



TEARS
OF **BLOOD**

DRONE VAMPIRE SERIES

STEPHANI HECHT

Times have never been more perilous for the Drone Vampires and their allied coven. The war against the Pure Born government continues to take heavy casualties and the Drones are in danger of losing what little bit of freedom they have remaining. At the cusp of a major battle that could very well change the tide of the war, it isn't a good idea to fall in love. Now try telling that to a certain warlock and vampire.

From the very first day he came to live with the Drones, Toby has been infatuated with a warlock named Blaine. Not wanting to be rejected by the brooding, yet handsome man, Toby keeps his attraction to himself. Then one fateful day he and Blaine share an intimate encounter and Toby blurts out his attraction only to have Blaine push him away.

Blaine cares deeply for the shy, sexy Drone, but he knows that they can never be together. Haunted by a tragic mistake in his past, Blaine doesn't believe he deserves any kind of happiness, let alone someone as wonderful as Toby. Even though it nearly destroys him, he vows to never claim Toby as his.

When a turn of events leads the Drones and the coven on the brink of annihilation, Blaine realizes he could lose Toby. Will Blaine be able to overcome the shadows of his past? Or will his doubts put not only himself, but Toby in mortal jeopardy?

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TEARS OF BLOOD
DRONE VAMPIRE CHRONICLES TWELVE

BY

STEPHANİ HECHT

DEDICATION

To all the little monsters out there.

CHAPTER ONE

If Blaine had to guess how his day would have ended, he'd have never imagined it would be under the hind end of a skunk ape. Not just any skunk ape either, but a really, really stinky one. Since those suckers already reeked to hell and back, that said a lot, too.

"Get the fuck off me," Blaine grated as he wiggled under the heavy bastard.

He tried to fire off some magic, but given the awkward angle and the fact that skunk apes had such thick hides, all he did was sizzle its natty, gray fur some. His eyes watered as the stench of burnt hair mixed in with the already overpowered stink of skunk ape.

If asked, he couldn't even really explain the stink. Maybe the best way would be that it was a mixture of rot, mildew and wet dog. Gagging, he dug his nails into the grass and tried to pull himself away. All the while, he scanned the darkening skyline of Pontiac in a desperate attempt that aid would be coming.

Since he'd called out for help not only to his coven but to the clan of vampire they were aligned with, surely somebody had to be on their way. Right?

"I said get off, you furry mother fucker," he snarled.

The skunk ape let out a low purring sound as it ground its ass cheeks more firmly into his back. A popping sound, followed by the sickening sensation of something thick and

warm trickling down his arm made him groan. One of the numerous pustules dotting the creatures hindquarters must have burst open.

Great, there was no way he'd ever get that mess off his uniform. Even leather was only so forgiving. He was so going to kill that skunk ape for this. Blaine just had to figure out how to get away soon.

"I will get up when the warlock apologizes and not a moment sooner," the skunk ape replied in a gravelly voice.

"I'll apologize when you've taken a bath and given yourself a good shave," Blaine countered.

"You're very lucky magics give me heartburn or I'd just eat you and be done with this."

"And you're lucky I can't use my magic or else I'd blow your fucking ass to a million little pieces." Blaine continued to squirm, his stomach doing a neat flip when another pustule broke, this time the slime going down his neck.

He craned his head, trying to get a better look at his foe. All he managed to do was get an eyepoke of gray fur. Blaine couldn't even tell if the damn thing was a male or female. Even before he'd been dumped onto his face, he hadn't dared look between the thing's legs to see what it was sporting. The voice wasn't any help either since all skunk apes sounded the same.

"You have one last chance to get up before I blast your ass from here to Detroit," Blaine warned in his most dangerous tone.

Usually a threat like that sent others scurrying to obey his orders. This skunk ape just laughed as it ground its ass once more against him. Blaine paused, his body turning to ice as a horrifying thought occurred to him.

"Are you trying to get off on me?" he demanded. *I will not throw up. I'll at least manage to maintain that little bit of my dignity.*

The skunk demon paused, a humming sound of pure bliss rumbling from its body. “Maybe,” it replied in a singsong, flirtatious tone.

Blaine’s heart hammered with honest to goddess fear as he recalled how bloody and painful skunk ape mating rituals were. Although he wasn’t proud of it, a small sound of distress slipped past his parted lips. Adrenaline surged through his body, giving him the strength to begin his struggles anew. However, Skunky remained as strong as ever, so all Blaine got for his efforts was more dirt collected under his fingernails.

Then things went from god-awful to oh-fuck-just-kill-me-now when he heard a suspiciously familiar laugh. Blaine closed his eyes as he wondered if maybe it wouldn’t be better to get eviscerated and then injected with Skunky’s slime after all.

He glanced up and spotted two sets of black boots. They matched his, being more fitted than the combat style the Drones wore, which only further confirmed his suspicions as to who the owners were. When his gaze traveled up far enough to make out the rest of the uniform, his heart sank. Yup, black leather, trimmed in green, just like him. They even had the same damn type of hoods covering their heads. He finally looked his *saviors* into the face.

Great, it just *had* to be Ian and Donavan who came to help.

The two warlock brothers and their cousin just recently joined the coven. Unfortunately, their transition to their new magic family hadn’t been exactly smooth. Since the three men used to be part of the notoriously evil coven, the Ninth, most didn’t trust or like them. Even though they were now supposed to be reformed and good guys, it was hard to forget who they used to be. Especially since their bodies were still marked with the evil coven’s trademark tattoos. Add in their dark hair, huge builds and brooding looks and

they scared half the coven and intimidated the other part.

While Donovan and his cousin Lachlan had been going out of their way to be nice to others, Ian had been doing anything but. Which is why Blaine wasn't overly surprised to see a smirk on the warlock's face.

"Uh, Blaine...there's something stuck to the back of your shirt," Ian informed in an infuriatingly calm voice.

"Knock it off," Donovan snapped, his dark gaze assessing the situation

"What?" Ian cocked his head to the side. "The attitude or the huge monkey dry humping Blaine?"

Skunky snarled at them. "You will not touch the warlock. He belongs to me."

Ian held up a finger, making a tsking noise. "Hate to break it to you, smelly, but I know of a certain vampire who'd argue that one."

"Shut up," Blaine hissed. Things were bad enough as it was without Ian bringing up that very touchy subject.

Of course, the asshat had to go and ignore him. Ian grinned and nearly bounced with excitement as he delivered his next zinger, "You should really heed my warning, stinky. Even though Toby may be just a vampire, he's a really big one. Everyone knows how vamps are when you touch their mates, too. He'll rip your furry hide up quicker than a dog with a cheap chew toy."

"Toby isn't my mate," Blaine denied, even though it felt like someone kicked him in the gut as he formed the words.

Despite the very sucky situation he currently was in, an image of the vampire flashed across Blaine's mind. The way the man's dark hair curled a bit around his ears, the way his blue eyes could look so earnest at times. How when he smiled it made a strange ache build up in Blaine's chest. The way Toby smelled like—

Ian clapped his hands, rudely jerking Blaine back to the

present. "Stay with me, here, Blaine."

At the same time, Skunky reached down and grabbed a handful of Blaine's hair. "Since you don't want the vampire, then I can have you."

Realizing it was futile to look at Ian for help, Blaine turned his attention to Donovan. "Please?"

He didn't have to say anything more. Donovan raised a hand, muttered a few soft words and shot off a small burst of magic. A jolt of lighting danced through the air and smacked Skunky on its well-furred ass.

The skunk ape yelped as it leapt off Blaine. "Yeow! Not nice!"

It let out a low growl, but another burst of Donovan's magic sent the thing scurrying away. Unfortunately, its stench stayed behind. It took Blaine a few seconds to realize that was because he happened to be coated in the rank smell.

He sat up and let out a shudder as he felt the slime and puss mixture slide down his shirt. More of it stuck to his hair, making the dark stands stick to his face. While he yearned to reach up and brush them away, that would mean touching the gunk. Given that he already had the slime covering his entire back, he didn't want to add to the problem.

He turned to glare at Ian. "Not. A. Fucking. Word."

The corners of Ian's lips twitched for a few seconds before he finally dissolved into full-blown laughter.

Blaine snarled at the idiot before glancing over at Donovan. It was to the warlock's credit that he didn't even have a hint of a smile on his lips. If anything, Blaine would say there was sympathy lurking on the warlock's face.

"Get this crap off me," Blaine requested. It took everything in him for the statement to not come off as pleading or whining.

"I can't," Donovan replied with an apologetic shrug.

Blaine groaned. Of course, how could he have forgotten? The lone way to get rid of skunk ape contamination was to wash with a special blend of essential oils and herbs. The only way to get said blend was for him to shag his ass back to the coven-slash-clan.

Shit!

"At least Lachlan is on duty tonight at the infirmary so you won't have to hope that the vampire doc has the cure handy. It should only take him a couple of minutes to whip it up," Donovan offered lamely.

"Yeah, and the infirmary happens to be at the very back of the dwelling. So you'll only have to walk by...oh, everybody to get there," Ian added, between bouts of laughter.

Blaine pushed himself to his feet. As he shook some of the goo off his arms, he fought the temptation to flick some of it Ian's way. It was only because he didn't want to stoop to the other warlock's level that Blaine didn't give into that desire.

"How did you manage to get into the fight with the skunk ape in the first place?" Donovan asked.

The question wasn't completely unwarranted. Usually, the creatures hung out in rural areas and never ventured into cities as big as Pontiac. In fact, Blaine hadn't seen one in years and that had been when he still lived at his childhood coven that was located in the side of a mountain.

"I found it attacking an urisk," he explained as he nodded over to the tiny crumbled body several feet away.

Surprisingly, that sobered Ian up almost immediately. He let out a soft sound of dismay as he ventured over to the creature. Half humanoid, half goat, it only weighed around fifty pounds. The poor thing hadn't stood a chance against Skunky.

"Who would want to hurt an urisk?" Ian demanded as he scooped up the small body.

"I have no idea. Urisks never harm anyone. If anything, they're almost too eager in their desire to always be helpful," Blaine replied, regret heavy on his heart. "I only wish I'd been able to save it."

Ian muttered a basic spell and incinerated the urisk within a matter of moments. The wind picked up the ashes and slowly blew them down the deserted back street. The muffled sounds of human activity and traffic warned that they could be discovered at any moment. That would not be good. While a handful of humans knew about the existence of the paranormal world, as a rule, it was best to keep things a secret from the majority of mankind. The last thing any of them wanted, be they good guy or baddie, was a repeat of the inquisition.

So having some man or woman stumble across three leather clad guys carrying several weapons and magical items would not be the best way to end their day. Add in the fact that Blaine felt pretty sure he looked like he'd been run over a very, slimy dump truck he knew they needed to get their asses back to the dwelling ASAP.

"So where's Kale? I thought you two didn't even take a piss without the other one being there to help out," Ian asked as he brushed the rest of the ashes off his hands.

Blaine resisted the urge to turn his head to the left, the side his twin always stood on. While Ian may be annoying as hell, he did have a point. Kale and Blaine rarely went anywhere without the other. He'd die before he conceded that, however.

"Yeah, because you and Donovan don't have separation anxiety issues of your own. The only thing missing is Ian tripping after you." Blaine frowned in the direction Skunky had taken off in. "I wish you hadn't mentioned Toby's name to that thing."

"Why? You afraid smelly britches will take off after your

vampire or something?" Ian asked, a snarky grin covering his mug.

"Toby isn't my vampire," Blaine corrected, even though it hurt like hell to speak those damn words.

"You could have fooled me. Going by the looks you two give each other, I would have placed bets that you guys were already fucking," Ian continued to taunt.

Blaine ignored the comment. Ian was the last one Blaine would confide to. There was a very valid reason why Blaine refused to act on his attraction to Toby—one that nearly tore Blaine apart inside and threatened to destroy him. The secret was so shameful and terrible that not even Kale knew.

"Toby is better off without me," Blaine finally said curtly.

