



BLOOD
Signs

AMBER KELL

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Chapter One

Randall Stewart's stomach growled as he flipped through his textbook. Concentrating on his paper was difficult as he struggled to work through his hunger. He was out of money until later in the week when funds from his student loan came through. The twenty in his pocket was going to have to last until Thursday, when he got his check.

"You gonna do something about that, man? It sounds like it's going to escape and eat me," Darren asked, laughing.

"Very funny," Randy said to his roommate. He wasn't looking forward to tomorrow. He hated Mondays. They were just the beginning of a long, hard week; served him right for going to medical school. At least this was his last year.

If he survived his clerkships.

Some of the physicians didn't appreciate spending time on students while others went too far the other way and wanted to be your new best mentor.

Luckily he didn't have anything on Sunday; it was the only time he didn't have clerkships. Occasionally, he was on call with his intern, but it was rare.

Another stomach growl made him grimace.

An apple sailed through the air heading towards him. He caught it with one hand, biting into its thick flesh. Juice spilled down his chin, making him pause and wipe it with the back of his hand.

"Seriously, dude, haven't you found a job yet?"

Randy shook his head at his roommate, not bothering to look away from his computer. "I've had a hard time finding one that'll work around my schedule." Randall's last job for a catering company had a downturn with the economy so they had to let him go. For the past three weeks he'd been looking, but it had been next to impossible finding something else. "It's hard to convince people to let you work

odd hours when they can hire ten other people who can work whatever hours they want.”

“Why don’t you hit your parents up for cash?”

Randy laughed and even he could hear the bitter notes. “Not everyone’s parents are rolling in cash, like yours. My dad’s a farmer. Hell, I’m going to have to be some top-notch specialist in order to make enough to cover my student loans.”

He tried not to let the idea depress him. After finding out how much college and medical school cost, Randy almost gave up on the idea, but he’d been dreaming of being a doctor since he was five and got a toy stethoscope for Christmas. His parents supported him emotionally, but they barely had enough money to pay for the farm, much less medical school. He’d always had a rocky relationship with his father, but then his father was a tough bastard. Randy’s coming out of the closet didn’t change their relationship a bit.

When he left for college, Randy’s father gave him a box of condoms and told him not to come home with any diseases.

It was almost a tearjerker.

His mother had shaken her head and slipped him a hundred dollar bill. Unfortunately, that money was long gone for other expenses. College was fucking expensive.

“I’m going to have to do something soon, though, or I’m going to starve to death.” He’d been frugal but his medical school loans didn’t cover as much as his undergraduate degree loans. There were a lot of extras in medical school that ate up his food money. They never tell you that you’ll need copy packets that cost thirty dollars each, on top of your books.

Darren flashed Randy a smile that, if he didn’t know the man was as straight as a board, he might have taken as a come on. “I might be able to hook you up.”

He could almost see the bright yellow caution light flashing over his roommate's head.

"Hook me up with what?"

"A job."

"What kind of job?" As far as he knew Darren hadn't worked a day in his life. His friend was getting a Masters in Fine Arts degree because Darren didn't know what else to do with his drawing talent and his family would pay as long as he attended college doing something.

Before Randall could interrogate his roommate, a soft beep from his laptop told him it was time to check his glucose levels. With a sigh, he pulled out his kit. Removing a test strip, he pricked his finger and squeezed until a drop of blood fell on the strip. He put it in his meter and waited. The machine beeped and he let out a breath of relief.

Normal.

Diabetes was a vicious bitch.

"How often do you have to do that?" Darren asked.

Randall sighed as he answered the same question that Darren asked every couple of weeks. After two months of rooming together, Randall had come to the conclusion that Darren had absolutely no memory capability. "Once a day unless I feel like crap then I check it until my sugar levels off."

"Huh. Wanna come with me tomorrow night?"

"Where to?"

Darren's eyes flickered around their shared room like he didn't know where to look.

"Where to, Darren?" He asked in a firmer tone. It wasn't like his outgoing roommate to keep secrets. Darren was the type who liked to boast about anything he could and some things he shouldn't.

"It's easier to take you than to tell."

“It’s not illegal, is it?” He didn’t need his Iowa farmer father coming to the police station to bail out his gay, stupid son. His father’s opinion of him was already low enough.

“No.” Darren said, meeting his eyes. “But it’s hard to explain. Which is why I want you to come with me.”

“Fine.” Randy said. After all, what did he have to lose? He needed a break from his homework, anyway.

* * *

The night air was freezing.

Randy could see his breath as he followed Darren through the dark streets. He didn’t think it was starting well. He was already worried they were going to get mugged before they got to wherever the hell they were going.

Finally, Darren stopped outside a plain grey metal door. With the cocky confidence of youth, he pounded on its surface.

Randall flinched, ready to run if necessary.

The door creaked open and a mountain of a man with dark brown hair and an unfriendly face glared down at Darren.

“You’re late.”

Darren gave him a nervous smile, shifting from foot to foot. “But I brought my friend with me. He’s diabetic.”

Randy wondered what being diabetic had to do with the job. If the rest of them were like the bouncer, he didn’t know if he wanted to stay very long. The scowl left the big man’s face and he gave Randy a wide, surprisingly white-toothed, smile. “Then, come on in.”

Huh. That was...strange.

Shrugging, Randy followed Darren through the doorway. It was plain inside the hallway. Beige carpet, beige floor, but he could hear the pounding of music and knew all wasn't as it appeared.

"Take him back to see Master Sasha."

"I was going to," Darren said breezily, walking away from the bouncer.

Randy sent the bouncer a nervous glance, but followed obediently.

The walk down the hall was short as they quickly reached a beige door halfway down the corridor. Darren stopped, straightened his shirt and ran his fingers through his hair in a futile attempt to tidy his appearance. Nervous gestures from his normally unflappable friend made Randy even more tense.

Darren pinned him with his bright green eyes. "Be respectful. This guy isn't one to fuck with."

"Okay," Randy said, nodding. He was a little unhinged at the fear flickering in Darren's expression, but his roommate had promised it wasn't anything illegal. Randy straightened his own clothes as Darren knocked on the door. Well, as straight as a tee-shirt and jeans could get.

"Enter." A strong baritone responded to the knock, sending shivers across Randy's skin that had nothing to do with nerves and everything to do with the sexiness of the man's voice.

Darren opened the door, motioning Randy to follow him.

Sasha Baros looked up as the men entered, his gaze sliding past Darren and zeroing in on the young man who followed him.

For the first time since his adolescence, Sasha lost control of his fangs. The scent of the stranger made his mouth salivate and his teeth ache from the need to drink from this new source.

"Good evening, Master Sasha," Darren said, kneeling before his desk.

The young man looked torn between kneeling beside his friend, and running for the door.

Sasha couldn't have that. He ruthlessly retracted his fangs, wincing slightly at the sting.

"Evening, Darren. Who is your friend?"

"This is my roommate, Randall. He needs a job, but his studies are too heavy for a regular schedule. I thought he'd be good at this one, since he's diabetic."

Diabetic. Yummm.

Sasha thought the kid looked good before but now he was a dessert waiting to happen and Sasha had a mean sweet tooth.

"Good evening, Randall. Do you go by Randy?"

The kid nodded.

"Come closer so I can get a better look at you." He could see fine in the dim lighting, but he wanted the young man nearer to scent him. He saw Darren swallow nervously as his friend stepped up to the desk.

Randall started to go to his knees.

"No. Stay on your feet. Darren, you may go to work."

He saw a flash of concern cross Darren's face as he looked at his friend. "But..."

"I will take good care of him," Sasha interrupted.

Sasha sent a mental push to Darren, surprised when Randall jumped.

"What was that?" Randy asked, looking around.

Amazing! His new snack had a bit of the psychic in him. Only someone who had psychic abilities could feel a vampire push that wasn't directed at him. A diabetic psychic would win top dollar at a blood-giver auction. Unfortunately for the others, they would never get to know the flavor of this particular blood donor.

This one was his.

He waited until Darren left before starting his interrogation.

“What has Darren told you about what we do here?”

Randall gave a self-conscious laugh, not looking Sasha in the eyes. “He didn’t. He just promised me it wasn’t illegal and that I could get some money.”

The smell of desire saturated the air and Sasha was pleased to scent it wasn’t all on his side.

Sasha leaned back in his chair and examined the other man. Randall wasn’t as beautiful as a vampire, but his slim, fit form was pleasing, and his bright blond hair and tanned skin spoke of a man who spent time outside in the sunlight. A perverse part of Sasha liked the fact that his soon-to-be lover was able to enjoy the star that was damaging to a vampire. At his age, Sasha could take the sunrays better than most vamps, but no vampire was completely comfortable with the deadly star.

He beckoned the human closer.

“Now I don’t want you to scream, but I’m a vampire.”

Randall stared at the gorgeous man, his mind completely blank for a moment. Then he burst into laughter. “And I thought Darren didn’t have a sense of humor. I can’t believe he set this whole thing up.”

Sasha opened his mouth and a pair of realistic fangs slid out from his gums.

Randall stepped back, away from the other man, creature...whatever.

The vampire was out of his seat in a flash; Randy never even saw him move before he was being held in place by a pair of strong hands.

“Easy, baby. Don’t be frightened.”

The vampire used a singsong tone that Randy was certain usually calmed his prey, but Randy didn’t feel calm. This close to the gorgeous vamp with his ebony hair and light, almost colorless blue eyes, Randy

felt his hormones kick in and all he could think about was how soft Sasha's lips looked and wondered if they would feel as smooth against his own. Fear fled before the hot flames of desire.

"There's only one way to find out," Sasha purred. Lips, softer than any he'd ever touched before, slid across Randall's. Passion fanned by Sasha's lips went directly to Randall's cock. It hardened and grew as if trying to reach the other man and get closer to the object of his lust.

Sasha turned slightly, pressing his thigh against Randall's cock, giving him something to rub against.

"Uh." Randall murmured, humping against the other man, unable to stop the insane rush of desire he felt for a total stranger.

"Give me what I need," Sasha demanded. "Offer me your blood."

Unable to stop himself, Randy tilted his head back, exposing his jugular even as he continued to shamelessly rub against the other man.

Without warning, teeth pierced his neck.

Randy's body jolted from the shock of the bite. Slow pulses made his neck throb as his blood was sucked in slow, steady measures. A low moan vibrated against his throat as the vampire fed, sending sparks of desire up and down his spine. Despite his intense arousal, panic set in.

He was letting a freaking vampire suck his blood.

His blood!!!

Before Randall's hysteria was complete, Sasha slid his teeth away, smooth as butter. The vampire laved Randy's neck with his tongue, making Randy's flagging erection come back with a vengeance.

Stupid cock didn't know when he was in danger.

"You are magnificent," Sasha said, placing soft kisses up Randy's neck and chills of desire down his spine. "I'm going to keep you for myself."

Sasha gripped Randy's hips and held him away from his body. "You may not come."

“What?” Lust fogged Randy’s brain making it hard for him to focus.

“You are not to come,” Sasha said clearly. He released Randy and went to sit back at his desk as if it was perfectly all right to be a cock tease. From the sparkle in the vampire’s eyes, he knew what Randy was thinking.

“Why not?”

“Because you need to learn to control your body if you’re going to be mine.”

Randall figured an unmanly whimper could be excused under the circumstances.

“What if I don’t want to be yours?” He asked. He was just being contrary. They both knew he wanted Sasha.

“You do.” Sasha’s voice was calm and confident as if there was no doubt in his mind that Randall would agree. “To be mine is to join the society as my pet. To sit at my feet during rituals, sit on my lap during dinners, and provide me with my food and comforts.”

“And what do I get out of it?” Randall was horny, not an idiot.

Sasha gave him a smile that was so wickedly lurid, it should be outlawed in all fifty states. “You get me.”

Nerves set in and Randy started to step away carefully, putting one foot behind the other in a bid to escape the vampire without triggering his hunting instincts. He had a feeling that vampires worked under the same rules as most predators.

Attack anything weaker.

“As good as that opportunity sounds, and as sexy as you are, I think you need a full-time person to take care of you. I’ve got clinicals, lectures, and stuff. I don’t really have time for a relationship.” Yeah, he sounded like a prize, and when did he care how it sounded?

Sasha stood up and stepped forward, carefully taking one motion forward with every step Randall made back.

“What are you studying, my sweet-blooded man?”

“Umm. I’m studying to be a doctor.”

A wide smile spread across Sasha’s face. “Cute *and* smart. I might have to give Darren a raise.”

Randall frowned. “What exactly is it that Darren does here?”

“He donates blood for money.” Sasha snapped his fingers. “That reminds me.” He walked over to his desk and pulled out a moneybox. Randall saw Sasha withdraw a handful of bills before returning the box to its drawer. “Here is your payment.”

Randy’s jaw dropped at the amount. There had to be over five thousand dollars in his hand.

“What’s this for?”

Sasha kissed him on the forehead, a disconcertingly gentle gesture. “You gave me your blood.”

“But I didn’t do it for money!” Randall gasped, shoving it back at him. “I’m not a blood whore.”

The vampire gave him another of his wicked smiles. “Why did you do it, then?”

“Because you’re hot!” Randall shouted. He could feel his cheeks blush with embarrassment. He didn’t mean to say it so loudly.

Sasha couldn’t have stopped the laughter that burst through his chest even if he wanted to. He’d never had anyone, who wasn’t under a trance or being paid, volunteer to give him blood. Yet here was this skinny med student with pretty brown eyes, all but throwing his money back at him.

“It’s just a job, sweetness. It is what your friend wanted me to offer you.”

“The job is letting you bite me?”

Sasha nodded, not wanting to say anything that would make the man run off.

“You’re not paying me for sex or anything?” Randy asked suspiciously.

Sasha stroked Randy’s cheek. “Anything intimate that occurs between us won’t have a monetary value to it,” he assured Randy. “It will just be shared passion between us.”

Randall’s shoulders lowered as if he had tensed up while waiting for Sasha’s answer. Humans were a strange lot.

“Do we have a deal?”

“I can’t accept so much.” Randy said. He gave Sasha a smile of his own. “Besides, if you pay me that much, I won’t need to come here very often.”

“We can’t have that. How about I give you this amount each time you come, but you have to promise to come here once a week.”

This was the closest Sasha had ever come to begging, but for this man’s blood, he would come even closer.

“Do I have to feed anyone else?”

“No!” Sasha growled. “Our contract is exclusive. You aren’t allowed to feed any other vampires. In fact, you will need to wear my ring to keep others away.”

There were other ways to mark a personal feeder but they were all things that could be covered up. He doubted Randy wore gloves very often and the ring would not only proclaim Randall his personal feeder, but also his human partner. No other would dare approach him for fear of reprisal.

Sasha wouldn’t share his Randall.

Ever.

He went back to his desk and pulled out a standard contract. A few scribbles of the pen marked out annoying phrases like *sharing* and

group were easily covered with *exclusive* and his name. Slamming down the amended contract, he handed Randall a pen.

“Sign.”

To his surprise the young man gave him a smirk. “And if I don’t?”

“Then you’ll have a new personal stalker.” Sasha growled.

“Ahh. And it’s just once a week.”

Sasha nodded. Being an old and powerful vampire, he really only needed blood from a live source once a month, making do with synthetic blood the rest of the time. However, Randall’s blood was like paradise and he wasn’t going to limit himself to once a month when he could have him every week.

