



NEO'S REALM

*Blood
Trinity*

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Blood Trinity

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

Neo's Realm

BLOOD TRINITY

Carol Lynne

Dedication

For all my readers, thank you for your continued support.

Chapter One

A noise woke Kern from a restful sleep. He instinctively reached over to Haig's side of the bed but met with only the cold sheet. Kern balled his hand into a fist and slammed it against the empty spot where his mate should be. How long would Haig continue to punish him for mating with a vampire?

Kern didn't even remember fucking and biting Audric. He'd been under the sadistic control of Richard, the last of Francois LaMont's chosen minions, at the time. No, that wasn't true. Audric was the last of the coven. It was a fact Kern had reminded himself of several times over the previous hours.

When he'd woken in the steel-lined underground chamber with a nude, and recently mated, Audric at his side, Kern hadn't understood. Neo, his boss, had been the one to inform him of what had happened. Kern's immediate response was to ask for Haig. It had also been Neo's job to tell Kern Haig had been unable to handle the knowledge that Kern had mated with another.

Kern's first inclination had been to get angry with Audric. He'd jumped to his feet and started yelling at the small vampire. The only thing that had calmed him was Audric's reaction. Instead of defending himself, Audric had rolled himself into a ball, obviously awaiting the first blow. Suddenly Kern yearned to soothe the small, red-haired man with haunted green eyes.

Hours later, Kern's heart had still been torn in two directions. The circumstances behind the mating had bound him to Audric. Although love hadn't come instantly, Kern's protective instincts had started to grow the moment he'd bitten the scared vampire.

Even now as he lay alone in a bed he'd shared with Haig for over four hundred years, he longed to check on Audric.

A noise outside his bedroom got Kern's attention. He jumped up and crossed the room, hoping Haig had finally come home. Nude, he walked into the living room. The sun was coming up and the room was bathed in a soft pink glow. Unfortunately, that seemed to be all that was in the room – no Haig.

The noise sounded again, and Kern finally realised it was coming from the guestroom. *Audric*. Kern raced to the bedroom, prepared to risk his life to defend the vampire. When he opened the door, Kern was surprised to find the room empty and the bed still made. He glanced at the windows and realised *Audric* hadn't even drawn the curtains.

Closing his eyes, Kern tried to zero in on the smell of his new mate. He knew it would take some time to acclimate his body to the addition of *Audric* into his life, but within days *Audric's* scent would forever be imprinted on Kern's wolf.

Kern's gaze went to the closet. What the hell? He closed the curtains before opening the closet door. Although *Audric* was only around five-foot four, sleeping on the floor of the closet couldn't be comfortable. He bent down and ruffled *Audric's* tousled red curls. "*Audric?*"

Audric's eyes sprang open. The look of fear in their green depths was something Kern would never forget.

"It's okay." Kern held up his hands. "I just came in to check on you."

When *Audric* seemed to relax a bit, Kern sat on the floor. "What're you doing in here?"

Audric's head tilted a fraction to the side. "Sleeping?"

"Why in the closet? The blinds'll keep the sun out if that's what you're worried about."

Audric's eyebrows drew together. "I'm used to sleeping in the closet. It's where I've always slept."

The admission angered Kern more than he could understand. "They wouldn't even give you a bed to sleep in?"

Audric shook his head and scooted further into the closet. "I had a bed, but it was always safer for me in the closet."

Kern stood and held out his hand. "I won't let anyone hurt you. Come."

Audric slowly rose to his feet on his own, keeping his hand far away from Kern's offer of help. His gaze seemed riveted to Kern's nude body. When Kern tried to cover himself, *Audric* spoke. "Did your mate return?"

With a sharp shake of his head, Kern tried to ignore the pain in his chest at the question. He moved to pull the covers down on the spare bed. Dressed in one of Kern's T-shirts, *Audric* looked so young and small. The vampire was nothing like Haig in body size, yet Kern

felt a stirring in his groin just by looking at the man. What would it feel like to hold such a fragile-looking creature?

Audric gasped, drawing Kern's attention away from his thoughts. Once again Audric's eyes appeared transfixed by Kern's cock. Kern started to make an excuse for his condition, but decided it would be better to be honest with his new mate. "Haig and I don't wear clothes around the house. It's the way we were raised. It's the way we'll continue to live. You'll have to get comfortable with it if you hope to become part of this household."

"You want me here?" Audric asked with a hopeful expression on his boyish face.

"Whether I want you here or not isn't really a question anymore, is it? You're my responsibility now, and I never run away from my responsibilities."

Without another word, Kern strode towards the window to make sure there were no gaps in the blinds. He glanced at Audric once more before leaving the room and closing the door securely behind him.

On the way to the kitchen to make his breakfast, Kern grabbed his phone from the table. He opened the refrigerator and removed one of the thawed steaks he'd set out two days earlier. With any luck, the meat would be spoilt and he'd get sick.

Before taking his first bite, Kern called Haig's phone again. "Please answer," he begged. He sighed when the call went directly to voicemail. "It's me again," he began. "Baby, I know I have a lot to apologise for, but I can't do that if you won't talk to me. I'll understand if you need some time, but please at least call me?" He started to hang up, but put the phone back to his ear. "I love you," he whispered before closing the phone.

What would he do if Haig never forgave him? Kern couldn't imagine a life without his lover and best friend. His fingers went to the scar running from his forehead to his throat. As he traced the path, he was once again reminded of everything Haig had given up to be with him.

Kern wondered if Haig had gone back to his old pack in Ireland. There was no doubt Haig could fight for his birthright and win, but would he really do it? Replacing the current pack Alpha would mean walking away from Kern forever.

With a sigh, Kern dropped his hand to the table. *I deserve no less for what I've done.* He'd broken a bond of over four hundred years because he'd wanted to prove to Neo he could be counted on even when it came to fighting vampires. Haig had tried to tell him it was a fool's

mission, but Kern had gone anyway. What he hadn't told Haig was his reasoning behind the action. As much as he loved Haig, he'd spent his entire life in the man's shadow. Even at Le uve del Regno he was known as Haig's mate first and a guard second.

How stupid he'd been to worry about such trivial matters. His marriage to Haig was more important than anything else in the world. Kern knew he'd gladly spend the next four hundred years making it up to Haig if only his mate would give him a second chance.

His gaze went to the closed guestroom door. What was he supposed to do with Audric if Haig returned? Kern knew the other man's presence would be a constant reminder to Haig of his infidelity. Unfortunately, Audric was already bound to him. To deny the physical bond of the mating would torture Kern and his wolf until the day he died, but maybe he deserved to be tortured.

Kern returned his attention to the bloody steak in front of him. Although he didn't have the stomach for it, he needed to eat. With a shake of his head, Kern set the plate on the floor. He quickly shifted to his wolf form and consumed the meat in five determined bites.

Shifting back, he carried the plate to the sink. He started to leave it for later, but changed his mind and washed it. Haig hated a messy house. Kern grabbed his phone from the table. A large part of him doubted Haig would call, but he wouldn't give up hope entirely.

On his way back to bed, Kern quietly opened the door to the guestroom. Once again the bed was empty, reminding him he and Haig weren't the only ones suffering from his mistake.

He stepped into the room and opened the closet door. He considered carrying Audric back to bed but stopped himself. What Audric really needed was to know he was safe. After a few moments of consideration, Kern pulled a pillow off the bed and lay as close as he could get to the small man.

As he laid there, Kern's body started to react to the nearness of his new mate. He longed to hold the frightened man and assure him everything would work out. "Damn." He shifted to his wolf form and crawled to the closet threshold before settling down again. Something would have to be done with Audric before Kern broke his vows once again and took the vampire to his bed.

* * * *

Even in his deepest sleep, Audric could feel Kern's presence beside him. It shouldn't have surprised him to open his eyes and see Kern just outside the closet, but Audric hadn't expected to see the handsome man in wolf form. He stared at the tan and black wolf in confusion.

He wondered if he'd ever understand were creatures. How could a man have an animal inside him? Audric ran his fingers through the thick pelt. Where was the skin he'd mapped with his eyes earlier? If the wolf was now on the outside, did that mean the man was now *inside*?

The wolf moved, pushing his muzzle against Audric's hand. Audric moved to scratch the stunning creature behind the ears. He'd had a dog when he was a boy so the affection came naturally, but knowing the animal was also his mate more than freaked him out. He ran his hand to the wolf's chest. "Kern? Are you in there?"

The wolf gave a low growl before shifting. In the blink of an eye, Audric's hand rested on Kern's heavily muscled chest. It took him several heartbeats to still the wandering digits as they skimmed across Kern's pebbled nipple. Gods, but he longed to take the small dark brown disk into his mouth.

With his eyes still closed, Kern moaned again and directed Audric's hand towards his hardening cock. "I knew you'd come back to me," he mumbled.

Audric jerked his hand back, realising the truth of the situation. "I'm not Haig." He sat up and moved to the back corner of the closet.

Kern opened his eyes and sprang to a squatted fighting position. It seemed to take him several seconds, but he eventually recognised Audric. "I thought..." He shook his head as if to clear it. "I'm sorry."

The disappointment in Kern's eyes cut Audric like a knife. He knew Kern had mated him while under Richard's control, so why did the honest apology hurt so much? He'd been stupid and naïve to think Kern would actually welcome his touch.

"You don't have to be sorry. I know it wasn't your choice for me to be here." He swallowed the emotions that threatened to overwhelm him. Just once he wished he could find peace. It was more than obvious he wouldn't find it living with a man who saw him as a

mistake. Maybe it would be better to put some distance between them? "Who should I speak to about feeding?"

Kern got to his feet. "I don't know. Neo, I guess."

Audric's gaze went to Kern's flaccid cock. Even soft, the man was more than impressive. "Okay." He looked down at the overly large T-shirt he wore. "Do you have something I can put on until I find a way to get some clothes?"

Kern nodded and walked out of the room.

Yeah, Audric thought, *he can't get rid of me fast enough*. He crawled out of the closet and stood with his back against the wall.

Kern came back into the room and tossed a pair of sweat pants and a shirt towards Audric. "Those'll have to do for now."

Audric caught the clothes. "Thanks."

Kern stared at Audric for several moments before turning back towards the door. "I'll be in my room if you need anything else."

"I won't."

Kern's spine straightened at the comment, but he didn't turn around.

As soon as he was alone, Audric quickly stripped out of the T-shirt and dressed in the borrowed clothes. Perhaps Michael had something that would fit him? He stuffed the shirt he'd slept in under the pillow along with his dream of ever being welcomed by Kern and his mate.

Audric didn't announce his departure because he doubted Kern cared either way. It was obvious Kern had only invited him into his house out of obligation, so Audric doubted the man would give a shit if he found other accommodations.

* * * *

With a groan, Haig knocked the ashtray away from his forehead before sitting up. The barstool under him teetered slightly before settling. *Fuck*. How much had he drunk? His mouth was beyond nasty. He moved the empty glass aside and wiped the thick funk from his tongue with a napkin that read *Puglisi's*. Haig sighed. At least he was only a block from the rundown hotel he currently called home.

He got to his feet and walked on unsteady legs to the front door. He'd spent four weeks in a drunken fog of his own making and was no closer to figuring out what the hell to do than he was when he'd come to the small seaside village. It didn't seem to matter how many times he told himself Kern had been under someone else's control, Haig was still only one of two mates Kern now possessed.

Haig unlocked the door to his room and flopped onto the bed. Maybe a trip back to Ireland was what he needed? He shook his head, dismissing the notion as quickly as it had come. There was nothing in Ireland without Kern.

Closing his eyes, Haig wondered if Kern was settling into newly mated bliss with Audric. It had been almost a week since Kern had tried calling. There was no doubt Kern probably had his hands full trying to keep up with the much younger vampire. Although Haig had never been around the species of Blessed Creatures, he had heard tales of Neo's sexual exploits. Whether all vampires had the sex-drive Neo had was unknown to him.

Although Haig and Kern had always enjoyed a healthy sex life, it had begun to wane in the previous one hundred years or so. He hadn't really thought about it until he'd started to worry about Audric being brought into their bed. How could Haig possibly compete with a man so different from himself? Kern had always enjoyed new things, and Audric was definitely a new toy for his mate to enjoy.

"Dammit!" Haig stripped out of his smelly clothes and collapsed back onto the bed. He stared into the mirror mounted on the ceiling. He may be old, but his hair was still as blond as the day he'd taken Kern for a mate. His broad chest and well-defined muscular body was just as hard as the first time he'd sunk his cock deep into Kern's ass.

Haig snorted. Who was he kidding? He couldn't hope to compete with a man as sexy as Audric. One lick of the vampire's tongue against the crown of his cock and Kern would spill his seed in rivers. Haig couldn't blame his mate for giving in to the temptation Audric's leanly muscled body provided. It was the fear of being rejected that kept Haig away.

Rolling over, Haig reached down and grabbed his jeans off the floor. He pulled out his phone and checked his messages. Although he already knew there was nothing new from Kern, he went to his saved messages just to hear his mate's deep voice.

"Haig? Please answer. I'm so lonely without you here. I feel like I'm being torn in two, and I don't know how much longer I'll be able to handle it."

Haig pushed save once again before moving to the next message. Of all the messages he'd received, this one disturbed him more than any of them.

"I can't go out. Everyone looks at me, expecting me to fall apart. I haven't run since you've been gone. Please, Haig, please call me. My body feels like it's burning from the inside out, and you're the only one who can put the fire out."

Closing his eyes, Haig dropped the phone beside him. Was the despair in Kern's voice real or put on for Haig's benefit? He'd like to think Kern was sincere, but with a hot little piece like Audric sharing Kern's bed, Haig doubted it.

For the first time in a week, the phone beside him rang. Haig snatched it up, hoping to see Kern's name on the display. His eyebrows drew together as disappointment began to set in. He hadn't heard from his cousin Flick in ages.

"Hello?"

"Do you have any idea how long I've been trying to track you down?" Flick asked.

Considering cell phones were only a pipe dream last time he'd talked to Flick, Haig didn't doubt it. The two of them hadn't parted on the best of terms, but Flick had been better than the rest of Haig's pack. "How did you?"

"I talked to someone who told me you were working for Neo Manos. So I took a chance and called him. He told me you'd left a couple of weeks ago, but he had your number."

"Yeah?" Haig prompted. He hated the thought of Neo feeling as though Haig had let him down by taking off. "So, what's so important that you'd spend time trying to find me?"

"I'm not sure if you're aware of it, but some of us were forced to leave our homeland. We've ended up just west of Bonner's Ferry, Montana."

"You left Ireland?" Haig couldn't imagine the pack anywhere but the green rolling hills he'd grown up on.

"Not by choice," Flick told Haig. "Things started to go downhill fast after you left. Once passage to America became available, a group of us grabbed at the chance to start over in an untamed country."

Haig never received word of his original pack. He'd never cared before, but something in Flick's voice made him curious. "What do you mean downhill?"

"You're father took Juniper Cavanaugh under his wing. I guess he thought to groom him to take his place, but Cavanaugh couldn't wait for your father to retire, so he challenged him and won."

Haig knew exactly what that meant. His father was dead. He searched his memory trying to come up with a face to match the name. "Cavanaugh?" Haig sat up in bed. He remembered the Cavanaughs well. They were a family of smaller than average stature. "I don't remember Juniper, but I can't believe any of them would turn out strong enough to take the Alpha title."

"You wouldn't remember him. Juniper's only three hundred years old or so. But you're not far off on your memories of the Cavanaugh family though. Until just before the challenge, Juniper stood five-foot-eight. Then overnight he started to grow. He was a healthy six-foot-four by the time he challenged your father."

"How's that possible?" Weres reached physical maturity around the age of fourteen. Haig had never heard of an adult were suddenly growing eight inches.

"No clue. He became such a tyrant that a group of us decided to leave everything we'd worked centuries for behind and move to the United States."

Haig wasn't sure what the pack's situation had to do with him. "I'm sorry to hear that, Flick, but I was tossed out of the pack years ago when I chose Kern over my father."

"I know, but we need your help. Galena managed to get a message to your mother. She thinks Juniper's up to something."

"Galena? What does my sister have to do with Juniper? Didn't she move to Montana with the rest of you?"

"No. Shortly after becoming Alpha, Juniper chose Galena as his mate. At the time, she thought he might go easier on us if he was given what he desired."

Galena was his only sibling, and the only reason he and Kern had stayed with the pack as long as they had. He knew he'd do whatever he could to help her. "Does she want to get away from him?"

"Away from him? That's all she's wanted since the day they mated, but Juniper won't let her out of his sight long enough for her to run."

"I'll take care of it. Once I free her, I'll put her on a plane and give you a call." Haig had no idea how he'd get his baby sister free of an entire pack, but he'd abandoned her once—he wouldn't do it again.

"You can't do it on your own, Haig. Juniper isn't a simple were anymore. He's...hell, I don't know what he is. If you and Kern can wait for me, I'll help any way I can."

Haig's hand fisted at his side. "It's just me."

"What? Did something happen to Kern?" Flick asked.

"Yes. No." Haig took a deep breath. "Look, I don't want to go into it right now. Call me when you get close. I'll meet you in four days at O'Toole's Pub."

"Okay," Flick agreed.

Haig hung up. Only once had he and Kern gone into a dangerous situation separately. The result was Kern's kidnap and subsequent mating to Audric. For weeks he'd played the pity card, feeling sorry for himself for something Kern had no control over in the first place. It wasn't a question as to whether or not he *should* attempt a rescue without Kern—it was whether or not he *wanted* to do it without his mate.

Chapter Two

Haig knocked on the front door of the main house before going to investigate the obvious situation between his mate and Audric.

A woman he'd never seen before opened the door. "May I help you?"

"Is Neo awake?"

The woman narrowed her eyes. "Who wants to know?"

"My name's Haig. I used to live here. I know I probably don't have a job anymore, but I wanted to explain my actions to Neo."

"Let him in, Evelyn," Neo commanded from somewhere inside the house.

The woman, Evelyn, took a step back and opened the door. As Haig passed, he noticed the scowl on her face. Damn. What the hell was her problem?

Neo stood at the foot of the staircase, a matching expression on his handsome face. "Follow me to my study."

Haig swallowed around the newly-formed lump in his throat and did as ordered. He was barely in the office before he spoke. "I'd like a chance to apologise for my actions."

Neo calmly sat in one of the large wingback chairs. "Have a seat."

Haig's ass was barely settled on the soft leather before Neo spoke again. "Have you seen Kern?"

"No, sir. I thought it was important to speak to you first. I sense that Audric's living in the dorm instead of in the house with Kern. What's going on?"

"You've been gone a month," Neo reminded Haig.

"Yes, sir. I know I shouldn't have run off like I did, but I needed time."

"What you did was incredibly selfish, Haig. There are two other men hanging on the edge because of your abandonment."

Haig sat up straighter in his chair. "With all due respect, sir, Audric isn't my problem. Now I realise I should've given Kern a chance to explain, but I'm not the one who cheated. *I'm* not the one who mated with another man."

Neo stood and walked towards the window. "Kern had absolutely no control over what happened. I know you don't have a lot of experience with vampires, but they...we...have the ability to take over someone's mind. When I woke Kern in the dungeon that day, he didn't know where he was or what had happened. He asked for you, and I had to tell him about the mating with Audric and your subsequent reaction to it."

Haig stood and joined Neo. "Is that why Audric's living in the dorm?"

Neo nodded. "The attraction between Kern and Audric came to a head about three weeks ago. Kern tried to keep Audric at arm's length, but the mating bond is stronger than I've ever seen."

"They fucked," Haig surmised. His gut clenched at the thought of the two men in a heated embrace.

"No, but they got close," Neo ground out between clenched teeth. "The guilt tore Kern up and drove Audric to the dorm. I tried to talk to both of them, but Kern's completely despondent and Audric refuses to do anything that would compromise you and Kern's relationship."

Although the news that Kern had remained faithful in his absence thrilled Haig, Neo's apparent anger didn't. "I know I have things to work out here, and I will, but there's a problem with my sister in Ireland that also needs my attention."

Neo shook his head. "You've got a bigger problem right here. The full moon is days away and Kern hasn't even begun to prepare Audric for what might happen." Neo put a hand on Haig's shoulder. "Don't make the same mistakes I've made. Take care of home first."