Ian opened his mouth as if he wanted to fire off another comment, but Donovan silenced him with a slicing motion. Blaine let out a soft sigh of relief. Ian may not listen to many, but when it came to Donovan, he usually followed orders. Sure enough, Ian didn't speak again as they slowly made their way through the city.

They used back streets and alleys to better avoid detection. As they walked, Blaine noted with some surprise how natural it felt to have the brothers flanking him. Despite their black magic past and Ian's attitude, Blaine had grown to trust the warlocks. So much so, that for the first time that night, Blaine allowed himself to relax a bit.

"Why were you patrolling on your own?" Donovan demanded in a soft voice.

Blaine resisted the urge to scrub at his face. The gunk had started to dry and it made it even more uncomfortable. "I was with Lance at first, but he kind of got distracted and wandered off."

Donovan cocked a brow. "*Distracted?*"

"We stumbled across a succubus," Blaine explained shortly.

"So, he just went off for some fun and left you without backup?" Donovan shook his head.

"Why are you so surprised? Lance has always been a first-rate fuck up," Ian snorted.

Blaine couldn't argue that point. The main reason their coven leader had even paired Blaine up with the nitwit had been in a last ditch effort to train Lance. The fact Blaine hadn't been able to do so stuck in his craw like a bitter dose of hemlock. Blaine was one of the highest-ranking warlocks in Ethan's ranks and it'd been a long time since he'd failed his leader.

"I should have kept better control of him," Blaine spat out, angry with himself.

"Last time I checked, Lance had just as many years of training as you. It's not your fault he refused to put all that time to good use," Donovan soothed. "Sure Ethan's going to be mad as hell, but it's not going to be at you. Lance will probably, finally, be demoted to a civilian position though."

"If I were Lance, I'd be more worried about how Kale's going to react once he hears about what happened," Ian chimed in.

Yeah, that wasn't going to be fun at all. Kale may be the easier going of the two, but they were both very protective of each other. When it got out that Lance not only deserted Blaine but also nearly got him killed in the process, there was going to be trouble.

"Good. Lance deserves a good ass kicking for bailing on Blaine the way he did," Donovan snarled.

"Not only that, but it shows no respect for Ethan," Ian added, shocking the snot out of Blaine.

"I thought you didn't like Ethan," Donovan couldn't resist goading.

Ian let out a long, suffering sigh. "What can I say? The Justin Bieber of the warlock world grew on me."

"You do realize that Ethan's in his twenties, which makes him too old to be a Bieber," Donovan pointed out.

That got him another one of those sighs. "Yeah, it's just that with all that blond hair and *aw-shucks* goodness around him, I can't help but make the comparison."

Blaine stopped walking so he could shoot off an incredulous look. "Ethan spent some time with the Ninth, just like you did. So he can be as badass as anyone. In fact, I was there when he decimated a good portion of the Ninth's coven. He did it with one wave of his hand, too."

Too bad, there hadn't been one certain member of the Ninth present that day. If there had, Blaine could have claimed Toby as his mate a long time ago. Instead, he had to keep the vampire at arm's length all the while looking over his own shoulder in fear of the damn warlock returning. Doing that while having such strong feelings for Toby didn't make things easy for Blaine either. Every time he saw that small flash of hurt pass over Toby's soft, blues, it felt as if Blaine lost another piece of his soul.

Instead of the snarky comeback Blaine expected, Ian got a thoughtful expression on his face. "I don't know. I guess I sometimes wonder how Ethan managed to get away while I didn't."

"From the Ninth?"

"That and from their influence. It's like..." Ian tailed off as he flicked a glance over at Donovan who merely shrugged.

"If you want to have sharing hour with Blaine, who am I to deny you?" Donovan replied casually.

Yet, the situation wasn't casual. Even with the added empathy gifts that came with his magical abilities, Blaine would have been able to detect the stress building in the two brothers. Their body posture practically screamed of it.

Ian took a deep breath before he continued, "It's like, even

though I no longer live under the coven's influence, they still have a hold on me. It doesn't matter how far I run or how many people I help, the Ninth's stench still covers me."

Donavan pierced Blaine with a squirm-inducing knowing look. "But you should understand that. From what I hear, you lived with the Ninth for a while yourself."

Blaine's heart hammered so hard in his chest werewolves three cities over probably heard it. As always, whenever he thought about that hellish time of his life, bile built up in his gut as a cold sweat broke out over his body. "Yeah, Kale and I were part of Ethan's group."

"Ethan's mother was your coven leader at the time, right?" Ian cocked his head to the side.

Blaine nodded. "Ethan only took over recently."

"Yet, she still sent her son and a group of then-equally young warlocks off to be trained by the Ninth." Ian made a disgusted sound.

"She wanted to have a group of soldiers who were trained in both black and white magic. Since Kale and I were twins, she was even more interested in us being what she considered properly trained," Blaine spat out bitterly.

"You sound like you didn't approve of the living situations."

"What do you expect? That I would be happy there?" Blaine snapped. "Maybe if it had just been me it would have been livable. But Kale's not like us, he—" Blaine bit off the rest of his sentence, pressing his lips together so hard it caused pain to shoot down his jaw.

Unwanted memoirs slammed into him—of having to listen to Kale's cries of pain, the way it had felt to have to stand by and watch his twin being punished. Of the desperate measures Blaine had gone to in order to keep Kale safe.

"But it got better for Kale, didn't it?" Ian demanded, his

usually hard eyes growing soft with understanding.

It felt as if someone had sucked the air from Blaine's lungs. *Ian knew!* How the warlock figured it out Blaine couldn't fathom, but there was no denying the look of compassion and knowing flashing over the man's eyes.

"Who was it?" Donavan nearly whispered as he put a comforting hand on Blaine's shoulder.

"It doesn't matter," Blaine replied in an equally low voice. "It's done and I can't take it back. All I can do is to make sure that my actions don't hurt anybody else."

"Shit, that's why you're staying away from Toby, isn't it?" Donavan gasped.

After so many years of keeping the secret to himself, Blaine found himself finally admitting, "Yeah, the warlock from the Ninth who...I had the arrangement with promised me that if I ever tried to be with anyone else, he'd know. He said that he'd kill whoever I took as a mate and that as long as he lived, I'd never be happy."

Both Donavan and Ian were gaping at him now, identical looks of horror on their faces. Donavan finally swallowed and asked, "What does Kale say about all this?"

"He doesn't know and I appreciate it staying that way," Blaine replied savagely.

Donavan gave him an awkward, one-arm, buddy hug. "Don't worry, we won't tell anybody."

Blaine let out a sigh of relief. After so long, it felt good to have someone know his darkest secret. What's more, they seemed to understand and didn't act a bit revolted. Blaine realized then that against all his prejudices, at that moment, Ian and Donavan had become two of his closest allies.

Damn if it didn't feel right, too.

CHAPTER TWO

Toby glanced down at the bag in his hand, his gut clenching painfully. His mind rebelled against the mere thought of touching the thing, let alone putting it to his mouth and sinking his fangs into it. His gaze remained riveted on the dark, crimson liquid contained in the thick plastic.

He shifted it slightly in his hand, the contents sliding from one side to the other, the harsh lights of the workroom glinting off the red. Even through the barrier, the liquid felt warm. His stomach did another flip as he recalled how he'd been told the temperature had been established to make it more palatable and life-like.

Blood. He never could stand the stuff. As a child, he'd been terrified by it. Just one look at it, be it from his own scrapes or a classmate's, and fear would shoot through his chubby, little body. As he grew into a tall, lean, adult, he didn't leave that phobia behind. While he still didn't cry and get all slobbery in his fits, his stomach never failed to summersault whenever he encountered the stuff.

Now he had to drink it in order to live. So here he sat, a fucking vampire afraid of his own food. If it wasn't so fucking pathetic, it would be laughable.

"Staring at it won't help," a quiet voice spoke, cutting into Toby's morose thoughts.

He glanced up and saw his brother, Micah, slowly approaching. While the rest of the workroom bustled with activity, until that moment, nobody had given Toby much notice.

Micah wore the all-dark uniform of cargo pants and long-sleeved t-shirt that all the Drone soldiers from their clan wore. Strapped on his thin, yet muscular body were several weapons. Just a year ago, Toby would have found it difficult to identify even one of them. Now he knew each and every weapon so intimately their internal mechanisms seemed to be burned into his memory.

While many said he and Micah were very close in looks, with their dark hair and blue eyes, the brothers did have their own uniqueness as well. Micah wore his hair a bit longer, where Toby favored a more military cut. While Micah may be bigger than most humans, Toby now surpassed his brother in the brawn department. Most of all, Micah took to their new life as vampire with much more ease than Toby.

Maybe that last bit wasn't exactly fair since Micah had been a vampire far longer than Toby. From what Toby heard, Micah didn't have an easy go with it at first, since it had been before the rebellion and he'd been under the control on the Pure Born-run Vampire Regulation Force, or VRF as they were better known as.

Micah reached out and gently pulled the bag from Toby's hands. "It does get easier as time goes on. I promise."

"If you say so," Toby agreed dully.

"Maybe if you just took on a feeding buddy, things may go smoother," Micah suggested.

Toby was already shaking his head before Micah finished the sentence. "Not an option. No matter how much you try to keep it casual, those arrangements always end up with strings on them."

"I guess I can't blame you for not wanting to take a live donor. Before I found my mate, I usually fed off the bagged stuff myself," Micah admitted, his gaze now fixated on the bag.

"Why?"

Micah shrugged. "Until Ozzie, I just wasn't that interested in having a warm body under me."

Toby nodded, even though that had been before his time with the clan, he'd heard rumors that Micah used to pretty much keep to himself. He took the bag back from his brother and gave a deep breath. May as well man up and get this over with. He brought it up to his mouth, yet continued to hesitate.

Micah finally gave a sigh and grabbed a nearby thermal coffee mug. Jerking the blood back, he neatly cut off one corner, then poured the contents inside the cup.

"There's no law that says you have to stare your phobia full on," Micah explained as he snapped the lid back on.

As he handed it over, Toby couldn't help but smile at the words printed on the side of the mug, *I have big fangs and I know how to use them*. Under the lettering was a tiny teddy bear that had an impressive set of incisors.

"It's Dante's, but I'm sure he won't mind if we borrow it," Micah shrugged.

Toby allowed himself a chuckle before he took a tentative sip. As soon as the blood hit his tongue, he had to fight back a fresh wave of nausea. While he'd heard countless other vampires describe the taste as warm, velvety and even a bit sweet, he didn't find himself agreeing. If anything, the flavor came off as too bitter and thick. He lowered the cup and stared at it thoughtfully. Shit what was he going to do? His taste for the stuff was getting worse, not better. Be it his phobia or some kick in the nuts by the fates, he just couldn't stomach the stuff. As a result, he'd been taking in less and

less of the crap. Not a good situation when he had to drink in order to live.

"Does Ozzie taste different?" he asked. Maybe it was just the donor blood from the infirmary he couldn't handle. That only consisted of human or vampire. Perhaps if he tried drinking from another species, he'd have better results.

"You mean because he's half werewolf and half vampire?"

"Yeah, I've often wondered if different species have their own unique tastes."

Micah shrugged. "The only ones I could tell you about are vampires, magics and werewolves, but yeah they were all different. For example, Ozzie's blood has a kind of wild aftertaste to it."

Toby's mind had fixated on one part of Micah's statement however. "You drank from a magic?" His heart hammered as his mouth grew dry. *Please, don't let it have been Blaine. Please, please, please.*

Micah shrugged, completely blasé about the whole thing. Then again, he had no clue about the little internal battle going on Toby's end.

"It was only once, but yeah," Micah replied.

"Who—" Toby broke off to run his tongue over his lips in a desperate attempt to moisten them. "Who was it?"

"Morgan."

Toby sighed in relief until another thought occurred to him. "I thought she had two mates. Very big ones, too, if I recall."

"They were there, too, keeping an eye on the whole process. We were in the field and I got injured. They were worried that if we waited to get me back to the infirmary, I wouldn't make it. It was before Ozzie though," Micah was quick to add.

This made sense, given that Micah never left the clan dwelling without his overprotective mate tagging along.