“What days can you be here?”

Sasha dipped into Randall’s thoughts. Unlike most humans, the kid had one of the cleanest, sharpest minds Sasha had ever visited. It was as if he could compartmentalize things to the smallest degree and his memory was close to photographic. It was an amazing place to visit.

“Sunday.” Randall said. “I have most weekends free and any day after five.”

“Excellent. Then I expect you here at seven each Sunday for blood and training, and you can leave at midnight, since you have an early class on Monday.”

“Training?” Randy gave him a curious look.

“Yes. As my personal blood provider you will need to learn about vampire society so when we mingle you won’t bring me shame.”

“Yes, Sasha,” Randall said, his voice suspiciously amused. “I’d hate to bring you shame.”

He could tell the kid was laughing at him, but he wasn’t going to let anything get in the way of him signing this kid to an exclusive contract. No one else was going to get the opportunity to taste his precious blood.

Randy's hand shook a little as he signed his name.

Sasha tried not to smile. It wasn't just the blood that was sweet about this human. He could barely restrain himself from ripping off Randall's clothes and fucking him against his big desk, but he could tell Randall wasn't ready for that. The human was attracted to him, but still nervous.

Sasha hoped constant contact with him would breed familiarity, though for a kid who had just learned vampires existed, he was taking the entire thing really well. He watched, puzzled, as Randall took a silver square out of his pocket, unwrapped it and popped the contents into his mouth.

"What are you doing?"

Brown eyes looked up at him, puzzled.

"My blood sugar is low, probably from you sucking my blood. I'm having a bit of chocolate to boost it a little."

Sasha was surprised at how much that disturbed him.

"Are you feeling poorly?"

Randy gave him a reassuring smile. "It's okay, it happens all the time. Why do you think I had a chocolate in my pocket?"

"I will get you some for Sundays. What do you prefer?"

"I like dark chocolate the best."

Sasha nodded. He'd see that his human got the finest quality chocolate, even if he had to have it shipped overnight from Europe.

"I'll see that it is done."

"O-okay. Thanks."

Sasha pulled the heavy ruby signet ring off his finger. It was a square cut red gem that had a 'S' spelled out in diamonds on either side. "Here is my ring. Wear it on your ring finger as a sign of our commitment to each other." At the human's hesitation, he slipped it on Randy's left ring finger himself. It would keep both human and

vampire predators at bay. It slid over the knuckle easily, but there was enough resistance that Sasha was confident the ring would stay.

“This is too valuable. I don’t want to lose it.” Randy muttered, trying to pull it off.

Sasha put his hand over the pretty human’s. “Nonsense. You are far more valuable, and this will put any questions to rest as to who you belong to.”

Randy laughed. “Do I have to wear it on this finger? It looks like I’m married.”

“For all purposes, you are. You can’t be involved with anyone else while you feed me, and I want to know where you are when you are away from your usual route. I won’t have it said that my feeder was behaving poorly.”

“Shit. But what if I need a little relief. Sometimes a guy just needs to get off, you know.”

Sasha held back a growl, not wanting to scare Randy off but the thought of anyone else touching his human made Sasha want to rip out someone’s throat with his teeth.

“You are not to go to anyone else. You are mine, and if you need to ‘get off’ as you so charmingly put it, you come see me and I’ll take care of you.”

“Fine. But you’re the one who just said I can’t take care of things myself.” Sasha saw the dissatisfaction in Randall’s expression.

He tilted the kid’s face up and placed a soft kiss on his lips. “Don’t worry, honey. I’ll take care of you later. Be good and I’ll make it worth your wait.” He forgot about the hormones coursing through a young man in his prime. Age had taught him patience and control. His poor human didn’t have those resources to fall back on.

Now that the contract was signed and the feeding was over, Sasha could feel the waves of nerves coming from Randall. He could almost

feel Randy's anxiety to leave. It was less than flattering that his human was looking for a way to escape him, but since they had just met, he let it go.

A knock at the door prevented Randall from having to pull out the small talk he could feel coming.

"Saved by the knock," Sasha said, giving him a wicked smile before yelling, "Enter."

Darren entered the room, looking a little pale. Sasha decided it must be the blood loss. Darren walked over to them, kneeling before Sasha.

Randall looked at him with wide eyes. "Do I have to kneel?"

"Not unless we are among others." Sasha said. He saw Darren blink up at him, surprised. "Randall has done me the honor of signing an exclusive contract."

He saw shock cross the human's face as the implications sank in. Sasha didn't sign contracts with humans...ever. It was a source of constant comments from the vampire community. For the first time in a long time, he was looking forward to something.

"If you're done, I would like permission to take Randall with me," Darren said, still kneeling.

Sasha watched in shock as Randall shook his head at his friend. Walking up to Sasha, he kissed Sasha's cheek in a sweet gesture that sent raging flames of desire throughout the vampire's body.

So much for his control.

"I'll see you Sunday," Randy said. On the way out, he hooked a hand through Darren's arm and lifted him off the floor. "Come on, let's go home."

For a brief moment Sasha felt a flash of pain that Randall wasn't talking about him when he said he was going home. Watching the pair leave, Sasha knew that he had a new goal in life.

One day he would be Randall's idea of home.

Chapter Two

As soon as they exited the club, Darren pounced. “What the fuck, man? I bring you in and you bag Sasha! Sasha!” He screamed like he was a girl fan to Sasha’s rock star status.

Randall couldn’t decide if Darren was happy or angry. “Is that bad?” He asked tentatively.

“Bad? Hell no, that’s not bad. It’s insane. No one bags Sasha. No one! The man has never bit the same blood giver twice...ever. You walk in and get an exclusive. An exclusive!”

Randall shrugged. He didn’t know what to say. It wasn’t like he had a particular talent. Being able to bleed wasn’t really a skill.

“Did you let him fuck you?”

“No!” Randall said. “We just met.”

“I’d let him fuck me,” Darren said with a smile.

“I thought you were straight.”

Darren smirked. “You should see your face. Relax, Ace, I’m not going to jump you. Your vampire would kick my ass. And I like both; I’m bi.”

“Huh.” Randall didn’t really believe in people being bi. The few men he’d met who proclaimed they were bisexual were really gay men in denial. Men trying to hedge their bets so they could have the traditional wife and family and still fuck other men. He wasn’t going to share that belief with Darren. It wasn’t worth making an issue about it. Besides, he only liked men so it was pure speculation on his part.

“Are you?” Darren asked, looking at him intently.

“Am I what?”

“Bisexual?”

“No! I only like guys.”

“No women at all?”

“Nope.” Randall shrugged. “I just don’t find them attractive.”

“Huh.”

The two men walked in silence as they made their way back to Darren’s blue hatchback.

“When are you going to get a car?” Darren asked.

Randall laughed. “I can’t afford one. Between car payments, gas and insurance, it’s easier just to walk or take the bus.”

“Then how are you going to get here?”

Randall stared at his friend for a moment. “You don’t come here every week?”

Darren shook his head. “I come Monday, Tuesday and party on the weekend.”

“Sometimes I wish I was getting a fine arts degree,” Randy said, ruefully. Unfortunately, he had nil artistic ability. Darren only had to worry about his projects. He half-heartedly attended classes and then came to the dorm, made a kick ass drawing and spent the rest of his time partying...and getting bit by vampires.

Darren was the ultimate party animal.

His friend jerked as Darren’s cell phone started to ring.

Darren flipped it open. “Hello.” A weird expression crossed his face as he listened. He handed the phone out to Randall. “It’s for you.”

Randy took the phone, not able to decipher the expression on his roommate’s face.

“Hello.”

“Hello, my sweet. I let you leave without arranging for you to get here on Sunday. I’ll send a car to your dorm. Be prompt. I don’t want the driver to tell me he couldn’t find you. By the way, what is your cell phone number so I can reach you?”

“I don’t have one,” Randall confessed. “It’s just one more bill I can’t afford.”

There was a long pause on the other side of the phone.

“I’ll take care of it.”

There was a *click* and Randall was listening to a dead line.

Randy closed the phone and handed it to Darren.

“Problem solved. Sasha said he’d send a driver for me.”

“He’s keeping you on a short leash.”

Randall shrugged. “He’s just making sure I live up to my part of our bargain.”

Darren laughed. “You just keep telling yourself that, man. By the way, nice ring.”

The pair got into Darren’s car and headed back to campus.

Randall’s mind was still spinning around vampires and blood donors, and most especially, Sasha. If Sasha wasn’t such a sexy vampire, Randy knew he’d be scared stiff.

As it was, Randall still had reservations, but he had to admit the spending money would be helpful. If he kept making this kind of money, he could pay back his loans before they started becoming due.

All of a sudden, exhaustion swamped him and he laid his head against the headrest.

“It hits you in the beginning, but you get used to it.”

Randall nodded. “You’re not going to fall asleep behind the wheel, are you?”

“Nah. I’ve been doing this for five months. It barely fazes me any more.”

Randy wondered if there would ever be a time when having Sasha’s mouth on him would be an ordinary event.

He rather hoped not.

* * *

Randy was tucking in his shirt when there was a knock on the door. Looking in the mirror, he gave up. He was more worried about how he looked for this job than he was for the last date he went on.

Unfortunately, the guy he was going to was hotter than any guy he could pick up at a club. Just thinking of Sasha made Randy's nerves kick in.

He ran his fingers through his hair and went to answer the door. Darren was out at some rave, so he was alone in the room while he got ready. Good thing, too, because his friend would've teased him mercilessly.

The person on the other side wasn't his idea of a driver. His nose was pierced, his neon pink tee-shirt was so tight it outlined the rings through his nipples and a tattoo peeked out above the collar. He'd be willing to bet his father's farm that the guy wasn't wearing any underwear beneath those pants.

"You'd win that bet," the guy said, his eyes flashing silver as he took in Randall's appearance. "Fuck, you're gorgeous. No wonder Sasha had you all signed and sealed before he gave the rest of us a chance to see you." The vampire closed his eyes and breathed. "Oh, don't you dare tell me."

"Tell you what?" Randall wasn't too proud to say he was completely out of his league.

"Are you diabetic?"

"Yeah."

"There isn't any magic in your blood, is there?" The guy was practically panting.

Randy almost lied but then he realized that would be stupid in front of a vampire who could read his thoughts. "No magic that I know of, but Sasha said he thought I was a little psychic."

“Nooooo.” The guy wailed as he clutched the doorframe dramatically. “It isn’t fucking fair.”

“Are you okay?” The vamp looked like he was suffering. Randy gripped the vamp’s shoulder and gave it a squeeze. “Seriously, are you all right?”

“I’m Liam. Please lie and tell me you’re straight.” Those silver eyes begged.

“I’m straight.”

“Fuck, you’re gay, aren’t you?”

“Is that bad? Sasha didn’t seem to have a problem with it.”

Randall couldn’t keep the defensiveness out of his voice as he took a step back from the dramatic vampire.

“It’s not a problem unless you’re me and you just met the diabetic, sun-kissed god of your dreams.”

It took Randall a moment to realize the odd vampire was talking about him. He had no response to the incessantly flirting man.

“I think we should get going, Sasha will be wondering where I am.”

Liam looked at his watch. “Shit. Yes, we need to go. I might lust after you but I don’t want the big guy to rip me apart.”

Without further comment, Randy was led down the stairs to a limousine parked right in front of the dorms.

“Hey, Randall got a hot date?” John Freidle, one of the football jocks who Randy once shared an undergraduate class with, called out to him.

Randy ignored him. John was a homophobic asshole who acted like he was still in high school.

“Don’t ignore me, dweeb. I’d hate to have to kick you and your little friend’s fairy ass.”

Liam turned and Randy saw the silver eyes shift to red.

Shit.

Faster than Randy's eyes could follow, Liam crossed over to John and lifted him in the air with one hand. "If you ever even think of touching a hair on his head, I will rip you open and bathe in your blood." The light-hearted vampire with a teasing air had vanished. This was a killer. "Do we have an understanding?"

John nodded, his movements short and jerky.

"Good. Because if I hear from Randall that you bothered him in any way, I will be very unhappy."

With a flex of his arm the sleek vampire tossed the two hundred pound jock across the lawn like a football. John landed with a *thud*, but Randy didn't hear anything break.

"Let's go, sunshine," Liam said before heading back to the limo.

* * * *

Sasha sat at his desk blindly looking at the papers he was supposed to be reviewing. He couldn't believe how nervous he was, but it wasn't every day he got together with his blood servant. If Liam came and told him Randy wanted out of the deal, Sasha knew he'd release him. He didn't want an unwilling blood giver. He wanted Randall to want to be here by his own decision, not be forced by their agreement.

Voices in the hall tore him away from his depressing thoughts.

"Delivered safe and sound," Liam said with a bow.

Randall walked around him, shaking his head and looking hotter than Sasha thought possible.

"You are a walking temptation, my sweet," he said before he could help himself.

Randy gave him a delighted smile. “You like?” Randy asked before pirouetting before him and wiggling his ass. “I always think food tastes better if it looks good.”

Sasha threw back his head and laughed. “You are dismissed, Liam. Thank you for bringing Randall safely here.”

“My pleasure.” Liam leered at Randy. “Entirely mine.”

Sasha leapt across the table and grabbed Liam by the neck, pinning the vampire to the wall behind him.

Randall pulled ineffectually at his arm. “Behave, Sasha! He didn’t mean anything by it; he was just having a little fun.”

Sasha shook Liam a bit before settling the other vamp on the floor.

“Apologies, Liam, but some things aren’t available for joking about. Randall is one of them.”

Liam gave a short bow. “I see that now. I apologize if I made you think he’d been unfaithful.” He gave Randy a rueful smile. “To be honest, he barely looked at me at all during pick up.”

That was a bit of stretch but Randall wasn’t going to rock the boat.

Sasha raised an eyebrow, obviously reading Randy’s mind. “You did look at him?”

“He’s wearing hot pink; he’s kind of hard to miss.”

Liam mouthed a *thank you* over Sasha’s shoulder. When Sasha turned around, Liam was all innocent looks and bright smiles.

“You can leave now,” Sasha said.

“Of course.” Liam gave a short bow and left the room.

Sasha sat on the couch in his office, patting the spot beside him. “Come sit and tell me about your week.”

Randall looked at the leather couch for a long moment before he sat beside the vampire who, surprisingly, wrapped an arm around him. It was more like a date than a formal blood exchange.

“Yes, that’s how I want you to think about our time together, as a series of dates.” Sasha said, idly playing with Randy’s blond waves.

“If this is a date and you’re paying for my time, doesn’t that make me an escort?” Randy used his fingers to make air quotes around the word *escort*.

Sasha laughed, the sound rumbling through Randy’s skin.

“You are thinking too much. Every Sunday you’re available I’ll send Liam to pick you up. Don’t accept a ride from anyone but Liam, do you understand?”

“Why?”

“Because there are those who are unwise enough to try to take what is mine. I will eliminate them if they try, but it might not be soon enough to save you. Understood?”

Randy’s throat went dry. He knew it would be too late, because he’d be dead. He nodded. “Understood.”

“Excellent.” Sasha stroked Randall’s head like he was a favored pet. He resisted the urge to bite.

“When you arrive, come straight to my office. I’ll feed and then we’ll go to the club and socialize a bit. I want to show you off and introduce you to the society. Afterwards, I’ll have Liam take you home. Now, my assistant Tian will see that you get a phone so I will always be able to reach you.”