"I understand that, but I'm supposed to meet my cousin in a few days. He's flying all the way from the United States. You're asking me to choose between a vampire I barely know and my sister."

With an annoyed sigh, Neo shook his head. "It's not only about helping a vampire you barely know. It's about saving your true family. Go see your mate. Really look at him. Maybe then you'll understand what I'm trying to tell you."

* * * *

Haig climbed the porch steps with caution. What would he find inside? Neo's words kept coming back to haunt him. What kind of permanent damage had he done to his relationship with Kern for running off like he had?

With a shaking hand, Haig turned the doorknob. "Kern?" he called as he entered the house.

The whimper he heard in return shocked him. Why was Kern in shifted form? He strode towards the bedroom and opened the door. The sight that met him turned his stomach. Kern's wolf was chained to the bed.

"What the hell?" Haig rushed forward. He knelt beside Kern's wolf and tugged at the heavy chain. "Kern, come on, babe, shift for me."

Kern's wolf opened its eyes. It stared at Haig for several seconds before closing again.

Haig ran a hand down the thin body of the wolf. *I've done this to him*, he admonished himself. No wonder he was on Neo's shit list. "I'm sorry I ran. I promise I'll never do it again, but please, babe, please shift for me."

What normally took a second seemed to take minutes as Kern slowly morphed into the body of a man. The drawn-out process, more than anything, proved to Haig how weak his lover had become. "Where's the key?" Haig asked his partner.

Kern pointed towards the hallway but said nothing.

Haig rushed out of the room and scanned the hardwood floor. He caught a glimpse of a small silver key half-hidden under an area rug and grabbed it. "How long?" he asked Kern as he tried to fit the key in the lock.

Kern shook his head as his arms scrambled to wrap around Haig's waist. In his weakened condition, Kern didn't have the strength to hold on.

Haig gently removed the steel collar from around Kern's neck. He threw the offensive device to the floor and drew Kern against him. Rocking the man he loved in his arms, Haig's anger turned to Audric. "How could that bloodsucker let you do this to yourself?!"

"I sent him away and told him not to come back," Kern rasped.

"Why?"

"Because I wanted him," Kern admitted as he broke down in tears.

Haig held his mate tighter and cursed himself. He should've known better. The sexual pull of a newly mated pair was ingrained in the were species. When he and Kern had first

mated, they'd basically stayed in bed for the first ten years, only coming up for air long enough to run and eat. The next one hundred years hadn't been much different except they'd had enough control over their libidos to search out a new life for themselves.

"I'm sorry," Kern cried. "I didn't know what I was doing. Please don't leave me again."

"I won't," Haig soothed. "I should've known you'd experience the mating frenzy with Audric. I guess I wanted to believe the mating wouldn't take since he's not were."

Decisions would need to be made. It was obvious there would now be three of them in the relationship. Haig knew there wasn't a possibility of him surviving without Kern, and he doubted Kern would fare much better without Audric.

As he ran his hands across Kern's tattooed back, he was reminded of how long he'd been away. "When's the last time you ate?"

Kern shrugged. "What day is it?"

Haig sighed and kissed the top of Kern's head. "Stay here. I'll go catch you something. It'll be easier for you to digest and regain your strength in wolf form."

"Don't leave." Kern wrapped himself around Haig. "Please. If you go, I won't be able to control myself."

"I'll go get Audric and bring him here before I go hunting." It would be the hardest thing Haig had ever done, but it was also the right thing to do. Somehow, someday, he'd have to come to terms with what had happened.

* * * *

Audric sat alone in his darkened room listening to the voices in the hall. It was a typical Saturday night and the residents were restless. He reached for a bottle of blood and took a sip. The stuff was nasty as hell but it was the only option he had.

It's not the only option. Audric shook his head, ridding himself of the internal voice that had seemed to follow him since he'd arrived at the vineyard.

Ramiro had been by several times to offer Audric a ride into town. A human donor bar called Il Donatore di Sangue, or The Blood Donor, had opened to service the vineyard's new staff of vampire guards, but Audric couldn't bring himself to leave the comfort and safety of Le uve del Regno.

He finished off the bottle and tossed it towards the trashcan. Like always, feeding made him horny. It didn't seem to matter whether or not the blood he drank was straight from the source or not—once consumed, Audric needed to fuck.

He got up and went in search of his well-used bottle of lube. He'd jerked off more in the last month than he had in his entire existence. After grabbing the lube from the kitchenette, Audric stripped out of his jeans and lifted one foot to rest on a straight-backed chair.

He slicked his hands and wrapped one around his cock while the other buried itself two fingers deep in his asshole. He was a dozen pumps in when a loud knock sounded at the door. The noise made Audric's cock immediately deflate as he looked around the room for somewhere to hide.

"It's Haig. I need to talk to you."

Audric's eyes rounded as he scrambled to wipe his hands and find his jeans. Was Kern's mate finally here to kill him? He backed into the corner of his small studio apartment as he fumbled with his zipper. Maybe if he stayed quiet, Haig would go away.

"I can smell you. I know you're in there, and I know what you were doing. Now open this fucking door before I break it down!" Haig bellowed.

Quickly pulling on his jeans, Audric knew he had to answer. "I didn't do anything. Please don't hurt me."

Haig was silent for several moments before finally speaking. "I'm not going to hurt you, Audric. Kern's in bad shape, real bad. He needs your help."

Audric took several steps towards the door. "What's wrong with him?"

"Please open the door so I don't have to broadcast our private business to everyone on this fucking floor."

Unsure what to do, Audric began to chew on his fingernail. There was no doubt in his mind Haig could easily break the door down if he wanted, so what would be the point of making him angry enough to do so?

Audric eventually crossed the room and turned on a small lamp. Just because he could move about easily in the dark, didn't mean a were could. It was yet another reminder of how little he knew about the species he'd been mated to.

After unlocking the door, Audric backed into a corner. "It's open."

He watched as the doorknob turned and Haig stepped into the room. He'd only been around the mountainous blond man once, and he was being guarded at the time.

Haig closed the door and looked around until his eyes settled on Audric. "You look like shit, too. What the hell is wrong with the two of you?"

Audric glanced down at himself. Although he'd always been thin, the bottled blood had diminished what muscle mass he had. Audric ran a hand over the raised ridge of his rib cage. "I'm not used to the blood here."

With a loud sigh, Haig opened the closet beside Audric's small bed. "Where're the rest of your clothes?"

Audric pointed towards the laundry basket on the floor. Because he only had three changes, he was forced to do laundry every other day. It was something he did just before dawn when the wolves and cats had settled in for the night. "Michael loaned them to me."

"You don't have any of your own?" Haig asked, throwing the clean T-shirt and pair of jeans into the laundry basket.

"No. They took me before I could gather them." It was yet another reminder he had nothing. His life with LeMont's coven might have been torturous, but at least he'd had the finest things money could buy.

Haig pulled the basket out of the closet and placed it on the bed. He looked around the room before turning to meet Audric's gaze. "You're coming home with me. What else do you want to take?"

Audric immediately lowered his eyes. "Kern doesn't want me there."

With a soft growl, Haig crossed the room and towered over Audric. "Want has nothing to do with it. Kern *needs* you there. I should've realised it, but I tried to tell myself a real mating couldn't take place between a wolf and a vampire. I was wrong."

Haig put his large hands on Audric's shoulders. "We'll have to work it out between the three of us, but for now, I only want what's best for Kern. *And*, if that means having you in the ways of a mate, so be it."

"Why are you doing this?" Audric asked, still looking at his feet.

"Because he could easily die if I don't." Haig released Audric and returned to the bed. Tucking the small laundry basket under his arm, he gestured around the room. "Now, get

what you want and let's go. Kern needs to eat and fuck, and I can't take care of both those things at once."

Audric's eyes rounded. "What're you saying? You expect me to just waltz over there and let him fuck me?"

"That's exactly what I'm saying. Unless of course you can bring down a deer for him to eat?" Haig opened the door. "Ready?"

Audric scrambled to gather his toiletries as well as the few bottles of blood he had left in the refrigerator. He found a sack and tossed everything inside. On his way out, he spied the bottle of lube peeking out from under the chair and bent to grab that as well.

He didn't care for Haig's no-nonsense attitude regarding sex, and he really didn't like being ordered around. Unfortunately, he was used to it. With any luck his new master wouldn't beat him as harshly as his last.

* * * *

Haig silently cursed himself as he led Audric down the path towards the small cottage the three of them would share. Although Audric hadn't chained himself, his physical condition appeared as bad as Kern's.

"What did you mean when you said you weren't used to the blood here?" Haig asked.

Walking several steps behind, Audric's soft response was barely heard. "Bottled blood isn't the same."

Haig slowed and turned to address Audric. "I've seen a number of strong, healthy vampires since I've been back. Why aren't they affected by the difference in blood?"

"Because they're going to The Blood Donor in town to feed."

Haig's eyebrows drew together in confusion. "Who's the blood donor?"

"Not who, what. The Blood Donor is a new bar. Vampires pay to get in. There are humans who allow vampires to feed from them. From what Ramiro tells me, it's a pretty nice place as long as you make it clear to the humans you aren't looking for anything more permanent than feeding."

Haig couldn't imagine such a place. "What do the humans get out of it?"

"Evidently it's become quite the kink for bored singles and married couples looking for something more. For some unknown reason they don't feel like it's cheating since we're not human." Audric shrugged. "I haven't been able to get myself to try it."

"Why?" It was obvious Audric needed what the bar had to offer. What would make him starve himself?

"I feel safer here at the vineyard. Ramiro said he'd take me with him, but I know what it's like when a vampire feeds, and I can't count on him to watch my back if he's engaged in his own feeding."

Haig turned back around and continued down the path. He didn't want to show his stupidity by asking what a vampire was like when they fed, but eventually he'd need to know. Shit. He still couldn't believe he was willingly going to live with a vampire, and not just any vamp, Kern's mate.

How would he handle the man he loved fucking someone else night and day? It had already become obvious he would either have to leave Kern behind when he went to rescue Galena from Juniper Cavanaugh's clutches, or take Audric with them.

Reaching the cottage, Haig climbed the steps and waited for Audric to catch up. Even as thin as he was, Audric was still damn sexy. What if Kern enjoyed sex more with the smaller man? Would Haig become obsolete?

Before he had a chance to warn Audric about Kern's current predicament, the door behind him opened. Although Kern was pale and thin, Haig couldn't deny the look of lust in those dark green eyes he loved more than his own life. "Be careful with him," he warned Kern. "He's not as strong as I am."

Kern's nostrils flared and his cock went rigid as Audric slowly climbed the steps. Instead of acting on his natural instincts, Kern turned his head to look at Haig. "I need him."

"I know." Haig set the laundry basket inside the front door and began to strip out of his clothes. "I'm going hunting, but I'll be back as soon as I can."

It took every ounce of love and compassion Haig felt for Kern to step back and shift into his wolf form. He knew the moment he was gone, his mate would be all over Audric. In the end, Haig decided it would be better not to witness the coupling so soon after his return. He fled towards the woods, away from Kern's hungry growl as he pulled Audric into the cottage.

* * * *

As soon as Haig ran off, Kern lifted Audric off his feet and carried him to the couch. He'd become obsessed with the thought of tasting and fucking his new mate. Lowering his head, he took Audric's mouth with all the passion he'd denied himself.

Audric's entire body stiffened when Kern pushed his tongue deep into his mouth. Kern tried to gentle his mate with tender touches to the face and back as the kiss continued.

Eventually, Audric's began to relax. Audric's tongue playfully slid across Kern's, signalling his own desire. Breaking the kiss, Kern repositioned Audric to straddle his lap. "I tried to stay away from you."

Audric nodded and buried his face against Kern's neck. "I'm sorry this happened to you."

Tamping down on his need to fuck his mate, Kern wrapped his arms tighter around Audric's small frame. "It wasn't your fault."

"But Haig hates me."

"No he doesn't. He's hurt, but he understands the bond between mates." Kern moaned at the brush of denim against his bare cock as Audric moved. "I need you," Kern ground out between clenched teeth.

Audric sat back and stared at Kern. "I need you, too."

Kern hastily began to rid Audric of his jeans. His stomach continued to growl as racking pains of hunger threatened to overwhelm him.

Naked, Audric dashed across the room to retrieve a small bag that sat inside the laundry basket. When he bent over, Kern noticed the shine of lube on his mate's already-stretched hole.

Kern was off the couch in the blink of an eye. He fell to his knees behind Audric and buried his nose in his mate's ass. Although he couldn't smell another man's flesh on the lubed skin of Audric's hole, he questioned him. "Who have you been with? Why can't I smell them?" he growled.

"No one, I swear. I-I was pleasuring myself when Haig came to my room," Audric panted, pushing back against Kern's face.

Kern swiped his tongue over the stretched skin. "Tell me what you were doing."

"Fucking myself with my fingers," Audric admitted. "Please fuck me." Audric bent further over the basket and spread his legs.

The position called to Kern's wolf, but unlike sex with Haig, Kern doubted Audric would take kindly to a wolf fucking him raw. He reached over Audric's shoulder and grabbed the bottle of lube from his hand. Audric might be slick enough to play with himself, but Kern's cock was much bigger than a few fingers.

He coated his erection with enough lube to ease his way, closed the bottle and dropped it to the floor. Kern pressed the crown of his cock against Audric's hole and waited for the vampire's body to welcome him inside. He wasn't sure what size of cock Audric was used to and didn't want to hurt his new mate the first time they fucked.

As Audric's hole opened to accept the tip of Kern's cock, Kern had to remind himself it wasn't the first time he'd fucked the man. However, it was the first time he had control over his actions.

The squeeze of Audric's internal muscles as they sucked Kern's entire length inside further threatened Kern's control. In his already-weakened state, Kern felt his face begin to elongate. *No!* He pushed back his wolf, promising a romp with Haig as soon as he'd eaten. His wolf eventually seemed to agree and Kern's face returned to normal.

With the threat of scaring his new mate to death on the back burner, Kern concentrated on the feel of Audric's body under his. He rested his cheek against Audric's prominent spine as he began thrusting in and out of the man's ass. "You've lost weight."

"Thanks for pointing that out. Now fuck me harder," Audric said, slamming back against Kern's cock.

Kern grinned. So, his little mate had teeth. He was silently pleased. Living with two weres who were both strong men, Audric would need to learn to stand up for himself despite his much smaller size. He nipped the pale skin of Audric's back before pulling back. With his hands on Audric's hips, Kern fucked the man as hard as he would Haig, holding nothing back.

Soon the musty air of the cottage was filled with grunts and groans. Kern was pleased Audric was a vocal mate. He enjoyed being told when he was pleasing his lover. He wondered what the noise level would be like if Haig were joining in.

Kern shook his head. He had to remember Haig and Audric weren't mates. A cry split the air, signalling Audric's climax as Kern continued to plough in and out as fast and hard as he could.

Although he had physically claimed Audric as his mate, Kern felt the need to verbally inform the vampire who he belonged to. "Mine. You understand? No one fucks this ass but me."

Audric looked over his shoulder, a pained expression on his face. "I've never had the option of telling someone no. I'm not sure they would listen to me."

The thought of other men forcing themselves on Audric pushed Kern's need to mark the man as his to the forefront. Pulling out his cock, Kern shot several thick strands of seed across Audric's back before pushing back in to ride out his climax deep inside his mate.

Before he finished, Kern rubbed his cum across Audric's skin. Any Blessed Creature who came within twenty feet of Audric would be able to smell that he belonged to Kern. "You'll wear my scent until everyone knows you're taken."

"And when I need to shower?" Audric asked, a mischievous smile on his gorgeous face.

"Then I'll scent you again," Kern answered. With the last of his strength drained, he pulled out of Audric's ass and scooted towards the large dark red area rug that covered the hard floor.

Audric eagerly followed Kern, moulding himself against Kern's chest. "What about Haig? If he wants to, should I tell him no?"

"He won't. Haig's always lived by a higher standard than most weres. He doesn't believe in sex outside of a mated relationship."

Audric swiped his tongue across Kern's nipple. "How long did the two of you wait?"

Kern smiled. "Not long considering I was only seventeen when he took me for his mate. Of course he was already an old man of two hundred and thirty-seven. I guess Haig figured he'd held onto his virginity long enough."

"You were just a baby." Audric continued to pinch and suck the skin of Kern's chest.

Kern rolled onto his back, giving Audric more skin to torture. He ran his fingertip over the long scar on his face. "I've been on my own since I hit puberty and my family discovered it wasn't females my body responded to."

"How old were you?" Audric brushed Kern's hand away to trace the scar with his own fingers.

"Fourteen, almost fifteen."

"Is it normal among the were to take a mate so much younger?"

"No, but Haig had always seemed to be waiting for something. But he's the one who took care of me after this happened." Kern pointed towards his face. "I guess he couldn't help but fall in love with me."

"How did it happen?" Audric rolled on top of Kern and began kissing the jagged scar.

"My mother did that as my father and brother held me down. She used a dagger made of Connemara marble. It marks my particular perversion amongst my people."

"Your own mother?" Audric held Kern's face between his hands. "I'm so sorry."

Kern shrugged. "It was a long time ago."

Audric shook his head. "I've been through enough in my life to know time doesn't heal every wound inflicted."

Kern stared into Audric's eyes. Was it possible his new mate saw more than Haig ever had? "Don't talk about it around Haig. He almost went insane when he found me like this."

"Okay." Audric placed a soft kiss on Kern's lips. "Just know you can talk to me about your feelings if you need to."

Kern was so used to putting up a strong front for Haig. He wasn't sure if he'd ever be comfortable enough with Audric to share the shadows buried deep within his heart. "Thank you."

Chapter Three

From the window, Audric looked out over the moonlit backyard at the two wolves as they shared portions of a small roe deer. Although the two were the same size, Kern's dark brown and black coat was a stark contrast to Haig's white colouring.

It was hard to imagine the wolf currently devouring a thigh was the same creature who'd fucked him only an hour ago. Audric ran his fingers through his hair. When Haig had returned to the cottage with his catch, he'd called for Kern to join him in the backyard without stepping foot in the house. Had Haig smelled their earlier sex session and decided not to interrupt or was it too hard for him to be in the same room with Audric and Kern?

Audric glanced down at the huge T-shirt he'd been told to put on and smiled. Although he knew Kern and Haig didn't wear clothing in the house, Kern had insisted Audric cover up with one of his shirts.

As soon as the wolves filled their stomachs, they shifted to their human skins and began to methodically cut and wrap the remaining meat. Audric wasn't trying to listen in on their conversation, but with the window open to air out the house, he couldn't help it.

"You look better," Haig said.

Kern nodded. "I feel better. Thanks for dinner."

"Lack of food wasn't the only thing you were suffering from and we both know it. How'd things go with Audric?"

At the mention of his name, Audric took a step back, out of sight.

"Do you really want to know?" Kern asked.

"Details? No. Just wanted to make sure it was the real deal, ya know?"

Kern was silent for several seconds. When he finally spoke, Audric wished he could see the expression on the man's face.

"We're truly mates if that's what you're asking. I know it's hard for you to accept. I don't blame you for it, but what's done is done and we both know it. I don't know how it's going to work between the three of us, but you have to understand that even though the mating frenzy is coursing through my veins, I don't love you any less."

"Come here," Haig instructed.

Audric bit his bottom lip as he eased closer to the window. Watching the two naked men in a heated kiss did funny things to his stomach. He found his gaze continually returning to Haig and the way he held Kern.

Haig was the first to break the kiss. "I know you love me. And I remember the mating frenzy quite well, but I can't lie and say it won't hurt to know you'd rather be fucking Audric over me."

Kern lifted his hand and petted the side of Haig's face several times. "You could always join us?"

Haig shook his head. "You may think that, but I believe your wolf would have other ideas about letting another man touch his mate."

"But you and I are mates." Kern shook his head. "I don't believe it."

Audric was uncomfortable with Kern offering him up to Haig. It wasn't that he didn't find Haig handsome. Hell, the man oozed sex appeal, but shouldn't he have a say? *You want Haig to fuck you*, his blasted internal voice said.