Toby was surprised the wolf let Micah even go to the can by himself.

Micah began to fiddle with one of the various dismantled guns lying around, but Toby could tell his mind was on other things. Sure enough, a few beats later, Micah hedged, "Have you ever thought about asking...you, know – him?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Toby snapped, playing dumb. At the same time, an image of Blaine popped into Toby's head. Not that he had to work to bring up the visual. He'd spent so much time studying the warlock, Toby knew every aspect of the warlock's handsome features.

Blaine's inner gaze traveled up the man's tall, muscular body. He almost always wore his coven uniform that consisted of tight black pants and a matching shirt that had a hood on it. The garments were trimmed in green and the color contrasted nicely with Blaine's tan skin. He usually didn't wear his hood, instead allowing it to hang on his back. That was a decision Toby could get into, since it let him admire Blaine's dark, thick hair and the way it curled slightly at his collar.

Many times, Toby had been so tempted to reach out and run his fingers through the strands. He yearned to know if they felt as soft as they looked. Not that he'd ever dare though. Just one look of Blaine's dark-eyed gaze that held a clear back-off message was enough to make Toby keep his hands to himself.

The one and only time Blaine had even really talked to Toby had ended in disaster. The warlock had told him that while he may have feelings for Toby, he could never act on them. Toby practically pleaded for a better explanation, but Blaine just walked away. That incident had been a week ago and the warlock hadn't so much as glanced in Toby's direction since.

"Don't play coy. You were never good at it. Even when

we were kids. I know how you feel about Blaine,” Micah said.

Micah stared at him, his gaze so thoughtful and understanding Toby almost caved and confided everything. Then he looked around and took in all the activity around the workroom. While the place was usually buzzing, lately it’d seen even more action because the entire clan was preparing for a huge attack on the VRF’s main headquarters. It promised to be a bloody battle and there was no guarantee that any of them would even make it out alive. So the last thing Micah needed was the added stress of Toby’s problems.

Toby forced a carefree smile. “It’s just a crush, nothing more. Actually, I was thinking about taking your advice about finding a feeding buddy. You know...another vampire from our team or something. Jeremy already told me once before that he’d be willing to let me feed from him.”

The way Micah pursed his lips together told Toby his brother didn’t buy it for a second, so he decided to use another distraction instead. “Hey, you want to go visit Nolan? He’s getting a blood transfusion so we should be able to catch him in the infirmary.”

Micah gave a slow nod. “Fine, but we’re not done with this conversation.”

Toby gave a half-nod of consent before they got up. To pacify Micah, Toby took the mug with him, even though he knew he wouldn’t be able to manage one more drink. His aversion to blood seemed to be growing worse, by the second. Just a few days ago, he would have managed to choke it down. Now, even thinking about it made him want to blow chunks.

The new Drone dwelling was in what had once been a sprawling office building. Since the human business had fallen victim to the crappy economy and vacated the

premises, the Drones purchased it, converting it to fit their needs. They'd only been there for a little over seven months, but Toby couldn't help but be impressed with the amount of work they'd already completed.

The school for the Drone kids was already finished, along with the cafeteria, infirmary, weapon's warehouse and training facility. Not only that, but they'd refurbished many of the offices into dorm style rooms for the Drones. Off on the other side of the building, similar rooms were set up for the coven of magics.

More times than he could count, Toby felt the urge to wander over to that side of the building in hopes of *accidentally* bumping into Blaine. He wondered if the magic dorms looked anything like the vampires'. More importantly, were their beds any bigger? All Toby had was a narrow single bed that was crammed into a small room he shared with Jeremy. Not that Toby minded much. Jeremy never talked unless spoken to first and then all the guy usually wanted to yap about were movies.

Toby hadn't been lying when he said Jeremy offered to be his feeding buddy. There hadn't been any romantic inclinations behind it or anything. Jeremy was just merely being a good friend. As a slight wave of lightheadedness went over Toby, he considered if perhaps he should take Jeremy up on his offer. Maybe if Toby drank straight from the vein, then he'd be able to take in a full meal.

He decided that he'd bring the issue up again when they all retired to their rooms at dawn. While he didn't relish sinking his fangs into anyone, even Toby wasn't too stubborn to realize that he needed to do something quick. Otherwise, he'd get really sick, or worse, end up in the infirmary getting blood transfusions. While he really did like Nolan, Toby didn't want to share a hospital bed with the guy.

For once, when he entered the infirmary, the place was relatively quiet. A recent improvement that Toby knew wouldn't last. His gaze scanned both sides of the room, taking in the extra number of beds that'd recently been added, no doubt in anticipation for the many wounded that would be coming in after the battle.

Nolan sat in a bed on the end of one of the rows closest to the nurses' station. Once vibrant and happy, the vampire's sandy hair now appeared dull in contrast to his ashen, sunken face. He still managed to work up his familiar beaming grin for Micah and Toby, however.

"Hey, what are you guys doing here?" Nolan asked.

"We miss you," Toby announced as he walked over to the bed and gave Nolan a very soft, playful punch on the shoulder. He felt almost afraid even to touch the fragile looking vampire.

"Yeah, Ian downloaded some bad porn again and it took Cherish and me three hours to fix the computer system," Micah teased.

It worked though, because Nolan laughed. "You can never trust magics."

"Hey, now that's not fair. I've never ruined a computer and I use them all the time," Lachlan chided softly as he came over to hang a fresh bag of blood on the IV pole.

"True, but you don't go to sites like banshee-on-banshee.com," Nolan returned, still grinning.

Lachlan appeared to think that one over for a moment. "You may have a point there."

"Well, you'll be happy to know that Ian is out patrolling with Donovan tonight, so your system is safe for at least a couple hours," Nolan smiled weakly.

"I'm surprised Donovan even left your side. I know how overprotective mates can be sometimes," Micah said as he sat gingerly on the edge of the bed.

Nolan rolled his eyes. "I made him go. I realize he means well, but his hovering was beginning to grate on my nerves."

"He's just worried about you. We all are," Toby interjected softly.

"This is all going to be over soon anyway. Once we attack headquarters and find the Bikor demon that bit you, you'll get better," Micah added before he shifted his gaze to Lachlan. "Right?"

Lachlan nodded. "That's what my angel contact told me. He promised that as soon as the Bikor demon died, so would the infection it injected into Nolan."

Angels! Toby still couldn't believe that there were actually demons and angels. Of course, just a year ago, he didn't know that there were vampires, magic or werewolves, either. His world really had expanded in the previous months.

"We should be leaving any day for the battle, too," Toby hastened to add. At least he hoped so, he was no medic but even he could tell Nolan didn't look too hot.

"Yeah, we have all the weapons ready and we're just waiting for word from Eric," Micah chimed in, referring to their clan leader.

"I guess you guys will be the first ones to know, too, seeing how your sister is married to Eric now," Nolan teased.

"Don't remind us," Micah groaned.

"Yeah, Mom insisted on us having a family dinner yesterday and we had to watch the two of them making kissy faces at each other the entire time. You know how hard it is to see someone who you've come to respect and trust as leader making snookum noises plus showing off awkward moments of PDA?" Toby asked.

Lachlan gave Nolan a droll stare. "Yeah, I kind of do."

Nolan blushed. "I said I was sorry about that. I got super hungry last night and just couldn't resist Donovan. Can I help it that my bites turn him on so much?"

"I guess not," Lachlan agreed as he reached out and playfully ruffled Nolan's hair.

"Are you going to the battle or has Eric decided to keep you here at the infirmary?" Toby asked Lachlan.

"I'm going. Not only to back up Donovan and Ian, but because Eric thinks it would be a good idea to have a medic on scene. While we have some vampire and magics trained, Dahlia and I don't think they're quite capable for something this big."

"I have to stay behind," Nolan sulked.

"Yeah, you do," Lachlan agreed in a duh voice. He picked up one of Nolan's stick-thin arms and gave it a shake. "In your current condition, you couldn't even get in a slapping fit with the chicks from the *Bad Girls Club*." When the vampires gave him disbelieving looks, Lachlan shrugged. "What can I say? Ian got me addicted to the show."

"See, I told you that they were just big, teddy bears," Nolan smirked.

Lachlan cocked a brow. "Are you going to say that to Ian's face?"

Nolan thought for a second. "Probably, especially if I know it's going to piss him off."

Toby and Micah burst out laughing. Not many would dare even look at Ian, let alone get smart with him. Leave it to Nolan to still have some spunk in him, even on his sick bed.

They were still chuckling when the rancid stench hit them. A mixture of death, graveyards, garbage and manure, it had to be the worst thing Toby ever smelled and that said a lot since he'd tangled with ghouls before. Holding a hand to his nose, he fought back a gag. Nolan and Micah let out

surprised curses while Lachlan gave a long suffering sigh.

"Who in the hell was the dumbass who was idiot enough to get into a skunk ape's path?" Lachlan demanded as he grabbed a blank chart from the desk.

Deciding not to point out to Lachlan that his cutdowns were a bit redundant, Toby instead glanced over the double set of doors leading into the infirmary. When a very gooey-looking Blaine burst through them a moment later, Toby felt torn between sympathy and horror.

Ian and Donovan were flanking Blaine. Toby's respect for the two warlocks went up several notches when he noted they didn't find any humor in the situation. Not even Ian was firing off taunts and he never let an opportunity like this slip by.

Donovan peeled off from the group and went over to Nolan. Brushing a hand through the sick warlock's hair, Donovan leaned down to place a tender kiss on his mate's forehead.

"Blaine, strip and get into the decontamination shower," Lachlan ordered as he hitched a thumb in the direction of the tall, glass stall located in the corner of the infirmary.

Blaine stopped mid-step, all the color draining from his face. "Come again?"

Lachlan made an aggravated noise as he reached for a pair of gloves. "We have to burn all your clothes. The cure only works on skin and fur, it doesn't do shit for clothing."

"But isn't leather technically cow skin," Ian pointed out.

"Don't fuck with me now. I have a ton of paperwork to do, plus I have to finish packing the medic bags for the battle. The last thing I need is for you to get all protective over a shy warlock."

Ian shrugged at Blaine. "Sorry, I tried. Lachlan can get really pissy when it comes to medicine though."

Toby found himself nodding in agreement. Outside of the

infirmary, Lachlan was the most laid-back guy in the coven or clan, but if someone dared to not follow his medical advice, the warlock could get a tad cranky. A point proved when Lachlan shot an angry glare at the still-clothed Blaine.

Blaine glanced over in the direction of Toby, their gazes locking. For the first time since Toby had known him, the hard-ass façade slipped a bit as Blaine hesitated, his fingers at the hem of his shirt. A slight blush stole over Blaine's arched cheeks as he continued to study Toby.

Toby shrugged in return. It was clear Blaine would prefer that he vacate the room. Too bad though. Now that Toby finally had a chance to see the warlock naked, not even the threat of the Armageddon could make him leave.

CHAPTER THREE

They actually expected him to strip in the middle of the fucking infirmary? This had to be somebody's idea of a sick joke.

Blaine never suffered from bashfulness, but at that moment, he would have given anything to be able to somehow run away from the situation. He slid his glance once more to Toby. The sexy-as-snot vampire had the frigging audacity to grin back at him.

"You have ten seconds to get rid of those clothes before I burn them from your body myself," Lachlan snapped, breaking into Blaine's shy haze.

"I'll bet that's the first time you've ever had to ask a guy more than once to get naked," Ian teased his cousin.

"Blaine, while I appreciate the fact that you're shy, you're starting to stink up my infirmary," Lachlan said as he raised one hand as if to shoot off magic.

"Fine, I'm doing it," Blaine said quickly.

He cursed under his breath as he knelt down to unlace his boots. He only hoped to goddess they could be salvaged since he'd had them specially made by one of the coven's witches. They were threaded with a spell to make them impervious to pretty much anything, but as he'd learned the hard way, nothing could deflect skunk ape.

If he ever got his hands on Skunky again, a zapped ass

would be the least of the bastard's problems.