Randy felt an electric tingle zap through his brain.

Sasha was talking to someone.

A second later there was a soft tap on the door.

“Enter.”

The door opened and a tall, muscular man with silver hair sauntered into the room. In each hand was a small box.

“You want the Iphone or the Motorola?”

“Randall, this is Tian, my assistant. Which phone would you prefer?”

“Sasha, I can’t afford the plans on either of those.”

Sasha gave his little human a squeeze. Most people, human or vamp, would be more than happy to take whatever Sasha wanted to give them, but Randy had a wide streak of pride. He knew he had to be careful about offending the small human.

“How about I pay for it and take it out of your money?”

He felt the tension in Randall’s body relax.

Are you really going to do that? Tian asked telepathically.

Hell no, Sasha said.

“You don’t have to talk around me.” Randy said unexpectedly.

“You can hear me talk?” Tian asked.

“I can’t hear the words but I can feel a jolt of electricity.”

He gave Tian a triumphant smile. His Randall was a goldmine.

“He’s also diabetic.” He couldn’t resist bragging.

“Lucky fucker.” Tian said. They had been friends for centuries and there was always a slight competition between them. Sasha knew he’d won this round.

“You don’t have any siblings, do you? Maybe a sexy sister?” Tian asked.

“Sorry, I’m an only child.”

“Figures.” He gave Sasha a pointed look. “I don’t suppose you’re going to share?”

“Nope.” Sasha gave him a satisfied smile. “I have an exclusive.”

It was amusing to see his friend’s eyes bug out like that.

“I’d pretend to be surprised, but if I had a diabetic psychic, I’d be claiming him, too,” Tian said with a wide smile proving there was no bad blood between them. “Now, Motorola or Iphone?” He asked holding up the boxes.

Randall turned and pinned Sasha with his gorgeous brown eyes.

“Promise you’ll take the cost out of my money?”

Shit.

“I promise.” He’d just raise the kid’s money to cover the cost of the phone.

“Can I see them both?” Randall asked with a shy smile.

“Sure.” Tian gave the human an indulgent look as he handed them over.

With careful deliberation Randall looked over each box. “I’ll take the Iphone.”

“Give them both to Tian. Your phone will be activated before you leave.”

“Thank you,” Randall said with another one of his sweet smiles.

“You’re very welcome, honey,” Tian said.

It was amusing to watch his big, bad vampire friend melt beneath a human’s smile. He might just give survivor rights to Tian. A quirk of having a contract with a human was that if something happened to you, it was important to have another to pass him on to. If Sasha didn’t give someone survivor rights, then Randall could be put into the common room for general use until Sasha’s contract ran out. Luckily, Sasha had only put a three-month contract in effect, because he wanted to see how compatible he was with the young human. Their second contract would be much, much longer.

Randall blushed at the endearment, making Tian smile broader.

“Need anything else?” Tian asked Sasha.

“No, that was it. We’ll be in the main room later. I want to show off Randall.”

“I’ll return the phone to you soon,” Tian said, giving a short bow and leaving the office.

“He seems nice,” Randall said with a smile.

Sasha resisted the urge to laugh. There were many words to describe his old friend, and nice wasn't one of them. "He'll have your phone ready before you go," was all he was able to offer.

Stroking Randall's soft skin, Sasha tried to get the other man familiar with his touch to ease the nerves he could feel jittering right at the surface.

"Come here and let me help you relax. I bet you've had a tough week." He rubbed Randall's shoulders, feeling a small amount of pride when he felt the knots loosen in his human's back. "That's it, darling, just let it all go."

"Sorry, I have this doctor in charge of my Emergency Medicine class who's a complete asswipe. I've been working like a dog and he still treats me like a halfwit. Between clinicals, classes and studying for my USMLE, I'm stressed."

Sasha slipped into Randall's mind. Filtering through Randy's memories, he found the doctor and memorized the name of the man towering over his human.

He'd take care of the idiot tomorrow.

No one was allowed to make his boy feel less than he was. Randall was a sweet, sincere human who wanted to make the world a better place through his work. Anyone who thought they could belittle him would soon learn there were people looking out for Randall.

He gently stroked his human's neck, sending waves of calming towards Randy.

"You don't have to persuade me. I'm here willingly." Randall said with a smile.

"Sorry, force of habit."

Out of curiosity Sasha eased back on the vampire magic. Randy tilted his head back, a willing victim to Sasha's bite. The erotic sight of

a human giving himself over without Sasha having to subdue him made the vampire hard as nails.

Licking across Randy's jugular, Sasha sank his teeth in the human's slender neck. Blood, sweet and rich, gushed into his mouth. Randy tasted different than anyone he'd ever drank from before.

Better.

So much better.

He could feel his body absorbing Randall's blood as it infused his cells with his human's life-giving liquid.

Careful not to scar the skin, Sasha slid his fangs out of Randall's neck. Licking carefully, he sealed the wound making sure there was no mark remaining. He didn't want to leave any sign on his human's neck that might attract someone not fond of vampire kind. Hunters often tracked vampires through their feeders.

It would destroy Sasha if he brought down trouble to his sweet, sincere, human.

With a sigh, Sasha leaned his head against the back of the couch.

"That was fabulous." Pulling open a side table drawer he handed Randall a small packet.

"Wow. This stuff is expensive." Randy said ripping open the small box of chocolates.

Sasha watched in amusement as his human stuffed a sweet into his mouth and chewed spastically while making happy humming sounds.

"Good?" Sasha asked with a laugh.

"So good. Here, you better keep the rest of them."

"But I bought them for you." Sasha said, worried that Randall didn't like his gift.

Randall gave him a rueful smile. "I have a terrible sweet tooth and it's best not to give me the entire box on my own. It will shoot my blood sugar through the roof if I scarf down a pound of chocolate."

Sasha kissed his lover, relishing the taste of Randall's mouth laced with bittersweet chocolate.

"Come, it's time to take you to meet the others. As my blood companion you aren't to talk to any of the others. I will speak for you."

"So I'm like a sub."

Sasha's head snapped back. "What do you know about that sort of thing?"

Randall shrugged. "Only what I read in porn books. I'm not really into the whipping and chaining kind of thing. Is that your kink?" He didn't know what he was going to do if that was part of the agreement. He liked Sasha, he really did, but he was rapidly realizing he was getting in way over his head.

Sasha gave him a fang-tipped smile. "Vampires created BDSM, humans just copy it; but no, my sweet, I won't do anything you're uncomfortable with. However, there are aspects of the vampire laws that are strikingly similar to a sub/dom relationship. You aren't to talk to any vamps except those I specifically give you permission for. You are also not to eat any food that doesn't come from my hands in case another vamp tries to drug you. Some of them find it amusing to steal each other's food. It is usually harmless, and as you are mine, most wouldn't dare, but consider it a precaution."

"Okay. I-I get that." Randy didn't want to appear too naïve to the worldly vampire but he was certain breaking a vamp rule was inevitable.

Sasha gave him a kind smile and patted him on the shoulder, but Randall knew what it was: Pity for the unfortunate human who didn't understand vampire/human relations and found himself deep inside the vamp camp.

"Stay two steps behind me at my right. I want you within grabbing reach, if it is necessary."

“Yes, Sasha.” Randall said in a soft voice. Maybe it wouldn’t be too late to make a break for it.

“You are under contract with me for the next three months.” Sasha reminded him. “Now come along.”

Shit.

Sasha’s low chuckle told Randall that the vampire had heard his thoughts.

It was nothing like he imagined. That was the thought that kept running through Randall’s head. He expected to see half-naked men being whipped and spanked. Instead he saw young men and women kneeling on fluffy velvet pillows or lounging beside their vampire. True, some of the men were scantily clad and a few had collars around their necks, but most of them were dressed in club clothing, and if asked to pick them out of a lineup with people going out for the evening, Randall would be hard pressed.

A closer look from beneath his lashes showed a few vampires were feeding, but it was very discreet with hair or clothing covering the action.

“Feeding is generally a private affair,” Sasha said in a low tone. “Look the other way if someone decides to feed.”

Randall nodded his understanding.

Sasha stopped their walk through the club at a large table where a slim man with sharp features and cold black eyes dominated. Randall quickly averted his eyes when the other man looked at him. His instincts screamed, *vampire*.

“Good evening, Harris.” Sasha said in his smooth, liquid voice. His voice both soothed Randall and made him incredibly horny.

“Evening, Sasha.”

Randall could feel the other vampire’s gaze boring into him, but remembering Sasha’s words, he refused to look up.

“Who is your little friend?” Harris asked. Unlike Sasha’s comforting tones, Harris’s voice was thick with desire, smothering in its intensity.

Randall instinctively wanted to hide behind Sasha but he kept his place where he was told to stand. He didn’t want to make his vampire look bad.

To his surprise Sasha stepped back and wrapped an arm around Randall’s shoulders. “This is Randall, my blood servant.”

The weight and heat of Sasha’s arms settled Randall’s nerves more than any words could. He felt safe and protected in the vampire’s embrace. Tension poured out of his body and he had to stiffen his spine so he didn’t melt into a puddle at Sasha’s feet.

Sasha laughed.

“Interesting imagery, my sweet.”

Sasha thoroughly enjoyed the jealous expression on Harris’s face. The two of them had competed for years for the same resources, but this time Sasha knew he had the upper hand.

“Did I mention he’s diabetic?” Sasha stroked Randall’s neck, enjoying the smooth feel of his human’s skin. Heat warmed his cool fingers. He’d never had a lover who emitted heat like the human in his arms. Vampires always ran cool. Their heart didn’t beat as quickly as a human’s because they were just circulating instead of producing blood.

He didn’t know why, but Randall poured heat like a furnace, making Sasha want to wrap the boy around him and roll about in his heat and scent. Leaning down, Sasha pressed his nose against Randall’s neck. The human smelled sweet, like warm honey. Unable to resist, Sasha ran his tongue across Randall’s jugular.

Only his quick reflexes prevented Randall from hitting the floor when his knees folded.

“Easy. I didn’t mean to make you fall.”

Randall laughed. "Then you don't know what it does to me when you lick my neck."

"Your pet needs to learn some manners." Harris said coldly. "I'd be happy to volunteer my services."

A growl bubbled up in Sasha's throat. For the first time in their long relationship he wanted to truly hurt the other vampire. Images of ripping out Harris's neck and bathing in his blood rolled through Sasha's mind with startling clarity.

"Shhh."

It took Sasha a moment to realize the inhuman noises were coming from him. Randall's elegant hands rubbed Sasha's chest, bringing him down from his intense anger.

The fog faded from his mind and he saw Harris staring at him with surprise.

"I don't think I've ever seen you truly angry before," Harris said.

"I've never been that angry," Sasha acknowledged.

Harris looked at Randall with a thoughtful expression.

"He is your *solnyshko*?" Harris asked.

A light went off in Sasha's mind. "Yes he is *moyo solnyshko*." To claim someone as "your sun" in vampire society was as close to a marriage as vampires got. By proclaiming Randy in that manner, Sasha had just told everyone assembled that this human was his in every manner. "Spread the word, Harris. I won't take it kindly if anyone threatens or harms my Randall."

Randall's hand was stroking his arm again. Sasha covered it with his. "Come, my love, sit," he said, pointing at a cushion by his chair. He kept hold of Randall's hand until the human was settled on his knees.

"Beautiful," Sasha said. The more time he spent in Randall's presence the more attractive the man became to him.

A waiter rushed over as soon as Sasha was seated. The vampire stroked his human's head as he listened to the night's specials.

"Anything sound good to you, my pet?" Sasha asked, continuing his caress of Randall's shiny bright hair.

"I wouldn't mind some of the steamed vegetables. Do they have any fish?"

"A healthy eater, huh?" Sasha said with a smile. Since it was mostly college-aged students who worked in his club, the vampire was more used to diets of fried foods and candy bars.

Randall looked embarrassed for a moment. "I kind of have to be. One way to control my diabetes is to watch everything I eat."

"Of course. Foolish of me not to think of that." He looked back at the waiter, a dark-haired boy named Jonathan. If he remembered correctly the kid's blood had been full-bodied but unsatisfying. "Do we have any fish?"

Jonathan frowned for a moment. "I'll have to check. We do have a shrimp stir fry that Candice is making; that's veggies, rice and shrimp."

Randall nodded.

"We'll take that."

"Excellent. Anything for you?" Jonathan's eyes lit up as he looked at the powerful vampire.

Sasha lifted Randall's hand exposing the vampire's ring. "I have everything I need here."

Jonathan looked crushed for a moment. "I'll bring his food right out." He said in a low, sad voice before leaving the table.

Randall almost felt bad for the kid. He could tell the waiter was hoping Sasha would choose him for his next meal.

"Yes, I did bite him once, but he didn't have high quality blood; but I'm sure someone will find him appealing." The vampire flicked a speck off his shirt.

Ouch.

Poor kid.

Sasha and Harris started talking about vampire affairs so Randall tuned them out. Looking around, he surveyed the room while trying to be careful not to meet anyone's eyes. He didn't want to get Sasha into trouble.

Without warning, a cold breeze floated across Randy's body. Shaking, he looked around to see where the sudden wind came from.

Directly behind him a red-haired man was staring.

Randall quickly diverted his eyes but it was too late to banish the expression.

As cold as Harris's expression was, this vampire's eyes held evil.

Sasha must have felt the change in Randall or read his mind because he started petting his head again.

We will discuss it later. The words drifted through his mind. Fortunately, Sasha's touch grounded him and he was able to brush off the feeling of malice engulfing him.

With his careful glance, Randall watched Tian enter the dining room.

The big vamp scanned the room and smiled when he saw them.

"I've got your boy's phone." He started to give it to Randall but a hiss from Sasha stopped him in his tracks.

"I provide for him. You are to give him nothing." The vampire snapped.

Randall risked a reprimand by reaching up and stroking Sasha's thigh, hoping his touch calmed the man like it did before.

Tian bowed low, waiting for a sign from his leader.

"Give it to me," Sasha snarled.

Tian handed over the sleek device and Randy resisted the urge to snatch it up. He really, really liked it.

His thoughts must have bled through because both vampires turned to look at him with amusement.

“What? I’m not used to having cool gadgets.”

Tian smiled. “I loaded a few games and gave you a thousand dollars credit on iTunes.”

A thousand dollars. Just the number made Randall’s mind spin. He could buy all his textbooks for a year with that kind of money, and the vampire just dropped it like a penny in a wishing well.

“Umm. Thanks.”

Sasha handed him the phone. “Enjoy, *miliy moy*, my sweet.”

“Thanks, Sasha. This is really cool.” He wanted to give the vampire a hug but with everyone watching he didn’t think this would be the best place. Randall was affectionate, but shy in front of others.

“You may thank me later,” Sasha said with a smile.

“Remember, you promised to take it out of my pay.” Randy reminded him.

“Yes, I did.” The vampire said gravely.

Harris laughed across the table.

Sasha watched as his oldest friend smirked at him.

Did you really make such a foolish promise? Harris’s voice whispered across Sasha’s mind.

He made me. I’ll just up his pay to cover the cost so we both get our way.

What does he taste like?

Remember that waitress we shared in Paris?

Yes, she was amazing.

Sasha let a small smile cross his lips. *She tastes like ash compared to my sun.*

Bastard.

Sasha stroked Randal's head when he saw the other man was rubbing his forehead. "Sorry pet, I just needed to talk to Harris."