"Regardless, I don't think any of us are ready for a three-way relationship. I'll just try to come to terms with the fact my mate also has another that is equally important to him. How's that?"

Kern shrugged. "It's not what I was hoping for, but I guess we all need time to adjust."

Haig wrapped up the last of the meat and handed it to Kern. "There's something else I need to talk to you about."

"Yeah?"

"It's about Galena," Haig began.

Audric's eyes widened as Haig proceeded to tell Kern about his sister and the need to rescue her.

"So the big question is...are you coming with me? I don't have a problem taking Audric along if that's what you want, but if so, we'll need to travel after the sun sets."

"When?"

"Day after tomorrow. I'm supposed to meet up with Flick on Tuesday in Ireland."

Audric held his breath, waiting for Kern's answer. Leaving the safety of the vineyard scared him, but he knew he'd go wherever his mate wanted him to.

Kern eventually nodded. "Make the arrangements."

"Thank you." Haig stepped up and gave Kern another deep kiss. "Why don't you go in and talk to Audric while I dispose of the carcass."

Kern stared into Haig's eyes. "Feel like taking a run with me in an hour or so?"

Haig traced Kern's lips with a fingertip. "I'd love nothing more."

Audric retreated to the sofa and waited for Kern to come inside. As he sat there, guilt began to assault him. He would need to tell Kern he'd spied.

The back door opened and he was out of time. He heard the refrigerator door open and close then suddenly a healthy-looking Kern stood over him in all his naked glory. Kern stared down at Audric's position on the sofa.

Audric glanced down to see what the problem was. As usual, Audric sat with his legs tucked under him. Wearing only the large shirt, he saw the tip of his cock peeking out from the hemline. "See something you like?" he asked, lifting the shirt a couple of inches.

Kern picked Audric up like he weighed nothing and lowered himself to the couch, bringing Audric down in his lap.

The heat in Kern's gaze shot straight to Audric's cock, but he knew he had to confess before things went any further. He put a hand against Kern's chest. "I heard you."

Kern nodded. "I know. I smelled you at the window. I'm sure Haig did, too."

"So why didn't you turn around and yell at me for spying on the two of you?" Audric brushed his thumb over Kern's nipple, delighting in the way it hardened under his touch.

Kern's hand found Audric's hole and began circling the tender skin. "That was my time with Haig. Besides, it didn't bother me that you heard what I said."

Audric moved his ass enough to impale himself on Kern's finger. "There's only one thing wrong with your plan."

Kern removed his finger and reached for the lube. After a quick slick to three digits, he sank them deep into Audric's ass. "What's that?"

"There's no need for me to travel with you. I can will myself there if you need me." Audric moaned as Kern brushed across his prostate. "I feel safe here."

"You'll be safe wherever I am. I'll never let anyone hurt you."

* * * *

From outside the cottage, Haig watched as Audric rode Kern's cock with enthusiasm. Haig knew he'd witness the two men fucking eventually, so he decided it might be more comfortable watching them from afar.

When Kern lifted Audric off his cock and high enough to deep throat the smaller man's bobbing erection, Haig's dick began to take notice. He couldn't help but wonder what it would be like to fuck a man light enough to manipulate in such a way.

Damn. Haig reached down and gave his cock a few tugs. He was surprised to find the sight more erotic than hurtful. It only took him a moment to figure out why. Although the two men were fucking again, Haig didn't see love in Kern's eyes. The mating frenzy Kern currently experienced had absolutely nothing to do with an emotional connection. It was purely physical, a need Kern could do little about. It was the way weres were created.

That realisation, more than anything, helped put Haig's mind at ease. Sure Kern needed to fuck Audric, but he still needed Haig to love. The least he could do as a lover, mate and friend to Kern was support him while he suffered through his current illness, and that was exactly what the fever was. Change was actually taking place inside Kern's body. Kern was taking in information and training his brain to track, protect and eventually love his mate.

Haig gave his cock another pull. It was easy to forget most weres weren't in love when they mated. In Haig's case, he'd loved Kern unconditionally before they'd mated, but Kern didn't have that connection to Audric. *Yet.* That was the only part that still bothered Haig. Until Kern actually fell in love with Audric, Haig's position in his mate's life would be solid. It would be what came after that worried him.

As he watched, Audric's cock erupted, spraying cum onto Kern's stomach and chest. Haig had made love to Kern enough to know it would only take a few more strokes for Kern to lose his control. It was the smell of cum that seemed to set Kern off every time.

Just as Haig had predicted, Kern howled Audric's name. Haig glanced over his shoulder, wondering who else had heard his mate's climax. As close as they were to the full moon, he doubted the wolves who weren't working were even around. *Shit.* That reminded him.

Haig strode to the front of the cottage and walked into the living room. Kern and Audric were cuddled together with Kern's cock still buried in Audric's ass. Haig tried not to

draw attention to his own erection as he sat in the chair beside the couch. He waited several moments, but eventually Kern opened his eyes.

"We need to prepare Audric in case he shifts," Haig informed his mate.

Audric's tongue began to explore the prominent vein of Kern's neck. "I won't," he said between licks.

"How do you know that? Neo's the one who told me to watch you for signs." Haig didn't like the way Audric began sucking on Kern's neck. The thought of his mate being used as a blood donor pushed things too far. "Don't you dare suck his blood," he warned.

Audric placed an open-mouth kiss on Kern's neck before turning his head to look at Haig. "Were blood isn't compatible with mine. It's the reason your Alpha is having such a hard time since Richard changed him into a vampire. Gunnar's entire genetic make-up is changing. Unfortunately, it's killing his wolf."

The news shocked Haig. From the expression on Kern's face, he was equally surprised to hear the revelation. "Does Neo know?"

Audric shrugged, drawing Haig's attention to the man's thin body. "I assume so. I told Ramiro the first week I was here."

Haig scanned Audric's back, sides, hips and ass. "You're being too rough with him," he told Kern. "He's covered in bruises."

Kern leant back as far as he could before helping Audric to his feet. "Turn around."

Audric bit his bottom lip and slowly turned around. The action put the smaller man's cock on display for Haig. He tried to look away but the generous length and width of the flaccid cock impressed him enough that he couldn't seem to take his eyes off of it.

"I told you before. I'm having a hard time adapting to the bottled blood. My body will eventually get used to it, but I've lived a long time on the real thing," Audric said, watching Haig watch him.

"If you're going with us to Ireland, we'll need you strong. I can't worry about Kern trying to protect you instead of watching his own back."

"I thought that's what you were for," Audric said, a trace of bitterness in his voice.

Haig had no intention of getting into a pissing contest with Kern's new mate. "I'll be busy saving my sister and disposing of Juniper Cavanaugh."

"I'm sorry I questioned you," Audric mumbled before breaking eye contact.

Kern pulled Audric back onto his lap. He petted Audric's stomach and kissed the side of his head. "Don't worry, sweetheart, I'll still be able to protect you. I promised nothing would happen to you, and I meant it." Kern narrowed his eyes at Haig.

Haig heard the unspoken reprimand loud and clear.

"Do you need human blood?" Kern asked. His hand continued to roam around Audric's torso, thighs and groin.

"Yes, but it won't be easy for you to allow me to do what I must to get it." Audric directed Kern's hand to the cum slowly dripping from his hole.

"Does this have something to do with that *Blood Donor* bar you told me about?" Haig asked.

Audric nodded. "According to the list of rules Neo and Ramiro presented me with, I'm not allowed to take blood that is not offered. In order to do that, I have to come on to the donor and get him interested."

Kern's fingers plunged inside Audric, dispelling more of the leaking cum. "You will not fuck another man. I've already told you that."

Audric spread his legs wide and shook his head. "I won't have to let him fuck me as long as I promise to mentally fuck them."

"What?" Haig questioned as he continued to watch his mate finger-fuck another man.

Audric shrugged. "It's one of our many talents. It keeps donors coming back for more. Why do you think husbands and wives are getting into the kink of it? They can feel like they're fucking or being fucked by a vampire without actually doing it."

"I still don't like it," Kern objected.

"That's why it would be better for you to stay here. I'll take Audric into town and watch over him while he feeds," Haig offered. "If you go, you'll probably end up killing someone."

Kern's eyes narrowed to mere slits. "Will you really watch over him or are you just saying that?"

Although Haig understood Kern's scepticism, it still bothered him. "In over four hundred years, have I ever once lied to you?"

Kern broke eye contact. "No."

"We should go now while there's still plenty of time before dawn. If it's okay with you, we'll take an early morning run instead," Haig offered.

Kern removed his fingers and stuck them into his mouth. "How long will the two of you be gone?"

Audric climbed off Kern's lap before turning around to give him a deep kiss. Haig swallowed around the lump in his throat. Seeing the two men kiss hurt more than watching Kern fuck the little sex pot.

* * * *

Haig was glad to get out of the enclosed space of the car. He'd tried rolling the window down on the drive into town but the smell of Kern's seed on Audric was too overpowering. "You smell like sex," he growled as they got out.

"That's Kern's fault. He wouldn't let me shower before I left."

Audric wore a pair of low-slung blue jeans and a forest green T-shirt that set off his dark red curls to perfection. Yeah, Haig couldn't blame Kern for wanting a proprietary scent all over the man. "Come on. Let's get this over with."

Haig opened the door and ushered Audric inside. He was surprised when he was asked to pay the cover as well as Audric. "I'm not here to feed," he told the bouncer.

"Humans are the only ones who don't have to pay a cover."

"Why?"

"Because they buy a lot of drinks," the bouncer continued to argue.

"Fine. I'll drink. But I'm not paying for blood." Haig stood nose to nose with the bouncer. Although the bouncer was also a vampire, Haig had no doubt he could take him in a fight. The bouncer must've agreed because he eventually took Audric's money and stepped back.

"I'll be keeping an eye on you. Four-drink minimum."

Audric grabbed Haig's hand and pulled him through the crowd. "I don't see what the big deal is. Now you'll end up paying even more than I did."

Haig shook off Audric's hold. "Whisky," he told the bartender. With his back to the bar, Haig scanned the room. His gaze landed on Ramiro. Hidden half in the shadows, the head of security for the Vampire King looked as though he was bored to tears. His gaze continued

until it settled on a man of around forty who was staring straight at Audric. "How about him?" he asked, pointing towards the tall man three tables away.

Audric handed Haig his drink. "He's with a woman. Probably his wife."

"So? Look at the bulge in the front of his jeans. That man wants you."

Audric sighed and rolled his eyes. "I don't think I can bite a straight guy."

Haig crooked his finger and invited the man over. "We'll see."

The man came over to stand in front of Audric instead of Haig. "Hi, I'm Juan."

"Nice to meet you, Juan," Audric greeted with a tentative smile.

"So, what's that wedding band on your finger mean? You straight, bi, what?" Haig asked before taking a sip of his drink.

"That depends," Juan said.

"On what?" Audric questioned.

"On whether or not I'm at work." Juan motioned towards his presumed wife who was currently giving a lap dance to a pock-faced vampire. "Lina and I enjoy a little variety in our marriage." He reached down and cupped Audric's cock. "Interested?"

Haig surprised himself by immediately knocking the man's hand away. "Not in that he's not. You want him to bite you or not?"

Audric looked up at Haig and rolled his eyes. "Real smooth."

Haig shrugged and finished his drink, signalling for another. "Audric hasn't eaten for a while so I'm sure he'll give you a good mind-fuck or whatever you call it."

"That's it." Audric turned and put his hands on Haig's chest. "Just let me take it from here."

"Just trying to help." Haig paid the bartender. "Better go ahead and get me another," he told the man.

Audric stood on his tiptoes and looked around the room. "We'll be over there," he said, pointing towards the dance floor.

"Don't go any further than that," Haig warned.

Audric walked with Juan hot on his heels. Haig quickly downed his drink and reached for another. *Damn*. If he didn't slow down, Audric would have to drive them home.

"Problem?" Ramiro sat on the stool beside Haig.

"Not really." Haig didn't take his eyes off Audric as he began to slow dance with Juan. Haig's wolf seemed to scratch at his insides, trying to push through the barrier of Haig's human skin. If his wolf was so upset by Audric's action, he couldn't image Kern trying to control himself and his wolf. "It's a damn good thing Kern isn't here though."

"Why?"

"Why? How can you ask that? Look at them." Juan had one hand on Audric's hip and the other on his ass. "Kern would rip the man's arm off if he were here."

Ramiro leant closer. "It's feeding. Try to step back enough to see the beauty in the act itself. There are no feelings involved." Ramiro bumped his shoulder against Haig's. "How does it make you feel when you're closing in on your prey? Does your dick go hard? Is it the next best feeling to fucking?"

Haig opened his mouth to deny it, but snapped it shut again. Yeah. He knew that feeling. "Is that really the way it is for vampires?"

Ramiro smiled. "I've already eaten, but I like to stick around and watch the beauty as my fellow vampires catch and devour their prey." He motioned towards Audric. Juan was actively grinding against the smaller man. "The more a human gets turned on, the sweeter the blood. Think of it as Audric preparing his prey."

When seen through Ramiro's eyes, Haig had to admit there was a certain beauty in the way Audric lulled Juan into thinking there was a chance for something more physical between them. "I can see what you're saying, but I still don't think Kern would."

Ramiro shrugged. "There might come a day when you're not around. Do you think Kern would rather accompany Audric or have his new mate go out alone?"

Haig watched Audric's fangs slip from their sheaths and sink into Juan's neck. By the way Juan's body bucked, Haig was pretty damn sure Audric was pulling straight sugar from the man's veins.

When the hardening of his own cock drew his attention, Haig sat on the stool behind him and pressed the heel of his palm against his fly. Shaking his head to clear the lust threatening to overwhelm him, Haig turned his attention to Ramiro. "So how's Gunnar?"

Ramiro sighed. "Not well."

"Audric told me the vampire cooties will kill Gunnar's wolf."

Ramiro winced at the analogy. "Sort of. His new vampire side won't kill his wolf, but it'll trap it. Gunnar will no longer be able to shift."

"Fuck me," Haig groaned. "That'll drive the wolf insane."

Ramiro nodded. "Yeah. Which is why most vampires would never attempt to change a were. But Gunnar's a lot stronger than he thinks. If he could just pull his head out of his ass and accept what he's become it would go a long way in helping him and his wolf make the transition."

Haig couldn't imagine not being able to shift. He turned around and signalled for his fourth and final whisky. "If there's anything we can do..."

"There's not," Ramiro cut him off. "Unfortunately, the only one who can get Gunnar through this is Gunnar. Believe me. I've been pounding my head against the wall for weeks trying to talk him through it. He doesn't want to be around me or anyone right now."

Being the head of security for the vineyard as well as pack Alpha, Haig knew Gunnar wasn't used to asking or accepting help. "Just because he growls, doesn't mean he'll bite."

"Who, me?" Audric asked, still cleaning the blood from his chin.

"Where'd you leave your date?" Haig asked.

Audric gestured to a chair on the edge of the dance floor. Juan sat, spread-eagle with a wet stain on the front of his jeans and his head thrown back.

"Is he dead?" Haig chuckled.

"As close to death as you can get from a mind-blowing orgasm," Audric replied. He lifted his hand towards Ramiro. "Hi."

Ramiro smiled and nodded. "Good to see you've finally come to your senses and decided to give this place a try."

"Yes, well, I don't plan on making this place a regular hang-out, but I think it will help me make the transition to the bottled blood Neo provides."

Ramiro made a face. "I hate that stuff. Although the Liquid Crimson is good for a treat on occasion."

"I'll have to take your word on that. I've never been much of a drinker. One glass would probably knock me on my ass."

Ramiro chuckled. "It's strong stuff. I doubt it would even take that much if you're not used to it."

The phone in Haig's pocket started to vibrate. He pulled it out and grinned before answering. "We're on our way."

"Good. I feel like I'm about to crawl out of my skin," Kern informed Haig.

"Need a fix, do ya?" Haig smiled, glancing at a well-fed Audric.

"I think I need a double-fix if you know what I mean," Kern answered.

Haig's cock filled immediately. "Be there in fifteen minutes."

Chapter Four

The sun was coming up when Haig and Kern finished their run. Kern had kept to his promise and renewed his connection with Haig through his wolf. When they reached the edge of the woods, Kern shifted and waited for Haig to do the same.

Kern rubbed the back of his neck. "Good thing I heal quickly. You bit the shit out of my neck."

Haig stepped closer and pulled Kern into his arms. "I think my wolf needed to remind you of your first mate." Haig traced the tattooed oak tree on Kern's back. "I'll never be able to apologise enough for running out on you like I did. But I'm back now, and I don't plan on ever leaving you again."

As Haig continued to trace the individual branches inked into his skin, Kern was reminded, once again, of how many years Haig had stood by him. "I know I keep saying this, but I'm sorry things happened the way they did. Even though I can no longer fight the changes taking place between me and my new mate, I'll try my best to deal with the mating frenzy when you're not around."

Haig released his hold on Kern and walked several steps away, giving Kern a view of his identical tattoo. "I watched the two of you through the window." Haig glanced over his shoulder. "I need to be honest with you about something."

"Okay."

"Watching you and Audric turned me on to the point that I had to touch myself."

Kern felt as though a heavy weight had been lifted off his shoulders. "That's good, right?"

Haig shrugged and turned to face Kern. "It's not the sex that bothers me. It's the thought of you falling in love with him that tears me apart."

"Why?" Kern tilted his head to the side. "Don't you think it's possible to love two people?"

Haig shook his head. "Not equally, no. Especially since you've just started the frenzy. You'll be in his bed more than mine. I can't help but believe I'll become your second choice."

Without a word, Kern started towards the house. "I can't believe you think so little of yourself and me!" He spun around to confront his mate. "Are parents asked to choose which child they love the most?"

He thought of his own family and waved his hand. "Not in my case, of course, but most parents. I just can't..." Kern let his hand drop. He'd spent his entire mated life trying to prove to Haig he was worthy of everything the Alpha had given up to be with him. Although he wasn't in love with Audric, Kern knew it would happen. The vampire was sexy and sweet and actually needed him, unlike Haig. "Eventually, I *will* fall in love with him."

"I know," Haig answered.

"So fall *with* me. There's absolutely no reason for you to make an outsider of yourself when it comes to my relationship with Audric."

Haig shook his head. "Except that he's not my mate!"

"So make him your mate." Kern hadn't thought of it before but it was the perfect solution. He could tell Haig was about to object. "Just think about it. It would truly bond the three of us together."

Haig yawned. "I'm going to bed." He walked past Kern without a backwards glance.

Well fuck. What was Kern supposed to do now?

* * * *

Audric was the first to wake early that evening. He smiled in triumph when he realised he'd managed to sleep the entire day in bed instead of in the closet. One day with Kern and already his new mate was replacing the shadows of his past with the light of his future.

He threw off the covers, grabbed the large T-shirt Kern had given him and pulled it over his head. It hit him mid-thigh and Audric thought it looked more like a dress than a shirt. He'd much rather follow Kern and Haig's way of life and walk around naked, but he doubted Haig would appreciate it.

Audric crept from his bedroom to the kitchen. He removed a bottle of blood from the fridge and set it in the microwave for forty-five seconds, making sure to stop the blasted machine before it dinged.

Dinner in hand, Audric walked through the back door to the deck. A small bistro table sat in the corner, under the window to Kern and Haig's bedroom. Audric quietly pulled out one of the chairs and sat down.

The evening air was hot and thick, but Audric welcomed it with open arms. How long had it been since he'd ventured outside alone?

Noises above and behind him caught his attention. The rhythmic slap of skin made Audric hard almost immediately. His ears perked up when he heard a deep growl he didn't recognise. *Must be Haig. Is that what he sounds like when he fucks?*

Audric spread his legs and repositioned himself on the chair. Closing his eyes, he leant forward and rocked back and forth, delighting in the pressure to his balls as he listened to the two large weres fuck.

He was just getting started when he heard Kern call out Haig's name. Audric opened his eyes at the foreign pain suddenly enveloping his heart. To hear his mate call another man's name at the moment of climax hurt. Audric sat back in the chair and pulled his T-shirt down to cover himself. He'd been involved in countless orgies over the years. There had been times when a man would come in his ass before moving to the next available hole, and Audric had never thought a thing about it. So why did it hurt now? Haig and Kern had been mates for centuries. Audric would do well to remember that.