After he got rid of the boots, he quickly stripped off his pants and shirt. He deliberately left on his boxers, only willing to bend so far. If Lachlan didn't like it, too damn bad. Blaine was determined to maintain at least a smidgen of his dignity.

Lachlan cocked a brow at his show of rebellion, but didn't remark on it. He simply held open a huge biohazard bag.

Blaine tossed in his pants and shirt, mourning the fact that he'd be one uniform down.

A soft moan drifted from across the room. Even though a part of his mind screamed it would be a mistake, Blaine lifted his gaze toward the source. He found that Toby had moved a few feet closer. While he still was several feet away, Blaine could still sense the arousal shooting from the vampire. Shoot, even if he didn't have his empathic skills, he would have been able to tell that Toby was turned on, just by looking at the guy.

His blue eyes were wide and dark with passion as his gaze devoured Blaine. Toby's lips, which were always plump and kissable, were now slightly parted. As Blaine fixated on them, he caught the swiping of Toby's pink tongue as it peeked out to lick his mouth. Blaine's cock jerked as he wondered what it would be like to have his own lips receive that same treatment.

Intending find that out, Blaine took a step closer, but was abruptly stopped by a hand on his shoulder. Lachlan gently nudged him in the opposite direction.

"The shower is this way," Lachlan said, a hint of laughter in his voice.

Aware that his cock was growing harder by the second and that he only had a thin pair of boxers to hide the condition, Blaine quickly stepped into the stall and turned the water on cold.

It didn't do a damn bit of good. No matter how long he stood under the icy spray, he couldn't get the image of Toby's fuck-me-please expression out of his mind. Again, he went against his better judgment as he glanced over to where Toby had been standing. He let out a groan when he saw that Toby moved closer, as if he wanted a better view of the show.

Fuck, cold water be damned because Blaine was fully erect now, especially when Toby did that licking thing with his lips again. Somebody said something to Toby. Blaine couldn't tell what it was because of the sound of shower. Toby's mouth worked as he responded, but he never took his gaze off Blaine.

Lachlan opened the shower door. He had a thin bag filled with a pungent mixture of herbs. Of course, he immediately had to hone in on the fact that Blaine had a huge erection.

"Great, it isn't that you're not hot or anything, but I happen to know for a fact that's not for me." Lachlan sighed as he pointed to the...uh, elephant in the middle of the shower.

"Sorry," Blaine tried, the word sounding lame even to his own ears.

"Somebody has to help you scrub the places you can't reach and damned if I'm going to do it. If I'm going to climb into the shower with somebody and get my clothes wet, it's not going to be with some guy who's spending the entire time thinking of somebody else."

"Fine." Blaine sighed, wondering why nothing could be easy that day. "Just give me the treatment and I'll manage on my own."

Lachlan held the bag out of reach. "Like I said, you'll need help scrubbing certain spots."

"Then what do you suggest we do?"

As soon as the words left his mouth, Blaine realized he'd

made yet another flub in what had been a day full of colossal mistakes. Lachlan gave him an evil grin reminiscent of Ian before he dashed over to Toby. Grabbing the vampire by the wrist, Lachlan all but tossed the man into the shower with Blaine. He didn't seem to let the fact that poor Toby was still fully dressed bother him either.

"Cold!" Toby gasped as the water hit his back.

Lachlan reached in and adjusted the temperature. "Better?"

Toby gave a jerky nod. Lachlan also gave a satisfied nod before he slapped the treatment into Toby's hand. Shooting Blaine a be-good-or-else glare, Lachlan slammed the door to the shower shut, effectively trapping the two men.

Blaine swallowed hard as he found himself facing Toby, mere inches between their bodies. The now warm water covered Toby's hair, making the dark brown strands plaster to his face. Already his black cargo pants and long sleeved shirt were soaked, his boots probably no better. He didn't voice any complaint though. Instead he just stood there, his hand clutching the herb bag so tightly, his knuckles were white.

"Wow, not to be mean, Blaine, but you really, really, really stink," Toby observed with a crooked smile.

That helped Blaine snap out of it, if only a little. Giving the air an experimental sniff, he had to agree. In the enclosed confines of the glass stall, the odor was more pronounced. "Skunky got me real good."

Toby's eyes grew wide. "You named it?"

"Yeah," Blaine admitted somewhat sheepishly.

"You should know better than that. Once you name them, then you start getting more attached," Toby teased lightly.

"You don't have to do this," Blaine said, his gaze dropping to Toby's body.

He'd always known the vampire had a nice build, but up

until then, Blaine hadn't noticed just how muscular the man was. The wet clothing stuck to Toby like a second skin, so Blaine got to see every dip and ridge of the man's hot body. When his gaze came to rest on Toby's groin, Blaine had to bite back a moan as he noted the thick outline of the vampire's erection.

"Of course, I have to. We can't have you miss a spot and continue stinking like this." Toby made the turn-around gesture with his finger.

After shooting one more desperate look to the others, Blaine complied. He tensed, waiting for the first touch. All the while, he reminded himself that no matter how hard it was, he could not give in to his needs and let things go too far. While he'd love nothing better than to strip both of them and really have some fun-shower action, Blaine realized it would only put Toby in danger.

So instead, he curled his fingers against the cool glass and fought to bring his arousal under control. Then he felt the first brushing caress on his back and he knew that this would be the biggest test of his control ever.

"Interesting tattoo," Toby observed as he ran a finger along Blaine's spine.

Even though Blaine knew Toby was merely tracing the ink, his body still shivered in response. For the first time ever, he didn't curse the markings on his back because they'd invited Toby to touch him.

"Yeah, I got them when I was training with the Ninth," Blaine admitted, his breath hitching slightly.

It wasn't from shame or the painful memories that came from the tattoos though. No, he found it difficult to breathe because Toby continued to run his fingers over the markings. He could even tell exactly which one Toby fingered. First the symbol for fire, followed by the ancient writing which spelled out the word *pain*.

"I heard that Ethan has brands from taking part of the Death Ritual. Is that what these are?" Toby asked, still tracing the symbols.

"No, they're from some lower level ceremony," Blaine said between gritted teeth. The more Toby continued to make lazy passes with his fingers, the harder it was for Blaine to maintain control.

"But I bet it wasn't any less scary," Toby observed.

Blaine took in huge breath, amazed at how quickly Toby managed to learn the ins and outs of his new world. It only seemed like a minute ago that Toby was still human and now he knew so much.

When Toby pulled back his fingers and began to run the bag of herbs over Blaine's back, the warlock had to hold in a moan of disappointment. To keep his mind off his dick, Blaine decided to ask some questions of his own.

"Do you still hate being a vampire?"

Toby paused in his washing. "I'm adjusting."

"You know, I've never forgiven myself for not watching Raven better. I knew she had a vendetta against Micah, but I'd hoped she wouldn't take it out on you."

"They said it was you who found me right after she attacked me," Toby said as he began to scrub Blaine's back again.

"What do you mean *after*? She was still feeding on you." Blaine closed his eyes as he recalled that horrible scene with the rogue female vampire draped over Toby's lifeless body, blood covering her shirt and face.

"Right before she attacked me, she said she knew I didn't want to be a vampire, so by transforming me by force, it was the best way for her to get back at Micah."

Blaine nodded. They'd already figured that much out the moment they'd found Toby. Knowing the why of it still hadn't made it easier for him to swallow though.

"Is it true you blew her up when you found out what she did?" Toby asked.

"Yeah, well she pissed me off." Blaine swallowed hard. "So, I guess I'm just like all the other monsters you wanted never to mix with."

Toby hesitated in his scrubbing once more. "Is that how you think I really feel?"

"I seem to recall you making it perfectly clear that you thought all magics and vampires were one step above wild animals and that we didn't have any morals," Blaine snapped, trying hard not to let that little bit of knowledge hurt.

A heavy silence filled the small space and for a moment, Blaine thought Toby would deny it, in the end the vampire said, "Yeah, well let's just say I've grown up some since I've come here to live. You have to cut me some slack though. Before then I was living a perfectly normal human life. Then one day, my missing brother turns up and I find out that he's a vampire. Then within hours, I also discover that hey, the VRF doesn't like humans knowing about them, so they want to kill me and the rest of my family now. So before I can even process the first couple bombshells, I have a team of Drone vampires and warlocks descending on my normal human home so they can swoop me away to their clan where I was supposed to be safe. I think it would be a lot for anyone to take in." Toby gave a half-hysterical laugh.

"Okay, I get it."

Toby wasn't done though. "Then I find out that my brother's mate is a werewolf-slash-vampire, that the local bar is run by a zombie, that Pontiac is ruled by demons, that a poltergeist haunts the Silverdome and a sea serpent lives in the Detroit river."

Blaine started to get worried. Toby sounded as if he were bordering on losing it. The last thing he wanted was to have

to explain to Micah why his brother had grown hysterical while showering.

"Sure, I don't blame you. That would be a lot for anyone to take in," Blaine agreed, hoping that would get the man to snap out of it.

Of course that didn't work either.

"And there just couldn't be one type of vampires or magics either. Nooooooooo...that would be too damn easy. There has to be the snotty Pure Borns who think we live in a police state or something. I mean, haven't they heard of the fucking constitution?"

It took Blaine a few moments to realize Toby expected a response. "I'm sure they have, but they just don't give a damn about a human document."

He turned around to look Toby full in the face and got a finger thumped into his chest as a reward. "You magics are no better. There has to be dark and white magics and even then, it's still sometimes hard to tell which ones are the good guys."

"That's true, too," Blaine ran his hands up and down Toby's arms in an attempt to soothe the vampire.

"And now we're going to get into this huge battle and even *I* know that the odds aren't good in our favor, but if we don't go, then Nolan will die. Not only that, but it's only a matter of time before the VRF attacks us again, so even if we do try to mind our own business, it won't matter."

Wow, who needed *SparkNotes* when they had Toby around to summarize their current fucked up situation?

Tony gazed up from under his lashes. "Even if we do win the battle, it won't make us any safer though. The VRF will still be out there, so will the Ninth and that demon faction that hates us. It's never going to end."

Since Blaine couldn't very well argue with any of those points, he decided to distract Toby another way. Dipping his

head down, Blaine pressed their lips together in a hot, sensual kiss.

As soon as Blaine tasted the sweetness that was Toby, he realized he'd made his final, yet biggest mistake of the day for he formed an instant addiction to the vampire's soft lips.

Toby let out a small gasp before he seemed to get into it, his free hand coming up to grip Blaine's shoulder. Blaine took that as a green light to take things even further, his hand cupping the back of the vampire's head. Threading his fingers through Toby's thick hair, Blaine tugged until Toby got the hint and tilted his face up slightly. Once the angle was to his liking, Blaine slid his tongue inside Toby's mouth.

On the way in, his tongue scrapped against one of Toby's fangs. As a warlock who'd been raised to hate vampires, that reminder should have turned Blaine off, but if anything, it jacked his passion up more.

Toby let out a feral growl, his hips rocking forward. Sparks of pleasure shot up Blaine's spine as their hard cocks brushed together. At the same moment, Toby's fingers dug into Blaine's flesh so hard there were sure to be bruises left behind.

A heady thrill went through Blaine as he realized that Toby was no longer some weak human for one to push around and dominate. No, if anything, now a vampire, Toby was the stronger of the two of them. Where in the past, Blaine had always been the aggressor in bed, he instinctively knew that wouldn't always be true with Toby.

While Blaine always thrived on taking the lead in the bedroom, a part of him yearned to be able to give up control once in a while...to submit to someone who was at least equally primal as he.

Consequences be damned, he had to fuck Toby, if only this one time. Just as he started to reach for Toby's pants, the vampire broke the kiss.

"I'm not falling for this again," Toby said, his words slightly slurred because his fangs were fully extended.

"What's that supposed to mean? Last time I checked, this was the only time we've ever kissed," Blaine replied, his voice raspy with unanswered need.

"I won't let myself fall for you again, only to get the whole I-can't-be-with-you-because-of-a-mistake-in-my-past speech." Toby gave Blaine an earnest, probing stare. "If we go through with this, I want to know that you won't regret it come tomorrow."