"Can he hear us talking?" Harris asked in surprise.

"No, but he can feel the energy," Sasha said. He hadn't meant for that to become public knowledge but now that he'd announced it in the dining room it would quickly become the latest gossip. Vampires gossiped worse than a roomful of ladies at a quilting bee. Too much time on their hands caused more than one vampire to stir up trouble just to have shit to do.

"So this is the new pet I keep hearing about."

Dread weighed down Sasha's chest as he heard the voice of the one person he didn't want to encounter tonight.

"Hello, brother." Sasha said standing up to face his older brother, Ustin.

"Long time," Ustin said. His green eyes glinted evilly as he looked at his younger brother.

Sasha didn't think it had been long enough, but he let the statement slide. Ustin was his oldest brother and he'd slit his own throat before admitting that he both feared and hated the redheaded giant standing before him.

Ustin's eyes slid to Randall, who was kneeling with his head bowed. Sasha skimmed his thoughts and, for the first time, felt his human withdraw. Mental blocks were firmly in place. It was as if Randy was trying to disappear psychically so that he wouldn't be noticed.

"Who is your pretty pet?" Ustin asked, his eyes raking across Randy like he was a common whore.

"He is *moyo solnyshko*. Randall Stewart."

"Will he not look at me?"

“No. He’s in training. I told him not to speak to other vamps without my permission.”

Ustin stared at Sasha.

Sighing, the vampire relented. “Randy, please stand.”

With his usual casual grace, his human stood and stepped to Sasha’s side.

“Randall Stewart, this is my older brother, Ustin.”

“Nice to meet you,” Randy said in formal, stilted tones.

“I want survivor rights,” Ustin said, ignoring Randall’s words as he continued to look at the boy like he was a market ware.

“Sorry, I already promised them to Tian and Harris,” Sasha said without hesitation. It would be kinder to slit Randall’s throat himself than to leave him to Ustin. The condition of Ustin’s blood donors after he was done with them was one of the reasons the vampire wasn’t allowed in any of the best feeding parlors. He was only allowed in Sasha’s club under the condition that he brought his own food or had synthetic. Sasha didn’t trust his brother not to kill someone on his property just to cause trouble.

“If they don’t survive, then he goes to me.” With an unpleasant chuckle, Ustin stroked a finger across Randy’s cheek. “You won’t last long, a skinny kid like you, but you’ll sure be fun to suck dry.”

Sasha’s fingers went to claws and without thought he slashed his brother’s arm.

Ustin jerked his hand back.

“Don’t touch my boy,” Sasha growled.

Ustin gave him a mocking smile. “Why, little brother, I never would’ve believed it; you finally grew some balls. Maybe you can loan them to Harris some time.” Ustin sneered at the other man. He turned his arm and licked his wound, sealing the gash with his saliva. “I’m really going to enjoy taking him from you. But not tonight.” Ustin

looked over to the young girl he had sitting on the cushion by his chair. “Tonight I have other things to enjoy.” With a laugh that sent chills down Sasha’s spine, Ustin turned and went back to his table.

Sasha and Randall both sat back down. Tian took the chair beside him.

Tian watched Ustin with wary eyes. “You know, there aren’t many things that scare me, but your brother is one of them.”

Sasha patted him on the shoulder. “You’re not the only one, old friend. You’re not the only one.” He leaned down and kissed Randy on the cheek. “Whatever you do, don’t ever be alone with my brother.”

Randy nodded emphatically. “Trust me when I say I’ll do my very best.”

Chapter Three

Randall was bleary eyed when he slunk into his Emergency Medicine lecture. Professor Ardman was a deep-voiced man in his fifties who talked to his students like they were not-too-bright kindergarteners. Randy hated this class both for the professor and the fact that it started at eight o'clock in the morning.

The professor's voice droned just enough that when students were just about to fall asleep the man would ask them questions.

"Mr. Stewart," Professor Ardman snapped.

"Yes, professor."

"Look at this slide and tell me what the problem is."

The professor flashed a slide onto the screen.

"That's a pathological fracture of a midlumbar vertebra that had been weakened by a hypernephroma metastasis."

At times like this it helped to have a photographic memory.

"Good." The professor went on to torture another student with a different slide.

Randall's mind wandered and he was startled when his phone vibrated against his hip. Looking around to make sure the professor's attention was elsewhere, Randy pulled out his phone.

Miss you. Looking forward to Sunday.

Smiling, Randy quickly tapped out his response.

Miss you, too.

A hand slammed down on his desk startling Randy into almost dropping his phone.

"There are no cell phones during class," Ardman shouted. "Hand it over."

Damn. He'd only had it one day and it was already confiscated.

"Sorry, professor," he said, handing the device over.

To Randy's embarrassment the phone vibrated in the professor's hand.

"Hmmm. Let's see what your pen pal is saying."

Worried that the professor was going to read it aloud in class, Randall waited for man to *out* him.

"We'll talk about this after class, Mr. Stewart." Professor Ardman said, reading the screen.

"Yes, sir."

The rest of the class dragged on. Randy wasn't looking forward to his conversation with the professor.

He waited until everyone left before approaching the older man.

"I really am sorry, professor. I just got the phone yesterday."

Randy gave a bashful smile that he quickly lost when the professor glared at him.

Professor Ardman removed his spectacles, polishing them with a cloth he took from his desk. "Mr. Stewart, you are a promising student and I hear good things about you from your advisors; however, you need to focus on your studies, not on your boyfriend."

Randy was a little surprised that the professor said *boyfriend* just like he'd say *girlfriend* to any other student. It was casual, as if he didn't care about the sex of the relationship, just that it was interfering with Randall's studies.

"I promise, professor, I am giving my studies my full attention. I won't answer a text again during class hours."

The professor gave him a wintry smile and handed back his phone. "Thank you. I'm glad we can agree on something. It is a nice phone, I have one of my own."

"Isn't it, though?" Randy said happily as he clutched his new phone. "I'm glad I picked it even though I doubt Sasha is going to take the money out of my pay like we agreed."

Professor Ardman's head snapped up, his skin turning white as he looked at Randall in horror. Randy stepped closer, afraid he'd have to grab the suddenly pallid professor.

"That wouldn't be Sasha Baros would it?"

"Yes." Randall smiled. "Do you know him?"

"W-would that ring on your finger belong to him?" The poor man was shaking now.

"Oh, yeah. He was all 'I want people to know you belong to me' Caveman like, but I wear it so he wouldn't have a conniption, you know."

"Yeah." Ardman cleared his throat. "You be careful, young man. By the way, you don't need to mention to Mr. Baros that I took your phone."

Remembering Sasha's protective manner Randall had to agree. "No, I'm pretty sure I can leave that out of our next conversation. I don't want him getting all upset over nothing."

"Exactly," Professor Ardman said. "Now, get back to your dorm and study. The next exam will cover chapters three through six."

Randall nodded and headed out the door before his professor could change his mind. It wasn't until he was almost back to his dorm room that he realized Professor Ardman never told students what to study. He was the type of professor who liked to throw whatever at you and hope half of the students failed.

The fact he mentioned which chapters to study was odd.

Shrugging, Randall went back to his room to take a nap. After last night, he was exhausted. Besides, he didn't need to study emergency medicine any more; with his memory, he already knew the chapters assigned. In the back of his mind he wondered why the thought of Sasha frightened Professor Ardman, a man he thought was beyond the fear of mere mortals.

Chapter Four

Sunday night someone knocked on the dorm room door. Randall didn't bother to look up from his bed. After a worried glance, Darren answered the door.

"Where's Randall?" He heard Liam ask.

Darren blocked the vampire with his body. "I don't think he's going to make it. He's been sick all day."

Randy snuggled further into his blankets trying to block everything out. He didn't want Sasha to see him like this.

"Let me in and I'll talk to him," he heard Liam insist.

Darren hesitated for a moment before stepping aside.

Randall heard footsteps approach the bed.

"Come on, sugar, look at me," Liam crooned. Liam's hand brushed the hair out of Randall's face. "Hey," he whispered as he kneeled beside Randall's bed, "How are you doing?"

Randall sniffed. "Not too good. Could you tell Sasha that I don't think I'd be very good company today? I've been puking all day. I think I got that flu going around."

"No. Come with me; he can make you feel better. I don't want to be the one to tell him he isn't going to get his human tonight."

"Liam, I think Sasha would understand." Darren said stepping forward protectively. "I can go with you and explain."

"Sorry, Darren but I don't think you'd make a good substitute. Come, Randall. Sasha will make you feel better. If I didn't believe that, I wouldn't make you go, I promise."

Randy gave another sniff and brushed his eyes with the back of his hand. Congestion was making them water badly. "Okay. Give me a moment to change clothes."

Liam nodded. "I'll go wait in the limo; come out when you're ready."

Once Liam left, Randall slipped out of bed. Darren put a hand on his shoulder. "If you don't want to go, don't let them talk you into it."

"It'll be okay." Randall said. He couldn't explain to Darren that he suddenly wanted to be with Sasha more than he wanted anything ever before. After a quick visit to the bathroom to splash some water on his face, Randy dressed in a casual tee-shirt and jeans. It wasn't in him to dress up tonight.

Ten minutes later he was getting into a familiar limousine. Closing his eyes, he drifted asleep before the limo pulled away from the curb. Randall barely registered that the limo had reached its destination before the door was ripped open and Sasha stood there. Taking a look at the situation, the vampire leaned in and lifted Randall out of the limo and carried him into the club. Reaching his office, Sasha sat on the couch and settled Randy on his lap, cuddling the smaller human.

Safe in his vampire's arms, Randall burst into tears. The illness and his stress over disappointing Sasha were too much.

Sasha froze.

Humans never cried on his shoulder.

It wasn't done.

Unsure what to do, Sasha stroked Randall's bright blond hair as he cradled his human close.

"Shhh, *dorogaya*, darling," Sasha said. He made low crooning noises as he rocked Randall close.

Patting his human awkwardly, Sasha was willing to promise anything to anyone to get his upset sweetheart to stop crying. He sent out a desperate mental call.

Tian came running down the hall. "What's wrong?" Tian asked, bursting into the room and pulling out his knives as he entered.

Glancing at the weeping human he asked, “Who do I need to kill for Randall?”

“He’s sick. Get me a glass of water,” Sasha said, stroking Randall’s soft hair. He didn’t know what hair products the human used but he was going to buy it by the gallon to keep the golden head silky soft.

Tian nodded and tucked his knives away. He left the room and came back a few minutes later with a glass of water. A slice of lime floated on the surface.

Randy lifted his head, wiping his tears away with his palms, as he looked at the large vampire towering over them.

“I should’ve stayed home, I don’t want to make you sick.” Randy sounded so shattered. Sasha crooned and cuddled him closer, placing soft kisses on his head.

At least he wasn’t crying any more.

“Vampires can’t get sick.”

Randall accepted the glass from the hovering vampire with soft thanks. When he tilted the glass to take a drink, Sasha resisted the urge to bite his neck.

Sasha was overwhelmed by the emotions running through him. Centuries of not feeling anything crumbled beneath the weight of his concern for the fragile human in his arms. He rubbed Randy’s back in slow, soothing circles as he felt Randall’s breathing even out.

“I’m sorry.” Randy’s face reddened as embarrassment hit. “I wasn’t planning on coming at all, but Liam thought you’d be upset.”

His eyes were troubled as he searched Sasha’s face.

“It’s all right.” Sasha said, brushing Randall’s hair out of his eyes. “I’m sorry you’re sick, but Liam was right to bring you. I would’ve been concerned if I didn’t get to see you with my own eyes. Tian, go and bring the healer. He’s in the green room.”

“Why do you have a healer if vampires never get sick?”

Sasha shrugged. “We can be poisoned and there are many who have human feeders that occasionally need help. Our healer was a doctor when he was human.”

Tian left the room only to reappear a few minutes later with a friendly looking brown-haired man with caramel eyes.

“Got a little cold, do you?” The friendly man asked, “I’m Dr. Samuel Chance.” The doctor turned to Sasha with a frown. “Why is he still getting sick if you’re bonded?”

“Randall has only been my boy for a few days. He’s also diabetic.”

“Ah,” the doctor said. He set a black bag on the floor next to the couch.

“I have the flu,” Randall said, looking at the bag with interest.

“There’s not much you can do about that.”

“I’ll be the doctor here,” Dr. Chance said.

“Randall is training to be a doctor,” Sasha said with pride.

“Hmm. What kind of doctor?”

“Emergency Medicine. At my school they have a really cool clinical rotation. Next month I get to ride in an ambulance and take a helicopter ride for a shift.”

Sasha paled. “Those helicopters aren’t safe. I forbid it.”

Since Randy had planned for years to go on that helicopter ride, he wasn’t going to get into an argument about it. He was going on the ride, anyway.

The doctor rushed to intercede. “Take these pills with a glass of water and two drops of Sasha’s blood. They are my own concoction and will speed up your healing.”

“Ew.”

“You’ll find most things will heal better with a little of your lover’s blood.”

“Sounds unsanitary.”

The doctor smiled. “Welcome to the world of the vampires.” He left the room before Randall could comment.

Randall was surprised when Sasha took his hands and squeezed them sympathetically, though it wasn’t as surprising as the fact that the vampire had held him for the past fifteen minutes only to calm him down.

Of course it could be he just wanted Randy calm before biting on his jugular, but he wanted to give Sasha the benefit of the doubt.

“I’m sorry I’m not very good company tonight.”

“That’s all right.” Sasha snuggled Randall back against his chest, crooning nonsense words. It took Randall a moment to realize Sasha was singing to him in Russian.

“What’s that song?” Randy asked. Sasha had a beautiful baritone.

“It’s a lullaby my mother used to sing to me.” Sasha said, stroking his head.

“It’s beautiful.”

Sasha pricked his finger and dripped some blood into the glass of water Tian provided. “Drink this and take your pills.”

Randall complied, trying not to think about the blood mixed in the water. Luckily, with the dilution of the water, he didn’t really taste it.

“Good. Now relax, my sweet. Let me finish my song.”

Snuggling up to his vampire, Randall fell asleep.

When Randy awoke he was lying in a dark room, in an unfamiliar bed with Sasha beside him. Despite rumors, his vampire lover didn’t feel dead. Sasha was warm and breathing, if not still, beside him. Glancing at his watch, Randy saw it was seven-thirty in the morning. Shit, he was going to be late for class.

Carefully extricating himself from his vampire lover, Randy slid off of the bed.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Sasha’s deep voice purred in the darkness.

“I’ve gotta get to class.”

“Have the limo take you,” Sasha said before turning over and lying in the space Randall just vacated. “You’re always so warm.”

Randy laughed as he put on his socks and shoes. He didn’t talk because he didn’t want to wake Sasha if he had fallen back to sleep. He felt surprisingly good; the aches and pains from before had vanished and he wasn’t the least bit congested.

Amazing.

He found his wallet, keys and phone sitting on the table beside the bed. With all his things in hand, Randall walked out of the room, right into Liam.

The vampire gave him a smirk. “Going somewhere?”

“I’m running late for class. Professor Ardman is going to nail my ass to the wall. He hates it when student are tardy, and he makes a point of telling you in front of everyone else.”

Liam wrapped a friendly arm around Randy’s shoulders. “Come on, kid. I’ll get you to class.”