* * * *

After a quick shower together, Kern gave Haig a deep kiss. "Are you taking Audric back into town tonight?"

"He said he'd probably only need to feed like that once a week." Haig reached for a robe and put it on.

Kern separated the robe and encircled his mate's cock. "Maybe further down the road, but right now he's still too thin." Haig had told Kern, in detail, what happened at the bar the previous night. Although it helped him understand the process, Kern still didn't think he was ready to see Audric rubbing up on another man. Well, one that wasn't Haig, anyway. He'd smelt Audric outside the window earlier and knew his new mate had overheard their

lovemaking. Instead of angering Kern, the thought of Audric listening had sent him over the edge.

"Would you please take him?" Kern asked, still fondling his mate.

"Or maybe Ramiro could."

"No!" Kern applied pressure to Haig's cock. The more he'd thought about Haig also taking Audric as a mate, the more solidified his plan had become. Kern knew all it would take for Haig to agree to the mating was a feeling of protectiveness towards Audric. It was just the way his mate worked. "It must be one of us."

Haig narrowed his eyes. "Why?"

"Because I don't trust anyone else." Kern held his breath, waiting for Haig to agree.

"Fine. Just don't forget we leave for Ireland in the morning. You're still coming with me, right?"

"Of course."

"And Audric?" Haig questioned.

"He'll meet us there. I hope you don't mind, but I gave him some money to buy some clothes."

Haig shrugged. "Okay, that's not a big deal."

Kern bit his bottom lip. "Audric's not like us. He's used to nice things."

"And?"

"They cost more than what we're used to buying." Kern waited for the fallout. Haig was a notorious cheapskate when it came to spending money.

"Whatever," Haig said with a roll of his eyes.

Kern released Haig's cock and pulled him in for another deep kiss. He tried to convey with a swirl of his tongue how much Haig's understanding meant to him. Breaking the kiss, Kern stepped back. "I'll go find Audric and tell him the plans."

"We both know he's on the deck." Haig tapped his finger against the tip of Kern's nose. "I may not be his mate, but my nose is as good as yours."

* * * *

After eating a large breakfast consisting of a dozen eggs and two pounds of bacon, Haig joined Kern and Audric on the deck. He set his cup of coffee on the small table and took a seat across from the kissing couple. Like the night before, Kern had Audric straddled across his lap, his hand up the bottom of Audric's shirt.

Haig was glad he'd chosen to wear the robe. Damn Kern for planting the seed of them all being together. At first Haig hated the idea, but the more he thought about it, the better sense it made. What would it feel like to have such a slight man in his arms? To plunder that tiny ass with his cock and fingers? Haig nearly groaned as his cock hardened.

"It's all set," Kern said, breaking the kiss. He met Haig's gaze over the top of Audric's dark reddish-brown curls. "Audric's going into town with you while I stay here and pack. He'll sleep during the day tomorrow and join us once the sun sets."

With his face buried against Kern's neck, Audric started moving his ass against Kern's hand. Kern gave Haig an apologetic smile and mouthed the word, "Sorry."

Haig shrugged and took a sip of his coffee. He reached into the pocket of his robe and pulled out a small tube of lube. "Thought you might need this. Seems I was right."

Kern's eyes rounded as he caught the tube when Haig tossed it to him. "It won't bother you?"

"I told you this morning it didn't."

Kern's gaze travelled to Haig's lap. Haig didn't need to look down to know his cock was at full attention and poking through the opening in his robe. Licking his lips, Kern opened the lube and slicked the length of his cock. He removed the fingers already embedded deep within Audric's ass and pushed the shirt up enough for Haig to get an eyeful.

Audric whimpered at the sudden loss of Kern's attention until he was lifted enough to impale himself on Kern's thick cock.

Watching his mate fuck Audric's tight little ass, Haig couldn't help himself. He reached down and wrapped his hand around his bobbing erection. The longer he studied the pair, the more certain he became about one thing. It wouldn't take a mating to convince him to join the two men in bed. If only that would be enough, but Haig knew he wasn't the kind of man or wolf who believed in fucking for fucking's sake. He needed that bond. That special feeling

that made lovers risk their lives for each other. Maybe Kern was right. It was entirely possible taking Audric as a mate would solve all his problems.

The smell of Audric's cum hit the air. Haig increased his rhythm, sliding his thumb over his leaking crown to ease his strokes. He met Kern's gaze and smiled. "Do it."

Kern's mouth flew open in a silent cry as his body bucked up against Audric's. Although the sight was incredibly erotic, Haig was able to hold his own climax at bay until he saw the thick white seed slowly dripping out of Audric's ass to coat Kern's balls.

Haig exploded, shooting his cum onto the underside of the glass-topped table. He bit his lip to keep himself from giving his condition away to Audric who still seemed to be in his own pleasurable world.

Kern smiled and kissed the top of Audric's head. "I think you're both ready to head to town."

* * * *

Sitting at a small table with Haig, Audric looked around the room. Despite what Kern thought he needed, Audric really wasn't hungry enough to put on a show for a human. He was more interested in getting to know the man at his side.

"Can I ask you a question?"

Haig took his eyes off the crowd and nodded. "Sure."

"How did you keep yourself from killing Kern's family after what they did to him?" Audric had given it a lot of thought since Kern had told him the story of how he got the scar on his face.

Haig readjusted his heavily muscled frame in the chair. "I would have, but my father was Alpha. He told me he'd take care of the situation. In the pack we grew up in, you never went against your Alpha unless you were prepared to fight him to the death."

"So...did your dad do anything about it?" Audric asked around the thumb nail he was currently chewing on.

Haig reached across the table and gently moved Audric's hand back to the table. "Not that I know of." Haig's jaws tensed visibly. "We waited around for a couple of years, but

nothing was ever done to Lasair. The writing was on the wall, and I knew the only way to do something about it was either split with Kern or challenge my own father."

Audric glanced down. Although he doubted Haig was aware of it, the bigger man's thumb was softly rubbing circles across the top of Audric's hand. He returned his attention to the conversation. Maybe if he didn't draw attention to the affection, Haig wouldn't end it. "I know the two of you finally left Ireland, but what about the pack? What happened to them?"

Haig shrugged. "I don't know much. My cousin Flick told me my dad lost a challenge for the Alpha position. And shortly after that, a portion of the pack moved to America."

"So why are we going to Ireland?"

Haig must've realised what he'd been doing and quickly released Audric's hand. He sat back in his chair and stretched his arms above his head. "Galena was just a pup when I left. She was too young to voice her opinion about anything my family did. Although she probably hates me, I just can't leave her with a mate who's hurting her."

Audric nodded. "I don't remember my parents, but I'd like to think they were nice people." Audric propped his chin on his hand. No matter how many times he tried to pull images up from his childhood, it was always a sea of black he saw in place of memories.

Haig took a drink of his whisky. "You mind me asking how you became a vampire?"

"No, I don't mind. It was a long time ago." Audric did a quick calculation. "Seven hundred and twenty-something years ago, I guess. Like I said before, I don't remember much of my life before LaMont kidnapped me. Just that I was young. I was hunting, I think, when I came upon LaMont in the Ardennes area of France."

Audric shrugged and began to study the room once more. He didn't like to dwell on his capture and subsequent torture. "I don't really remember anything else. I guess seven hundred and twenty-something years of being abused and raped at the hands of twisted vampires erased all the good memories."

A low growl sounded from across the table. Audric turned his attention back to Haig. "Did I say something wrong?"

"No wonder you jumped at the chance to help Neo put an end to the rest of LaMont's coven. Why did you stay for so long?"

Audric's bark of laughter surprised even him. "You say that like I had a choice in the matter." Audric's gaze went to Haig's massive upper body. "Then again, I guess you wouldn't know what it felt like to always be the weakest one."

Suddenly it was Haig who broke eye contact. "So, you gonna pick someone out and feed or not? I have to be up and on the road in six hours."

Whether it was thinking and talking about his past or something else, Audric wasn't sure, but he had no desire to feed. "No. We can go." Audric stood and pushed his chair in. "Sorry that I wasted your time."

"You didn't," Haig answered, finishing off his drink in one swallow.

Audric waited for Haig to go first. It was much easier following in the big man's wake than to try and push through on his own. While following Haig, an arm shot out and grabbed him around the waist.

"Hey there, pretty lady, where're you off to so early?" the drunk man asked.

Used to being referred to as feminine-looking, Audric tried to ignore the remark. "I'm on my way home. Please remove your arm." Audric could easily snap the man's arm in two, but after so many years of violence, he wanted to handle things in a civilised manner.

"Juan over there said you were a real good suck. Thought maybe I'd try my luck."

The man finished the sentence by cupping the front of Audric's jeans. Before Audric had a chance to correct the man's assumption, Haig pushed his way back through the crowd and lifted the human off the floor with a single hand around the back of the man's neck.

"It's okay, Haig. I can take care of him," Audric was quick to say when a circle of people started to form around them.

Haig's blond eyebrows shot up in question. "Did you change your mind about feeding?"

"No, but I'm strong enough to protect myself against a human."

Haig grunted and released the man, giving him an extra shove as he did so. The man fell to his knees and immediately covered his neck with his hands. Audric bent over and spoke directly into the man's face. "Here's a lesson for you. When a Blessed Creature tells you no, listen to them. Because next time you try to force yourself on someone, you may just end up limbless and bleeding to death in the alley."

Audric straightened and smiled at Haig. "Okay, let's get home to Kern."

* * * *

As soon as they climbed into the pickup, Haig's phone rang. "How does he do that?" Audric asked.

Haig smiled. "It's a wolf thing." He opened his cell. "We're on our way." He pulled the phone away from his ear and passed it to Audric. "He wants to know what just happened."

Audric threw his hands up. "Someday you're going to have to explain the 'wolf thing' to me." Audric took the phone. "Nothing happened that wasn't handled. Just an over enthusiastic human who needed to be put in his place."

"I hope Haig re-educated the asshole with a swift kick in his ass."

"He tried, but I insisted on handling it myself."

"You what? The reason I sent Haig with you was to watch your back. Let him do that."

Audric sighed. "You know, I was feeling really good about the way I handled it, now you're trying to bring me down. Let me have my moment, will you?"

He glanced over at Haig who was grinning from ear to ear. Evidently Haig had been on the other end of Kern's tongue a time or two.

"I'm not trying to take anything from you. I just don't think you understand how dangerous it can be for someone of your..."

"Size?" Audric finished for him. "I'll tell you what. When I get home, the two of us are going to arm wrestle."

"Come on, I didn't mean to make you mad. Haig and I are just bigger. It stands to reason humans would be more intimidated by us," Kern tried to reason.

Without another word, Audric hung up the phone and handed it back to Haig. As soon as he did it he wished he could take it back.

Haig chuckled and shook his head. "Did you really just hang up on him?"

Audric nodded.

Haig whistled. "You're a braver man than I am."

Slinking down further in the seat, Audric turned his attention to the side window and began chewing one of his already short fingernails. Why had he done something so stupid just because Kern had questioned his ability to protect himself? His hopes for a more

peaceful future had been shattered in the span of a phone call. He readied himself for the blow that was sure to come, it always came. Maybe not in the next minute, but sooner or later Kern would lash out with his fists or a belt to teach Audric a lesson.

Haig pulled onto the vineyard and drove down the winding road towards the row of cottages. He parked in the communal parking lot and turned off the engine.

Audric couldn't seem to move from the safety of the truck.

"You coming?" Haig asked from outside of the vehicle.

Audric shook his head. "I think it would be better if I went back to the dorm," he mumbled.

"What?" Haig sighed and climbed back in the truck. "What's going on?"

"I talked back to Kern. I hung up on him." Audric shook his head. "I'd rather just walk away than be hurt again. I wanted this life to be different. But it's only been a couple of days, and I'm already doing the same stupid shit I did with LaMont's coven."

Haig leaned one arm on the steering wheel and turned in the seat to face Audric. "What is it you think you've done?"

Audric felt tears burn his eyes. He wiped them away before they had a chance to fall. "I talked back. I hung up. I should know better. I got too comfortable." Audric took a deep breath. He had to get himself under control.

Haig's hand shot out and Audric flinched, closing his eyes against the expected blow. When nothing happened, he opened his eyes enough to look through his lashes at the man beside him. Haig appeared even angrier than he had before. Sometimes it was waiting for the punch or slap that was the worst part. "Just do it," Audric finally said.

"I—" Haig cleared his throat. "I'm not going to hurt you."

Still pressed against the passenger door, Audric opened his eyes fully. "But you're mad. I can see it on your face."

"You're damn right I'm mad, but not at you."

While Haig had been talking, his attention drifted to the window over Audric's head. "It looks like Kern's come to check on us."

Audric turned and jumped when he saw Kern's handsome face staring down at him. His first instinct was to lock the door.

"Don't," Haig said. "You need to understand that not all disagreements end in abuse."

Audric glanced up at Kern once more. His mate appeared to be more confused than angry. Audric felt the same way. Was it really possible to talk his problems out with Kern?

"What's going on?" Kern asked through the glass.

"Why don't I go on to the house and let the two of you talk," Haig suggested.

"No." Audric needed to learn to trust. Wasn't that what this new life was about? "If you really think I'm safe I'll go inside with the two of you." It was a giant leap of faith for Audric, but he so wanted to believe in the goodness of the new men in his life.

"There's not a safer place in the world for you than between me and Kern. That, I can promise you."

Chapter Five

"Are you sure he'll be okay?" Kern asked Haig as they waited to board the plane.

"He'll be fine." Haig rested his hand on Kern's thigh. "I know it's easy to think of Audric as weaker because of his size, but he was right to call us on it." Haig gave Kern a sideways look. "How many weak vampires do you know?"

"None," Kern conceded. Other than Gods and demigods, vampires were the strongest among the Blessed Creatures. "But if he's so strong, why has he suffered for so many centuries?"

"I didn't say he was the strongest," Haig corrected. "I'm sure he was no match for LaMont and his coven—they were vampires, too. But out in the real world, Audric has the advantage, and we need to remember that."

Kern crossed his arms. He'd spent the remainder of the night making love to Audric, trying to reassure his mate of his commitment. "I still can't believe he thought I'd physically punish him for arguing with me. Sure, I enjoy a hard, brutal fuck, but you know me, I'd never purposely harm him."

"I know, babe. Don't worry. It may take a little time, but sooner or later, Audric will know it, too. There's a lot of shit in his past. It'll be up to us to undo centuries of abuse."

"Us?" Kern questioned.

Haig shrugged. "He's growing on me."

Kern's heart leapt at the subtle pronouncement. He wanted to ask his mate if he'd come any closer to a decision as to whether he'd also take Audric as a mate, but he bit his tongue. Pressuring Haig never ended well.

The overhead speaker announced their flight to Galway. Haig stood and held out his hand. "Ready?"

"No." Kern hated to fly. Their yearly trip back to Galway to have their anniversary tattoo session with Declan Byrne was the only exception he made to his 'no fly' rule.

Haig pulled Kern to his feet. "Don't worry. I'll keep you distracted."

Kern rolled his eyes and followed Haig. *Distracting* him usually meant a hand job, but because they'd purchased their tickets so late, they hadn't been able to secure seats in the back of the plane. "I'm not putting on a show for a bunch of humans," Kern grumbled in Haig's ear. He pressed against Haig's back and landed a quick kiss to his mate's neck.

Haig turned his head towards Kern and spoke out of the side of his mouth. "I was talking about discussing what we're soon going to be up against. There'll be plenty of time for fucking once I rescue Galena."

"Oh." Kern felt as though his hand had been slapped. He stepped back and resettled his overnight bag on his shoulder.

Haig handed his ticket to the attractive woman working the gate. He waited for Kern to do the same before turning around to address him face to face. "I didn't say I wouldn't rather get my hands on you. Just that it isn't likely given the seating situation."

Kern smiled as his momentary pang of hurt slid away. "Let's get this flight over with then."

* * * *

As soon as the plane landed, they hailed a cab and headed towards the pub. Haig had to admit he was looking forward to seeing Flick. More importantly, he was anxious for word on Juniper Cavanaugh. "How could Juniper Cavanaugh grow eight inches after reaching full maturity?"

Kern turned away from the view outside his window. "He couldn't. Maybe Flick's memory's gone fuzzy."

Haig shook his head. "No. I believe him. I just can't figure out how it's possible."

Kern fingered the scar on his face. It was something Haig was used to seeing whenever their old pack was discussed. Flick hadn't mentioned Kern's father so Haig had no idea if they would come face to face with Kern's past. Haig's hands automatically balled into fists at the thought of running into Lasair. Perhaps Kern would finally get a chance to confront his father.

The cab pulled up in front of the pub, and Haig handed over payment, including a nice tip. Kern had gone quiet, worrying Haig. "Are you sure you're up to this?" he asked, climbing out of the car after Kern.

Kern pulled Haig closer to the building, out of pedestrian traffic. "I guess I'm just questioning why we're risking our necks for any of them." Kern slung his bag over his shoulder. "No one did it for me, ya know."

"I did," Haig reminded his mate.

Kern stepped forward and pressed a hand against Haig's chest. "Yes, you did, which is why I love you more than my own life. I would charge into any situation if I thought you were in danger, but you're not."

Haig swallowed around the lump in his throat. "I know you would, babe, and maybe I don't even have the right to ask you to help me rescue Galena, but I am. I left her once with barely a goodbye. I may be a cold bastard at times, but I can't turn my back on her now that I know she needs help."

Kern held Haig's stare for several moments before dipping his head. "Okay. Let's go see if Flick's here."

Although Kern's sign of submission bothered Haig, he didn't call him on it. Within all weres was an ingrained sense of submitting to the Alpha. Haig didn't consider himself the leader of his partnership with Kern, but he couldn't fight his natural position in their relationship. "I wish I could kiss you right now," Haig told his mate.

With a wink and a smile, Kern opened the pub door. "Later."

Haig stepped inside the building and began to scan the room. His eyes and nose settled on a man in the back corner with shoulder-length, steel grey hair. He elbowed Kern to get his attention. "Does he look like the Flick you remember?"

Kern followed Haig's gaze. "Fuck. And you thought we were looking old."

Haig made his way through the pub, pausing at the bar long enough to put in his and Kern's order. He stopped beside the table and stared at the seated were. Although Flick's hair had gone totally grey, his face was that of a much younger were.

Flick immediately stood and enveloped Haig in a hug. "Good to see you again."

"You, too," Haig replied. He hugged Flick once more before letting him go. It surprised him how good it felt to see his cousin after such a long time. Haig stepped back and gestured to Kern. "You remember each other?"

Kern nodded and held out his hand. "I remember. Been a while though."

"That it has." Flick shook Kern's hand before gesturing to the table. "Have a seat."

Before sitting, Kern held up his phone. "If you'll excuse me, I need to make a call first."

Haig watched as his mate walked towards the restroom before returning his attention to Flick. Haig had agreed with Kern's suggestion that they tell Flick they were both mated to Audric. It would be safer for the small vampire if the weres believed them to be a solid unit. "Sorry about that. He has to call and check in with our mate, Audric."

Flick's brows rose in surprise. "Audric? You've taken a second mate?"

Haig nodded. "He isn't were though." He purposely left Audric's Blessed Creature status out of the conversation. With luck, Flick would believe Audric to be human. "Audric should be here within an hour or so. He stopped over in Rome to buy some new clothes."

Flick grinned and shook his head. "I never thought I'd see the day you allowed another man to get that close to Kern. You've always seemed like the jealous type."

The remark hit Haig square in the chest. "Yeah, well, you haven't been around me since I was just a kid." Haig needed to change the subject before he reached across the table and strangled his cousin. "So, what's with the hair?"

Flick chuckled and ran his fingers through the grey strands. "Hard livin', I guess."

"Do you have a mate?" Haig asked.

"I did." Flick's smile fell. "She was killed by a couple of ranchers in the area over a hundred years ago."

Haig sucked in a breath. Killing a were wasn't as easy as shooting them. You had to skin them before killing them or their body's natural ability to heal would prevent their death.

"How'd they figure out how to..." Haig started, but he couldn't finish the sentence.

