which only made her laugh more.

He longed to feel her in his arms. To hold her, to touch her, to have her just one more time. What would their child have been? Boy? Girl? Now he would never know. They would have made great parents, and their child would have wanted for nothing.

And because he'd been insistent on needing the laser scope, he'd lost them both.

He wouldn't have needed it, not really. He could have worked without it. Why had he insisted he needed it? Why had he put them all in danger? He didn't deserve to be alive. It should be him who died in the car, not Ariel and not their innocent child. It was all his fault.

He hoped Trinity didn't try to find him. He didn't want anyone else getting hurt. Had Dante and Gypsy even made it through the accident and the attack after? The last thing he remembered was seeing Gypsy attacking one of the vampires. Dante had been on the ground but Jonah had no idea if he'd been alive or not.

Jonah had been such an idiot, so thoughtless to the others and now they were paying the worst price. He didn't deserve to live and he wished to God he would just die.

Someone put a stake through my heart and end my sorry life.

He heard rapid fire footsteps above him and wondered what the hurry was. Then the cellar door opened and the light spilled out into the darkness. His eyes were beginning to focus more now, but with the bright light he was forced to close them to stop the burning he felt from the brightness.

"We have to hurry. I don't know how long the drugs will last."

Cautiously he opened his eyes and saw her working on the shackles at his feet. "What are you doing?"

"I told you I was going to get you out of here. I spiked the guard's and Chaos' drink but I don't know how long it'll last. We have to hurry."

His body slumped to the floor the instant his hands were released. Even if he'd wanted to get up, his legs wouldn't let him. They felt like rubber. Then she lifted him up and shifted him to rest against her back in a piggy back fashion then clasped his arms around her neck. "Just leave me."

"Just hold on. You're heavier than you look," she grunted as she moved them towards the stairs.

His feet slid along the floor, scraping as he was dragged along. It was humiliating not being able to move, but no matter how much he tried, he couldn't get his legs to work. "Where are you taking me?"

"Out of here." She shifted him and continued walking.

"You're going to hurt yourself. Just let me be." She headed past the stairs, confusing him, and continued through the dark cellar.

"I've seen too many innocent lives lost. I refuse to watch another one, so just shut up and hang on." She opened the door and stepped into a tunnel.

"What is this place?"

"An old army shelter. This tunnel leads to a fallout shelter and an exit." She panted, dragging him along on her back.

"Why can't I use my legs?"

"I think you might have hurt your spine in the accident. Just hold on."

"Are you telling me I'm paralyzed?" That couldn't be, he felt the skin on the top of his feet being scraped away. He had feeling he just couldn't use his legs.

"No, not paralyzed, but there might be some swelling on your spinal column. I'll know more when we get to the hospital." She huffed.

"Hospital?"

She punched in the code that released the door, then pushed her way through to the outside. "It's the only place I know of that they won't come looking for us. Stay quiet now, just in case someone's outside."

She carried him to a car parked near a field. They were on some sort of farm, by the looks of it, though he had no idea where. She opened the door to a dark sedan, then shifting him, laid him in the back seat and shifted his hips and legs before closing the door. It was then that he was reminded of his nudity.

"Just relax, it won't be long," she stated as she climbed behind the wheel and started the car.

He wished he had a blanket or something to cover himself. Instead, he put his hands over his genitals. He wasn't sure why he bothered when she'd seen him already.

The car lurched forward as she sent them on their way.



Basil crumpled the paper in his hand, fury igniting inside of him. "She said nothing before she vanished?"

"Not a word," Dante supplied. He didn't like the look in Basil's eyes. The normal translucent blue was beginning to glow but it was the coldness Dante felt from them that worried him.

He tossed the paper aside then turned away and marched from the room.

"Shit!" Dante knew just where he was going and he wasn't about to let him do what he had in mind.

"What?" Gypsy asked as she ran after Dante.

"He's going to torture Danny to find out where Jonah is." He caught up with Basil just as he was taking the stairs down to the dungeon. "You can't kill him."

"I have no intention of killing him."

"He won't tell you anything even if you beat him."

"We'll see."

He grabbed Basil's arm, which had been a vital mistake. Basil spun on him, his fangs bared and eyes glowing. The growl he emitted should have told him to back off, but it didn't. "I can't let you do this, Basil."