Randall didn’t bother arguing. It never did any good around vampires. They just did what they wanted, anyway. Besides, he was pretty certain Liam was under orders to take him to school and he didn’t want to get the friendly vamp into trouble.

Moments later, they were back in a limo that was beginning to feel like a second home, except this time Liam was in the back with Randall and someone else was driving.

“If you lived with Sasha you could be taken to school by limo every day,” Liam said.

“You make it sound like a selling point,” Randall said with a smile. “I prefer to just roll out of bed and head to my class still half asleep. It works for me.”

“Hmmm.” Liam’s eyes lit with laughter. “I can see the appeal, myself, but Sasha is going to get impatient eventually and want you where he can watch over you all the time.”

Randy tilted his head as he looked at Liam. “Do all vampires get possessive over their food?”

“You aren’t just food, Randall,” Liam said. For once all amusement was gone from his face. “You are Sasha’s *moyo solnyshko*. To be a vampire’s sun is to be his everything. You feed his soul as well as his body. It also gives you the power to destroy him. It is a great responsibility, my friend; don’t ruin it because you don’t understand. Eventually, others will start to hunt you because they will know, to capture you, is to control Sasha.

“Keep an eye out for other vampires. Don’t go anywhere with a vampire you don’t know. Only trust me, Tian and Sasha. It is like when you were a child. Don’t get into a car with any strangers even if they say that Sasha has sent them to retrieve you. Sasha will only send me, or Tian. Anyone else could be there to take you. We have a saying in the vampire culture. ‘To take the sun is to take the life.’ If anyone gets their hands on you, they will have Sasha’s life.”

“I’ll be careful, Liam,” Randall said, patting the vampire on the knee. “I’ll even look both ways before I cross the street.”

Liam laughed. “You do that.”

As they pulled up in front of the building his class was in, Randall hopped out and was surprised when Liam followed.

“I can take it from here,” Randall said with amusement. “I’ve been walking myself to class all semester.”

Liam shrugged. “I am just curious.”

“Doesn’t the sunlight bother you?”

Liam shrugged. “I’m old enough that I can stand it pretty much before noon. After that, I get a little smoky.”

Shaking his head, Randy entered the building and headed to his class. Opening the door, he got a glare from his professor.

“We’re so glad you could join us, Mr. Stewart,” Professor Ardman said with a glare.

Liam spoke up behind him. “Sasha sends his regards, professor. Randall was sick yesterday and needed the rest. I’m sure you understand.” Liam’s tone left no room for misinterpretation. Ardman understood, or else.

The professor paled. “Of course. Of course. Please sit down, Mr. Stewart.”

“Have a good day, kid.” Liam whispered. Randy headed to his desk only to realize he was missing his backpack. Shit, he didn’t have any of his stuff. With a sigh, he set his chin on his hand. This was starting to look like a crap day.

Professor Ardman avoided Randall’s gaze all class. Luckily he had a photographic memory or he’d be out of luck with his assignment. He’d have to start taking a bag to Sasha’s if he planned to stay the night. Luckily, he had a few hours between classes, so he had time to change and get his stuff together before his first clinical session with his resident, Dr. Marcus Brown and his supervisor, Dr. Arthur Tallis.

Dr. Tallis was an internationally known Emergency Medicine doctor whose track record of saving patients was unparalleled. Randall hoped to make a positive impression on the doctor, because if he wanted to get into Emergency Medicine he would need good recommendations. A recommendation by Dr. Tallis would weigh heavily with any residency committee.

Swallowing his nerves, Randall showed up for his clinical with butterflies dive-bombing his stomach. He gave a nervous smile to his fellow students. Mandy, the only student he felt mildly close to, gave him a grin.

“I heard Dr. Tallis is a hotty,” she confided with a giggle. She was one of the few students who knew he was gay.

He traded smiles. “At least it will give us something to look at.”

Although he knew of the man by reputation, this was the first time he got to see the man in person.

Dr. Tallis walked into the room and Randall had to admit the man was stunning. A hard, tight body outlined by scrubs made Randy want to drool. He lowered his eyes so the doctor wouldn’t know one of the students was lusting after him. It wouldn’t do his career any good if he made the doctor uncomfortable with his staring.

Soon he was too enthralled with what the man was saying to care what the man looked like. To his enraptured audience, Dr. Tallis showed current cases and discussed treatment and procedures before presenting mystery slides. When he asked them to guess at diagnosis, Randall held back. He knew most of the answers but had learned in the past to let others answer first. He only answered four of the twenty questions when it became clear none of his classmates knew the answer.

Dr. Tallis’ green eyes examined Randall like he was a new and interesting species each time he answered a question, increasing Randall’s nervousness.

When the lecture was over and everyone was excused, Randy was asked to remain behind.

“Is there a problem, Dr. Tallis?” Randall asked.

Dr. Tallis looked at him for a moment. “What’s your name?”

“Randall Stewart.”

“You knew all of the answers, didn’t you, Randall?”

“Yes.” There was no reason to lie.

“Why didn’t you answer them?”

Randall shrugged. “Everyone should have a chance.”

“But you’re better than them,” Dr. Tallis answered. “I’ve been teaching these same cases for ten years and no one has ever diagnosed all of them.”

Randy shrugged.

“I have a photographic memory. It works to my advantage.”

Dr. Tallis shook his head. “It’s more than memory. Some of those cases aren’t in any manual. You have to be able to put all the symptoms together. It’s a rare gift, and I’m impressed that you were able to do this while still in medical school. I have senior residents who’d have problems diagnosing the ones you knew.”

Randy blushed from the praise.

“Thanks.”

“What specialty are you interested in?”

“Um. I was sort of hoping to do Emergency Medicine.”

Dr. Tallis smiled. “Excellent, then I can save myself the hard sell. I look forward to seeing you during rotation.”

Randy nervously brushed back his hair, hoping he lived up to the other man’s expectations. Tallis’ eyes followed the motion and zeroed in on his ring.

“What a beautiful ring. Are you married?”

Randy blushed. He hadn’t expected to be outed before he even started his career.

“My boyfriend gave it to me.”

“What’s your boyfriend’s name?” Dr. Tallis looked more than a little interested.

“Sasha.”

“Sasha Boris?” The doctor took a step away from Randy like he had the plague.

“Does everyone know him?”

“Yes. Most people know your Sasha. And you say you’re his boyfriend?”

“Well, he calls me his sunshine, but it sounds kind of lame to tell people that.”

Dr. Tallis sucked in his breath. “I’m surprised he lets you continue your studies. Vampires like to keep their companions close.”

Randy shrugged. “He hasn’t said anything about me quitting. I wouldn’t quit anyway. I’ve worked hard to get to this point and off the farm. I won’t give it all up for someone I just met.”

“We’ll see. If you do make it through, come see me and I’ll make sure you get your residency.”

“Thank you.” Randy could barely contain his excitement. Now he just had to make sure his controlling lover didn’t ruin his chances.

Chapter Five

Sasha knew something was wrong. He could feel Randall's unease throughout the day. His lover was worried. When he couldn't take it any longer, he pressed his intercom button.

Tian showed up within minutes.

"Randall is upset. Send out Liam to find out what's wrong."

"Why don't you just call him? Isn't that why you got him a phone?"

"I don't want him to think I'm too controlling. That's the quickest way to scare him off. He's an independent sort."

"You don't think sending Liam to him will be just as bad?"

Sasha shrugged. "Randall likes Liam and he's young enough to make it look like he's a friend just checking in."

"If you say so, but I'm betting your little pet isn't stupid enough not to know what's going on."

Sasha threw his stapler at Tian's head, not the least surprised when the tall vampire easily avoided it. "Fine. I'll call him."

Picking up his phone, Sasha dialed his lover's number.

"Hello." Randall sounded tired.

"Hi, sweetheart. I'm just calling to check on you."

There was a long sigh on the other end. "I'm just having a bad day. One of those days where nothing goes right."

He could hear the misery in his lover's voice.

"Did you want to come and spend the night over here?"

"I-I don't want to impose. It's only Wednesday."

"I miss you," Sasha offered, hoping it would be easier for his lover if he announced his need first.

"I miss you, too. Okay, have Liam pick me up and I'll spend the night. I have an early class, though."

“That’s fine. I can always have one of the humans drop you off.”

“Okay.” Randall’s voice was relieved. “I’ll see you soon.”

“See you soon, baby.”

He hung up only to see his old friend looking at him with a huge grin on his face. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen you so enchanted with a human before.

“He’s the one.” Sasha said simply. There was no other way to describe their relationship. “I’ve contracted to have one of the werekin come and work with me.”

“What for?”

“I’ve been doing some research and some of the werekin can sense when a diabetic’s sugar levels are low.”

“You’re kidding me.” Tian laughed. “The other members of the club are going to laugh at you when they find out you got a werekin for your sun. You’d best put out the word that the guy isn’t food. Everyone is going to want a taste of him. Werekin have amazing blood.”

“I’ll make sure everyone knows he’s under contract,” Sasha said. “I don’t want to start an interspecies war. He’s supposed to be here this afternoon. Besides, Randall sounded sad; I thought a dog would cheer him up.”

“I’m not a dog.” A man with auburn hair and elf green eyes stood in the doorway. He couldn’t have stood more than five feet, eight inches and if Sasha’s heart wasn’t already in Randall’s hands, he would’ve been attracted to the man.

“You must be Dustin.” Sasha stood to shake the werekin’s hand.

“Yes. My pack leader volunteered my services.”

Sasha examined the werekin’s mind. “If you are reluctant, I don’t want you near my boy.”

Dustin sighed. “I’m not reluctant. I just would’ve preferred to be asked. I had plans.”

“What plans?”

“I was going to be a Protector,” The shifter said with a downturned mouth.

“You’re a little short for a Protector,” Tian said without tact.

Dustin glared at him. “I might be short as a human, but I’m strong.”

“Then this will be a prime assignment for you,” Sasha said. “I need you for your skills in detecting drops in glucose levels and for protecting my man. I don’t want him to know that he is being watched. You are going to be his new pet.”

A low growling filled the room. “I’m no one’s pet.”

Sasha flashed his fangs. “You will be Randall’s pet and you will like it. If you are good, I’ll let you out for good behavior and not have you fixed. Trust me when I tell you that if you make my love the least bit unhappy, I’ll have you snipped until you sing soprano. And before you go whining to your pack leader, he’s the one who volunteered you for the assignment.”

“Bastard,” Dustin snarled.

Sasha’s phone rang.

He answered it with a curt hello, listened for a moment and then hung up.

“Change. Randall is on his way.”

Dustin closed his eyes and moments later a white wolf with green eyes glared at Sasha. He came up to Tian’s thigh and looked anything but friendly.

Moments later, Randall burst into the room.

“Hey, Sasha.” Randy said. He walked straight up to the vampire and slid into his arms, lifting his chin for a kiss Sasha was more than willing to give him. It made Sasha feel warm inside to be the focus of this sweet boy.

The kiss would've gone on longer but Dustin barked. Randall broke away to turn around to the sound.

"Oh, look at you!" Randall exclaimed, looking at the dog. "Aren't you beautiful." He looked to Tian. "Can I pet your dog?"

"That's not Tian's dog," Sasha corrected. "That's yours. He's a special dog that's supposed to be able to alert you if your glucose levels get too low."

Randall looked up at the vampire with surprise. "I've been monitoring my levels for years and I've never had any problems. Besides, isn't there controversy as to whether these creatures actually work or not?"

"Not this one; he's special."

Randall looked at the gorgeous dog and went to his knees. Putting his hand flat he let the animal sniff his scent. The dog sniffed a moment before licking his palm.

Randall laughed. "No licking." He wiped his wet hand on his jeans with a smile.

"Yes, Dustin. No licking," Sasha snarled.

"Easy Sasha, he's just a dog." Randy scratched the dog behind the ears, pleased when its green eyes crossed. "Who's a good boy, hmmm, who's a good boy?"

The dog gave a happy bark.

"Yeah, you're a good boy."

"I think that's enough. Tian, take him into the other room. Randy will take him with him when he goes."

"I can't take him with me." Randy protested. "They have a no pet policy at the dorms."

“Dustin’s a medical assist animal. He’s cleared. I called the dean myself to make sure he could go into your classrooms and into your dorm.”

“I’ll have to make sure that Darren isn’t allergic.”

“I called him; he’s thrilled.”

“You took care of everything, didn’t you?”

“I tried.”

“Thanks.” Randy leaned up and kissed the vampire. The more he did it, the more natural it felt. He could easily become addicted to his lover’s mouth.

When they came up for air Sasha gave him a fond smile. “You are most welcome. I will have to see what I can do to get you more presents.”

“I can think of one present you can give.”

“What’s that?” The smile on Sasha’s face told Randy that the vampire read his mind.

“I think I can accommodate your wishes.” Sasha said with a smile. “Come upstairs with me.”

Randall shoved down his nervousness as he took Sasha’s hand. It had been a long time since he’d had sex. He hoped he didn’t disappoint the vampire. Sasha probably had hundreds of years of experience under his belt.

Sasha stopped their walk to wrap Randall in his arms. “Baby, I might have a lot of experience but I’ve never had any experience with someone like you.”

The tightness in Randall’s chest unfurled at Sasha’s words.

It only took a few minutes to get to Sasha’s rooms. The bed was just as big and the sheets as silky looking as he remembered from a few nights before.

“Strip,” Sasha commanded.

Randall gave Sasha what he hoped was a sexy smile as he stripped off his shirt. This was the best part of his day so far. He started it by waking up late, not getting a chance for any coffee, and having a pop quiz in Emergency Medicine. It didn't get any better when he tripped in the cafeteria and dropped his food.

Sasha made a low growl when Randall dropped his pants and stood before him completely naked.

"You are a truly beautiful man," Sasha said.

Randall looked down, too embarrassed to look his lover in the eyes.

Sasha's tilted Randall's head up. "Never be ashamed of your body, my love. In my eyes, you will always be the most beautiful man on the planet."

Sasha's mouth devoured Randall. The feel of Sasha's clothed body against his bare skin held a forbidden excitement, making him harder than ever before.

When the kiss ended, Randall whimpered. Scooting to his toes he tried to recapture Sasha's lips.

"Easy, love."

Sasha took a step back and stripped off his clothes. Randall watched with avid eyes as his lover bared a muscular body with ripped abs.

"Yum." Randall licked his lips as Sasha stripped off his socks, shoes and pants. When he was done, he stood before Randy in a pair of silk boxers and nothing else.

"Would you like to do the honors?" He asked Randy.

"Oh, hell yes," Randy said. Sinking to his knees, Randall slid Sasha's boxers to the floor. Sasha's cock was at perfect mouth level and Randy showed his appreciation by sucking it down. Sasha tasted sweet, not bitter like other men he'd tasted before.

The vampire's long fingers slid through Randy's hair, cupping his head with a gentle touch. Encouraged, Randy focused on giving Sasha the best blowjob ever. Alternating between long licks and strong suction, Randy soon had Sasha moaning and writhing beneath his touch.

Just as he was certain he'd be rewarded by Sasha's fluid, he was pulled away from his prize.

"Hey, that's mine," Randy complained.

"Yes, it is," Sasha agreed, "But right now I want to become one with my sun. Later you can suck me to completion if you'd like."

"All right, but you promised."

"I will keep my word," Sasha vowed. His voice was solemn, but there was a twinkle in his eyes.