Flick's eyes narrowed. "I thought it was a coincidence until word came from Galena. Apparently, Juniper sent a message to the local sheriff at the time. According to Galena, Juniper's goal was to ensure we'd never return to Ireland."

It didn't make sense to Haig. "Why would he do that?"

"Evidently there's something he doesn't want us to see." Flick's hands fisted. "I won't lie to you. I don't plan on leaving this time without seeing an end to Juniper Cavanaugh."

* * * *

"That one. Definitely," Michael said, pointing towards the shirt Audric held up.

"You don't think it's too much?"

Michael laughed. "You're a gay vampire living with two werewolves. Are you really that concerned with what others will think?"

Audric held the short sleeved black shirt up to the interior lights of the clothing store. "You can see right through it. I may as well not be wearing anything."

"Exactly. If only they had pants to match." Michael started looking through the rack. "Maybe I should get one in white."

Audric imagined Kern and Haig wearing one of them. The sheer fabric would allow their amazing tattoos to show through. Fuck. Audric's cock began to fill. He put the one in his size back and searched for two in a much larger size.

"What're you doing?" Michael asked.

"I think I'm going to get one for Haig and Kern."

"So why'd you put yours back?"

"Because no one wants to see my skinny chest on display," Audric reasoned.

With the white shirt in his hand, Michael cocked his hip and shook his head. "You're kidding, right? Guys like Kern and Neo love to see our skinny chests. I think it makes them feel even more...manly. I know Neo's crazy about my body, and I can almost guarantee Kern feels the same about yours."

"If it makes them feel manly, it's because they see us as weaker," Audric reminded his friend.

"So? Being coddled and pampered by the man you love isn't necessarily a bad thing."

"But I'm stronger than Haig and Kern. Unfortunately, all they see is my size, and because I'm smaller, they think I can't take care of myself."

Michael's head tilted to the side. "Stop me if I'm wrong, but weren't you the one who asked me and Neo to help you get away from LaMont's coven?"

"Yes. So?" Audric didn't understand what one had to do with the other.

"So maybe having two strong weres around to ensure you never get put into a position like that again isn't such a bad thing? After all, Neo can believe he's in charge all he wants, but I know the truth. There's only one man alive who can challenge him and walk away with his head still on his shoulders." Michael pointed towards himself. "So tell me, what does strength have to do with power?"

Audric shook his head. "But I'm not talking about power. I'm just saying that Kern and Haig don't believe I can take care of myself."

"So that's your secret weapon. The important thing is you know you can take care of yourself. I have to say, you've come a long way since the day I first met you." Michael put a hand on Audric's shoulder. "How do you feel when Kern's fucking you?"

Audric's eyes rounded. "Wow. You really want an answer to that?" The thought of describing how Kern's cock made him feel embarrassed him.

Michael chuckled. "Not what you feel physically. What do you feel emotionally when Kern's holding you in his arms?"

"Safe," Audric answered automatically.

"Exactly. Feeling safe has nothing to do with strength."

* * * *

By the time Audric walked into the pub, Kern was ready to crawl out of his skin. "It's about damn time," he said, charging across the room to reach his mate.

Audric lifted the bags in his hands. "Sorry. I told you when you called I still had another hour or so of shopping to do."

Kern ignored the bags and pulled Audric against his chest. The moment he covered Audric's mouth with his own, some smartass behind him cleared his throat. Kern broke the kiss and turned around to punch the guy's lights out when he noticed Haig standing there with his hands on his hips.

"Way to keep a low profile," Haig said.

Kern shrugged and led Audric to the table with an arm around his waist. "Audric, I'd like you to meet Flick, Haig's cousin."

The moment the two men shook hands, Flick's gaze shot to Haig. "He's vamp. I thought you said he was human."

Haig shook his head as he settled in the chair. "Nope. Never said that."

Kern situated Audric between him and Haig and rested a hand on his mate's knee. He'd noticed the tension in Audric's body the moment Flick called him out as being a vampire. Trying to put Audric at ease, Kern gestured to the shopping bags. "You get some good stuff?"

"Sure." Audric dug in his pocket. He handed back the money Kern had given him earlier. "I didn't need any of that. Neo gave me some of the money *The Realm* confiscated from the LaMont coven."

Audric leaned closer to Kern and whispered in his ear. "I even bought you and Haig a few things."

"Really?" Kern could tell by the mischievous look in Audric's green eyes that it wasn't something he wanted to pull out in front of Flick. Kern glanced from Haig to Flick. "We about done here?"

Flick nodded. "I'll try to find the supplies we discussed and meet you at your hotel in..." Flick looked at his watch. "Three hours? Does that sound okay?"

Audric's spine stiffened. "That'll be just before dawn."

Kern knew where his mate was going. "Yeah. It's the best time of day to catch wolves unaware."

"But that means I can't help," Audric pointed out.

Arguing with his mate in front of Flick wasn't an option. "Let's go check in to the hotel and talk about it." He stood and offered Audric his hand.

Audric ignored Kern's hand and looked at Haig. "Why don't you want my help?"

Kern had no idea how Haig was going to answer the question. He held his breath, hoping Haig didn't drive a wedge between the three of them.

Haig surprised Kern by reaching out to cover Audric's hand. "It's not that we don't want your help. It's all about timing. We have to do this right if we're going to successfully get my sister out of there." Haig gave Audric's hand a squeeze. "I'm sorry."

"But I can pop in on the wolves and they would never see me coming." Audric looked from Haig to Kern. "I have certain skills I'm willing to use to help you. Let me."

Flick stood and tapped the table with his knuckles, clearly uncomfortable. "I'm going to head out. Just give me a call if our plans change."

Haig waited for Flick to leave the pub before turning his attention back to Audric. "Let's go to the hotel and discuss this further."

Audric stared at Haig for several moments before eventually agreeing. "Okay."

* * * *

Haig finished his shower and reached for a towel. His plan had been to give Audric and Kern some time alone, but the cries of the two men fucking in the adjacent room had cut his shower short. He'd been over and over Audric's offer, and he still couldn't figure out why Kern's mate would risk his life to help Galena.

Harder to understand was why Haig declined the offer. It had nothing to do with Audric's capabilities and everything to do with his desire to keep Audric safe from Juniper and the rest of his pack.

Wrapping the towel around his waist, Haig opened the bathroom door and stood to regard Kern and Audric. The longer he watched Kern bathe Audric with his tongue, the harder it was for him to remain an observer. He walked over and sat on the edge of the other bed in the room.

Audric turned his head and watched Haig through heavy-lidded eyes. Although not a word was spoken, Audric proved his new ease around Haig.

Haig rubbed the back of his neck to keep from reaching for the vampire. Never had he been tempted to touch another man other than his mate. Kern had the excuse of the mating frenzy to excuse his behaviour but Haig didn't.

Audric reached out towards Haig in silent invitation.

Sweat immediately began to pour down Haig's face and chest as he fought against his body's desire.

Kern must've picked up on Haig's conflicting emotions. He released Audric's cock and turned to look at Haig. "What's wrong?"

Haig stared at Audric's cock, glistening with Kern's saliva, and swallowed. Would Kern see it as cheating? Would he? Haig wasn't sure if he could live with himself knowing he'd

given in to his body's urges outside of being mated. He thought of Kern's suggestion that Haig mate with Audric and shook his head. He knew he couldn't take the easy way out. Mating was a spiritual calling in Haig's opinion, and he couldn't imagine taking that leap without love being the basis.

"Nothing." He gestured to the door. "I'm going to grab something to eat. Give me a call when you're finished."

Kern grinned. "You might want to get dressed first."

Haig glanced down at the erection threatening to send his towel to the floor. "Asshole."

* * * *

Audric wished he could drive Haig from his mind. There he was with his legs folded up against his chest and a gorgeous hunk of a man fucking him through the mattress and all he could think about was the mixed emotions clearly visible in Haig's eyes.

"Are you still with me?" Kern asked, slowing his thrusts.

Audric returned his attention to the man he was quickly falling in love with. "I think Haig's sad."

Kern glanced towards the closed hotel room door. "Why do you think that?"

"Just the way he was watching us earlier. I can't keep doing this if it's going to upset him. You've been his mate for hundreds of years. Besides, you chose him. You've just become stuck with me. There's a difference, and I know it."

Although Kern didn't pull out, he did help Audric lower his legs to a more comfortable position. "I may not have had a choice in our mating, but that doesn't mean I wish it hadn't happened. You bring something to my life that I can't explain. A sense of..." Kern shook his head. "Calm."

Despite the seriousness of the situation, Audric couldn't help but chuckle. "We've been fucking almost nonstop for days. You call that calm?"

Kern smiled in return. He balanced himself on one arm and lifted Audric's hand to cover his heart. "You make me feel calm here. Whether our mating was natural or not, it's right. And I think Haig sees that."

"Do you think it hurts him?"

Kern shook his head. "I think it confuses him."

"Why?"

"Because he's attracted to you, and he doesn't understand it. Haig's incredibly old-fashioned. To him love should absolutely come before desire. I saw the effect you had on him earlier. He definitely desires you, so either he's falling in love, or the ideas he's held onto for so long are being challenged."

Audric bit his bottom lip. "Earlier when he was watching us, I held out my hand to him." He looked deep into Kern's eyes. "I wanted him to join us."

"I'd like that," Kern confessed. He kissed his way down Audric's neck, using his tongue to occasionally lick and suck the skin. "Don't be angry with me, but I suggested to Haig that he mate with you as well."

Audric pushed at Kern's head. "You offered me to Haig without asking me first?" The more he thought about it, the angrier he became. He'd been mated once before without being given a choice.

Suddenly the strength Kern hadn't believed he possessed came out in full force. With one simple shove, Kern's nude body hit the wall on the opposite side of the room as Audric sprang off the bed and onto his feet.

Dazed, Kern blinked several times. "What the fuck?"

Audric held up his hand. "Don't talk to me," he said, grabbing his pants off the chair and rushing out into the hall. He tripped over a large pair of feet and fell to the floor. Looking up he stared into the handsome face of a smiling Haig.

"I see Kern didn't give you the same advice he did me about leaving the room naked," Haig said with a chuckle.

Audric quickly covered himself with his jeans and glanced up and down the hallway. He wanted to stay mad, but it was hard with the big goofy smile aimed his way. "Gods, he's an ass. How can you put up with him?"

"Kern certainly has his moments. What happened?"

The door opened and Kern rushed into the hall. "Where're you going?" he asked Audric.

"We're talking. Go on back into the room," Haig ordered.

Despite being naked, Kern walked towards where Audric had fallen. Audric scooted backwards, away from the imposing man. He held up a hand to shield his face and turned away. "I'm sorry if I hurt you."

"Kern! Go back into the room and let me handle this," Haig said again.

"He threw me across the room," Kern tried to argue. "I just want to talk to him."

"If he did, he must've had a good reason, now go back into the room and let me figure out what's going on."

Kern huffed several times but eventually started towards the door. "I know you didn't mean it," he told Audric.

Audric held his tongue. Although he hadn't meant to hurt Kern, he didn't regret his actions. Once Kern was out of sight, Audric turned around and got to his feet. He struggled into his wrinkled jeans before taking a seat beside Haig with his back against the wall. "Do you realise how long it's been since I've had a real choice in how I live my life?"

Haig's eyes narrowed as if he was really thinking about the question. "Have you ever?"

Audric blinked back the surprising question. "I—I don't know. Maybe when I was human?" He searched his memory. Although he'd been around twenty years old when he'd been turned, he didn't remember ever living on his own. "No. Probably not."

"Don't you think it's about time you did?"

The simple task of making his own decisions threatened to overwhelm him. First his parents had control over him then LaMont. After LaMont's death the coven took over handing out orders and punishments. Now, well, now he had Kern. Audric looked up at Haig. "I don't think I know how," he admitted.

Haig pulled Audric closer. "Why don't you tell me what happened."

"Well, we were...you know, and we started talking about you. Kern told me he'd offered me to you as a mate." Audric shrugged. "It made me mad because..."

"Because he hadn't consulted with you about it first," Haig finished for him.

"Yes. I'm not chattel for him to just give away."

Haig covered Audric's hand with his own. "For what it's worth, I don't think Kern meant it that way. I think he's just afraid of what will happen if you and I don't find a bond between us all. His solution was the mating."

Audric had been afraid of the same thing in the beginning, but as the days went on, he realised his feelings for Haig were growing at the same pace as those for Kern. "I don't think that's true."

"You don't?"

Haig started to pull his hand away but Audric stopped him. "No. I don't. Vampires don't mate in the same sense that weres do. Like you, we mark the one we choose to spend eternity with but that instant connection isn't there just because of it."

Audric stopped himself. He didn't want to get too deep into an explanation he'd never had experience with, but Haig did deserve to understand the process. "From what I understand, most vampires that do choose to mark a mate do so out of love. It's the love that binds them, not the bite. Does that make sense?"

Haig nodded. "I think it's the same for me."

"Kern told me you won't mate with me because you don't love me."

Haig shook his head. "I didn't say that. I said I couldn't mate with you without love between us." He lifted Audric's hand to his lips and kissed it. "And when, or if, the time comes, I need that love in return."

Watching as Haig continued to hold his hand, Audric realised he was quickly on his way to falling in love. It was different with Kern. Their relationship was a physical need for both of them. Audric turned his body towards Haig. "When I'm with you, like this, I feel as though I'm falling in love for the first time in my life," Audric admitted. "And that shames me."

Haig moved to press Audric's hand against his chest. "Why? Don't you like me?"

"Yes." *You love him. Tell him.* Audric brushed the voice inside his head away and found the small pebbled nubs under the thin material of Haig's tight T-shirt.

Haig's head fell back against the wall as Audric ran the tip of his finger around the hard nipple. "Why does it shame you to like me?"

"Because you belong to Kern," Audric confessed. He didn't admit that although he was developing feelings for Kern, they were different than what he felt for Haig. Although there was no doubt in his mind it would happen eventually, it wasn't fair to either Kern or Haig that the love should come first to the man who wasn't his mate.

Haig's Adam's apple bobbed several times before he spoke. "What do you want, Audric? This is your chance to choose the path that's right for you."

Closing his eyes, Audric leant forwards and captured Haig's nipple between his teeth. Given the choice, he wanted to make love to the handsome man who often haunted his dreams.

Haig buried his fingers in Audric's hair and held him in place for several moments as Audric laved the shirt until it was transparent. Pulling back, Audric looked deep into Haig's big brown eyes. "Make love to me," he whispered. *Bite me*, his inner voice chimed in.

Haig stood and pulled Audric up and against his chest. "It will change things between us."

Audric slowly nodded.

"We'll have to discuss it with Kern," Haig informed Audric.

Audric nodded again. He gasped when Haig lifted him from the floor and cupped his ass. Audric wrapped his legs around Haig's waist and held on. His emotions were all over the place. Worry, guilt and love all swirled through his heart and mind as he continued to stare into Haig's eyes.

"I want to kiss you," Haig whispered. "But I can't without talking to Kern."

Disappointment filled Audric. It wasn't that he didn't understand—he did—but the thought of hurting Kern by desiring Haig worried him. "What if he says no?"

"He won't," Kern answered from the small opening in the door.

"Then open up because we're coming in," Haig told Kern.

Chapter Six

Kern watched as Haig carried Audric into the room and set him on the bed. He'd heard the entire conversation after he'd been ordered back into the room, and he hadn't missed the underlying meanings to Audric's statements. It hurt him to know Audric hadn't yet started to fall in love with him, but he understood it would eventually happen.

Audric's growing feelings for Haig were a blessing because apparently Haig felt them, too. Moving forward as a threesome would be much easier on everyone involved. Kern could worry about Audric's love, or lack thereof, down the road.

He noticed there were two sets of eyes staring at him. "What?"

Haig left Audric's side and approached Kern, pulling him into a warm embrace. "Are you sure this will be okay with you?"

"Of course it's okay. It was my suggestion in the first place. Just took the two of you longer to come around to my way of thinking." Kern tried to bury his hurt so Haig wouldn't sense it. He pulled Haig's shirt up and off.

"Will you let me watch?" Kern asked as he popped the button on Haig's jeans and lowered the zipper.

Haig grabbed Kern by the back of the neck and pulled him in for a deep kiss. Kern opened his mouth and accepted the tongue-fuck with enthusiasm. Having been denied his earlier climax, Kern's cock hardened at the first brush of his mate's tongue.

After several glorious minutes, Kern broke the kiss and glanced at Audric. His little mate was already naked and touching himself. "What about you? Would you mind if I stayed?"

Audric shook his head and spread his legs in invitation. "The only sexual experience I have with more than one man at a time wasn't by choice. Thank you for giving me what others wouldn't."

Kern neared the bed with Haig. "I heard what you told Haig earlier," he confessed. "I was wrong to suggest mating as an option between the two of you without asking you first, and I'm sorry."

Audric smiled. "Thank you. That means a lot to me."

Kern looked at Haig. The two of them had never taken another man into their bed. Before Audric, neither of them had slept with anyone but each other. Since he'd already experienced the joy of fucking Audric, Kern thought it was important Haig be given the honour. He put his hand on Haig's hip and gestured to the bed.

Haig gave Kern another deep kiss. "I love you," he whispered in Kern's ear.

"I know."

Haig sat on the bed beside Audric. He started to reach out but stopped and pulled his hand back. "I don't know what to do," he admitted.

Audric chuckled and grabbed Haig's hand. "Sure you do. I've heard you make love to Kern before, remember?"

Haig glanced back up at Kern with an uncertain look in his eyes. Understanding the unspoken plea, Kern went around the bed and lay beside Audric. He lifted Audric's wrist and placed Haig's hand on the vampire's chest.

Haig made a noise deep in his chest as his palm began to work its way across Audric's chest. He brushed over the twin dark brown nipples, watching Audric the entire time.

Audric released Haig's wrist and pinched one of his own nipples, telling Haig without words what he wanted.

"He's not as fragile as he looks," Kern said with a grin and released his hold on the men. Watching Haig pinch Audric's nipples was sexy, but when Haig bent to take one of the brown nubs into his mouth, Kern's need threatened to overwhelm him. He tried to direct Haig's mouth towards Audric's leaking cock. "Suck him. Show him how good your mouth feels."

Audric moaned when Haig released his nipple and insinuated himself between Audric's spread thighs. "Is that what you want?" Haig asked.

"I want Kern to come up here and let me suck his cock while you suck mine," Audric answered.

Haig chuckled. "Who's going to suck me?"

"No one. You're going to make love to me after I come down your throat," Audric told Haig in a matter-of-fact tone after scooting up to rest his back against the headboard.

Haig glanced up at Kern. "Is he always this bossy in bed?"

Already on his feet, Kern stood by Audric's head and pointed his cock towards his mate's mouth. "He's a man who knows what he likes, that's all." He smiled at Haig, who was busy watching Audric give Kern an expert blow job. "So give the man what he asked for."

That seemed to snap Haig out of his haze. He wrapped a hand around the base of Audric's cock and began sucking on the crown.

Audric moaned, sending vibrations down the length of Kern's cock to his balls. "You like that, baby?" Kern asked, burying his fingers in Audric's hair.

Audric nodded and sucked Kern deeper.

Kern began a shallow fuck of Audric's mouth as he watched Haig devour the little vamp's cock. Haig pulled off Audric's length long enough to spit in his hand. "Sink deep," Kern told him. "He had my cock shoved up there less than thirty minutes ago."

"I can tell," Haig answered, sinking three fingers into Audric's hole.

Audric bucked as Haig started to finger-fuck him. The movement caused Audric's teeth to scrape against Kern's sensitive cock. The bite of pain threatened to pull Kern's wolf to the surface. "No!" Kern reprimanded his wolf.

Audric released Kern's cock. "You want me to stop?"

Kern smiled down at his mate. "Sorry. I was talking to my wolf. I figured it might freak you out if he decided to come out and play."

"You'd be right."

"Why don't you hand Haig the lube and put him out of his misery. From here it looks as though his cock is about to explode."

Although Haig continued to use his mouth and fingers on Audric, he nodded in agreement. Seeing the excitement in Haig's eyes warmed Kern for some reason. Sure, his mate was getting ready to fuck another man, but that man also happened to be Kern's mate. It was confusing as hell, but with any luck, it would bring them all closer.