"You don't have a choice."

"The hell I don't," he cursed loudly when Basil vanished. In a dead run, he took the stairs down, ignoring the stabbing pain in his knee. And as he rushed to the door to the dungeon, he heard the locks click shut. "Damn it, Basil. Let me in."



She didn't care what she had to give up just as long as Jonah was brought home where he belonged. Appearing in the Mystical room, Trinity called out to the queen. "Your Majesty. I beg a minute of your time." The bright white room shimmered and before her eyes, the queen appeared.

"What has my lady brought as a gift?"

"Myself. I'll give you anything you want, take it all. Just, please, help me find Jonah."

"Do you know what you are willing to sacrifice?"

"Yes," Trinity sighed. She didn't care if all her powers were taken away, she had to find Jonah. "Please, you have to help me find him. Chaos turned him and I'm afraid the longer he keeps him...the less of him will remain. Please," she pleaded again.

"I can not take you at your word that you will give to me what I claim."

"I promise I will. My word is gold."

"Blood is the tie that binds."

Before her a sheet of paper appeared on a white pedestal table. She looked up and was handed a feathered pen. "What do I need to do?"

"Give me your left hand."

Trinity did and she felt the warmth as her hand was taken by the queen. Then her hand was tipped back and the pen placed on her vein. In a flash it was sliced across her wrist and the blood began to spill.

"Now, sign it."

She took the pen from the queen and signed the paper before her in her own blood. The instant it was signed, both pen and paper vanished and the wound on her wrist was sealed.

"You will find him on Valley Road in a farm house of white and blue."

"Thank you, thank you so very much." She vanished and sent herself to the locations she'd been given. Only to find it engulfed in flames. "No!" She sent herself into the house, into the scorching flames and tore through the house in search of Jonah. Only when she felt her skin sizzling did she take herself out of there and back to the queen.

Only this time, there was no light, there was no queen. The room was an ordinary cement and brick closet. "Your Majesty. Please, I need to see you. Help me. The location you gave me is in flames. Help me find him." All she got was the sound of her voice as it echoed in the empty room. "NO!" she screamed and had the walls cracking and the door rattling.

She fell to the floor and began to weep.



Chaos looked around the dingy room he'd been brought to and forced his eyes to stay open. He'd been baffled to wake up in a car speeding down the road, and even more baffled to see the farm house engulfed in flames. At the time, he'd been too groggy to ask what was happening, but now his mind was clearing up.

"This is the best I can do, I'm afraid."

Chaos lifted his heavy head to the man before him, then down at the cup in his hand. He smelled the blood in it and knew it wasn't human. He took the cup and looking down into it, spoke, "I would like an explanation now."

"Raven must have drugged us both. My mind is still a little foggy, but the last thing I remember was taking the cup of coffee she offered me and wishing her a good night. When I came out of it a short time later, she and the new slave were gone. When I went to tell you, I realized she'd drugged you as well."

"She'd been so kind, bringing me a nice warm cup of plasma. I never thought to be suspicious of it, or her." He didn't like being made a fool and when he caught up with her she was going to pay dearly.

"I realized then that she'd planned it and I thought it was best to get you out of there before anyone came after us. I couldn't be sure she wouldn't tell Trinity of our whereabouts."

"What about the fire?"

"I set it."

"Why?"

"Seemed like the right thing to do. No house, no evidence."

Chaos nodded then reluctantly took a sip. It was warm and taste of the dog it had come from. "You were right to get me out of there. I have no doubt Raven will have taken Jonah to Trinity and told her where to find me. The fire was a nice touch. Thank you, Fritz."

"I am your servant, my lord. Without you, I am nothing."

Chaos smiled as he drank the remainder of the blood. "I am in your hands now, Fritz. And since I am short a second in command, I will appoint you as such."

"Thank you, my lord." He bowed, leaving his head down.

"Now, where have you taken me?"

Fritz lifted his head and stood perfectly erect as he spoke. "A shack not far from the farm. It's only temporary until I get my senses back. I think it best to go back underground, at least for the time being."

"You're probably right. We'll need to gather the men. I think it's time we took out my enemies. Don't you agree, Fritz?"

"Yes, sir." He bowed again.

"Good. Now get me someone to drink. This dog blood is crap."