"Climb up on the bed and lay on your back. I want to see your face when we make love."

Randy was thrown off by Sasha's choice of words. He didn't know if he loved the vampire but he was growing fonder of him by the day.

"Soon you will love me," Sasha said confidently.

Randall smiled and sprawled out on the bed as Sasha grabbed a tube of lube from a drawer.

"Condom?"

"You don't need them. I can't give anything to you and I need to mark you with my essence. It will seep into your body and keep the other vampires away."

"O-Okay."

What did a person say to that, anyway?

Sasha crawled up Randall's body, licking and nibbling his path up the smooth skin. A lick on Randall's cock had his hips lifting to lure the hot mouth back to his body.

“Easy, lover,” Sasha crooned. I’m going to fuck you and then I’m going to suck you, in more ways than one. When I’m done, you’ll know who you belong to.”

Sasha kissed the ring on Randy’s finger.

A warm glow grew in Randy’s chest. In that moment, with a deadly predator looming over him, Randall had never felt more cherished.

Sasha placed a soft kiss on Randall’s lips while sliding a finger deep inside. Randy was so relaxed that he didn’t even feel any discomfort until Sasha slipped in a second finger and started scissoring them apart.

“Relax, *moyo solnyshko*,” Sasha said in tender voice.

“Sorry, it’s been a while.”

“Good.” Sasha kissed him again, building the fire between them. “I like that you were waiting for me.”

Randall was too distracted by Sasha’s touch to focus on his words. When Sasha substituted his cock for his finger, Randall’s back bowed beneath the surge of pleasure jolting through his body.

Just as he was adjusting to the feel of his lover’s body, Sasha struck.

Fangs pierced Randy’s neck, making a hot sex session go nuclear.

It was like having a full body orgasm.

Sasha plunged into Randy’s body over and over, hitting the perfect spot and sending sparks through Randall’s body.

“I’m going to come!” Randall screamed.

Sasha lifted his mouth and licked Randall’s wound clean. “If you come, I won’t suck you.” Sasha threatened.

“You can suck me another time.” Randy whispered. It felt too good, too intense to wait. With a cry, Randall pumped hot, sticky, wetness between them.

“That’s it, my love,” Sasha said. Smashing his mouth against Randall’s, Sasha pumped his fluid into his lover.

Randall’s skin tingled.

It felt like little sparks dancing across his body. Sparks that spread until it no longer tingled, it burned.

Burned like fire.

Sasha roughly pulled out of Randall’s body, jerking another cry from the man.

“Oh, fuck, we’re bonding.” Sasha whispered.

“Chance.” Randall dimly heard Sasha scream the doctor’s name. Whether the vampire shouted out loud or telepathically, Randall didn’t know, but it was loud.

The doctor burst into the room.

Sasha covered Randall with his body.

“He’s bonding. I can feel the heat.”

“I thought you already bonded?” The doctor said.

“Not completely.”

“And you thought it would be a good idea to finish it without a doctor present.”

“Stop lecturing and save my mate,” Sasha demanded.

Randy wanted to tell them to stop fighting but the words wouldn’t come. There was too much pain. His skin felt tight, like he’d outgrow it from one instant to the next, while his blood burned like lava searing through his veins. He could almost hear it rushing and bubbling.

“Shhh.” Dr. Chance came to the bedside. Randall saw a quick flicker of a syringe out of the corner of his eye followed by a pinprick stab in his arm.

“Ouch.”

“It’ll be better soon, love,” Sasha told him. The vampire’s hands continued stroking Randall’s hair, his cheek, his chest. Everywhere those large, cool palms went, Randall felt so much better.

It was as if Sasha’s touch beat back the lava.

“Touch me,” he whispered through his dry, cracked lips. When had they become cracked? The thought distracted him from the pain, a pain that was lessening along with his ability to think.

“Just sleep,” Dr. Chance said, so he did.

* * * *

Sasha paced for hours waiting for his lover to awaken.

“You need to get some sleep,” Tian said from the doorway.

“What if he doesn’t wake up? What if I killed the only man I’ve ever loved.”

Tian looked at him in astonishment. “Surely you’ve loved others. You’re over three hundred years old.”

“Never.” Sasha looked down at his beautiful human. Unable to resist, he brushed Randall’s hair away from his face. “I’ve never loved anyone before.”

“He’s coming around,” Dr. Chance said. The doctor sat in the corner monitoring Randall’s condition. There was little he could do, but Sasha threatened his life if he left. The vampire had a fear that Randall would have complications that Sasha couldn’t help. He insisted the doctor stay.

It wasn’t a request.

Sasha picked up Randall’s hand and kissed his ring. A flutter of Randall’s eyes had Sasha crawling up on the bed to lie beside him. “Come back to me, baby. You survived the bond and we’re together forever. If you die, I’ll die with you. You decide our fate.”

A soft sound of denial came from Tian, but he didn't say the words. They both knew that a bonded pair couldn't survive if one of them died. If Randall didn't make it, Sasha would die slowly, unable to feed from another and unwilling to try. Both of them had seen vampires die without their bond mate.

"Don't talk stupid," Randall whispered, blinking open his eyes. Instead of solid brown they now had a bright golden ring around the pupil.

Stunning.

"Am I a vampire now?"

"No, baby. You're still human. My human."

Randall gave a small smile. "Does that make you my vampire?"

"Absolutely." Sasha stroked Randall's face. "So what do you say? Will you stay on this earth and be mine?"

Randall frowned at his lover. "You could've warned me about the bonding. Is this going to happen every time we have sex?"

"No, the bonding only happens once. The rest of the time we will make love like normal people, without the passing out and pain."

"Good. Normal is good." Randy blinked his eyes like keeping them open was too much work.

"Go back to sleep. You've had a long night. I'll have someone wake you when it's time for you to go to class."

"Stay and hold me," Randall said, his eyes already closing.

"Anything you want." Sasha slid into bed and wrapped himself around his lover. "You two can go now."

Tian patted him on the back. He knew they would talk about this later, but all he could handle tonight was knowing his lover was safe.

"Let Randall know he can call me if he needs to," Dr. Chance said on the way out.

"Thanks, doc. I'll tell him when he wakes."

Right now, all he cared about was holding onto his lover and keeping him safe.

Chapter Six

Randall rushed into the classroom just under the clock, his white dog racing beside him. The professor eyed his dog, but having been prepped by the dean, said nothing about the enormous animal joining them in class.

“What the fuck is that?” One of the students asked in surprise.

Professor Ardman shuffled some papers before turning to address the students.

“For those of you who don’t know, Mr. Stewart is diabetic. This dog is part of a special breed of animals that will alert him if his glucose level becomes dangerously low. If anyone has a problem with an animal in the classroom or has allergies, please address your complaints to Dean Phillips. This is out of my hands.”

There was some muttering among the students. Randall kept his head down and out of any debate. Sasha wanted him to bring the dog to school, so he brought him. As far as Randy was concerned, the debate was over.

“What’s your dog’s name?” Mary asked, sliding closer to talk to Randall. “I’ve never seen a dog like that. Is he part wolf?”

“I’m not sure. He was a gift. His name’s Dustin.”

“Can I pet him?”

Dustin gave a low growl.

“Sorry, Mary, he’s a working dog.”

Dustin settled down beside Randall’s chair and laid his head on his paws.

The class flew by and Randy almost forgot the animal was there until he stood to leave class and had to avoid stepping on him.

“Sorry, pal.” He scratched Dustin behind an ear in apology. “We should grab a snack before our next class.”

Dustin stayed at Randy's side throughout the day. The dog never fidgeted and a few times it looked almost as if the dog was listening to the lectures. When they finished the last lecture of the day, the pair crossed the darkened campus to the dorms. One of the advantages to bonding with Sasha was that Randall could see in the dark better than ever before.

"Let's head back to the dorm and see what Darren's up to," he said to the dog. Dustin barked his agreement.

The closer they got to the dorm, the tighter the knot in Randy's stomach got. Something was wrong. He could feel it. He gripped Dustin's leash tighter. Randall's steps slowed outside the door to his room; he didn't want to go in. Swallowing the sudden knot in his throat, Randy turned the handle and pushed the door open.

The stench struck him before the door hit the wall.

Dustin blocked his entrance, a low growl rolling from his throat.

"What up, Randall?" Drew, a fellow student, came down the hall and held up his hand for a slap. "It's so cool how you got the admins to let you get a dog."

"Drew, call campus police."

Drew's eyes got huge in his thin face. "What's up, dude?"

"I don't know, but my dog won't let me inside and it smells bad."

Drew tilted his head in. "Shit." He pulled out his cell phone and dialed the police.

Randall could've smacked himself. He wasn't used to having a cell so it didn't occur to him to call.

"Thanks, man. I just got a phone and forgot I could call them myself."

Drew patted his back. "You're just freaked, man."

Minutes later a pair of campus police came down the hall.

“I’m Officer Nevens and this is Officer Lowell. Which of you called in?”

“I did.” Drew held up his hand. “But Randy asked me to.”

“What made you think not to go into your room?”

Randall shrugged. “When I opened the door it smelled really bad and Dustin here wouldn’t let me inside. He kept growling and blocking my path so I thought it must be pretty bad.”

“Good thinking.” Nevens said. The officer was a skinny Latino with a thin mustache, the direct opposite to his blond-haired blue-eyed partner. They told Randall to stay outside while they investigated.

They came back out quickly and Randy heard them calling for back up.

“It’s best that you don’t go in there. We’d like you to come down to the station.”

“What happened? Where’s Darren?” Randy started to go inside his room but Dustin blocked him, flashing some fang.

“Wow, that dog’s big.” Nevens said looking at Dustin with respect. “I think he’s right. You don’t need to go in there. We’ll have pictures taken and you can look at them at the station while we discuss who might want you dead.”

“Darren’s dead, isn’t he?”

“The body hasn’t been confirmed but we’re pretty certain that it’s your roommate in there and it isn’t pretty.”

Randy grabbed the wall to stay upright. “Why would anyone hurt Darren? He never hurt a fly.”

Officer Lowell hooked a hand around Randy’s arm. “Stay with us. We’ve contacted the City Police. They’ll take you down to the station and ask you a few questions. Do you have someone you can call to get you, maybe stay with a few days?”

“Yeah.” Randall brushed back his tears. “S-Sasha will let me stay with him.”

The two officers exchanged looks. “Sasha Baros?”

Randy let out a watery laugh. “Does everyone know Sasha?”

“How do you know him?” Officer Nevens asked.

“He’s my boyfriend.” Randy held up his hand to show off his ring.

Before the campus police could say anything more, a man and a woman both wearing suits approached the group.

“I’m Detective Wallace and this is Detective Frankle.” The man said, pointing to each of them in turn.

The female detective gave Randall an appreciative gaze.

“The body is in there,” Nevens said, pointing inside. “This is Randall Stewart. He shared the room with the victim. He is also dating Sasha Baros.”

“I didn’t know that Sasha dated,” Detective Frankle said with a wry smile.

“Why don’t you call your boyfriend and let him know we’re taking you in? I don’t want to be accused of any mishandling of this case.”

“Okay.” Randy slipped his phone out of his pocket and pressed the speed dial.

“Hello, my love,” Sasha’s voice purred over the line.

“S-Sasha, they think that Darren is dead and Dustin won’t let me into my room and the p-police want to take me to the station.”

Suddenly it was all too much for Randall and he burst into tears.

Detective Wallace took the phone from his hand and started talking to Sasha. Randy didn’t hear what the detective was saying over his own sniffles. Drew gave him an awkward hug.

“Hey, Randy, your man will be here soon to take care of you.” He said in a gruff voice. It was obvious the jock wasn’t comfortable dealing with the situation, but Randall appreciated that he tried.

Dustin rubbed against Randy in a soothing motion, almost knocking him over.

Randall scratched the animal behind the ears.

“They’re sending a car to come and take you to the station. Officer Frankle will go with you.”

Before he could finish his meltdown, Liam was there. The perky vampire wrapped an arm around Randall.

“Come on, honey, I’ll get you to the station.” He turned to the police waiting beside them. “He’s not a suspect, is he?”

Office Frankle spoke up. “We won’t know until we establish a time of death.”

“The limo is out front, sweetie, and Sasha is on his way.”

“Sasha is coming?” Detective Wallace’s pale skin turned even paler. “I thought he didn’t leave the club.”

Liam gave the detective a cold look. “He’s not going to leave his husband in the hands of the cops.”

Silence filled the hall.

“He said Sasha was his boyfriend,” Detective Frankle said.

“They are married in our way,” Liam said, patting Randall on the back. “Randall is still getting used to it.”

Randy leaned towards Liam. “Am I the only one who didn’t know about vampires?”

Liam nodded. “Pretty much.”

“Yes.”

“Uh. Huh.”

Even Drew chimed in. “You didn’t know about vampires? Dude!”

“Let’s go,” Randy said to Liam. He didn’t feel the need to argue about his own ignorance. How was he to know vampires were the worst kept secret in the city and apparently, his ‘husband’, was known to all. Randall waited until he was in the limo to talk to Liam again. He

needed to talk to him about Darren's murder (which still didn't feel real to him) and his marriage (like when the fuck did he get married?)

"Is Sasha one of the top vampires or something? Every time I mention his name people know immediately who I'm talking about and they all look like they want to cut and run."

Liam gave him a fanged smile that was not the least bit reassuring. "He's well known for being ruthless when he wants his way."

Dustin hopped up on the seat beside Randall and put his head in Randy's lap.

"Sasha is going to rip off your wolf ears if you don't move your head." Liam advised the dog.

"Hey, don't talk to my dog like that!" Randall said indignantly. He petted the animal's head, pleased when it gave a happy puppy sigh. "He's a good boy," he crooned at the animal.

Liam leaned over and growled at the creature, "Shift."

Before Randy's eyes, his sweet obedient dog turned into a handsome sullen-eyed red-haired man. He was completely naked.

Liam rifled through a black bag in the corner of the limo. After a moment's search he threw some clothes at the man. "Get dressed before I tell Sasha you were naked with his man."

"There are werewolves, too!!"

"We prefer shifters," the man who had been Randy's dog said.

"Sorry."

He got a smile before the sweater went over the man's head. "No worries. You're a really good pet owner. I don't think I eat that well as a human."

Randall blushed not only from the words but also from the nakedness of his companion. "Shit, Sasha made you change so you could guard me. I knew that diabetic dog story was bullshit."

“It’s not total bullshit,” Dustin said. “I *can* tell if your glucose level is low and Sasha thought you might need some protection.”

Memories of Darren flashed through Randall’s mind. “Too bad no one was there to guard Darren.” He blinked back tears as he remembered his perky roommate who introduced him to Sasha.

“Hey.” Liam wrapped Randall in his arms. “We’ll find Darren’s killer and take care of the bastard.”

“It won’t bring Darren back, though.”

“No. It won’t bring Darren back,” Liam said into Randall’s hair, “but it will make sure that his killer doesn’t go free.”

They pulled up in front of the police department. Dustin got out and reached back in to help Randall from the car. Liam covered his other side. Randall knew it wasn’t accidental that the two men flanked him when he went from car to building. He took a curious look at the sky; the sun was at full strength.

“Why doesn’t the sun affect you, Liam? I thought the afternoon sun was bad for you?”

“Naw, this is the fall sun. It’s not strong enough to burn me. I can’t go sunbathing, but I’m old enough that’s it’s not much of a bother.”