Deciding to get more involved, Kern took the lube when Audric held it out and resumed his position on the bed at Audric's side. He coated his hand liberally and spread the slick on Haig's erection. "Want some of this?"

Haig released Audric's cock and held out his hand. "Thanks." He leaned up enough to kiss Kern after receiving a large dollop of lube.

Kern returned his attention to Audric. He moved back up and rested his head next to his mate's. "Are you still okay with this?"

Audric rolled his eyes. "I practically have my knees behind my ears. What do you think?"

Kern licked the side of Audric's face, his wolf thanking him. "I think you're the sexiest thing I've ever seen."

Haig cleared his throat.

"Come on, be honest, you think so, too."

Haig removed his fingers and crawled up higher on the bed. Sitting back on his heels, he pressed the tip of his cock to Audric's hole. "Wrap your legs around me. I want to hold you in my arms while I make love to you."

The three of them seemed to hold their collective breaths as Haig slowly pushed inside Audric. The moment was absolutely perfect until Haig's cell phone began to ring.

"Fuck," Kern spat, looking at the clock. "You know it's Flick wondering if we're still coming."

Haig slowed his thrusts and shook his head. "Nothing, and I mean nothing, is going to stop me from finishing."

Kern blew out a breath. "Fine. I'll answer it. What do I tell him?" He rolled off the bed and grabbed Haig's phone from the credenza. "Well?" he asked when Haig continued fucking Audric.

Haig broke a kiss and looked over his shoulder. "Tell him we'll be downstairs in thirty minutes."

Kern groaned. "The way you're going at it, I'd guess fifteen." The phone stopped ringing and Kern cursed. "Great." He held up the phone. "I'll go into the bathroom and call him."

Haig stared down at Audric as their bodies continued to move together. He wished he could read Audric like he read Kern. "What're you thinking?"

Instead of answering, Audric pulled Haig down into another deep kiss. Haig accepted the kiss, surprised and grateful for the emotions that seemed to accompany each brush of Audric's tongue. He pulled back and tried to swallow around the newly formed lump in his

throat. In that moment it was clear to him. He'd fallen in love. How it had happened so quickly he didn't understand but it had and it filled him with an unbelievable happiness he'd be hard-pressed to explain.

Audric smiled. "Now it's your turn to tell me what you're thinking." He finished the sentence by contracting his internal muscles around Haig's cock as it lazily pumped in and out of him.

The words were on the tip of his tongue when Kern walked back into the room. He didn't want to leave Audric without him knowing, but he thought it was important for Audric to hear before Kern.

"We'd better get a move on. Flick's downstairs in the lobby," Kern announced, setting the phone back on the dresser. "Since talking to your cousin has totally wilted my cock, I'm going to hop in the shower."

Haig doubted he'd ever been as glad to see Kern leave a room. Alone with Audric once again, Haig brushed the dark red curls away from Audric's face. "I love you."

Audric turned his head away as tears filled his eyes. It wasn't exactly the reaction Haig had been hoping for. "I'm sorry," Haig was quick to say.

Audric shook his head but still refused to look at him. "I can't remember ever being loved. I'm sure my parents loved me, but I have no memory of them." Audric wiped at his eyes before meeting Haig's gaze once again. "I've been struggling with my own feelings. I don't mean to sound naïve, but will you tell me what it feels like to love someone?"

Haig had never been asked the question. How did one go about explaining a feeling like no other? "I could go into a bunch of flowery words, but for me it's pretty damn simple. When you leave a room, you take my breath with you."

Audric's eyebrows drew together.

Evidently Haig's explanation wasn't basic enough. "I don't feel like I'm alive unless you're near me."

Audric made a noise Haig couldn't identify and soon the tears started again. "That's the way I feel about you and Kern. I didn't think I had those feelings for Kern, but I feel just what you described when either of you aren't around."

Kern burst into the room and jumped on Haig's back. As water dripped down Haig's sides, it was obvious his mate hadn't bothered to dry off.

"I love you, too," Kern said, moving Haig's head out of the way so he could kiss Audric.

Haig reached behind himself and landed a smack to Kern's ass. "You have got to stop eavesdropping."

Kern broke the kiss with Audric and landed one right on Haig's temple. "Why? I learn all the best secrets that way."

Now that their feelings were all out in the open, Haig was able to relax. Once they returned home, they could start building their lives together instead of Kern and his two mates.

"Let me fuck you while you fuck Audric," Kern growled, grinding his hard cock against Haig's ass.

"Way to turn a tender moment around." Haig chuckled.

"Yeah, I know, you want wine and flowers and all that, but I don't think my cock can be denied again. Twice now I've been on the verge of coming only to get interrupted. And any moment now, Flick is going to be banging on that door, pissed as hell."

Although Haig was still hard and pumping slowly in and out of Audric's ass, he didn't want to come yet. Coming meant he was finished, and he wanted the warmth of Audric's ass for days, not minutes.

When Haig heard the snick of the lube bottle opening, he knew he was about to be fucked. It wasn't often he was able to push his wolf deep enough to allow himself the bottom position, but his wolf seemed preoccupied at the moment with licking Audric's neck.

Kern tapped Haig on the thigh. "Bring these up under you."

Haig did as instructed. The slightly altered position drove his cock deeper into Audric.

"Yes," Audric moaned.

When the first long finger slid inside him, Haig nipped Audric's neck. The small taste of Audric's blood deepened the bond between them. Would his feelings grow even stronger if he clamped deep and mated with Audric?

The thought seemed to fuel Haig's lust. Despite a second finger being pushed into his ass, Haig started thrusting in and out of Audric harder and faster. "You'd better hurry if you're going to catch up in time," he informed Kern.

"Shit!" Kern fumbled for the bottle of lube that had fallen beside Haig. "Hang the fuck on."

Haig repositioned Audric's legs to drape over his shoulders, nearly bending the man in two. "Love you," he panted, staring down at Audric.

Audric opened his mouth but all that came out was a loud moan as Kern impaled Haig with his cock. Haig gritted his teeth as his mate fucked him as brutally as ever. Kern rarely made love. To him, making love was about words. When cocks were involved it was all about fucking.

Although Haig loved nothing more than a fast hard fuck, he was glad he now had someone he could make love to. He took the opportunity to look down to where he was joined with Audric. The trail of pre cum on Audric's torso made Haig's mouth water. "Touch yourself."

Audric insinuated a hand between them and began pumping his cock to Haig's established rhythm.

"Yes, that's it, baby. Love to see that," Haig murmured.

Despite his slow start, Kern was the first to climax. He howled Haig's name before clamping down on the area where Haig's shoulder met his neck. Haig didn't need to look behind him to know Kern had done a partial shift. The long canines digging into his flesh were proof.

Audric gasped, and Haig realised the vampire was witnessing a partial shift for the first time. Haig was worried Audric would be frightened or turned-off by the display, but the warmth shooting up between them told Haig all he needed to know.

Audric's unwavering acceptance tipped Haig over the edge. He bit his bottom lip bloody in an attempt to keep his wolf from joining Kern's. Seeing a partially shifted man and being fucked by one were two different things, and even in Haig's state of bliss, he realised Audric wasn't ready for that next step.

Kern released Haig's skin and collapsed on top of him. Haig rolled both of them to fall beside Audric. They ended up snuggled around one another.

Haig's phone rang again, prompting a unified groan. "We need to get out of here if we're going to surprise the pack," Haig said, sitting up.

"What about me?" Audric asked, glancing at the clock.

Haig cupped Audric's cheek. "It'll be dawn in two hours. By the time we drive out there, it'll be cutting things really close."

Audric's hopeful expression fell.

"It's not that we don't want your help, or that we think you're too weak. I think you proved your strength earlier." Haig grinned at Kern. "But this is the best time of day to do what we have to do. I promise you, it's not personal."

Audric nodded, but Haig could tell the man was still hurt by his omission from the rescue operation.

Haig brushed a kiss across Audric's lips. "Go to sleep and we'll be in bed with you when you wake up. I promise."

"Really?" Audric questioned.

"Yep," Kern joined in, stealing a kiss of his own. "We promise."

* * * *

During the drive to the pack's ancestral land, Kern noticed Flick casting glances at Haig in the rear view mirror.

"What?" Haig finally asked from the backseat.

Flick shook his head and pulled off the road and onto a dirt path. "I'm just trying to figure out what to tell your mom when she asks about you. I mean, she's barely used to the thought of her son being gay. How am I supposed to tell her you're also in love with a vampire?"

"Tell her. Don't tell her. I don't give a damn either way."

It didn't escape Kern's notice that Flick didn't seem surprised Kern would fall for a vampire, just that Haig had. *What else is new*, Kern thought. The pack had always tried to blame Kern for Haig's fall from grace.

He shifted uncomfortably in the seat and turned his attention to the scenery out the window. It had been a long time since he'd been this close to pack land. A hand landed on his shoulder. Kern automatically reached up to cover Haig's hand with his own. It was Haig's way of settling Kern, and it seemed to work.

Kern was still bothered by the news Flick had given them in the hotel lobby. Seemed word was already out that Kern and Haig were back in town and had brought an outsider with them. Despite Haig's heartfelt speech to Audric, Kern was glad his mate wasn't with them. The mere idea of Audric being surrounded by a pack of wolves scared the shit out of Kern.

"How big is the pack now?" Kern asked.

"I don't know. When we left there were only twelve, including Galena, who chose to stay behind, but that was years ago." Flick drove off the dirt road and turned the truck around, parking it on the shoulder.

All three of them climbed out of the truck and began to undress. It was cold and Kern watched as his breath merged with the early morning fog. He tossed his clothes in the back and shifted into his wolf form, thankful for the thick fur.

Kern's wolf crept over to Haig and sniffed his mate's balls, smelling a combination of Kern and Audric.

Haig swatted at the wolf's nose. "It's too cold out here for that kind of greeting." In the next second, Haig shifted. His wolf turned to Kern's and offered a few licks on the muzzle before walking off towards Flick.

Kern followed his mate. Although the plan was to grab Galena and run, Kern had a suspicion Flick was after something more. Not that Kern could blame him. If Flick was right and Juniper had been responsible for the death of Flick's mate, Kern might just help Flick seek his revenge.

In the lead, Haig suddenly yelped and fell to his side, shifting to his human form. "Stop," Haig cried in a voice barely above a whisper.

Kern shifted and started to take a step towards his mate.

"Stop!" Haig growled, holding his palm out to Kern. Haig's eyes rolled to the back of his head as he lost consciousness.

Kern looked towards Flick, who had also shifted. "Stay here." He slowly picked his way towards Haig, unsure of what had happened. Grabbing Haig's outstretched arm from where it had fallen, Kern pulled Haig towards him, wincing as Haig's bare skin scraped across the ground.

As soon as Kern thought they were far enough away from whatever had hurt his mate, he dropped to his knees and turned Haig over. "Haig." He rubbed Haig's chest and neck before leaning over to kiss him. "Come on. Open your eyes."

It took several seconds, but Haig eventually opened his eyes a mere slit. "It's warded," he rasped before falling unconscious once more.

Kern's eyes rounded. He looked up at Flick. "How long have the fae been a friend to the pack?"

Flick shook his head. "I don't know. It must've happened after we left." He picked up a stone and tossed it towards pack land. The stone splintered in mid-air.

If the ward was strong enough to obliterate a stone, what had it done to Haig? "We need to get Haig to The Realm." Kern didn't waste any time. He picked his mate up off the ground and carried him towards the truck. He settled Haig's head on his lap in the backseat without worrying about clothes.

Flick, however, took enough time to throw on a pair of jeans. When he jumped into the truck he handed Haig and Kern's jeans back. "Haig's phone was ringing a second ago."

Kern fumbled in Haig's pocket and removed the cell phone. A quick press of buttons and he was in to Haig's messages.

Audric's frantic voice sounded in Kern's ear. "What's happened? I felt a shooting pain and then nothing from Haig."

Kern nearly dropped the phone. *How was that possible?* He hit redial as Flick tore out down the dirt road.

Audric answered on the first ring. "Haig?"

"No, it's Kern. On the way to the pack lands Haig ran into a ward like nothing I've ever seen before."

After a brief pause, Audric's soft voice asked, "Is he dead?"

"No, but he's unconscious. I need to get him to The Realm. If anyone can help him it's Spiro. Unfortunately, I don't know how to get him there." Although The Realm was a real place, most Blessed Creatures never ventured onto what they considered the holy ground. "Can you take him?"

"No, but Neo can. Bring him to the hotel. I should have Neo here by the time you get here."

Hearing the emotion in Audric's voice threatened to break what little control Kern had left. He wanted to ask Audric how he knew about Haig. The two weren't mates, and even then, it didn't normally work that way. If it had, Haig would've found Kern in LaMont's dungeon immediately. The only possibility was inconceivable to Kern.

Haig groaned before falling silent. Kern swallowed around the lump in his throat. "Hurry, Audric. I've never seen Haig like this and it's scaring the shit out of me."

"I won't let you down," Audric said before hanging up.

Kern stared down at his mate. A single tear slipped from his eye. "Don't you die on me. We have a lot more leaves to add to these tattoos. You can't expect me to walk around with a half-finished work of art on my back."

Chapter Seven

Covered from head to toe in the comforter from the hotel bed, Audric knocked on Neo's front door. When it didn't immediately open, he tried the handle only to find the house locked tight. "Neo!" he screamed, pounding on the door again. *You're going to fry yourself before you ever get help for Haig.* "Dammit, stay out of my head," he scolded his inner voice.

The door opened with a whoosh, and Evelyn, Neo's housekeeper, pulled him inside. "Neo is at rest. You of all people should know the importance of that," she scolded.

"I don't have time for the lecture, Evelyn. I need Neo's help. Now."

"What's happened?" Michael asked, rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

"Haig. Something's happened to him in Ireland. Kern said he hit a ward, evidently a powerful one. He thinks Spiro is the only one who can help him."

Michael wasted no time springing into action. "Neo! Wake up!" he yelled as he ran up the staircase.

Evelyn came back into the foyer with a bottle of blood. "How long has it been since you've eaten?" she asked.

The thought of stopping long enough to drink the bottle of old blood didn't appeal to Audric in the slightest. His stomach may be empty, but his heart was full of worry for the man he loved. "No, thank you."

Within minutes, Neo raced down the stairs fully dressed. "Ramiro's on his way. Michael's summoning Spiro. Tell me exactly what happened."

Audric shook his head. "I don't really know. I wasn't with them. All I know is I was asleep when a searing pain moved through my body. I opened my eyes and called Haig's name. He told me he loved me and then nothing. I tried to reconnect with him but it felt like he was no longer there. When I called his phone and didn't get an answer, I knew something had happened to him. Kern called me back and told me Haig was down. That he'd run into a strong ward surrounding their old pack lands just outside Galway."

Neo's eyes narrowed momentarily before he began to pace between the foyer and the sitting room. "This is about Haig's sister, right?"

"Yes. Haig, Kern and a cousin of Haig's, Flick, went to rescue her from her mate and Alpha, Juniper Cavanaugh."

"Cavanaugh?" Spiro asked, stepping into the room with Michael and Sema at his side. Sema began butting his head against Spiro's thigh. Spiro absently reached down and settled the black jaguar.

"You know him?" Why would the ruler of The Realm know an Alpha werewolf in Galway?

Spiro nodded. "We'll discuss it later. Right now I have to get Haig to The Realm if I hope to save him."

"They should be at the hotel in a few minutes." Although Neo and Spiro shared duties as leaders of The Realm, Audric didn't feel the same sense of awe around Neo. There was just something about Spiro that made Audric feel like he should be bowing or something. Maybe it was the man's unearthly colouring? With pale skin and long hair that actually looked more silver than blond, Spiro truly was one of those men who looked like they had been sculpted from the finest marble.

With a bit of reluctance, Audric stepped towards Spiro and averted his eyes. "May I please accompany Haig to The Realm?"

Before Spiro could answer, Neo cut into the conversation. "Audric felt Haig's pain, and before you ask, no, they aren't mated."

"But that's..." Spiro started but stopped before he could finish his sentence.

"What?" Audric prompted. "Do you know why I was able to feel it?" Audric had never heard of a vampire that could feel the pain of another. He knew Neo could, but Neo was the son of Zeus. Audric wouldn't begin to compare himself to someone of that lineage.

"There will be time to discuss it later. Right now we've got to get to Ireland." Sema stood on his hind legs and placed his paws on Spiro's shoulders, a soft growl coming from his throat.

"Not now." Spiro tried to push the big black cat off of him, but Sema wouldn't budge. He turned his face away from Sema's licks and snapped his fingers. "Down!" he ordered in a commanding voice.

Sema did as instructed but continued to head butt Spiro. Shaking his head, Spiro returned his attention to Audric.

Ramiro walked into the foyer flanked by two more vampire guards. "I got here as soon as I could."

"You've been at court?" Neo asked.

"Yes. King Kildare summoned me. An entire coven in Scotland has been decapitated while they slept."

"Fuck!" Neo spat, running his fingers through his hair. "What the hell is going on?"

Spiro ignored his brother and turned to Audric. "Get me to Haig."

Audric closed his eyes and concentrated on giving Spiro the exact location of the hotel room. After a brief feeling of pressure, he opened his eyes to find himself in the room with Spiro but no Haig. Pulling the phone from his pocket, Audric called Kern.

"We're almost there," Kern answered.

"I have Spiro here."

"Tell him to pull over, and I'll go to him," Spiro interjected.

"I heard him. Flick, pull over," Kern ordered. "Okay. We're stopped along Seamus Quirke Road right before you get to the Browne Roundabout."

Audric delivered the location to Spiro. "We'll be right there." He hung up and pulled the comforter over his head once more. "Let's go."

* * * *

Spiro stepped out of his private lab and beckoned for Kern and Audric. "I think he'll be okay. Right now he's still in and out of consciousness, but I managed to rid his body of the poison the ward infused."

Neo stepped up to stand beside Kern. "How was a ward able to do so much damage? Usually they're used to block entrance, but not harm."

Kern was caught between a need to be with his mate and the desire to figure out what was going on with his old pack. He felt Spiro's hand on his shoulder. A simple touch and Kern's anxiety level dropped immediately.

"Audric should go in and sit with Haig. I need to speak with you."

The touch of worry evident in Spiro's pale eyes told Kern more than words could. Kern looked down at Audric who was pressed against his side. "Will you go sit with Haig?"

Audric pulled Kern's head down for a kiss. "Find out who did this," he instructed before walking away.

Their small group had already determined fae were helping the were pack, but who and why remained mysteries. Kern watched Audric until he disappeared into the lab before turning to Spiro. "What's really going on here?"

Spiro's gaze roamed the group. "As you all know by now, this was no ordinary ward. I've only heard tales of two beings with that kind of power, and only one of them was ever found after the decimation of the dragons."

"Morwyn," Neo ground out, his hands fisted at his sides. "But how is that possible? With the collapse of the dragon species, Morwyn was banished to Tartarus."

"I don't know."

"Who's Morwyn?" Kern asked, confused by talk of a species he didn't even know had existed.

"Morwyn and his brother, Nialo, were conjoined twins born to Gaia. Cronus, their father, who is also the father of Zeus, took one look at them and cast them from The Realm. They managed to survive with help from the fae and were infused with magic through the love the fae had for Nialo. According to legend, Morwyn grew jealous of the way people responded to his brother. One night while Nialo lay sleeping, Morwyn took his sword and severed their bodily connection. The results of the separation weren't what Morwyn had expected. He was left with no heart. Gaia stepped in to help protect Nialo from the wrath of Morwyn who had become obsessed with reclaiming the heart he believed belonged to him. Gaia gave Nialo the ability to breathe fire and thick scales to protect himself. The gift of flight came from the fae who were determined to do everything they could to see that good triumphed over evil. Nialo became an entirely new species...dragons."

Spiro stopped talking and suddenly a glass of water appeared in his hand. He drained the contents and the glass disappeared. "The fae who chose to follow and protect Nialo were also granted the same gifts from Gaia, but she was a smart cookie. The gifts she granted the fae only survived as long as Nialo did."

"So if the dragon species collapsed, I gather Morwyn got what he wanted and killed Nialo," Kern said.