"Open this damn door, Basil."

Ignoring the pounding, Basil walked to the cell and through the bars.

"He doesn't sound pleased," Danny commented nonchalantly.

"And neither will you be when I'm through with you." He picked the young man up by the shirt front and held him in the air. "You have three seconds to tell me where Jonah is being kept before I get nasty."

"Bring it on. I'm not saying a thing."

"Have it your way." Basil set him down on the floor, then spun around when Trinity appeared behind him. "Where the hell have you been? Do I have to emphasize how dangerous it is for you out there right now? What were you thinking?"

"I was thinking of finding my friend," she spat back at him with a great deal of heat.

"Did you find him?"

She closed her eyes and sighed. "No. The place the queen sent me to was up in flames when I got there. No sign of Jonah or Chaos. Damn it!"

For the time being torturing answers out of Danny could wait. Basil stepped through the bars and took her in his arms. He stroked her back as she rested her head on his shoulder. She was wearing down, though she fought diligently to hide it from him. He could see it in little things like now, resting her head on his shoulder.

He kissed her head, then looked into her eyes when she looked up at him. "I'll go to the queen and see what I can do."

"She isn't there anymore. Oh, Basil, Chaos got him."

He caressed her face and saw the fight was slowly slipping away. "I know. We'll find him before its too late. What do you mean the queen wasn't there?"

"She's not there. The room is there but it's an ordinary closet. No white light, no serenity. She didn't even come when I called."

"But she was there when you went to her to ask for help with Jonah?"

She nodded. "Yes. She told me where to find him; I signed the agreement, then went to the location she gave me. The second time I went to see her she was gone. Everything was gone."

"Back up. You signed something?"

"Yes. An agreement to take my powers away if she helped me. I need to find him, Basil, and I don't care how I do it."

"Yet you still have your powers." He cocked his head to the side. "Did she specifically say it was your powers she would take?"

"Yes...well, no. I told her I would give her anything I had, to take it all, and she agreed. It's done, we need to move on. Has he given you anything valuable?"

"No, but I was just about to get started on him." The dungeon doors flew open with an angry Dante on the other side.

"You better not have touched him."

"I haven't harmed him, yet. How did you get in here?"

"Cooper gave me a key." Dante glanced at Danny. "I want some time alone with him and don't tell me no. I want Jonah home just as much as you do, but I'm not going to allow you to beat my brother to a pulp for the answers."

"If Chaos isn't at the farm, then I have no idea where he is. So you all can save your breath," Danny piped in.

"Where else would he go?" Trinity demanded of Danny.

"I have no idea. I've been here, in case you've forgotten."

"I need to find him, Basil. I need to get Jonah back."

"We will, my love. I promise you we will."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"I'm going to pull into the emergency dock and run in and grab a wheelchair. I won't be long."

Jonah nodded...what else could he do? It wasn't like he could move his legs and take off before she got back. What else was going to happen to him? He'd lost his wife and child, lost the mobility of his legs, and lost his humanity. What the hell did he have to live for?

"Here we go." She knocked on the window at his head. "I'm going to open the door. Can you hang on to the front seat?"

He nodded and grabbed a hold of the front seat and held himself up. The door opened and he felt a cool breeze at his back. Then her hands slid around his chest and he felt the warmth of her body against his back.

"I'm going to slide you out and put you in the wheelchair now. Okay?"

"Sure." He was humiliated not just with the fact that he was stark naked, but that she was practically carrying him. She grunted as she pulled him from the car and then he felt the wheelchair beneath his butt. Once he was seated, she grabbed his legs and he wished with all his heart he had something to cover himself.

"There we go."

As if she'd read his mind, she draped a blanket over his hips and legs, then scurried in behind him and began wheeling him to the doors. "It's deserted?"

"Has been for a few days now. The cops and the army have been hustling people out of the city until they can figure out why it's staying dark. People don't want to believe in magic. They'd rather think the world is ending and that the apocalypse is upon us. Here we go now."

She wheeled him into a room the size of a closet with one hospital bed and a chair. "You're not a vampire."

"No. I'm going to try to lift you onto the bed but I'm going to need you to help me. Can you grab the bed and help pull yourself up?"

"I think so." He hoped so. "Um...can you maybe close your eyes while we do this?"