“What about Sasha?” Randall asked, suddenly worried. “Will it harm him?”

“Not if he wears a hat,” Liam said. “He’s younger than me but more powerful. The stronger the vampire, the weaker their ability is to be out in the sun. No one knows why.”

Randall’s scientific mind flashed through the possibilities but without more information on vampires he couldn’t establish a hypothesis.

The detectives ushered them inside.

“You gentlemen can wait outside,” Detective Warren said.

Liam laughed. "Until Sasha can be here for his husband, I will stand in his stead. I am a licensed lawyer in this state."

"Of course you are," Randall said dryly.

"And him?" Detective Warren pointed towards Dustin.

"He's the bodyguard."

"Fine. Bring them both. It's not like we really think he's the killer. We just need to ask him some questions," Detective Frankle said.

They were led into an interrogation room. Randall and Liam took a seat and Dustin leaned against the wall by the door. His green eyes scanned everything, letting Randall know that nothing was going to get past the shape shifter.

Minutes later the detectives entered the room.

"Mr. Stewart, it will take a little while to establish the time of death and have someone come and identify the body."

"I can identify the body."

"No, you can't." Liam and Dustin said in unison.

"Why not? He was my roommate I should identify him."

"Sasha wouldn't want you to see Darren like that."

Before he could say anything else Sasha stormed into the room. "Why have you illegally held my husband?" He demanded. There were three men in suits behind him with sleek briefcases.

Detective Frankle stood up to face the intruders. "He isn't being held; we're asking him questions about his roommate."

"Without his lawyer?"

Liam raised his hand. "I offered to represent him."

Sasha lost some of his ire but he still strode forward and pulled Randall into his arms.

"You all right, my sun?"

“Yes. I’m fine. Well, not really.” Randall confessed. “They say Darren’s dead.” Shock was starting to set in as reality struck. His cheerful roommate was dead.

“Shhh. Shhh, my precious man,” Sasha whispered against Randall’s hair. “I’ll take care of you.”

“But who’s going to take care of Darren?” He asked in a broken voice.

“I’ll see that his body gets to his parents,” Sasha vowed wrapping his lover in his arms. “His death won’t go unavenged; this, I promise you.”

“Vengeance won’t bring him back,” Randall said. His body shook from the emotions gripping him. Memories of Darren smiling, joking, tossing him an apple, ran through his head. Tears burst from Randall, ripped from the bottom of his soul. Sasha held him close while the dam burst, stroking his back until the storm was over.

“Let it all out, my love. I’m here for you.”

After a few questions about his whereabouts, the detectives let Randall go home with Sasha. It wasn’t like he could go back to his dorm room now, anyway. The police had no reason to hold him, as he had alibis for last night and all morning.

Randall watched the limo pull up in front of Sasha’s club with little expression. He missed Darren.

His friend was one of those people who made you feel better just by being in the same room. Although they’d only been roommates a few months (Randall’s prior roommate dropped out of school) he’d grown fond of the other man quickly.

Sasha rubbed a soothing hand across Randall’s back. He could almost feel the anxiety pouring out of Sasha. His lover was used to being able to fix things. That he couldn’t take away Randall’s guilt and

fear was a burden to him. Sasha didn't mourn for Darren that Randall could see.

"My kind rarely mourn, my sweet. Darren was food, not a friend." With two fingers he gently turned Randall's head until their eyes met. "But make no mistake. If it had been you, there would be no end to my sorrow and rage. I am sorry if I don't feel what you want me to feel, but I am here if you need me to help you with your sorrow."

"Thanks, Sasha," Randy said. He let the vampire help him out of the limo and tried not to feel bitter. Darren had been a friend and he couldn't stop feeling that if the other man hadn't been his roommate, he might be alive today.

Randy blinked back tears as he trailed after his lover. With a sigh, Sasha reached back and linked his fingers with Randall's.

"You can't blame yourself for another's death. Everyone's time comes when it is right. It was Darren's time."

Sasha wrapped a strong arm around his lover, sheltering him with his larger body.

"Come to bed. You've had a hard day. I have some work I need to get done but I'll stay with you until your food arrives and I can find someone to stay with you."

"I'm not a child, Sasha. I don't need a babysitter."

Sasha's grip tightened. "It is for my own peace of mind. If someone was after you and got Darren, I don't want you to be vulnerable to his attack."

"You know who did this, don't you?"

"No. I thought at first it was my brother, but he would want you alive long enough to give me hope and he would've delivered you personally."

"So you don't think it's your brother?"

Sasha shook his head. “No. Which makes the situation all the more dangerous. I know how to handle my brother; I don’t know how to handle an unknown danger.”

Randall let Sasha take him to his apartment. After being fed some pizza, he let Sasha tuck him into bed like he was a five-year-old.

Dustin showed up in dog form and jumped on the bed. With a soft woof he curled up at Randall’s feet and closed his eyes.

“You’d best stay in dog form if you plan on being in bed with my husband,” Sasha said with a flash of fang.

Dustin gave a small snarl but settled down, nose to tail.

When Sasha left the room, Randall curled up closer to the wolf. “Thanks, Dustin,” he whispered as the stress and horror of the day swept away under the sweet oblivion of sleep.

Sasha paced his office.

“Send our best men out to investigate this fiasco. Someone has to know something.”

“On the plus side, you now have your boy where you wanted him,” Tian said.

“I didn’t want him this way. His heart is breaking over his friend’s death and Darren’s parents don’t want to be bothered to identify their dead son because he was gay. How can humans be so unfeeling towards their own flesh?”

“Don’t get all self-righteous on us,” Liam said from his seat on the couch. “Vampires aren’t exactly saints. After all, one of us tore Randy’s roommate apart.”

“The question is, why? Was he trying to scare Randall or warn him? What is the story there?”

None of the vampires in the room could come up with a reason.

“We must find who did this is and stop him,” Sasha said.

“Why?” Tian asked as he slowly paced the room.

“What do you mean, *why*?”

Tian shrugged. “What do we care about a single blood worker?”

Sasha stared at his friend. “Have you been here for the entire conversation? My son’s heart is breaking.”

Tian rolled his eyes. “I’m sure that your boy will get over his friend’s death. Humans are a resilient lot.” The vampire’s voice indicated he was already bored with this conversation.

Sasha bared his fangs. “We will solve this and my love will find closure; it is a very human thing to want resolution.”

“Fine.” Tian got to his feet. “I’ll go do some asking around and we’ll find out who is out to get your boy.”

“Good.”

Tian left with one last glare at everyone.

“He’s in a mood,” Liam commented.

“Hmm. I wonder why?” Sasha shook his head to banish the strange thoughts spinning in his head. Tian would never betray him. The other vampire had worked for him for over two hundred years. “I’m going to check on Randall.”

Liam nodded. “I’ll wander through the club and see if anyone has heard anything. Someone might be stupid enough to brag about what they did.”

“Good idea.” Sasha felt better that they were at least doing something, so he could report to his sensitive lover that there was an attempt to find the perpetrators.

Randall was curled up on the bed sobbing into Dustin’s fur like his heart was breaking. Sasha felt a strange fluttering in his chest. He wanted to help his boy, but he didn’t know how to comfort someone. In all of his years he’d never had to comfort anyone before and he didn’t

want to do it wrong. With careful steps he made his way over to the bed. Sliding onto the mattress, he pulled his lover into his arms and cradled him close.

Dustin hopped down, discreetly leaving the room.

“Shhh. I’ll find out who killed your friend and I’ll take care of them. I will do anything to make you smile again.”

Randall snuggled into Sasha’s embrace. “I’m scared, Sasha. I don’t even know what they want, but I’m afraid.”

“I’ll keep you safe,” Sasha vowed. If anything happened to Randall, Sasha’s life wouldn’t be worth anything, anyway. Wrapping his arms around his lover, Sasha snuggled Randall into his arms. His human lover liked to be snuggled when he was upset about anything. Lately, he’d been upset a lot.

Sasha vowed to himself that he would find out who killed Darren, so that Randall’s heart would be at ease.

Chapter Seven

Randall walked to his class from where the limo dropped him off, dragging his feet as he went. He wasn't really feeling up to class but he couldn't afford not to show up at lecture. His dog/werewolf accompanied him, though Randy had to admit he was less comfortable with the white animal now that he knew the beast could turn into a human.

Sasha had wanted him to quit school but Randy was adamant. He hadn't worked this hard to blow it off because he fell in love with a vampire or because there was a chance he'd be attacked. Although he wasn't particularly brave, Randy refused to live in a protective bubble. Besides, what was he going to do? Sit at Sasha's club and count his toes? He needed a purpose. Going to school helped keep his mind busy and away from the idea of his roommate torn to pieces.

Class was uneventful, with Randall getting condolences from his classmates about Darren's death. Word of a murder whipped through campus quicker than a tsunami. A few looked at him as if expecting him to confess to being a killer, but people were sympathetic, for the most part.

After class, Randall went to the hospital for his Emergency Medicine rounds. When he got to the ground floor, he heard the sounds of an ambulance arriving. Two big paramedics came through, pushing a patient. As he tried to move out of their way, the patient jumped from the stretcher, shot the shifter and grabbed Randall. Before Randy could scream, a cloth was shoved over his nose and darkness took him.

Waking up wasn't pleasant. Randall's head felt like it was going to crack open like an overripe melon and smear all over the place. His hands were bound and his feet couldn't move at all.

“He’s awake.” A cold male voice said over his pounding head.

“Wakey, wakey.” A familiar voice said.

Randy opened his eyes.

“Darren?”

“Surprised?”

“I thought you were dead!”

“Not yet,” Darren said with a toothy smile. “But I’ve been promised conversion into a vampire if I help kidnap you.”

“Why did you need help? I would’ve gone anywhere with you.”

“Yeah, but I didn’t want Sasha to suspect I was involved. He might have hunted me down before you were killed.”

The easy way Darren talked about Randall’s death sent a shaft of pain through his heart.

“I thought we were friends.”

Darren leaned over Randall; his eyes had an eerie calm that sent chills up and down Randy’s spine. “We were, until you decided to take my spot. I was supposed to be the one Sasha bonded with. Who the hell do you think you are to take my place at his side?”

“Stop whining. No one is going to be at Sasha’s side. He’s going to die and I’m going to have his little pet to play with.” The unknown speaker said. It took him a moment to place the sound of Sasha’s brother.

Randy wondered if he would die when Sasha did. He’d rather die than be at Ustin’s mercy. Ustin would enjoy hurting him.

“Shhh, little one.” Ustin said. “I won’t kill you right away. First we’re going to have some fun. As long as you’re alive, my brother will have hope. Hope is the most painful emotion, after all. The beauty is that he will feel your distress but be unable to do anything about it. I’ve waited a long time to have leverage over my brother and you are the perfect trap. I will use you to get him and eventually destroy him.”

“You don’t seriously think this guy is going to keep his word about converting you, do you, Darren?”

Darren looked at Ustin cautiously. “Why wouldn’t he?”

“Yeah, why wouldn’t I?” Ustin said with a sneer. “After all, my little pet has been so useful, I will enjoy him in the years to come.”

Darren paled. “Wait a minute.”

“You didn’t think I was going to change you to a vampire and then let you go?” Ustin purred. “That would be irresponsible of me. No, my sweet, I will keep a close watch on you. A very close watch.”

“Th-That wasn’t the deal,” Darren stuttered.

“I guess there just isn’t any honor among kidnappers, is there?” Ustin said with a pointy-toothed smile. “Now go check on the dog.”

“You brought Dustin?”

Ustin glared at him. “We had to, that stupid dog started barking. We couldn’t leave him behind. He’s a beautiful shifter. I’m thinking of skinning him and keeping his coat.”

Goose bumps ran up Randall’s spine. He had to get out of there. His body stiffened in terror when Ustin held up a small scalpel.

“First I’m going to cut you a little. Just enough that Sasha will know you’re being tortured.” He gave Randall a falsely apologetic smile. “I’ve always enjoyed playing with my food.”

Randall kept his mind carefully blank. Maybe he could prevent Sasha from feeling his pain if he blocked his mind.

Why didn’t this mating stuff come with an instruction manual?

The knife flashed ominously in the dull light.

Sharp pain ripped through Randy’s body as Ustin sliced a line down his arm.

Despite his silent vows, Randall screamed.

“Oh, you do that so beautifully,” Ustin gave him a pleased smile. “I’m going to enjoy you.” Leaning down, he licked along the cut,

sealing the wound as he went. Ustin's eyes rolled into the back of his head.

"You are simply delicious. I don't think I've ever tasted such amazing blood," Ustin praised. "Anyone who has blood that superior needs to stay alive. It would be a crime to kill someone with your special talents."

"What!" Darren screamed. "But what about Sasha?"

Ustin gave Darren a cold look that would have Randall pissing his pants if it was directed at him. "You don't understand the bigger picture, human. I have centuries to torture my brother. This is his mate. I can cut and heal him over and over while Sasha does nothing more than wring his hands and uselessly search for the one that took his mate. The vampires I used are clanless and won't be tracked back to me. It's the perfect setup. In exchange, my brother suffers and I get to taste the best blood of my life."

"But you're going to change me, right?" Darren asked.

"Don't worry, human, you'll get exactly what you deserve."

Faster than Randall could follow, Ustin's hands grabbed Darren and yanked him into his arms. "I have little use for traitorous humans. Anyone who will turn on his friend is someone I can't trust at my back."

Ustin plunged his fangs into Darren's neck. Darren's scream was piercingly loud before a wet squelching sound brought it to a halt. Ustin tossed aside Darren's body, his throat ripped out.

Licking his lips, Ustin leaned over Randall. "See, we just met and I've already done you a favor and killed your betrayer." Ustin held up his scalpel. "You don't seem grateful."

"Th-thank you?" Randy said even as inside he was screaming.

Ustin gave him a bloodstained smile. "You are refreshingly sweet. No wonder my brother is so fond of you." He stroked Randall's head

like he was a good dog. “You’ll be my companion for many years to come. Just think, you and me and the whole wide world. Of course, this place isn’t the type I usually live in. This is just to throw my brother off; he’d never expect me to stay here.” He gave a maniacal laugh. “He is so easy to fool. Now I’ve got to go console my brother for his loss.” Laughing, Ustin strolled out of the room.

Randall watched Ustin leave with both relief and trepidation. His eyes avoided Darren’s body as he pulled at the restraints.

They were firm.

If Darren had been alive at the time, he wondered who was the person at his dorm. For the first time Randall looked around his accommodations. There were no windows and the place smelled like damp cement and mold. The room was completely bare except for the cot Randy was tied down to and a large metal cage he could see in the corner of his eye.

“Are you all right, Dustin?” Randall called out.

“Your friend is no friend at all,” Dustin replied.

“Yeah, I kind of figured that out.”

“Give me a moment and I’ll get us out of here.”

The sound of metal screaming filled Randall’s ears. If his hands were free, he would’ve covered them; instead, he winced at the noise and hoped it would be over soon.

Seconds later a naked werekin stood over him. “Luckily the cage wasn’t built to keep in my kind.” He looked Randall over with a frown. “Sasha will not be happy that I failed you.”

“If you get me out of this alive, I’ll put in a good word,” Randy promised.

“If I don’t get you out of this alive, I’d best make my plans to leave the country, because neither my pack leader nor Sasha will take it well.”

“True.”

With a few yanks, Dustin had him free.