"No one knows. Morwyn gathered an army and attacked the dragons. When they stormed the dragon lands, Nialo was nowhere to be found, and the fae who had become his protectors had lost their dragon qualities. After half the fae were slaughtered by Morwyn and his men, Zeus stepped in and banished his soulless brother to Tartarus."

"So could this ward be one of Nialo's?" Kern asked.

Neo and Spiro both shook their heads. It was Neo who took over the conversation. "Nialo has never surfaced, but before his imprisonment, Morwyn swore retribution on Zeus and The Realm."

"But even if he managed to escape from Tartarus, why would Morwyn be working with a small pack of weres from Galway?"

"Good question. And one I plan to get to the bottom of," Neo replied.

"And what does this have to do with Haig?" Kern asked Spiro.

"Nothing, other than the fact that Haig was injured by the ward."

"So why did you want to speak to me without Audric around?" The longer they talked, the more confused Kern became. All he knew was his two mates were in a room without him.

Spiro gestured towards the wall of two-story windows. "Let's go over here."

Kern swallowed around the lump in his throat. "You're scaring me," he admitted.

"I assure you, that's not my intention. I assume you know there are a few weres who have been gifted a true mate, a union designed by the Gods."

"Yes." Although Kern had never known mates who had been fated to meet, he had heard of them.

"I believe Audric and Haig are such a pairing."

Kern shook his head. "That's not possible. Vampires don't mate like weres do."

"I know." Spiro took a deep breath. "What do you know about Audric's past?"

"Not much. He says he doesn't remember much before he was kidnapped by LaMont."

Spiro shuffled his feet uneasily. "I think we were wrong about Gunnar."

"Gunnar? What does he have to do with anything?" Again, more confusion clouded his mind.

"I believe Audric was the first werewolf LaMont turned," Spiro explained.

Kern wanted to scream at Spiro, to tell him he was wrong in his conclusion, but something Audric had said filtered back to him. "Audric told Ramiro that the vampire blood would kill Gunnar's wolf. Do you think he knew that because it's what happened to him?"

"Probably. Although he doesn't seem aware of it. My guess is he's shoved that part of his life so deep within himself that it honestly doesn't exist to him anymore."

Kern turned to look out the window. Why they had constructed The Realm with windows he didn't understand. Outside seemed to be nothing but a white swirl of mist. He refused to believe Audric was Haig's fated mate. Such a joining would nullify everything Haig felt for Kern. "You can't make me give Haig up to mate with Audric," he mumbled.

Spiro's hand landed on Kern's shoulder. "That isn't my decision to make. You must talk to them, tell them the truth, and follow where your hearts lead."

Before Kern could say anything, Haig's scream turned Kern's blood to ice.

* * * *

Sitting at Haig's bedside, Audric leant over and rested his head on Haig's bare chest, staying clear of the symbols Spiro had painted on Haig's skin. He closed his eyes and prayed to every god he could think of for Haig's recovery.

Fingers threading through his hair brought Audric upright. "You're awake."

Although Haig's eyes were droopy, Audric knew they saw him. "I dreamt of you."

Audric grinned and moved to place a quick kiss on Haig's lips. "Yeah? Was it a sexy dream?"

Haig's gaze turned troubled. "No."

"No?" Audric smoothed the hair away from Haig's face. "What did you dream of?"

Haig moved his head from side to side. "Doesn't matter. It wasn't real." He pulled Audric in for another kiss.

Audric opened his mouth for Haig, but he couldn't forget the haunted look in Haig's eyes. It was obvious to Audric something had scared the man he loved. Maybe it was a left-over feeling from his exposure to the ward.

Haig's hand travelled down Audric's back to land on his ass. "Lie next to me."

Straightening, Audric studied the narrow width of the bed. "There's no room. Get better and we'll play later. Besides, you've still got some healing to do before you're ready for anything too strenuous."

"Where's Kern?" Haig asked.

"Outside talking to Spiro, Neo, Michael and Ramiro. Do you want me to go get him?"

"In a minute. First I want to tell you how much I love you."

"I love you, too. When I felt you hit the ward, it almost killed me. Not because it hurt, but because I thought I'd lost you." Audric buried his face against Haig's neck. "After all these years, I've finally found you. Promise you won't ever try to leave me again."

All at once, images began assaulting Audric. Horrific visions of capture, blood and torture blocked out everything else. His hands pressed to the sides of his head trying to keep his mind from exploding. The power of the memories was too strong, sending Audric to his knees. The last thing he remembered were Haig's screams filling his ears with even more pain.

Haig's head felt like it was exploding as he watched Audric writhe on the floor in obvious torture. He wasn't aware he was screaming until Kern and the others rushed into the room.

Unable to form words, Haig pointed towards Audric.

Kern was the first to reach the whimpering vampire. He scooped Audric into his arms and turned towards Spiro. "Do something!"

Spiro was already in motion, filling a syringe with a cloudy substance. When Audric started to squirm out of Kern's arms, Spiro yelled, "Hold him still."

Kern did as ordered and Spiro grabbed Audric by the hair and turned his head around before plunging the long needle into the back of his neck. Whatever medicine he'd been given seemed to work rapidly.

Audric's head lolled to the side as he stared off into space.

Haig's pain stopped immediately and he pushed himself to a seated position. "Give him to me," he told Kern.

As Kern carried a dazed Audric towards the bed, tears began streaming down his face. Haig didn't understand his mate's sudden display of emotion. He held out his arms and accepted Audric like the gift he was. "He'll be okay," he tried to soothe Kern.

Kern nodded and backed away. "He's yours to take care of. I know that now."

He knows. Haig closed his eyes. The dreams he'd had earlier were coming true and he didn't know how to stop them. He opened his eyes and stared pleadingly at his mate. "Don't go," he begged Kern.

Kern shook his head. "The bond is too strong. I can't fight the Gods."

Haig hugged Audric against his chest. "Yes we can. That's how powerful our love is." He looked to Neo and Spiro for support, but the two men didn't seem to have any to give. "No!" He turned his attention away from the others in the room to stare at Kern once more. "I will fight for you."

"Fight who? Yourself? Audric?" Kern continued to shake his head. "You've found your true mate."

Haig narrowed his eyes. "You're giving me up, just like that?" Audric stirred and Haig placed a kiss to Audric's forehead. "He'll need both of us if he has any hope of getting through this."

Having seen Audric's suppressed memories, Haig knew there was too much pain for one man to heal. Now that they had been brought to the surface, Audric's battle had only just begun. Audric closed his eyes and seemed to settle into a deep sleep.

"What did you give him?" he asked Spiro.

"Nothing harmful, I assure you. It's just something to slow his memories down to a pace his brain can process more clearly. He'll be out of it for a few hours, but he'll remember everything that's happened. He'll need to be watched closely. Even though his brain is better able to process the images, it doesn't mean they'll be any less painful. As a matter of fact, they'll probably be worse. However, the alternative could very well have driven him insane."

Haig tried to pick the images apart one by one. "He was hunting in his wolf form when he was captured by LaMont." Haig brushed his lips across Audric's soft curls. "He's one of us."

"Was," Spiro corrected.

"So Gunnar's wolf truly will die?" Ramiro asked.

"That would seem to be the conclusion once he finishes his transformation into a vampire. I should know more when I get a chance to fully examine Audric, but he has other things to deal with at the moment." Spiro stepped up to the bed and cupped Audric's cheek. "We should be able to learn quite a bit with Audric's cooperation."

Standing beside a window, Kern spoke over his shoulder. "What now? Do we just forget about Morwyn's connection to the Galway pack? Or are we planning to do something about it?"

It seemed to Haig that Kern was suddenly more concerned with other issues than his mate. He opened his mouth to reprimand his mate of over four hundred years, but a shake of Spiro's head stopped him.

"In good time," Spiro whispered for Haig's ears only. He turned towards Neo. "Everything ever written about Morwyn and his powers should be in the vault. Make sure you know your enemy well before trying to conquer him."

"We'll need the help of fae," Neo said.

"You'll need the help of all Blessed Creatures," Spiro corrected. "I have a feeling this is about more than Morwyn taking over a were pack. I think he's trying to fulfil the threat he made thousands of years ago."

"To destroy The Realm?" Neo reached out and pulled Michael against his side. "Then we'll need to not only learn everything we can about Morwyn, but form a true army to defeat him."

"It would seem so," Spiro agreed.

Chapter Eight

After getting Audric settled in bed, Haig left his side only long enough to seek out his mate. He entered the grand hallway off the private room they'd been given in the palace and noticed a guard. "Excuse me, can you tell me where the meeting is taking place?"

The guard looked surprised. "It broke up hours ago."

"Oh. You didn't happen to see a werewolf about my height with dark hair and a scar on the side of his face, did you?"

"I believe he left with Neo and Ramiro, sir."

Left? Haig couldn't believe Kern would leave The Realm without telling him. "Do you know where they went?"

"No, sir."

Haig ran his fingers through his hair. "What about Michael and Spiro, are they still here?"

The guard's expression took on a look of relief. "Yes. I believe they're in the gardens behind the palace."

"Thank you." He gestured towards the room he'd just left. "Would you do me another favour and keep an ear out in case Audric wakes in distress?"

The guard nodded and moved closer to the door.

"Thank you." Haig hurried down the sweeping staircase and headed towards the back of the palace. He didn't have a clue how to get to the back gardens, but his sense of direction had always been spot on.

He ended up in the busy kitchen, swarming with meal preparations. "Excuse me, can someone tell me the way to the back garden?"

A young woman with a brilliant smile pointed towards the door with a chopping knife. "Out that way and follow the path."

"Thanks." As soon as Haig was outside, he jogged his way down the path. He found Michael and Spiro sitting on a bench, staring out at a dark, turbulent sea.

"Is everything okay?" Spiro asked, getting to his feet when he spotted Haig.

"He's still sleeping. I need to know where Kern went."

Spiro and Michael shared a knowing glance. It was Michael who finally spoke. "He went with Neo and the others on a scouting mission to Galway."

All Haig could think about was the ward he'd run into on his way to the pack lands. "Do they have a way around the ward?"

"Yes. A small one," Spiro told him.

"Spiro gave Neo the ring his mother had given him before she died. It should open a hole small enough for them to pass without alerting the pack of their breach."

With his hands on his hips, Haig turned to face the sea. The water looked like he felt. "Why'd Kern leave without telling me?"

"Probably for the same reason you left him when you found out he'd taken another mate," Spiro replied. "Don't be too hard on him. He's trying to find his way through a difficult time."

Haig spun around. "But it was his idea for me to mate with Audric in the first place."

"Yes, but he didn't know at the time that Audric is your divine mate, your true mate. Do you realise what happens once that bond is fully formed?"

Haig could only tell Spiro what he'd heard passed down from his father. "True mates become as one, spiritually. They are able to sense each other's thoughts and feelings."

"And pain. As the two of you have already proven to be the case."

"No. Audric and I haven't mated. I mean, we love each other, but I haven't marked him as mine." Which didn't explain how he was able to see and feel Audric's pain earlier in the day. Realisation hit him between the eyes. "I nipped his neck when we made love. Although I didn't sink my teeth into him, I did taste a drop of his blood. But that wouldn't be enough to satisfy the Gods, would it?"

"No, but if the bond between the two of you has strengthened to that degree after a taste of Audric's blood, what do you think would happen if you were to truly mate with him?" Spiro shook his head. "You would cease to think about any man beyond your true mate. Kern knows this. It's the reason he's pulling away."

"Easier to walk away than be forgotten," Haig surmised.

"Yes."

"But I don't want to forget him. I love him. He's been my entire reason for living for over four hundred years. What kind of Gods would give me the ability to forget all we've been through together?"

"It's not their fault. You were probably never meant to fall in love with Kern in the first place. Unfortunately, Audric was kidnapped and turned before your wolves could find each other."

"So because of LaMont I'm supposed to choose?" Haig asked, anger coursing through his blood.

"I can't tell you what to do. As far as I know, this has never happened before."

"Except for you," Michael interjected.

"Huh?" Haig questioned.

"My mate was lost to me before I had a chance to meet him. But that's water under the bridge. I've accepted a solitary life filled with the occasional bed partner." Spiro smiled but there was a look of sadness to the happy face he was trying to portray. "You'll have to find your own way on this one. I'm afraid I can't help you."

* * * *

Kern sat outside the ward with Flick and three other soldiers from The Realm. Although Neo and Ramiro had slipped easily through the opening created by Spiro's ring, every time Kern or one of the other weres neared it, it began to shrink.

It had finally been decided the non-vampires would sit outside like a bunch of jackasses while Ramiro and Neo went in and risked their necks. Kern knew he wasn't the only one feeling useless. Flick was fit to be tied at the exclusion. Kern had a strong feeling it had something to do with Flick's need for revenge against Juniper Cavanaugh.

"You know they'll bring her out if they can," he said, trying to reassure Flick.

"With only the two of them, I just don't see how that'll be possible."

"Have you forgotten who Neo is? Believe me, there's no way Juniper can best Neo."

Neo appeared seconds later carrying a filthy woman Kern assumed was Galena. She had rolled herself into a ball, her hair hanging like dirty brown strands of rope in front of her face. *What the hell happened to her?*

Neo was flanked by Ramiro who kept looking over his shoulder. "Hurry," he heard Ramiro say.

Kern and Flick jumped to their feet and started tossing grass and dirt towards the ward, making the opening visible.

Neo motioned for Ramiro to precede him through the opening. It was a tight fit, but Ramiro managed to get through. He held out his hands for Neo. "You come out first in case the girl causes the portal to close."

Neo shook his head. "I'm not leaving her in here."

"You will if you have to. We have no other choice. The Realm can't fight this battle without you."

The closer Neo carried Galena to the opening, the smaller it became. "Leave her," Ramiro shouted, causing Galena to squeak and bury her face in her hands.

Flick stopped flinging dirt and charged towards Ramiro. "She has a name, and she's just as important as you are."

Ramiro narrowed his eyes and Flick actually took a step back. "I would watch a hundred Blessed Creatures die to save our leader. The question is, why wouldn't you?"

"Take her!" Neo yelled.

Flick and Ramiro stopped their argument to focus on Neo. Galena was half in and half out of the ward. Kern wiped the sweat from his forehead and continued to toss anything he could find against the ward.

Flick grabbed Galena's wrists and pulled her free just as the ward closed. He hoisted her into his arms and began whispering words Kern couldn't hear.

"Fuck!" Ramiro began to pace back and forth. "Now what?" he asked Neo.

"Now you get them out of here," Neo ordered.

Ramiro shook his head. "I'm not leaving without you."

"Yes you are. I can get myself out, but not without alerting everyone within a fifty-mile range that I'm doing it. Once that happens, Morwyn will be on these weres in a heartbeat. I need to make sure they're safe first."

Ramiro huffed for several brief moments before pointing towards Flick's truck. "You heard him — get out of here."

Flick ran towards the truck with Galena in his arms. Kern turned towards Ramiro. "I'll head back to the vineyard after I make sure Galena and Flick are safely on a plane home."

Ramiro shook his head. "You need to come back to The Realm with me."

"No," Kern argued. "There's nothing there for me now."

Ramiro grabbed the front of Kern's shirt. Although the two men were the same size, Ramiro easily lifted Kern off his feet. "Neo's about to declare war on Morwyn. Do you have any idea what that means? We're going to need every strong body we can find to help us win and yours is stronger than most."

The last thing Kern wanted was to see the two men that he'd lost. "I can't do it, Ram."

"You have to."

* * * *

Haig wiped the sweat from Audric's face and chest with a cool washcloth. For hours, Haig had held his fated mate while he'd suffered racking sobs. Each nightmare seemed a rehashing of past tortures at the hands of LaMont and his coven.

Although Haig still wasn't sure where he stood with Kern, there was definitely one conclusion he'd come to in the previous hours. Never again would he allow Audric to suffer one moment of unhappiness. No matter what it took or what he had to give up, Haig would spend his life making sure of that.

A knock sounded at the door, and Haig's hopes rose to the surface. "Come in."

Ramiro stepped into the room. "May I speak with you?"

Despite the sweat still pouring off of him, Haig tucked the sheet around Audric's naked body and got out of bed. Being nude in front of Ramiro didn't bother Haig, but by the expression on Ramiro's face, Haig felt he needed to be dressed for the conversation about to take place.

Leaving Audric alone wasn't an option. He pointed towards a pair of chairs in front of the unlit fireplace. Ramiro began speaking as soon as they settled. "I need you to know what we're up against."

"You mean with the pack?" Michael and Spiro had filled Haig in on the threat Morwyn presented if he was indeed with the Galway weres.

"It's not just a pack, Haig. Morwyn has built an army of..." He shook his head. "Mutants." He shrugged. "There's no other way to describe the creatures I saw today. I think he must've started working his brand of magic on the weres of Galway, but he's moved on to all the Blessed Creatures who've been unhappy for one reason or another with The Realm. The weres are twice as big, twice as strong as you are. The vampires seem to be in a permanent state of blood frenzy like nothing I've ever seen."

"Then how can we defeat them?" Haig glanced over at Audric's restless sleep. *And how can I protect the men I love?*

With his forearms resting on his knees, Ramiro bent his head and threaded his fingers through his shoulder-length black hair. "I don't know. Neo's gone to speak to his father. His hope is that since Morwyn is Zeus's brother, he'll be able to help."

"And in the meantime?"

Ramiro sat up and glanced towards the bed. "Hold the ones you love close." He turned and met Haig's gaze. "All of them."

Haig nodded. "You don't have to tell me that. I'm not the one who left earlier without saying goodbye. I'm not the one who's been back to The Realm for who knows how long and hasn't bothered to come up and check on either of his mates."

"I just spent an hour trying to talk Kern out of volunteering for what could be a suicide mission."

"What?" Haig jumped to his feet and towered over the vampire. "Who's sending him?"

"No one yet, but he told Neo he would try to infiltrate Morwyn's army. I tried to tell him he should stay here and use that energy for something more positive like fighting for the men he loves. Unfortunately, he's convinced he can't challenge what the Gods have fated."

"I won't let him go."

Ramiro leant forward, his eyes narrowing just a bit. "Then you'd better get downstairs and make damn sure he knows that."

"Kern?" Audric's weak voice called.

Haig jumped up and strode towards the bed. "You're awake."

"Kern," Audric said again.

Haig sat on the edge of the bed and smoothed his hand over Audric's cheek. "He's not here, love."

"I need to talk to him." Audric pushed at the covers and sat up.

"I'll find him for you." Haig resettled Audric on the pillow.

"Where is he?" he asked Ramiro.

Ramiro smiled. "You'll find him outside the conference room, waiting for further orders from Neo."

* * * *

Kern had his face buried in his hands when he felt someone sit beside him. He sprang up and was surprised to find Haig. "What're you doing here? Is Audric okay?"

Haig rested his forearms on his knees and shook his head. "Nope. I don't think any of us are okay, do you?"

"You'll go on," Kern mumbled. He tried to hide the pain coursing through his body. When Haig had hit the ward...had that really only been the day before? Kern shook his head. He felt like each minute had stretched into an hour. The combination of sexual need during the mating frenzy had been nothing compared to his emotional needs at the thought of losing his two mates.

Haig reached over and tried to hold Kern's hand, but Kern pulled back. "Don't."

"You can't just give up on us," Haig told him. "I don't understand how you'd willingly fight for The Realm but not your family. But it doesn't matter, because you're not going."

"Yes I am. If Neo gives me the go-ahead, I'm outta here," Kern stated. "I've made up my mind. It's the right thing to do."

In a flash Haig towered over Kern with his hand wrapped around Kern's neck. "I said, you're not going."

Kern tried to hold Haig's stare, but his mate had been born to the Alpha position, and Kern had always respected that. He averted his eyes and tilted his head to the side, baring his throat. "Don't keep me here. I can't stand to watch the two of you forget about me." He met Haig's gaze again. "It'll kill me and we both know it."

Haig's hand slid to the back of Kern's neck as he leant down for a kiss. Knowing it may be the last time, Kern willingly opened for his mate's probing tongue. How would he get through a single day without the taste of Haig in his mouth?

Kern groaned when Haig sat down to straddle his lap. His hands scrambled to wrap around Haig's muscular body, drawing his mate even closer. "Gods, I love you," he said as a sob broke free. He dug his fingers into Haig's flesh, wishing he could keep his mate forever.