She smiled and her blue eyes lit with pleasure. "I've seen it all before, but I understand you want some dignity so I'll do my best to keep the blanket around you. Ready?"

"I guess so." She wheeled him closer to the bed and he grabbed the side railings, then hoisted himself up. It wasn't as easy as he'd thought it would be and when she grabbed him around the waist he wished desperately his legs would begin to work again.

"Here we go. I'll just settle you in properly." She shifted him onto the bed, moving his hips, shifting his shoulders and straightening his legs out. Then she pulled the bedding up and covered him with the blankets. "I want to wash those wounds down with some antiseptic before they get worse."

"Why are you doing this? You could have just left me there and ran away yourself."

She shook her head as she smoothed out the blankets. "I've been waiting for a reason to take off. You gave me that. I'm just going to leave you for a bit while I look for the antiseptic. Okay?"

He nodded. "I don't even know your name."

"Raven. Raven Mooney."

She left him in the room alone and for the first time since he'd woken chained to the wall, he closed his eyes and cried.



It had taken some fancy talking to convince Basil and Trinity to leave him alone with his brother, and Dante was glad he'd finally won. Now all he had to do was figure out what he was going to say.

"You're wasting your breath if you think talking to me will give you any answers."

Dante grabbed the stool in the corner and dragged it to the cell, then took a seat. He looked over at his brother, his dark hair unruly and his stance defiant. He'd seen that look plenty of times in their youth. "I don't want to talk about Jonah or Chaos right now. I want to talk about us."

"You're still wasting your breath." Danny sat down on the cot, curling his legs up as he leaned back against the wall.

"Maybe, but it's my breath to waste. I never gave up on you, Danny. I need you to know that. I'm sorry I didn't do anything to stop Chaos from taking you. I'm sorry I didn't save you."

"I don't need saving, bro."

"It's funny, you keep saying I mean nothing to you, that we're not family anymore, yet you still call me bro. Lexi's married now. He's a good guy, owns a bar and makes decent money. She works for me as my secretary and I don't know what I would do without her. Mom and Dad live in Florida now, retired and happy."

"I know. I checked up on all of you."

"Yet you claim you don't want to be a part of us. We didn't desert you, even though it may feel that way. I became a cop so I could find you."

"Bravo to you." Danny clapped his hands giving Dante a snide look.

"Twenty years I wondered where you were, how you were."

"I didn't want to be found," Danny admitted. "I meant what I said before. I finally feel whole. I finally feel like I belong. This is what I was meant to be. Come on, bro. Why do you think I was always sneaking out of the house late at night? I was searching for someone to tell me who I really was. Chaos did that for me and I'm sorry if you can't accept that. Now, I'm kinda bushed." Sliding down, straightening his legs, Danny rolled onto his side and faced the wall.

Dante sat there a moment before standing. Leaving the stool in its place, he left.



Jonah was at peace in his dreams. He was with the woman he loved while they watched their son play in the sand, building a castle with buckets and sticks. She felt of flesh and bone, and her scent stimulated his senses. And when he kissed her, she was warm and real.

Then the darkness came and took them all away.

He sat up screaming, his heart pounding.

"It's okay. Shh now."

He wasn't startled when Raven brushed her hand over his hair. Though the room was dark, he saw with perfect clarity. And even if he hadn't been able to see, he could smell her in the room. She had a distinctive scent to her, one of soap and ginger. He wasn't sure where the ginger came from but understood the soap.

"What time is it?" he asked, laying back against the pillow.

"Just past five." She clicked the light above his head on.

"In the morning or afternoon?"

"I'm not sure. I lost track of time a while back. They all seem to blend into one. How do you feel?"

He closed his eyes. "Miserable."

"You had a nightmare?"

"More like a revelation. Are the telephones working?"

"As far as I know, yes. Why?"

"I need to call my friends and let them know I'm alive." He had to at least do that because he knew Trinity would be insane with worry and he didn't want her doing anything to put her life in jeopardy.

"Do you think they're still here? Maybe they left town like everyone else has."

"They'll be here. They're looking for Chaos." Raven set a pair of scrubs on bed "What are you doing?"

"I thought you might like something to wear, and maybe a shower. I can wheel you to it and get it set for you. You can sit in the wheel chair and wash, or I could help you."