“Thank you.”

“We must proceed with caution. I smell several people up above.”

Randall patted his pocket and let out a laugh of relief. “I still have my phone.” With shaking hands, Randy dialed his lover.”

“Baby, where are you?” Sasha’s concerned voice warmed Randall’s heart.

“I was kidnapped by Ustin and I’m in a basement somewhere. Dustin is with me. Ustin is headed your way.”

There was a low growl over the phone. “I will rip out his heart and eat it.”

“Umm, okay. Ustin killed Darren. Darren wasn’t the guy in my apartment. He helped kidnap me because Ustin promised to make him a vamp if he betrayed me.”

“Sit tight, my love, there is a tracking device in your phone. Leave it on and I will have my men come and get you.”

“Okay. I’ll see you soon.” Randall hung up the phone but left it on. “Sasha is sending some men to come and get us.”

Dustin sighed and Randy tried not to look at the man’s naked body. It was rude to stare, no matter how gorgeous he was without clothing.

“Shifters don’t have any hang-ups about nudity,” Dustin said, watching Randall’s expression.

“Humans do; we’re socially repressed.”

Dustin nodded solemnly. “I had noticed that. So what is the deal with you and Sasha? How did you rate the head honcho?”

Randy shrugged. “Sasha believes it’s fate. I don’t know what to think, except I know he’s the best thing that’s ever happened to me.”

“Some people might think you’re too young for him,” Dustin offered.

“Maybe.” Randy sat back down on the cot. “But I can’t make him any younger and I’ll only get older with time. I know I can never match his experience with things, but I love him and that has to count for something.”

There was a long silence that made Randall look over at the werewolf.

Dustin was staring at him. “Did you tell him you love him?”

Randy thought back over their short relationship. “No. But if I get out of this alive, I will definitely make it a priority.”

“You do that.” Dustin’s face took on a sad expression. “We don’t always take the opportunities offered to us and when they’re gone, it’s too late to get them back.”

“Did you lose someone?”

Dustin shook his head like a dog shaking off water. “It doesn’t matter. It was a long time ago.”

Randy would’ve argued, but the sounds of footsteps cut him off.

With a surprisingly fluidity Dustin transitioned back to a wolf; crouching low to the ground, he guarded Randall with his body.

A low chuckle met his posturing and an enormous man with black hair and flashing gold eyes walked into the room.

“Temper, temper, pup,” the stranger said.

“Who are you?” Randy asked.

“I’m Lewis Reynolds, the beta of Dustin’s pack.” He nodded towards the growling animal.

“He doesn’t look that happy to see you,” Randy commented as Dustin flashed an impressive set of canines.

“That’s because he hates it when I have to rescue him.” A flash of tenderness entered Lewis’ eyes as he looked at Dustin, but it was quickly banished. “He’s a really beautiful animal.”

“Is it safe to go?”

“Yeah, we took care of the guards.”

“We?”

“You didn’t think we’d take well to the kidnapping of a pack member, did you, especially when the pup is the alpha’s brother?”

“How did you know he was missing?”

“He didn’t check in and your man called and said you were missing. The vampire might need technology to find his mate but I only need my nose to find mine.”

“Dustin’s your mate?”

The white wolf snapped at the dark-haired man.

Lewis gave him wide smile. “Fight it all you want, beautiful, but one day you’ll be mine.” He looked back at Randall. “Let’s go before your vampire kidnapper comes back.”

Nodding, Randall walked around the snapping wolf to follow the beta. “Come on, Dustin, I’m not leaving you here, and neither is Lewis.”

With one last growl, the white wolf followed them up the stairs. Randall looked around curiously when they got above. It looked like an abandoned apartment building, not where he’d expect his elegant mate’s brother to be hiding. “This doesn’t look like a place that Ustin would live.”

Lewis looked back at him. “He wouldn’t have brought you to his hideout on the off chance your mate found him. Vampires are generally cautious about letting others know about their homes. Your mate is the exception, but then he is one of the most powerful vampires I’ve ever met.”

Two large men waited at the top of the stairs. From their powerful builds and golden eyes, Randall pegged them as shifters. Five vampires lay on the ground beside them, all bound in ropes, all unconscious.

“We’ll take them back to Sasha for punishment.” Lewis smiled and Randall was happy the vampires were unconscious, because they’d be scared shitless if they saw the shifter’s expression.

Randall was led to a large black Hummer.

“Come with me and I’ll take you back to Sasha before I return Dustin to the pack.”

Randall jumped into the car, surprised when the white wolf jumped in beside him and placed his head on Randy’s thigh.

“You get that face any closer to his crotch and I’ll have you fixed,” Lewis growled.

Dustin made a snuffly noise that sounded like doggy laughter.

“Get into the back; there are clothes for you to change into.”

With a low growl, Dustin hopped into the back seat. A crackle of energy in the air made Randall’s hair stand on end.

“Show off,” Lewis growled. Randall saw the love in the other man’s eyes when he looked at Dustin in the mirror.

“Why aren’t you together if you’re mates?” Randall asked in a low voice.

“I can hear you, honey,” Dustin said. “We’re not together because Lewis is an asshole.”

“Don’t call him *honey*. He belongs to Sasha.”

Randy figured Dustin only did it to annoy his mate since he’d never called him by a pet name before. He wisely stayed quiet.

“Where are the vamps?” Dustin asked.

“Julian is following us with another vehicle. I didn’t think you’d want to travel with them. Sasha will be interested in interrogating them.”

"I'm sure he will." Randall almost felt sorry for them.

Almost.

"Does Sasha blame me?" Dustin asked.

"You'll have to ask him. I sort of hung up on him when he said you were kidnapped."

"Did you call Sasha and tell him I've been found?"

"Oops," Lewis said with a toothy smile.

"Shit." Randy reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone, seconds later he was connected to his lover.

"My people are on their way," Sasha said in a soothing voice.

"Don't worry."

"Umm I've sort of already been rescued." Randy said. "The shifters found me."

There was a long silence on the phone. Randall wondered if they'd been cut off.

"What shifters?" Sasha finally asked.

"Dustin's pack."

"Put him on the phone."

"Dustin?"

"Whoever is in charge."

"Sasha wants to talk to you." Randall said handing the phone to Lewis.

"Sorry, I never talk on the phone while driving. It's a hazard, you know. Tell ol' Sasha we're almost at his den." He said it loud enough Sasha could hear him.

Randall pulled the phone back to his ear to hear Sasha creatively cursing. He let his mate go on for a while. After all, some of those words he'd never heard before.

"Now I'll owe a debt to the pack leader," Sasha said mournfully.

Randall's temper snapped. "Well excuse the fuck out of me, if my possible death and dismemberment isn't worth a little pack favor. Next time, I'll stay so I can be tortured and you won't owe anyone anything." Infuriated, Randall disconnected the phone.

He looked up to see Lewis staring at him like he'd grown a second head. "Watch the road," he snapped.

"Yes, sir," Lewis said, snapping his head forward.

Silence filled the cabin before laughter from the back seat had Randall turning around.

"What?"

Dustin smiled. "I've never heard anyone talk to Sasha like that before."

Remorse filled Randall. "Yeah, I probably shouldn't have said that, but damn, it was *his* brother who kidnapped me and he was less than appreciative of you guys rescuing me."

Lewis cleared this throat. "We actually came to rescue Dustin; you were sort of a bonus so that Sasha would owe us a favor."

"I don't care about your motives. I'm no longer in Ustin's psychotic care so I'm grateful, and my lover should be, too."

Randall wasn't in the mood to be forgiving. He'd had a hell of a day and he was so pleased not to be terrified out of his mind that he wanted his mate to be grateful of his rescue, not grumpy that he owed the werewolves a favor.

* * * *

Sasha stared at his phone for a moment.

"What happened?" Tian asked from across the room.

"My sweet mate just hung up on me after telling me off."

Liam chuckled. "I heard him. He didn't appear to appreciate your concerns about the debt you owe the werekin."

“He’s young,” Tian offered. “He doesn’t understand about species politics.”

Sasha shook his head. “No, this time I think he’s right. I should be grateful they grabbed him. They could’ve left him there when they grabbed Dustin.”

“They must want something,” Tian said.

“I agree,” Sasha said. “But unless I want to alienate my mate, I should at least appear grateful when they arrive. I don’t want any estrangement, especially when I’m going to ramp up his security. He never would’ve been grabbed if he had more than one little wolf watching over him.”

“It would make more sense to remove him from the hospital. He is much safer if he stays here among the vampires,” Tian offered.

Liam laughed until tears rolled out of his eyes. “I can see that conversation going really well.” He chuckled again. “By the way, mate, I’d like you to stop everything you’ve worked your entire mortal life for so you can be my plaything and blood source. What do you say?”

Tian glared at the younger vampire. “If he was my mate, he’d do what I told him.”

Sasha gave his old friend a smug smile. “I’ll remember that when it’s time for you to mate. You’ll find it isn’t so easy to control someone when you care if they’re happy or not.”

Their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Randall, accompanied by two of the werekin.

“Master Sasha,” Lewis said respectfully, “I’ve brought back your mate.”

Sasha went to Randall and inspected him from head to toe. “You are unharmed.”

“No. Ustin cut me and then sealed the cut with his tongue.” Randall’s body shook from the memory. Sasha pulled him close.

“I’ve got you now, my lover.”

Randall pulled away enough to look Sasha in the face. His stunning gold-ringed eyes were solemn as he cupped Sasha’s cheeks in his hands. “I love you. While I was captured I realized I’d never taken the time to say the words and might never get the chance again.”

Sasha’s heart leapt to his throat. He leaned down and gave Randall a tender kiss that he hoped conveyed his emotions. “I love you, too, *moyo solnyshko*.”

A throat clearing tore his eyes from his sweet man.

“I believe we have the matter of a debt.”

“What is it you want?” Sasha asked, cuddling Randall close.

“A vampire clan is intruding on our pack lands. We want your help in making them back off.”

“I will talk to them, but I can’t do anything if they are within their rights.”

Lewis growled. “We own those lands through purchase and shifter rights. We’ve been there for five hundred years.”

Sasha nodded. “Then I will tell them to back off. If they had a prior claim, they should’ve declared it before now.”

The tension in the shifter’s body faded. “Thank you.” He nodded towards Randall snuggled in Sasha’s arms. “Just so you know, we would’ve rescued him anyway. Dustin has grown fond of your man and wouldn’t leave him behind.”

Sasha stroked Randy’s head. “I appreciate that.”

Lewis left with a final envious glance at the pair.

“He’s Dustin’s mate,” Randy said.

“Really? They don’t smell mated.” Vampires were one of a handful of paranormals who could smell mating marks.

“I don’t think they’ve officially mated, but Lewis swears they are mates.”

“Huh.” He thought of the two shifters and paired them in his mind. “I hope he has good luck with that. Dustin strikes me as the stubborn type.”

Randall laughed. “Yeah, he does. Did you catch Ustin? He said he was heading your way.”

Sasha shook his head. “He must’ve figured out we were on to him. He’s missing and isn’t at any of his usual haunts. Even the shifters can’t find him.”

“What are we going to do?”

Sasha could hear the nerves in his mate’s voice. Hugging him closer, he placed a kiss on Randall’s forehead. “We live our lives and I put a pair of bodyguards on you. No one will ever be able to take you from me again.”

“I don’t want bodyguards,” Randall whined.

“Tough. Either give up med school or put up with bodyguards.”

“No one is going to want to recruit a resident that needs bodyguards. What kind of doctor could I be if I don’t have my patient’s trust?”

“First of all, I’ve hired some unseelie to come and watch you. They can make themselves invisible so no one will have to know you have guards. Secondly, you will make a fine doctor and when you practice you can practice for the paranormal community. There are many that get injured and don’t necessarily self-heal. Part of the agreement with the unseelie was that once you are a full doctor, you would agree to help them.”

Randall leaned back. “Don’t you think you should’ve gotten my agreement before you made a trade for my services?”

Sasha snorted. “Like you would’ve refused to heal anyone. This way, we at least get something back.”

Sighing, Randall leaned back against his lover. "You're right, I would've healed them anyway."

"So we made a deal for nothing?"

Randall turned to see a pair of large men well over six feet with huge diaphanous wings crowding the entryway.

They wore glittering knives strapped to their bare chests and black leather pants. Any leather boy's wet dream.

Wow.

A pinch from his vampire had him turning to see Sasha's eyes flare with anger.

"What? They're gorgeous. I can't help it. I'm only human."

"Yes, but you're *my* human, remember that?"

"I don't think you'd let me forget." Randall muttered, his gaze going back to his bodyguards.

"You can't go back on the deal, Vallin. Your king already agreed. One year from each soldier in exchange for medical access. Randall, my love, these are Vallin and Rael, your first set of bodyguards."

"What if I can't heal an unseelie?" Randall asked, feeling panicky. "What if they tear a wing or something?"

"I have arranged for you to train with an unseelie healer so that you get a better understanding of their problems. There aren't enough gifted unseelie medicine people to go around, so they often look for help from the outside.

"Umm, okay."

Randall's eyes kept going back to the gorgeous wings he got peaks and flashes of when they moved. Instinctively his hands went out to touch, only to have Sasha wrap both arms around him, holding him still.

"Don't touch. It is considered bad protocol. Their wings are extremely sensitive."

“Oh, sorry.” Randall could feel the hot blush stain his cheeks.

The speaker of the pair gave Randall a wicked smile. “I can see why you are so fond of your human. He is rather sweet.”

Sasha snarled at the unseelie. “Just remember that he is *my* sweet one, and we’ll get along fine. Especially as you will usually be invisible.”

The pair of unseelie gave a slight bow before vanishing.

“Where did they go?” Randy reached out with his mind but he felt nothing.

“They went back to court. They aren’t expected until next week. The next three days you’ll spend in my arms and Monday you can go back to your usual schedule. I called your school and explained about your kidnapping. They said you could take the rest of the week off.”

Since it was Friday it wasn’t a great deal of time but Randy knew he couldn’t afford to miss too many days.

Turning in his lover’s arms, Randy gave what he hoped was a seductive smile. “What ever will we do until Monday?”

Sasha gave him a wicked grin.

“I’ve got several ideas I’d like to share. Let’s go discuss them in bed.”

Randy nipped at Sasha’s neck, earning him a growl. “That sounds like a fabulous idea,” he agreed. With a laugh he escaped his lover’s grip and ran to the doorway. “Catch me and I’m all yours.”

Sasha laughed. “Baby, you’re all mine, anyway.”

Unaware of the eyes of the unseelie, the pair ran for the elevator.

“Do you think he knows there’s unseelie blood in him?” Vallin asked, watching Randall reach the elevator first.

Rael shrugged. “I doubt it. The boy is a long way from the original king’s line.”

“Maybe, but that’s still royal blood in his veins and his highness warned us if anything happened to him he’d rip off our wings.”

“Why does the king care about him now?” Rael wondered. “He’s not a child seeking protection and he doesn’t have more than a few drops of unseelie blood in his entire body.”

“I heard one of the seers had a vision. The boy is going to be important to our future.”

“Huh. Well, I don’t have any problem watching him. It’s better than looking after any of the other royals, and there’s always the chance we get to kill a vampire.”

Vallin exchanged feral smiles with his partner. “Yes, that could be fun.”

With a flicker of wings the fae left the vampire club, returning to the unseelie court until it was time to watch their charge.