Goddess, how Blaine wished he could give Toby what he wanted. His chest hurt from the need to give in to his desires and their mutual attraction. Blaine realized he would never forgive himself if Toby were harmed though.

"I'm sorry, I can't promise that," Blaine croaked, his gut clenching painfully.

A brief flicker of agony went over Toby's face before he gave a curt nod. "I guess I did ask for the truth."

Muttering a curse, Toby pushed open the door to the shower and stumbled out.

"Toby, wait," Blaine called.

Toby spun around and tossed the bag of herbs at Blaine's feet. "Get someone else to clean you up. I'm out of here."

He stormed away, slipping once because of his wet boots. Just as he reached the doors to the infirmary, Toby turned around again. "Just so you know, I'm going to find a permanent feeding partner. I've been holding back in the stupid hope that you'd come around. I can see now that was a huge mistake on my part."

Unwanted rage and jealousy slammed into Blaine as he thought about Toby getting up close and fang with another male. A snarl even started to work its way up his throat before Blaine managed to get a frigging grip. He pressed his lips together and refused to allow himself to react to that jab.

While it would kill him to see Toby with somebody else, deep down Blain knew that in the end it would be better for both of them.

CHAPTER FOUR

“‘I was wondering if I could feed from you.”

Toby’s question must have come as a shock because Jeremy nearly dropped his backpack as he let out a loud, “Oh!”

“That is if the offer to be feeding buddies is still open,” Toby hedged as he perched nervously on the edge of his mattress.

Their room was so small that Toby’s knees almost touched the side of Jeremy’s bed at the same time. Frankly, the room wasn’t big enough for two beds, let alone two full-grown Drone soldiers. But crowded situations had left Jeremy with no place to bunk, so Toby immediately offered up his scant space.

While Toby wasn’t as tight with the vampire as Micah or Nolan, they’d still developed a good friendship. Toby respected the shy, brown-haired, gray-eyed man. Even if Jeremy had the tendency to drop into long spells of quiet, almost as if he had his own secrets that haunted him. For all Toby knew, maybe he did. Nobody really knew that much about the vampire’s past. Jeremy may look young, but that still didn’t mean anything because Drones didn’t age once they were turned. As a result, Jeremy could be twenty or sixty.

Jeremy paused, one fang working his bottom lip. “I’m

sorry, I already found somebody.”

Toby blinked a few times, surprised the timid man had the balls to approach anyone else with an offer. “Who?”

“Sandy, the redhead that works at the cafeteria.”

“A girl?” Toby cocked a brow as he allowed himself a slight grin.

“Why does it come to a shock that one of us could actually be straight?” Jeremy rolled his eyes.

Toby held his hands up. “Sorry, you’re right. It could happen.”

Inside, Toby doubted it. One of the reasons that Eric’s clan melded so well together was the fact that so many of them were bisexual or gay. As for himself, even as a human, Toby had always known he was gay. It just happened to be his good fortune that he’d ended up at Eric’s clan.

Not that it really matters since the one guy I’m interested in wants nothing to do with me.

“I guess I just assumed if you were straight that you’d have gone to live with the Moore clan or one of the other hetro dwellings.” Toby shrugged.

He didn’t add that he’d also caught Jeremy checking out Lachlan on more than one occasion. It became somewhat of a private joke amongst some of the members of the team that Jeremy had the hots for a warlock. An attraction Toby could well understand.

“Okay, I’m not straight.” Jeremy sighed as he sat heavily on the bed. “Sandy and I are just really good friends who are helping each other out. She knows I’m attracted to somebody else and I know she’s halfway in love with a witch from Ethan’s coven.”

“Who does she like?” Toby asked, never being able to pass up on a good piece of gossip.

“Some chick named Hazel.” Jeremy sat on the bed, the move making them so close their knees touched.

Toby let out a short burst of laughter. "A witch named Hazel. Wow, talk about living up to stereotypes."

"At least she's pretty. Or at least Sandy thinks so."

"Let me guess, Hazel doesn't want anything to do with Sandy though?" Toby asked bitterly.

Jeremy's smile faded. "Nope, there aren't very many magics who want to be with vampires. Despite all the let's-be-allies and we're-all-friends-now talk, most of them still consider us beneath them."

Hurt sliced through Toby over the truth to that statement. What if the real reason Blaine didn't want to take things further between them didn't have to do with some past mistake after all? Could it simply just be that he didn't want to lower himself and become a fang whore?

Jeremy's soft voice broke into Toby's troubled thoughts. "When's the last time you drank blood?"

"About a week," Toby admitted. "I tried dinking the bagged stuff again today, but I couldn't take more than one drink."

"Here, you can use me." Jeremy offered up a wrist.

"I thought you said you already let Sandy drink from you." Toby swallowed hard as he looked down at the vein fluttering under Jeremy's pale skin.

His stomach revolted, but his fangs seemed to like the idea. They dropped down in anticipation of finally feeding. Toby curled his fingers in the bedding as he wondered what it would be like to drink straight from the source. For so long he'd avoided it, first because of his fears, then because he'd wanted Blaine to be his first.

But Blaine didn't want him. The warlock made that perfectly clear not once, but twice—the second time in front of a room full of witnesses. So who could blame Toby for moving on? If Blaine thought he was too damned good, then it would only serve him right if Toby moved on.

"Go ahead, it's okay," Jeremy urged. "Sandy didn't take that much earlier, so I'll be fine."

Toby slid to the floor, the carpet connecting hard with his knees. Reaching up with trembling fingers, he lightly caressed Jeremy's skin. It felt nice, but not nearly as warm and alive as Blaine. Toby knew that had nothing to do with the fact that Jeremy was a vampire whereas Blaine was a warlock either. No, it was all because of that damn, fucked-up crush that Toby couldn't let go.

Still, the sane part of him screamed he needed to feed. With each passing hour, he felt a little weaker. If he didn't do something soon, he'd pass out and end up in the infirmary. Then the whole clan would know all about his ridiculous blood phobia. So far, only Jeremy, Nolan and Micah knew about it and Toby planned on keeping it that way.

With a hiss, he bared his fangs, sank his head and...froze. Though the blood now was so close to him that he could smell it, hear it rushing through Jeremy's veins, Toby couldn't bring himself to go in for the bite.

"It's okay, you can do this," Jeremy soothed as he ran his fingers through Toby's hair.

Toby nodded before he bared again, hissed again and fucking froze again. He let out a groan of despair. "I can't believe this. I'm going to be the first vampire who starves to death because he's too much of a wimp to use his fangs."

Jeremy continued to stroke Toby's hair, the move entirely friendly rather than sexual. "I don't think it'll come to that. We'll figure out something first. We just need to do it soon because quite frankly, you look like shit."

"Thanks, I think."

"Why don't you try to get some sleep," Jeremy advised. "We'll think of something tomorrow."

Toby nodded and quickly changed into a pair of thick

sweats and a heavy hoodie. Lately, he hadn't been able to stay warm. Jeremy turned off the light and they both climbed into their own beds.

As Toby listened to Jeremy's breaths become steady and even, he knew his own slumber would elude him. With each moment that ticked away at the clock, his physical condition dipped lower. No matter how many blankets he used, he couldn't get warm. In addition, every joint and bone in his body began to throb with a dull ache. It reminded him of when he was still human and had the flu. Although he'd never quite gotten ill this bad before.

Afraid that his tossing and moaning would annoy his roommate, Toby got up and left the room. It was midmorning, so the clan side of the dwelling was deserted. All the *normal* vampires would be sleeping at this time. Which just suited Toby fine since that meant he wouldn't bump into any of his team members. He didn't need a mirror to know he probably looked bad and he didn't want to field any questions.

As a strong wave of dizziness slammed into him, Toby decided that maybe he did need to make a quick stop by the infirmary after all. Since the sun was out, that would mean the vampire doc, Dahlia, wouldn't be on duty. Lachlan usually took the daytime hours and that strangely comforted Toby some. Maybe it was because he didn't want to have to admit his failure to a fellow vampire. A nice, impartial warlock might make the confession much easier.

First though, he wanted to get a cup of coffee. Toby always had been a caffeine junkie and when he'd turned vampire, that hadn't changed. So he made his way to the cafeteria.

He'd assumed that it would be full of magics, but there was only one or two individuals sitting at the numerous round tables. Toby nodded to them before he went to the

counter. A tall, red-haired witch worker stood behind the register, a bored expression on her face as she worked over a piece of gum.

"Isn't it a little past your bedtime?" she asked by way of greeting.

Toby had to bite back a knowing grin when he saw her nametag said *Hazel*.

"I watched *Paranormal Activity* and now I'm too scared to sleep," Toby joked.

That got him a hint of a smile from the witch. "What can I get you?"

"Just some coffee with cream, please."

She ran off to fetch the item, returning quickly with a white mug filled to the top. He thanked her and went to find a seat. Since the back private dining halls were empty, Toby ducked inside one of them. Until he got to the infirmary, the less others saw of him, the better. The last thing he wanted was some well-intentioned magic running to Ethan or Eric in concern for a sickly vampire.

He sank into a seat, his fingers curled around the mug. Despite the warmth seeping into his hands, Toby started to shiver harder than ever. The jerking movements of his body brought along fresh waves of pain. A cold sweat broke out over his body as his stomach rolled up into a heavy, gonna-vomit ball.

If you don't drink blood, you will die. A little voice whispered in his head. All Toby had to do was go back to the counter and request a bag from Hazel. They always had some ready at the cafeteria. Toby shifted to get up to do just that, but quickly sat back down.

It was hopeless. Even if he did get the damn bag, there was no way he'd be able to drink it. He was truly and totally fucked and not in a good way.

* * * *

Blaine stood at the doorway and stared at Toby. When a well-meaning Hazel called him to tell him that *his vampire was in the cafeteria and the fangster didn't look good*, Blaine hadn't expected it to be this bad.

Toby was curled into himself, his hands still managing to clutch his coffee mug, almost as if the porcelain served as a lifeline. A lock of hair hung over Toby's eyes, some of the strands sticking to his pale, sweaty face. Even from across the room, Blaine could see the tremors going through the vampire's usually strong body.

The angry words Toby spoke earlier came back to Blaine. *Just so you know, I'm going to find a permanent feeding partner. I've been holding back in the stupid hope that you'd come around. I can see now that was a huge mistake on my part.* Blaine realized then that Toby hadn't been feeding, period.

"Oh, you stubborn brat, what have you done to yourself?" Blaine whispered, his heart breaking at the sight of his vampire so sick. He cleared his throat to announce his presence.

Toby swung his head around, but it seemed to take him a few moments to register who was standing in front of him. "Go away. I'm not in the mood for another round," Toby said, his voice coming out surprisingly strong for someone so ill.

Ignoring him, Blaine crossed the room and took the chair next to him. He glanced in Toby's cup, hoping to see blood, only to discover that the vampire liked cream in his coffee. "When's the last time you drank?"

"When's the last time you drank," Toby mimicked childishly.

Blaine arched a brow, wondering where all the brattiness was coming from. "This is a side of you I've never seen

before."

"Maybe it's because I'm sick of hearing that damn question," Toby snapped, his dark-rimmed eyes shining with fury.

"Then you should take better care of yourself," Blaine replied, making no attempt to hide his own anger.

"I told them. When they came to me and asked if I wanted to become this, I told them no," Toby seethed.

"Yeah, and life gave you a great big *fuck you* when Raven attacked you and you were changed anyway. What would you have preferred that we killed you off instead? Because by the time we got there, she'd already forced some of her blood down your throat. So there was no going back."

"You don't get what I'm trying to say. I know it happened anyway, but if given the choice, I would have never wanted to be a vampire. You can keep the supernatural strength, the immortality and all the other perks because the cons outweigh them."

"I know, now you're a monster who will kill anything that gets in your way," Blaine recited sarcastically, sick to death of that argument.

"That's not why!" Toby's loud voice cut through the mostly quiet cafeteria.

Blaine studied Toby for a moment. Going by the way Toby's started to shake more and the way his breaths were coming out rapidly, he was only holding on by a thread. Blaine got up and shut the door to the private dining room. "Okay, fine I'm listening."