"I think I can manage to wash myself." It was humiliating enough to have her do everything else for him.

"All right then. Would you like to wash first or the call?"

"The call."

She picked up the phone beside his bed and put it to her ear, then frowned. "It's not connected. I'll go check if the ones at the desk are working. And while I'm at it, I'll get you something to eat."

"I'm not hungry." He had absolutely no urge to eat at all.

"I know, but you'll need to feed. I'll be right back."

He watched her scurry away and understood what she meant by feed. She was going to bring him blood.



Everything was perfect. Or at least she hoped Dante thought it was perfect. She really didn't know if he was the romantic type or not. If not, well, lesson learned. She lit the last candle then took a step back to observe the room. It had the right ambiance, she just hoped it accomplished what she'd meant for it to accomplish.

She wanted him to forget his troubles for just a few moments.

Seeing a wrinkle in the sheets, Gypsy quickly hurried to the bed and smoothed it out. She'd never slept on silk bedding before, certainly never made love on them either. It was going to be an incredible experience for her to do so now. She took a moment to look at herself in the mirror. Her yellow eyes were a natural part of her now, as were the fangs. She shifted the cups of the red bustier corset, drew the strings together just a bit more to make her breasts bulge up a little higher, then did a turn to examine her ass. The red thong showed off the smoothness of her butt and she was very proud of her it.

The sound of lopsided footsteps in the hallway clued her in to Dante's arrival. Like a giddy schoolgirl, she giggled in anticipation. She hurried to the door just as it opened. "Surprise!" The look on his face said it all.

"What's going on?"

She took him by the arm and closed the door. "I wanted to do something nice for you." She pulled him towards the bed, hardly able to contain her excitement. "Get undressed."

"Gypsy, I'm not in the mood for sex right now."

That was a little disappointing, but she could rectify that. "Just get undressed and lie down on the bed, face down."

With a heavy sigh he began unbuttoning his shirt.

The instant all the buttons were undone, she pulled it off his back and down his arms. "Now the pants and underwear."

"You're a very demanding woman."

"Uh huh, and you love it." While he kicked out of his jeans, she pulled the blankets back and waited for him to crawl underneath. "On your belly."

"Yes, ma'am." He crawled onto the bed and lay down on his belly. "What's this all about, Gypsy?"

"Me making you feel better." Grabbing the oil, she climbed onto the bed and straddled his butt. He had such a nice ass, so round and so firm. She just wanted to squeeze it right now, but she refrained. "How is your knee?"

"Sore."

He really was in a mood. One word answers was a clue he didn't want to talk. That was fine, he didn't need to talk, he just needed to enjoy. "Your shoulder is healing up nicely." She squeezed some oil onto her hands then set it beside her on the bed. She rubbed them together, placed them on the small of his back, and slid them up to his shoulders.

"You're giving me a massage?"

He sounded so baffled that she couldn't help but laugh. "You don't have to sound so shocked."

"Sorry. I expected you to fuck my brains out, not rub my body in oils."

"I'll fuck your brains out later. Right now, just enjoy the massage." She stroked her oil slicked hands up his back, then down again. His muscles were so tense, so tight. She massaged gently, easing the tension from his muscles and felt him relax. "I worked as a masseuse once. I didn't have the qualifications, but the manager said he'd let it slide if I promised not to tell anyone he also provided sensual massage in the back. Money was money and I enjoyed the sensual act as much as the massaging of muscles."

"You had sex with the customers?"

"No, but I did get them off. That was part of the job description. It was mostly middle-aged men who were having trouble getting it up that came in for a massage. Most of them left happy."

"You are good with your hands."

She leaned in to whisper in his ear. "Just my hands?"

He snickered. "Among other things. I was ready to come back to my room and drown my sorrows in a few bottles of beer. This is so much better."

"Thank you." She shimmied down past his ass and couldn't resist nipping it with her teeth just once. When he moaned, she contemplated doing it again. But she sat up and decided to massage his legs first. There was plenty of time for nibbling on him later.

"I don't know what to do about Danny."

"Right now is for you and me. No worries about what we need to do, or who we need to find. It's just time to relax." She slicked some more oil onto her hands and ran them along his sore leg. "Tell me if I'm hurting you."

"A little pain is good. Makes me feel alive."