Haig pulled away first, loosening Kern's grip. "Come upstairs so we can talk."

"Audric doesn't need me. I was his forced mate. You're the one he's always needed."

"They why did he wake up with your name on his lips?"

Shocked, Kern started to shake his head no, but Haig's hands on either side of his face stopped him. "He needs to see you."

The thought of saying goodbye to Audric threatened Kern's control once again. "He's probably remembered how Richard made me mate him against his will. He probably just wants to spit on me."

Haig tilted Kern's chin up. "Do you really think he's capable of something like that? He's been through a life of pure hell. I know—I've seen it." Haig shook his head. "He deserves all the love the two of us can give him and more."

Haig climbed off Kern's lap and held out his hand. "Come on."

With a great deal of reluctance and a heavy heart, Kern took Haig's hand. "What if Neo comes out to get me and I'm not here?"

"I have a suspicion that Neo's left you out here for so long in hopes we'll get our shit together and do what's right for our family. Now let's go do just that."

* * * *

Audric eyed Ramiro as he sat by the fireplace. He still wasn't sure how he'd be able to process all the memories, but he knew he had a lot to make up for. Starting with the handsome man across the room. "I'm sorry."

Ramiro's head snapped up. "Excuse me?"

"I know LaMont made you have sex with me after he turned you. I'm sorry."

"Don't apologise. I don't dwell on my early days in LaMont's dungeon."

"You should, you know?"

"Why, so I can become even more bitter about what he did? Believe me, it doesn't help."

Audric remembered the companion who was captured at the same time as Ramiro. *Claudio*. The two men were obviously in love, but it was a time in history when men couldn't openly show their feelings for each other.

LaMont had been thrilled to play games with the two lovers. For days after Ramiro's change, LaMont slowly stripped the skin from Claudio. Battling the blood frenzy that always occurred, Ramiro fought the urge to consume the blood of his lover. It had taken over a week for Claudio's strong body to finally bleed to death, but LaMont made sure Ramiro drank every drop. Because he wasn't allowed to bite Claudio, Ramiro's feeding resulted in nothing but the death of the man he so obviously loved.

Audric continued to study Ramiro closely. No, the man had never dealt with what he'd done. "It wasn't your fault that Claudio died." He knew he was taking a big chance by bringing it up, but what other way could he hope to make amends for the things he'd been forced to do.

Instead of answering, Ramiro just disappeared.

Audric threw off the covers and tried to stand on wobbly legs. How long had it been since he'd fed? He hadn't even had the nasty bottled blood for a few days, he realised. Holding onto the furniture, he made his way to the en suite bathroom.

"Audric?" Haig called.

"I'm in here. I'll be out in a second." He closed his eyes and willed for a nice stream to release. When nothing happened, he realised he was becoming dehydrated. Not good when your body was unable to produce its own fluid.

He finally gave up when he heard Kern's low voice mumble something to Haig. *Kern*. Audric took a deep breath. His role in Ramiro's past wasn't the only thing he needed to atone for. He made his way out of the bathroom and leaned against the doorframe.

Haig was across the room in a heartbeat, lifting Audric off his feet. "You should've waited until I got back."

Audric rolled his eyes. "Turns out it was only wishful thinking anyway. I'm afraid I'm in dire need of blood."

Kern suddenly sprang into action. He turned to leave the room. "I'll get it."

"No!" Audric shouted to stop him. He looked at Haig. "Would you do it for me? I need to speak to Kern alone for a minute."

Haig looked uneasy about leaving the two of them alone but eventually nodded and laid him on the bed. He bent to give Audric a brief kiss. "I'll be right back."

As soon as Haig left the room, Audric patted the bed beside him. "Will you come here, or are you mad at me?"

Kern looked hurt. "I'm not mad at you. How can you ask me that?" He sat on the edge of the mattress and tucked one leg under himself, turning to face Audric. "You look a little better than you did the last time I saw you." Kern brushed the wayward curls out of Audric's face. "How're you doing?"

"Not good," Audric admitted. "I need to tell you something, but I'm afraid I'll lose you if I do."

"I already know the Gods destined you to be mated to Haig."

Audric shook his head. "That's not what I'm talking about." He took another deep breath and released it slowly, trying to work up his courage. "When Richard took control of your mind, he didn't have control of mine."

"What're you saying?" Kern asked.

"That I didn't fight Richard when he ordered you to mate with me."

"Why?"

Audric lifted his hand to his mouth and began pulling at the skin surrounding his thumbnail. "Because I wanted to know what it felt to belong, to truly belong to someone. I knew what mating did to weres, and although I doubted we'd make it out alive, I hoped your mate would find you, find us. I knew you'd be tied to me, and I prayed you'd eventually learn to love me."

"And I did." Kern covered Audric's hand where it rested on his stomach. "I think I began to fall the first time I caught you sleeping in the closet. All I wanted was to comfort you and drive away the pain I saw in your eyes."

"You did." Audric knew they were getting off track. "Anyway, I need to apologise for my part in the mating." Audric pushed his head back further into the pillow and bared his neck.

Kern gasped. "Why did you just do that?"

Audric straightened and stared up at Kern. "Do what?"

"Submit in the ways of a wolf. I thought your wolf died when you were turned?"

Finally, someone's fucking listening to me. "Shut up," Audric told the voice.

Kern reared back. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to bring up a bad memory."

It took Audric a moment to work out the reason for Kern's apology. "Oh, no, not you. There's been this annoying voice in my head for like a month and it's driving me crazy."

The biggest smile Audric had ever witnessed spread across Kern's face. "That's not an annoying voice, babe, it's your wolf."

Audric shook his head. "That's not possible. I remember the day my wolf finally stopped talking to me. It was the day I knew I could never go back to my life before LaMont turned me."

Kern bounced the bed slightly in his apparent excitement. "Don't you see? My bite must've woken him up, or whatever." Kern covered Audric's chest. "He's still in there. He's still part of you."

If Audric had had more fluid in his body he knew he'd be in tears at the thought he hadn't lost that part of himself after all. It was still doubtful his wolf would ever be strong enough to allow him to shift, but knowing he was there warmed Audric more than he thought possible.

Audric and Kern both had goofy grins on their faces when Haig came into the room carrying a tray of bottled blood. "Did I miss something?"

Kern quickly filled Haig in while Audric gulped down the first of three bottles.

Haig started removing his clothes and gestured for Kern to do the same. "Well, what are you waiting for? Let's welcome Audric's wolf back properly."

Kern stood and took a step back.

Haig was having none of it. "Sit down," he ordered. "You two have had your little private talk, now it's my turn."

Although Audric knew Haig was an Alpha wolf, he'd never seen his fated mate so commanding before. His cock responded immediately, trying to poke up beyond the edge of the sheet that rested in his lap.

"I've done some thinking, and I have an idea," Haig began.

Kern resumed his place next to Audric. He glanced at Audric and his eyes went wide at the glistening cockhead visible above the sheet.

“Pay attention!” Haig commanded. “Now, we all know what will happen if I bite Audric hard enough to mate with him, but who the hell says I have to? The three of us love each other. Shouldn’t that be enough to please the Gods? I don’t need to officially mate with Audric to consider him part of my family. I’d give my life for either of you. Isn’t that what a mate does?”

Kern nodded. “I just never even considered you’d give up the chance to feel what being a fated mate was like.”

“I’m not giving up anything.” Haig crawled across the bed towards Kern. “And as I see it, I’m getting two mates instead of just the one the Gods promised.”

Epilogue

Haig reached down to put his hand on Audric's well-used ass, only to find Kern's already there. He looked over the top of Audric's head and grinned at Kern. "You trying to stake your claim before we get to the bar?"

Kern let out a grunt. "I can't believe we're actually going to let our mate dine on a stupid fae."

Haig shrugged. Other than human, fae blood was the only substitute that would keep Audric fed and strong. Since war preparations had begun, Neo had reluctantly agreed to relocate operations to The Realm, the one place Morwyn couldn't invade. It had left the threesome with little choice but to seek out the fae.

"Horny little bastards," Kern grumbled.

Haig caught Audric's grin. Although Haig doubted Audric would ever admit it, Audric seemed to prefer the fae blood to human. It was well known the fae's sex drive was twice that of mortal men. No doubt their blood was pure honey by the time Audric got them all worked up. Haig had even gone as far as to ask Ramiro to explain the feeding process to Kern, and why Audric did what he did to excite his donors, but Kern still seemed reluctant to witness it.

Audric leant his head on Kern's shoulder as they walked towards the bar. "Will it help if I tell you how horny it makes me to feed?"

"No," Kern answered. "Not when you've got a damn fae in your arms."

Audric chuckled. "The moment I seal their wound, I forget them and go looking for one of my mates. Isn't that right, Haig?"

Haig adjusted his hardening cock. "Oh, yeah." He smiled at Kern again. "And he doesn't usually care where he is when it happens."

"No wonder you always insist on taking him." Kern chuckled. "I thought you went to protect him, but you're going just to reap the rewards."

"You got that right." He stopped and opened the door. Although the palace was otherworldly and sat on a plain above everything else, the rest of The Realm resembled a normal city.

When they walked into the bar, the noise hit Haig first, just like it always did. Getting used to so many Blessed Creatures in one location hadn't been easy, but it was becoming easier. Between the addition of Neo's people and those loyal to Ian Kildare, The Realm had become quite crowded, but it was the only way the Gods could think to keep them safe. Neo, Ramiro and Gunnar had been working with some of the more powerful Gods and demigods to come up with a plan to destroy Morwyn once and for all.

At first Haig hadn't understood why the Gods didn't just zap them or whatever it was Gods did, but Neo had explained the need to preserve Earth and its inhabitants while also ridding them of Morwyn and his army of mutants.

The first thing he noticed after scanning the huge room was Ramiro in his customary place at the table in the corner. Haig wasn't sure what was going on with Ramiro, but he'd changed in the last three weeks. Gone was the vampire who fed then kicked back to watch the crowd. The new Ramiro couldn't seem to get enough blood. On a normal night, Haig would watch as Ramiro fed five or six times with different men, many of whom he openly fucked afterwards.

During one of their frequent talks in the last three weeks, Audric had told him about Ramiro's first partner, Claudio. Haig assumed Ramiro's change in feeding habits had something to do with being reminded of what he'd done to Claudio.

If only Gunnar would pull his head out of his ass. Haig gave his Alpha credit though. At least Gunnar had begun to ease his way into the life of a vampire. He'd even seen him at the bar once. Well, that wasn't exactly true. In all actuality, Gunnar had nearly run Haig over trying to get out of the bar, but at least he'd been inside.

"Bar or table?" Audric asked.

"Table," Haig answered. "I'm not sure if Kern's ready for the bar yet."

Haig led the way to a table only about three away from Ramiro's. Audric's hands were already starting to roam over Haig's body. He took a seat and pulled the little vamp down into his lap. "Getting in the mood, are you?"

Audric grinned and leaned in to whisper in Haig's ear. "I'm feeling especially hungry tonight. Don't let me freak Kern out."

Haig turned his head enough to capture Audric's mouth. He swept his tongue in deep while he massaged Audric's jean-clad ass with his hands.

"Is this what the two of you do when you leave every night?" Kern asked, his arms crossed in front of his chest.

Although he loved the feel of Audric's erection pressing against him, he nudged his mate off his lap. "Someone's pouting."

Audric made a sexy show of straddling Kern's lap. "I think you'll find out the payoff in the end is worth me teasing some fae into giving up his blood." Audric licked the scar running down the side of Kern's face as he ground his hard cock against him. "Feel that?"

Kern groaned and tried to stick his hand down the back of Audric's jeans. "How could I not?"

"Well, this is for you and Haig. I need you to remember that when you see it later."

"Will I?" Kern asked. He gave up trying to insinuate his hand under Audric's waistband and settled for scraping the denim seam riding between Audric's ass cheeks with his fingernails.

Audric's back bowed when Kern pressed against the plug he'd stuck up Audric's ass before they left their room. "Again," Audric begged.

Haig kicked back in his chair and enjoyed the show. He'd learned to love watching his mates go at each other. A fae with long blond hair caught Haig's eye. If there was one thing he enjoyed about the fae it was how gorgeous they all were, not an ugly one in the bunch.

"You've got someone eyeing you," he told Audric.

Audric slowed his grinding rhythm to glance over his shoulder. He smiled at the fae before turning back to Kern. "If you'll give me ten minutes, I'll be back to finish what we've started."

Kern growled and tried to hold Audric on his lap. Audric gave Haig a pleading look and mouthed, "Help."

Haig glanced around the area before unzipping his jeans. There were several people around, but most seemed occupied. With his erection free of its confinement, he tapped Kern

on the shoulder. "Why don't you come over and give me some attention while Audric takes care of business."

Kern stared at the cock in Haig's hand and licked his lips. "Stop trying to distract me."

Haig gave his cock several rough strokes, bucking up against his hand. "Distracting you isn't exactly what I have in mind. Drop your jeans and get over here."

Kern looked horrified at the thought of fucking in a public place. Audric gave Kern a sweet peck on the nose. "The same rules you're used to don't apply here. If you want Haig to fuck you, let him. No one cares." Audric reached into his front pocket and extracted a small tube of lube. "Here."

Kern was so shocked, he let Audric slip off his lap and disappear through the crowd with the gorgeous fae on his arm.

Haig reached over and squeezed Kern's shoulder. "Come on over and keep me company."

Although he seemed to be unsteady on his feet, Kern stood in front of Haig and slowly unzipped his jeans. "Are you going to let me fuck him when he finishes?"

Haig spun Kern around and pushed his jeans to the floor. Spreading Kern's muscled ass cheeks with his hands, Haig leant forward and swiped his tongue up the length of Kern's crack. "Of course," he said between licks. "I'll be too busy still fucking you."

For someone who had seemed so reluctant, it didn't take long for Kern to get into the spirit of his newest adventure. He quickly kicked his jeans off and passed the lube back before bracing his hands on his knees to give Haig better access to his hole.

"So pretty." Haig rimmed the puckered skin with the flat of his tongue before using the tip to try and drill his way inside.

A noise off to his left caught Haig's attention. He removed his face from Kern's crevice and glanced at Ramiro as he opened the lube. "Don't you have another fae to fuck?"

Ramiro grinned and held up a hand. Within seconds another fae stood in front of him with his neck willingly exposed. "I suppose I do," he answered before returning his attention to his newest donor.

Haig focussed back on Kern's ass. To his delight, Kern's hole opened immediately for his fingers. "Are you sure you're not still feeling my cock inside you from earlier?"

"Need it again," Kern said, pressing himself against Haig's hand.

Haig used his free hand to slick his cock before guiding Kern to sit on his lap. He wasn't sure why, but sex with Kern had taken on the same frenzy they'd felt the first hundred years of their lives together. Whatever the cause, Haig planned to enjoy every moment of the next hundred. With luck, the threesome would never lose the mating frenzy they all seemed to be under the spell of.

Kern wasted no time impaling himself on Haig's length right down to the root. "Ahh, fuck," Kern moaned as he started to ride Haig.

Haig pushed up the back of Kern's shirt and began kissing each branch and leaf of the large tattooed oak tree. They had decided to mark the years with Audric by giving the tree brighter leaves. When they tried to coax Audric into starting his own tree, Audric had declined, claiming there was only enough room on his scrawny back for a sapling, and he didn't want to be compared to Haig and Kern.

Haig grinned just thinking about it. As much as he hated Audric speaking badly about himself, his little vamp was right.

He spotted Audric and his little fae donor across the room by the bar. After nipping Kern's neck, Haig nudged at the man's ear. "Watch the way our mate stalks his prey."

When the fae grabbed Audric's ass, Kern's entire body tensed, causing Haig to grunt in pain. "Ease up, babe, or you're going to pinch my cock in two."

"How can you sit by and let another man touch him like that?"

Haig nipped Kern again, reminding him who he belonged to. "I'm not just sitting here. I happen to be fucking my mate, or had you forgotten?"

Kern used his legs to lift himself off Haig's cock before slamming down again. "No way to forget with you inside me."

"Good. Now watch him closely. The best part's coming up." Haig kept a strong arm around Kern's waist in case his mate decided to bolt.

Audric kept his eyes on Haig and Kern as his fangs dropped from their sheaths. He smiled at them just before he sank his teeth into the pale skin of the fae.

"See? He's watching you. What do you want to bet he's about to come in his jeans watching you fuck yourself on my cock?" Haig let his hand move down to apply lube to Kern's dripping erection. "Are you going to fuck him with this?"

"Yesss," Kern hissed, grinding his ass against Haig's balls.

"Keep watching," Haig reminded Kern.

Audric's fangs retracted and he licked the fae's neck. With barely a word to the satisfied fae, Audric wove his way through the crowd back to the table.

By the time Audric reached Kern, he already had his jeans riding just under his sac. "Need you," he said, pushing his jeans the rest of the way down and off. Being the nimble little shit he was, Audric climbed up to join them. He balanced his feet on the seat of the chair and tucked them securely under Haig's ass.

Before sitting on Kern's lap, he leant towards Haig and offered his cock. Never one to turn down a taste of Audric, Haig engulfed the dark cock head hungrily.

Haig heard Kern's groan as he pulled the plug out of Audric's ass. Patience wasn't one of Kern's strongest virtues, and he tore Audric away from Haig's mouth.

Audric gasped as his ass was filled with Kern's long thick cock. Haig moved his arms to Audric's back and stared into his eyes.

"Love you," he whispered.

"Forever," Audric countered as he started to move.

Kern pulled Audric's head down for a kiss, breaking the eye contact he'd had with Haig. With his mates momentarily distracted with each other, Haig's gaze lifted to the room. He was surprised to find a number of eyes staring his way. This surprised Haig. He'd seen every sort of fucking there was to see in the bar since they'd been in The Realm, so why all the attention on him and his two men?

Ramiro walked by and grinned at Haig. "Not even I can compete with the three of you."

Haig watched Ramiro's retreating back, trying to figure out what the vampire had meant.

Kern broke the kiss and tilted his head back to stare up at the ceiling. "I can't hold it any longer." His next words weren't words at all but howls as he shot his seed deep within his mate.

It didn't take long for both Audric and Haig to follow Kern over the edge. Haig gritted his teeth as he fought to stay silent. It was one thing to have an audience at such an intimate moment, but the last thing he wanted was to embarrass himself by squealing like a girl at the unbelievable intensity of his climax.

Kern and Audric both slumped against Haig as they all fought to regain some kind of normal breathing pattern.

Kern was the first to speak although his words somewhat ran together. "Can Audric feed every night?"

Haig chuckled. "I thought you wanted him to get used to the bottled blood?"

"Changed my mind," Kern mumbled. "You were right about feeding making him horny."

"You're wrong," Audric chimed in. "The two of you make me horny." He lifted his head from Kern's shoulder and looked up into Haig's eyes. "Later, will you fuck me slow? You know how much I like that."

Haig ran his hand down Audric's back, oblivious to the rest of the room. "It's called making love," he reminded his little vamp.

"Nope. I'm already in love, no need to keep trying to make what's already there."

"Good point," Haig agreed.

Holding both of his mates helped remind Haig why he'd willingly go to war to help keep them safe. The thought of Morwyn winning the war and getting his hands on Kern and Audric fuelled Haig's anger. Let Morwyn try to defeat The Realm with an army of magically altered Blessed Creatures. Haig knew the truth. You didn't win a war with strength alone. You won it with heart, something Morwyn lacked.

Audric was the first to untangle himself. He reached for his jeans and pulled them on before tossing Haig his. He gestured at Kern. "He's asleep, you know?"

Haig winked in return. "Doesn't surprise me. Kern could never keep up with me."

"Now that's a damn lie and you know it," Kern said, sitting up.

"Really? Prove it."

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About the Author

An avid reader for years, one day Carol Lynne decided to write her own brand of erotic romance. Carol juggles between being a full-time mother and a full-time writer. These days, you can usually find Carol either cleaning jelly out of the carpet or nestled in her favourite chair writing steamy love scenes.

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Also by Carol Lynne

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Carol loves to hear from readers. You can find her contact information, website and author biography at <http://www.total-e-bound.com>.

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