"What makes you think I want to share it with you?" Toby retorted, acting the brat again.

Blaine refused to let it get to him this time. Instead, he went back over and sat down. "Stop being a twerp and just tell me already."

The insult actually worked because the anger faded from

Toby's eyes as he started to nibble on his bottom lip thoughtfully. "You'll think it's stupid."

"No, I won't."

"The reason is just so...human."

"That doesn't matter to me."

"This coming from the warlock who used to sneeringly call me *The Human* when I first came to the clan."

"It was a pet name."

Toby made a small outraged sound in the back of his throat. "It was an insult."

Blaine smiled. "But you were *my* human." Blaine finally dared to reach out and caress Toby's arm. Not that the guy would be able to feel it through the numerous layers of clothing. He had more clothing on than a Sherpa getting ready to scale Everest.

"It all started when I was seven and playing on an indoor soccer team," Toby began.

It seemed a long ways to go back in history to get to the problem, but Blaine held that comment in. Now that he finally had Toby talking, he didn't want the vampire to get pissed off and stop.

"I was playing with Will Anderson. There were these rows of small lockers lining one of the walls and we decided it would be fun to slam the doors of them while running by. I got excited and wasn't paying attention and accidentally shut one of them on Will's fingers."

"Let me guess, he started to bleed."

Toby glanced up, his gaze edged with a bit of panic, almost as if he were reliving the moment in his mind rather than just talking about it. "Yes, he bled, badly. I screamed for help, but it was already all over the place. It even got on my new pair of soccer cleats."

"My dad came running, along with Will's mother. I thought they were going to help Will. Instead, they started

arguing over who had the worst kid. Will's mom said I'd always been a bad influence and that's why Will got hurt. Dad yelled back that Will had always been a little shit and he didn't need my help getting into trouble."

Somehow, Blaine could see that situation in his mind. He'd heard that human parents could be very emotional when it came to their offspring. "Was Will still bleeding through all this?"

"Yeah, and he started to get pale. So I thought that maybe if I put my hands over the wound it would stop the bleeding. But it didn't seem to help at all. The blood got all over my fingers. It was so thick, sticky and hot feeling that it grossed me out. Then, when the smell hit me, I lost it and puked all over Will's mother."

The situation sounded so outrageous that if it hadn't scared Toby so much, Blaine would have been tempted to laugh. Toby gave him a pained look.

"Will wasn't allowed to play with me anymore after that. Plus, ever since then, just the mere sight of blood makes my stomach turn. It's so bad that when I was in college, I couldn't even participate in any of the blood drives. All I'd have to do is think about all those bags of blood or the popping sound the needles make when they pierced the skin and I'd run in the opposite direction. In fact, don't get me going on needles at all. I still think they're just another form of torture. It's the reason I always refused to get a flu shot. "

That finally pushed Blaine over the edge and to his horror, a small chuckle slipped out.

Toby gaped at him, his mouth opened just wide enough to show off the tips of his fangs. "I pour my heart out and you laugh?"

"Sorry, it's just I've never heard of a bigger irony. A vampire who's biggest fear is blood and needles." Blaine pressed his lips together to hold in any more laughter, but

failed miserably when a sputtering, choking sound still made its way out.

After a moment, the corners of Toby's lips twitched. "I guess it is kind of funny when you put it that way."

Another wave of shivers hit Toby so hard that Blaine heard the chattering of teeth. That finally did it, like it or not, Toby was going to take some comfort. Even if Blaine had to pin the man down and cram it down his throat. Sobering, Blaine crooked a finger. "Come here."

Toby's eyes narrowed suspiciously.

"You look cold. Let me warm you up."

"I don't think that's a good idea."

"I promise, I'll just hold you. We won't do anything else." Blaine couldn't resist adding, "That is, unless you want to take things a little further."

Blaine took in a deep breath and held it in. He realized Toby would probably tell him off and storm off again. If this situation were in reverse, Blaine knew he sure as hell probably would. To say he'd been giving poor Toby mixed signals would have been the understatement of the decade.

So when Toby slowly rose and reached out to put his hands on Blaine's shoulders, the warlock's heart leapt with joy. The next big question popped into his head. Now that he finally had Toby where he wanted him, how in the hell was he going to keep him there?

CHAPTER FIVE

“This is stupid,” Toby whispered, even as he curled his fingers deeper into Blaine’s thin, red shirt.

The warmth coming from the warlock called to Toby. So much so that all Toby wanted to do was crawl up on Blain’s lap and snuggle. The desire grew so strong that when Blaine nudged him closer, Toby didn’t fight it. He even let Blain pull him onto his lap so they were facing each other.

It felt a little awkward at first, to be straddling Blaine’s lap like that, but once Toby forced himself to relax and rest his head on the man’s hard chest, it faded. Toby even let out a soft moan as he burrowed his cheek into Blain’s body.

“You don’t stink anymore,” Toby observed as he breathed in the pleasant blend of herbs and essential oils that he’d come to associate with Blaine.

“After you left, Kale hopped into the shower and helped me scrub the rest of Skunky’s stench off me,” Blaine replied as his palm began to make heated passes up and down Toby’s back.

“I’ll bet he just loved that.”

“Yeah, it didn’t thrill either one of us. I’m planning on sending Skunky all the therapy bills we’re going to rack up getting over that little incident. Kale and I may be close, but we’re not *that* tight with each other.”

Toby tilted his head up so he could look into Blaine’s face.

"Really? I'd heard that most magic twins take on the same mate so all three of them can share magic."

"That's kind of true, Triquetras are common in covens, even when two of the magics aren't twins," Blaine pointed out, unoffended by Toby's question. "It's considered even more sacred when twins do it, however, because some think the power created by the three mates is stronger than normal Triquetras. But that's never been the way I wanted it to be. I don't mind saying that I can be very selfish with certain things."

"Like what kind of things?" As soon as that question slipped out, Toby wanted it back.

He licked his lips nervously as he waited for Blaine's reaction. If the warlock pushed him away again, Toby didn't think he'd ever recover from the hurt. This time proved to be different. Blaine smiled as he ran the back of his knuckles along Toby's cheek.

"I could never share you. Not even with Kale."

The beginnings of hope started to build up inside Toby. "Really?"

"Are you kidding? Ever since you told me you were going off to find a feeding buddy, I've been out of my mind with jealousy. Kale got so sick of my temper, he finally took me to the training room and made me use the punching bag for a couple hours. It didn't work though, because I was still upset at the thought of any other man touching you."

"If you feel that way about me, then why do you keep pushing me away? Whatever mistake you made in the past shouldn't ruin whatever we can have in the future. There have been plenty of others in our group who've fucked up in the past, but they still managed to find happiness with a mate. Why are we so different?"

Blaine gazed at him for several tense breaths before finally nodding. "Okay, I'll tell you what happened, but only

if you promise me something.”

“Anything,” Toby swore, not having to consider that condition for a second.

“When I’m done, you have to drink from me. I don’t care how disgusted you are once you hear about what I did.” Blaine palmed Toby’s cheek.

Toby turned into the caress. “There is nothing that you can say that will ever make me change how I feel about you.”

“Don’t be too sure about that,” Blaine warned.

“I mean it,” Toby insisted.

“Okay, snuggle in and get warm while I tell you the story.” Blaine cupped the back of Toby’s head and brought him back in.

“Did the big, bad warlock just say *snuggle*?” Toby couldn’t resist goading as he did as ordered.

Instantly, Blaine’s arms came up and wrapped around Toby, the embrace taking away the cold that’d been plaguing him for hours. Toby let out a satisfied sigh as he briefly closed his eyes. If he’d been a kitten, he may have been tempted to purr.

“I’m sure you heard about how my old coven leader, Olivia, fostered out a half dozen of us when we were only twelve. She sent us to the Ninth so some of her warlocks would be trained in the dark and white arts of magic. She figured it would give her an edge up on all the other covens. The fact that she was sending six innocent kids didn’t bother her at all. In case you haven’t caught on, Olivia can be a bit of a self-centered bitch at times,” Blaine started.

“Yeah, Ethan told me that a few times. Even though she’s his mother, he doesn’t think too highly of her. ”

The thought of a mother sending her own child off to live with the most evil coven ever known, floored Toby. He was still very close to his own mother, her room only being a few

doors down from his. Unlike him, she'd easily adapted to the new clan way of life, despite the fact she was still a human. Most of the vampires adored and doted on her. Something that gave Toby a measure of comfort since his mother had worked too hard following the death of his father.

After placing a soft kiss to the top of Toby's head, Blaine continued, "Olivia made sure to include Kale and I in the group because even then she had high hopes about us someday forming a Triquetra."

"I guess she hadn't heard you don't like to share," Toby teased as he rubbed his cheek against Blaine's chest. Now that he had free rein to touch the man, Toby couldn't seem to get his fill.

"I don't think she would have given a damn even if she had. Olivia wants things her way and she doesn't give a damn who gets hurt in the process. Why do you think most of the coven defected and now serve Ethan?"

"It must have been terrifying to be sent to the Ninth."

"More like a fucking nightmare. It was even worse for Kale. The rest of us could put up a hard front and do some of the awful things the Ninth demanded of us, but not him. As we grew older, it only got worse. By the time we'd reached eighteen, I'd seriously begun to worry that he'd be killed or worse."

"But you found a way to protect him, didn't you?" Toby surmised. The Blaine he'd grown to love just wouldn't have been able to stand by and watch his twin suffer. Not without putting up one hell of a fight.

"There was high-ranking warlock who took a liking to me and not in a good way. He promised that if I did certain things for him, he'd protect Kale. Right before he informed me that if I refused, he'd kill Kale," Blaine took in a hitching breath. "So I agreed to be very cooperative if you know what

I mean.

Toby sat up and this time it was he who cupped Blaine's face. The hurt, shame and despair he saw etched in his man's face broke Toby's heart. At that moment, he'd have given about anything to take away just one ounce of that pain.

"Is that what you've been keeping from me? If so, then don't worry. I could never hold something like that against you. Not when you were only doing it to protect Kale. I'd do the same for Micah."

Blaine gave him a watery smile. "No, it gets worse. When it came time for my group to go back to our home coven, the warlock didn't want to give me up. He asked me to stay and become his mate. When I refused, he promised that he'd hunt me down and that if I ever took another mate, he'd kill them."

Toby forgot how to breathe as the implication of those words slammed into him. All this time, Blaine had only been trying to protect him, not unlike the way he'd protected his twin all those years ago. It was so sweet, yet irritating at the same time that Toby didn't know whether to strangle Blaine or kiss him.

"So you think that if we're together, this asshole is going to kill me?" Toby asked, already making a silent vow to himself that he'd hunt down the asshole and do the murdering first.

Blaine nodded. "He's powerful, too. I've seen him take down a half dozen vampires by himself."

"I'm not just any vampire," Toby boasted. "Eric has made sure we're all highly trained and I'm one of his better soldiers."

"I realize that, but —"

"Not only that, but I have a personal interest in both of us staying very much alive." Toby leaned forward and gave

Blaine's neck a slow, lazy lick. "Now, that I have you in my grasp, I'm not letting you go and I want us to have a long, happy, sex-filled future in front of us." Toby's cock stirred when a low moan rumbled in Blaine's chest.

"I just don't want you to get hurt on my account," Blaine replied, his voice strained.

"I can protect myself. Besides, it's too late. We've already fallen in love with each other, so the damage has been done."

Blaine smiled, making Toby's heart swell with happiness. "We're in love, are we?"

Tony swiveled his hips, so their erections ground together. "Yes, we are, very much so. Since you're too chicken to say it out loud, I thought I'd save you the stress and declare it for both of us."

Anxiety sliced through Toby as he waited for Blaine to deny it, but the argument never came. He only smiled larger before tipping his head to the side so his neck was more exposed.

"I guess I can't argue with that logic. I just can't help but still worry about you though."

Toby gave him a playful nip, his fangs never breaking the skin. "Stop it. Like I said, I can handle myself, plus it's not like I ever go out alone. I always have at least three other teammates tagging along."