Still, she was gentle when she slid her hands along the side by his knee. As she ran her hands up, she grazed his balls and felt them

tighten and heard him moan. She knew if she were to ask him to roll over now, he would be fully hard. Instead, she went to the next leg. She rubbed the oil along his leg, up his thigh and teasingly touched his balls again. She liked to hear him moan and loved to arouse him. And as she continued to rub his leg, he began to pump his hips.

"Roll over."

"Now we're talking."

She laughed as she sat beside him on the bed while he rolled over. She was right, he was definitely hard and begging to be sated. In time she would, but for now, she wanted to please him in a different way. "What nationality are you? I ask because of the dark hair and skin. My guess would be Hispanic."

"Your guess would be right. My grandfather came over in his youth and married a pretty little brunette. They had two sons. I look a great deal like my grandfather."

"I thought as much. It's the eyes." Lifting the bottle of oil, she dribbled some onto his chest, knowing full well how sexual it was. She set the bottle back down on the bed then smoothed her hands over his hairy chest. "You're a very sexy man."

"And you're driving me insane. I need you, Gypsy."

"I know." She smiled teasingly, then dipped her hands low enough to graze the side of his dick.

"And you're doing that on purpose."

She squealed when he grabbed her and giggled when he threw her down onto the bed and climbed on top. "I wasn't finished the massage."

"Oh, you're finished alright, and now it's my turn." Grabbing hold of the string on her bodice, he yanked it open then pulled it down past her breasts. She gasped when he took one hard nipple into his mouth.

"I love your mouth." She was disappointed when he released her tit, then smiled as he slid his tongue along her chest to her belly. When he slid her thong aside and used his tongue on her, she didn't mind so much that he'd given up on her breasts. She spread her legs and let him lap her up. When he swirled her clit with his tongue, she clenched onto the bedding and lifted her hips. He had such a gifted tongue and he knew just how to use it. He suckled her silky, moist folds, teasing her nub with the occasional flick. And just as she was about to explode, he dove inside. Her body quaked as the orgasm took control.

"Oh my God, yes, yes," she panted as it rippled through her body. She never wanted it to stop.

Then he lifted his head and slid his way up her body.

"That must hurt your knee."

"A little pain is good. I want something from you now, Gypsy. Something we've never done before."

She couldn't think of anything they hadn't done yet. "Now I'm confused."

He ran his thumb along her lips. "I want you to bite me while I fuck you."

Her eyes went wide. "No!"

"I want every part of you and I want you to have every part of me. I want to be the one to feed you."

"Dante, do you know what you're asking?"

"Yes." He pressed his thumb to her sharp teeth hard enough to pierce the skin. "I don't want to be turned. I just want us to be as one. In every way."

She took his hand in hers and sucked the blood from his thumb and her body reacted as if she'd just sampled an aphrodisiac. "I may not know when to stop."

"I think you will." He kissed her now and her heart swelled with love. "Take me, Gypsy. Take all of me."

He penetrated her in one long thrust and turned his head to expose the length of his neck. She saw the vein and felt its pull. His blood was still on her lips, in her mouth, and she wanted more. It was a big thing he was asking of her, and she knew to do so would be the most intimate they would ever be. And she wanted nothing more.

She spread for him, taking him in as he pressed in then out and in again. Her body was revving up and his blood called to her. But she had to be sure. "You really want this?"

"More than anything."

She closed her eyes, drew in a deep breath, then lifted her head, peeling back her lips and touched her mouth to his neck. She could feel the blood pulsating in his veins and it matched with each thrust of his hips. She needed him in every way, and took.

She clamped her teeth down, penetrating the flesh and searing the vein. He groaned loudly and thrust himself deep inside. She drank his blood and as it filled her, she felt the orgasm strike her like never before. She clamped onto him with her hands and pulled him down to her. His hips pistoned inside of her with a ferocity that shook the bed. Opening up, her body gushed with its release. Pulling her mouth free, she cried out as it washed through her.

She felt him pulsate inside of her with his own release.

"I love you, Gypsy."

His blood coated her mouth and her body was electric. She lifted his head, smiling, and took his mouth with hers. She kissed him while his blood still saturated her lips and when she released him, she knew she'd finally found her home. "I love you more than words can say."



Raven had connected the telephone, then left him alone to make his call. Jonah appreciated that, because what he had to say had to be said in private. He could only hope Trinity understood. Sitting up in his hospital bed, Jonah lifted the receiver and dialed. He didn't want to take the chance of getting someone else on the phone, so he decided to call her cell. He hoped she had it on her.

The phone rang once, then twice before it was answered. "Hello?"

"Trin, it's me."

"Jonah? Oh my God, Jonah. Is that really you?"

The sound of her voice struck his heart and he nearly got all choked up. "It's really me. I'm alive. I'm...okay. I just wanted to let you know so you'd stop worrying about me."

"Where are you? We'll come get you, just tell me where you are."

"I can't. Don't be angry with me, Trin. I need to do this. I love you." He hung the phone up with shaky hands, then took a moment just to breathe. The note he'd written to her sat beside the telephone with instructions where to take it. He'd been grateful to find a pen and pad in the bedside table while Raven had been trying to find a working telephone. He trusted that she would deliver the note.

Sitting up, he held the pen in his hand and prayed it did its job. Closing his eyes, he held it out, tip pointing towards his chest, ready to end it all. His eyes flew open when Raven grabbed his hands.

"Nice try."

"Let me go." He yanked at his hands, trying to pry hers off his when he felt the jab in his arm. He looked to his left and saw the needle she jabbed into his arm. "What are you doing?"

"Saving your life."

His head began to swim and he let his arms fall to his sides as he collapsed against the bed. "I don't want to be saved."

She climbed in beside him and put her arm over his head and pulled him against her chest. "We don't always get what we want."

EPILOGUE

Here he was again, in the underground tunnels, back in the five by five foot room of dingy cement walls and stale smelling air. Chaos sat down on the cot which was anything but comfortable and cursed Trinity Ford. He was going to make her pay dearly for ruining his life, his plans. He only wished he'd had more time with her friend. Turning him against her would have been such sweet pleasure. But thanks to that bitch of a maid he'd been stuck with, his plans were foiled.

Trinity was a dead woman the moment she stepped outside of her hiding area.

He had no one now. The king was gone, Magnus was dead, and Daniel had been captured. He was sure his brother was doing his utmost to convince the young man to join his side. Daniel was young. He was sure the boy would turn, which hurt. He thought of Daniel as his son.

Fritz had informed him that several of his men had deserted him, and that angered him a great deal. But he supposed it was too much to ask that they wait for him, and trust that he would do what was best for them. That was also Trinity's fault. Because she was on the hunt for him, he had no choice but to stay in hiding. She knew he'd need his blood spilled in order to bring the sun back. But he was going to remedy that one problem very soon.

When the door opened and Fritz entered, Chaos stood, and looked him square in the eyes. "Well? Can it be done?"

Fritz nodded his bald head, his hands clasped in front of him. "It might take a day to get what we need, but it can be done."

"Perfect. How many do we have on our side?"

"Fifty."

Chaos shook his head. Only fifty. At one time not so long ago he'd had hundreds. "And you've gathered them someplace safe?"

"I have. They're ready to take action just as soon as you give the command."

And he couldn't wait. "You'll inform me the instant they arrive?"

"I will, sir."

"You are a treasure, Fritz." He sat back down on the cot, and a sly smile lifted his lips. "Trinity won't know what hit her."

Biography

Raised on a rural farm in Saskatchewan, Shiela Stewart relied on her vivid imagination to fill her days. Never did she realize that her need to tell a story would someday lead to becoming a published romance author. In the fall of two thousand and six, Shiela published her very first book and hasn't stopped since.

When not writing, Shiela spends time with the love of her life, William and their three children. She has a strong affection for animals which is evident in the five cats, one dog, three turtles and ten fish she owns. Some of her passions aside from writing are drawing and painting and proudly displays her artwork in murals in her home.

Her favorite time of day is sunset and loves to stargaze.

Other Books by Shiela Stewart

Discovery in Passion: Passion Series Book 1

Escape in Passion: Passion Series Book 2

Mercy in Passion: Passion Series Book 3

Seducing the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 1

Desiring the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 2

Embracing the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 3

Charming the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 4

Tempting the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 5

Penetrating the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 6

Consuming the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 7

Surviving the Darkness: Darkness Series Book 8