"And me," Blaine rasped.

Toby pulled back. "Huh?"

"From now on, you don't leave the dwelling without me by your side," Blaine declared savagely.

"Okay, if you want to be the bossy, overprotective type, who am I to deny you?" Toby teased lightly before titling his head up for a hot kiss.

Blaine moaned into Toby's mouth, the sound going straight to the vampire's cock. Pleasure rippled up Toby's

body and suddenly he didn't feel so sick or cold anymore. Just the opposite, he felt damn horny.

Desperate for relief, he splayed his hands on Blaine's shoulders and ground their cocks together again. The friction of his clothing rubbing against his dick almost pushed Toby over the edge. Only his desperation to make the encounter last for as long as possible made Toby hold back.

"Aren't you forgetting something?" Blaine asked between kisses.

"No, we can rush back to my room if we need some lube."

Blaine laughed against Toby's lips. "Not that. I meant you feeding off me."

Toby stilled, the desire instantly leaking from his body as if someone had pulled the drain in a bathtub. He nervously licked his lips as his gut kicked in fear. "Oh, that."

"Yes, it's my job to take care of you now and it starts with *that*."

Toby leaned forward and tentatively licked the flesh covering Blaine's jugular. The blood flowing through it called to Toby, making his fangs drop further in anticipation. His stomach even growled a bit, which might have embarrassed him had the situation been less tense.

Quick as a bullet, Blaine's hand shot out and grabbed Toby by the back of the head. Jerking him down, Blaine impaled himself onto Toby's incisors. Toby let out a gasp of shock. Blaine gave a grunt, no doubt because it had to hurt like hell. While a vampire's bite was supposed to be pleasurable, that came after a lot of licking and teasing. Not a quick assault like Blaine initiated.

Worried, Toby started to pull back only to have Blaine tighten his grip. "Suck."

Normally Toby would have loved to hear that one word coming from Blaine's lips. At that moment though, all Toby

wanted to do was run away before he made an idiot out of himself by puking or something. His hesitation must have displeased Blaine because he used his free hand to deliver a hard spank to Toby's ass.

"I said, suck," Blaine replied, firmly enunciating each word.

So Toby obeyed. He steeled himself and allowed the blood to enter his mouth. The first few drops tasted so good, he even dared to give a really good, hard drag. A dark, spicy, tingle of flavor exploded in his mouth, making him groan in pleasure.

It tasted good! More than that, it tasted like fucking liquid sex.

Still keeping his fangs firmly in place, Toby began to grind his cock against Blaine again. This time the pace was more urgent and demanding. Blaine let out a moan as his hand drifted down to Toby's hips.

Toby realized the bite didn't hurt Blaine anymore when he began to thrust up in return. Blaine even began to let out loud pants as his fingers dug into Toby's thighs. All through it, Toby continued to drink, the life force coming from Blaine's blood awaking so many sensations.

The rub of his clothes. The sensual sounds coming from Blaine. The smell of the warlock's blood. All of them were so sharp and real that it made Toby's body sing in pleasure.

"Going to come," Blaine warned.

If he could have, Toby would have smiled. He'd waited so long to hear those words that they were almost as big a turn on as Blaine's blood. Blaine dug his fingers in even deeper as he thrust up two more times, then gave a strangled cry.

Toby's own cock remained hard and aching, but damned if he could bring himself to care. Not so long as Blaine continued to hold him. Toby carefully extracted his fangs,

then licked the wound to seal it closed.

"You didn't come," Blaine observed.

Toby barely got a nod out before he found himself thrown flat on his back onto the table. He let out a small yelp of shock as he felt the ties to his sweats being undone. He strained to look down to see the expression on Blaine's face, but the man stayed in his seat, making it nearly impossible for Toby to get a good view.

"You don't have to do this," Toby rasped as he ran one hand through his hair.

Despite having a frustrated cock, every other inch of his body hummed in pleasure as the blood of a magic traveled through Toby's veins. He closed his eyes and let himself get momentarily lost in the sensation.

"I know I don't have to. I'm doing this because I want to. It seems like I've been aching to taste your cock forever," Blaine declared.

Toby smiled, his eyes still closed. Okay, if Blaine insisted, who was he to protest? After all, Toby wouldn't want to be accused of being rude or anything. So he went along with it, even lifting his hips slightly so Blaine could lower the sweat pants a bit.

Going by everything he knew about Blaine, Toby should have expected a hard, curl-your-toes blowjob and that's exactly what he got. Blaine didn't waste any time giving teasing licks or kisses. Instead, he parted his lips and sucked in every inch Toby had to offer.

"Fuck!" Toby yelled, his hips bucking up as near overwhelming pleasure crashed over him.

Blaine gave a happy humming sound as he somehow managed to suck Toby in harder. At the same time, he reached between Toby's legs and cupped his balls, his fingers rolling the sack, teasing out more pleasure.

"Shit, once you finally get to it, you don't believe in

wasting time, do you?" Toby asked, the words coming out slightly pitched.

Blaine only attacked Toby's cock harder, pulling back to swirl his tongue over the head, one hand making a neat twisting motion on Toby's shaft. Before that sensation could fully register in Toby's sex-hazed mind, Blaine sucked him in again. Blaine repeated that process for what seemed like an eternity. Just as Toby felt ready to yell in frustration, a tingling sensation built up in his spine, letting him know the orgasm he so desperately wanted was approaching.

"I'm going to come," he warned in case Blaine wanted to pull back. For all Toby knew warlocks didn't like to swallow.

Blaine didn't seem to mind though. He kept on sucking even after Toby groaned and came, his cock filling the man's mouth. Blaine even kept it up after Toby began to soften, slowly licking his shaft clean.

The door burst open and Kale charged through. "Are you in here, Blaine? We got a situation."

Kale froze, his mouth opening in shock as he took in the situation in front of him. Toby blushed, he could only imagine the picture they presented—him flat on his back, cock hanging out and Blaine sitting between his legs. While he knew he should jump up and attempt to tuck himself back in, Toby found himself frozen with mortification.

Then just as he thought things possibly couldn't get any worse, they did when Ian came up behind Kale. The smartass let out low whistle before he laughed. "Looks like you two made up."

CHAPTER SIX

Blaine glowered at his twin as he quickly pulled Toby's pants up. "Damn it, Kale. Couldn't it have waited?"

Kale blinked a few times. For the first time in their lives, Blaine found it impossible to read his brother's face. Finally, Kale gave a slight shake of his head and focused, "No, actually it can't."

"Fine, what in the hell is going on?" Blaine asked as he helped Toby get off the table.

Blaine paused to press a soft kiss to Toby's lips, not caring they had an audience. After hesitating for a moment, Toby relaxed and returned it, his tongue sneaking out to sweep across Blaine's lips.

"Haven't you two ever heard of the expression *there's a time and a place?*" Ian bitched.

"Not to side with jackass here, but we do need to focus," Kale added. "We have a group of angels out front wanting to speak with Ethan and Eric."

That managed to get Blaine's full attention. "Did you just say *angels?*?"

Kale nodded. "Yeah, and they want to talk to Eric, which is going to be a problem since all the vamps are sleeping because it's daytime."

"Not *all* of them are tucked away in bed." Ian nodded to Toby. "He could stand in as Eric's second."

Blaine shook his head. "Not going to happen. We don't know what the angels are capable of. We'll just have to go wake Eric up."

Ian cocked a brow. "Have you ever tried to rouse a sleeping vamp? It's worse than trying to shake awake a hibernating bear."

"I'll do it," Toby's voice cut in softly.

They all turned to look at him. He gave a sheepish shrug in response. "I mean if you need a vampire, what choice do you have? I'll just keep my mouth quiet and let Ethan do all the talking. I was going to drop by the infirmary, but I don't need to anymore."

"Since Ethan is half-vampire, too, why can't he just represent both sects?" Blaine demanded.

"Because Ethan's not going to be there either. He's out of it, too, so you and I are going in as his seconds," Kale volunteered.

"So we have you, Kale and Toby speaking for the coven and clan?" Ian asked, disbelief echoing in his voice.

When they all nodded, Ian threw his hands up in disgust. "We're so screwed."

They left the room and rushed to the front docking bay where the angels were supposedly waiting for them. As they passed large groups of magics, Blaine wasn't surprised. Up until that moment, Lachlan had been the only one who'd ever looked at an angel, let alone spoke to one. The coven's curiosity felt nearly palpable.

Just under a dozen tall, very muscular angels waited. All of them male, most of them blond, each one was the sheer definition of beauty. They had full lips, high arched cheekbones and carried themselves in an almost regal way.

Blaine had to hold his surprise in check when he noted the weapons some of them carried. One of the thinner blonds had a long bow slung over his shoulder, while a

couple of the others had long swords strapped to their backs. Because it was so much to take in, Blaine decided to focus on one in the center since he appeared to be the leader.

Despite being inside, the angel wore a pair of dark sunglasses, which seemed to go with his spiked, blond hair and long, black leather duster. Even though he must have realized they were outnumbered if things got sticky, the angel's posture remained relaxed.

"Hello, my name is Blaine. I and my brother Kale serve under our coven leader Ethan," Blaine held his hand out to shake.

The angel studied it for a moment before he reached out and clasped Blaine's hand. "I'm Cam and these two are my brothers, Derel and Bear."

"Did he just say Bear as in teddy?" Ian snarked under his breath.

The corner of Cam's lips twitched into a smile. "Yeah, he comes complete with cuddles and his own brand of fabric softener."

The smaller blond shot Cam a dirty glare. "You'll think cuddly when I shove my boot up your ass."

Cam grinned full out, showing off a set of fangs. "You'll have to excuse Bear. Since he's the youngest, he never did get enough love."

Blaine frowned at the sight of the fangs. While their knowledge about angels may be squat, he felt pretty sure that wasn't standard hardware for their kind.

"It's the incubus in me," Cam replied, as if reading Blaine's mind.

"Half-incubus," Lachlan added as he stepped closer to the group. "He's still half-angel though."

"Ah, there he is. Our little lost boy." Cam nodded to Lachlan.

Blaine exchanged confused looks with Kale and Toby.

The situation just kept getting stranger by the moment.

"What in the hell are you talking about?" Ian demanded as he took a protective step closer toward Lachlan.

"I tried to warn you, Lachlan," Derel added, completely ignoring Ian.

"Warn him about what?" Ian snapped, his hands flexing as if to shoot off magic.

Worried about things getting real nasty, Blaine sent him a slight hand gesture to stand down. When Ian actually agreed and lowered his palms, Blaine felt both shocked and relieved as hell.

"I'm not the only half-angel around here," Cam announced, his gaze honing in on Lachlan.

"That's bullshit, we would know if he was different like that," Ian protested.

"Didn't you ever wonder why Lachlan could sense things when other's couldn't? How he managed to excel so easily in his skills as a healer? Why he always had a glowing circle over his head?" Cam fired off.

Ian paused, his brow furrowing. "He doesn't have a halo."

Cam grinned. "Actually none of us do. I was just fucking with you on that last one. The healing and perception ones are all spot on though."

"But he can't be," Ian protested, though his voice sounded much weaker.

"Trust me, Ian, I'm very good at sensing this kind of thing."

"How did you know my name?"

"It's written on your name badge...*duh!*" Cam pointed to Ian's chest.

Ian actually looked down like an idiot before he let out a curse once he realized he'd been played once more. Blaine had to bite his bottom lip to keep from laughing. While he'd

warmed to Ian, it was still fun to watch someone one-up the warlock.

"Listen." Cam sighed as he ran a hand through his hair. "I don't want to be here anymore than you guys want us hanging out. I left my very, beautiful mate and my nice, comfy bed back home to come here to yap it up with you guys. Frankly, so far I have to say that you've been really wasting my time, too."

Anxiety spiked through Blaine. Joking aside, Cam didn't give off the vibe of someone who liked being fucked with. He cleared his throat so the conversation was directed back on him.

"Then why don't you tell me exactly why you're here?" Blaine pressed.

"We know all about the attack you have planned on the VRF," Cam said.

A collective murmur followed his bombshell.

"How?" Blaine demanded. They'd taken every precaution possible to avoid that information leaking out.

"Let's just say we have our ways," Cam replied mysteriously.

"Does the VRF know?"

Cam shook his head. "No and even if they did, we all know they wouldn't consider you a real threat. Sunlight Grenades or not, you're just a lowly clan of Drones to them."

"You know about the grenades, too," Toby burst out.

"Like I said, we have —"

"Your ways. Yeah, we got that," Blaine cut in. "So, what does us attacking the VRF have to do with you?"

"Nothing until we found out this one was going into the battle, too." Cam nodded at Lachlan. "We can't allow him to be put into that kind of danger."

"Just because you think I may be some long, lost halfling doesn't give you an excuse to come here and try to rule my

life," Lachlan snarled.

Cam grinned, acting as if Lachlan's display of stubbornness impressed him. "Derel said you'd be this way. That's why we came to help fight."

Blaine snorted. "What difference will a few angels make in a huge battle?"

"Don't underestimate us. Just because we're called angels, doesn't mean we're angelic. We're going in to protect Lachlan and God help anyone that gets in our way," Cam declared in a deadly calm voice.

The words still sent a shiver down Blaine's spine. He turned to Kale and Toby. "What do you guys think? Will Ethan and Eric go for this?"

Toby flicked a wary glance over at the angels. "They'll probably be glad for the help. Something tells me Cam means what he said."

"I agree," Kale added. "Besides, the VRF will never expect us to have this kind of backup. It may help us get an edge over them."

"There's something else you need to pass on to Eric and Ethan," Derel interjected. "The attack needs to take place tomorrow."

Blaine's heart galloped in fear. "Why?"

"Because that how long Nolan has left. Even now I can sense his life force waning. If we don't find and destroy the Bikor demon within twenty-four hours, then the vampire will die."

"That can't happen. Donavan won't survive the loss of his mate," Ian declared, his normally smartass expression replaced with worry.

Cam looked pointedly at Lachlan. The entire coven seemed to hold in one collective breath as they waited for the healer's answer. Finally, Lachlan muttered a curse under his breath and nodded. "Fine, you angels can stay and help.

But it's just for the battle and only because Nolan's involved. Don't think for one fucking minute that I want anything to do with any of you." Giving them one last look of disgust, Lachlan turned on his heels and began to storm from the room.

Ian's eyes grew huge. "Lachlan, watch your language around the angels."

"Yeah, watch your mouth, you little fucker," Cam called. He gave a mocking sad shake of his head. "It's always the same with these long, lost types."

Even though he had a sneaky suspicion he was walking into a punch line, Blaine asked, "All the same, how?"

"Every one of them has major daddy issues and a huge chip on their shoulders."

"Usually Lachlan is much nicer," Toby defended.

"That's not bad at all." Cam hooked a thumb to the side. "You should see Bear here when he gets into a mood. He's downright homicidal."

Bear rolled his blue eyes. "Seriously? You're going to bring that up. I was possessed at the time, so it could hardly be my fault that I tried to kill you a few times."

"You say possessed, I say cranky as hell."

"You really do suck sometimes," Bear retorted.

Cam ran a tongue over one fang. "Yeah, I do."

Both the angel brothers groaned.

"Do you always have to pull out that old gag?" Derel demanded.

"Really, dude. Get some new material," Bear added.

Blaine shared an amused glance with Toby.

"Do you need someplace to store your things and catch some sleep," Blaine offered.

The angels shook their heads.

"I'm going to go to Nolan and see if I can help stabilize him," Derel offered before he hitched his crossbow up

higher on his shoulder.

"Sure, I'll show you the way," Toby offered.

"Thanks, but I already know where to find him," Derel replied in the irritating knowing way that all the angels seemed to have perfected down to a new art form.

"With your permission, the rest of us would like to go out and patrol the streets. We'd like to check up and see if there is any heightened demon activity in the area," Cam said.

"Of course there is, Pontiac is on the edge of a hellsmouth after all," Ian drawled.

"I meant more than normal. Especially since there's been this horrible rumor going around that some idiot warlock pissed off a high-ruling demon named, Crocell."

When Ian actually blushed and shuffled his feet at that comment, Blaine finally lost control and laughed.

Cam gave Ian one last knowing look before he turned to Bear. "Why don't you stay here and see what intel you can gather on tomorrow's battle. Call home and let the family know we'll be here for at least of couple days, too."

"There's more of you?" Toby asked.

"Yeah, my family has eight brothers, plus one sister. Then Bear, Derel and I all have mates waiting for us at home." Cam pointed to another tall sword-toting blond. "Except, Case. He has nobody but his pillow to snuggle up with at night."

The blond flipped Cam off.

Blaine rubbed the bridge of his nose as his head started to throb. While he wanted nothing more than to take Toby to the nearest bed so they could finalize their commitment to each other, it looked like they'd be on angel babysitting duty for a while.

"Ian, can you go on patrol with the angels and show them around?" Blaine ordered. So help him if one of those non-halo wearers argued they didn't need a guide, Blaine was

going to clock them. The whole mysterious act was beginning to wear thin on him. Luckily, Ian fell into line and actually obeyed.

On his way out, Ian paused to ask Kale, "You want to come along, too?"

The two warlocks stared at each other for a moment, Kale a look of confusion on his face, Ian an impassive mask. Finally Kale gave a half-nod. "Sure, okay."

Ian ducked his head, but not before Blaine saw a satisfied smile pass over the warlock's face.

Oh, Goddess was Ian attracted to Kale? The pounding in Blaine's head grew worse. He had a feeling he was in for a long day.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Toby finished putting together his last sunlight grenade when someone came up behind him and placed a kiss on the nape of his neck.

"Blaine?" he asked, a smile already forming on his lips.

"That shouldn't even be a question because nobody else should be touching you, but me," Blaine growled into Toby's ear.

A shiver of pleasure went down Toby's spine as Blaine's warm breath brushed against his skin. "I don't think you have to worry about that. The looks you've been shooting me all day have made your feelings pretty clear."

Blaine wrapped his arms around Toby and pulled him tight to his chest. "And just what kind of looks have I been giving?"

Toby moaned as he thrust his ass against Blaine's cock. His smile grew when he felt how hard the man already was. "Is this all for me?"

"You know damn well it is. Ever since our little encounter in the cafeteria, I've been wanting to take you to bed and screw you brainless. I've been hard all day just thinking about it."

Toby glanced around the loading dock that was full of activity as magics and Drones rushed around to get things loaded into the large convoy of vehicles they'd be driving to

the VRF headquarters. The sounds of doors slamming, voices yelling and engines were so loud that it was harder to hear regular conversation. It was only because they stood so close that Toby managed to catch every word that slipped past Blaine's fuckable lips.

"We could go find a private spot and do it now," Toby suggested as he let his head roll back against Blaine's shoulder.

"There's no time for that," Blaine sounded as disappointed as Toby felt.

"Not even for a little bit of fooling around?" Toby pleaded as he ground his ass against Blaine's cock.

"Ethan says we'll be leaving any minute. All we have time for is for you to feed again."

Toby paused, waiting for the normal wave of fear to hit him. Instead, all he found was ball tingling excitement. He only had one concern. "I don't want to take too much from you. If you go into the battle low on magic because of me, I don't think I could forgive myself."

"It'll be okay since you last fed a while ago. Plus, Kale can share some of his magic with me."

Toby spun in Blaine's arms, his body humming with anticipation. "Okay, where do you want to go to do it?"

"Right here is fine with me."

"Ah, isn't it a bit crowded?" Toby darted a quick glance at the numerous bodies surrounding them.

"Which is exactly why I want to do it here. Once everyone sees you feeding from me, they'll know who you belong to."

Those words shouldn't have made Toby pant with desire, but they did. His fangs quickly dropped and he felt a primal thrill go through his body. Palming his own cock, Toby said, "What if we get off on it again?"

"I hope to hell we do."

That was all the further incentive Toby needed. Tilting his

head up, he gave Blaine's neck a few warning licks before he struck hard, his fangs sinking deep into the warlock's neck.

Fuck, this somehow managed to be even better than the first encounter.

Toby let out a small whimpering sound as Blaine reached out and jerked them closer so their cocks rubbed against each other. Torn between the pleasure of the friction and the flavor of Blaine coating his throat, Toby felt a moment of loss. Lucky for him, Blaine took hold of him.

"I've got you, love," Blaine murmured.

Love. That one word repeated itself again and again in Toby's blood-fever mind. Blaine really did love him. Since Toby couldn't speak his own feelings in kind, he let it be known with a soft hum of consent.

"Put your legs around me," Blaine commanded.

It didn't even occur to Toby to argue. Not taking his fangs out of Blaine's flesh, Toby gave a little hop and wrapped his legs around Blaine's trim waist. No sooner had he settled in place, then Blaine let out a low growl and slammed Toby into the side of a *Hummer*.

Toby grunted as the hard metal hit his back, but he kept on feeding. He used one hand to tug roughly on Blaine's hair, to keep his head in the proper position. No sense in letting the warlock think he ran every aspect of the show.

Off in the distance, Toby became vaguely aware of the catcalls and whistles coming their way. Instead of shaming him, it only jacked his arousal up. Toby let out a snarl, the sound only somewhat muffled against Blaine's warm flesh.

"Mine!" Blaine declared loudly enough for all the others to hear.

Toby let out a long growl that screamed his own ownership. He pulled Blaine's hair harder, earning a hiss from the warlock. Toby had long stopped sucking in blood, but he kept his fangs in place, not wanting the encounter to

end.

"Damn, it! Toby, pull your fangs in," Eric's voice cut in.

Since Toby couldn't very well disobey a direct order, he reluctantly slid his fangs free. He took a few moments to lick the wound closed before he allowed his legs to slide to the ground.

Looking over Blaine's shoulder, a blush came over Toby's face as he realized they had quite a crowd surrounding them. One of them was Bear. The angel's mouth hung open in shock as he blinked several times.

Just as Toby was about to apologize, Bear blurted, "I may be straight, but that was fucking hot."

One look at the angel's dilated pupils and flushed cheeks showed he spoke the truth. When several members of the crowd shot him looks of shock, Bear shrugged, "What can I say? I've always loved watching other's screw. It's my kink."

"Just because they're called angels doesn't mean they're angelic," Blaine quoted into Toby's ear.

"If everyone is ready, it's time to roll out," Eric yelled.

Toby nodded to their clan leader. At one time, the man's short, blond military cut, ice-blue eyes and hardass attitude intimidated Toby. Now that he knew Eric better though, he realized it was just a shield the vampire put up. Too many times Toby watched the tender way Eric acted around his young daughter and new wife.

Eric walked up to Toby. "I heard how you stepped in for me earlier when the angels first arrived."

Toby nodded, wondering if he was going to get balled out for assuming too much power. In the end though, Eric gave a satisfied nod as he patted Toby on the shoulder.

"Thank you. From what I hear you did a good job."

"I really didn't say much," Toby stammered.

"But you stood there, as my brother-in-law and representative of the coven. That was more than good

enough."

A lump formed in the back of Toby's throat. "Thanks."

"Okay, now let's get going." Eric smiled at him.

Toby and Blaine climbed into the back of the *Hummer*. Kale joined them, taking the seat behind the wheel, while Cam jumped into the passenger seat. They pulled out, taking their place in the long line of vehicles.

"Riiiiight," Cam drawled out slowly. "Because a parade of black SVUs with tinted windows isn't going to attract some attention."

"Do you have any better ideas on how to transport a clan and one coven?" Toby asked.

"No, I'm just warning you that they're going to be expecting us," Cam warned.

"Eric anticipated that. He just hoped to keep things a secret for as long as possible. Maybe now, the VRF won't have time to mobilize fully and we can still catch them with their pants down, so to speak," Blaine added.

They fell into that tense kind of silence that always preceded a battle. The only thing that brought Toby any comfort were the warm caresses Blaine kept sneaking him. Finally, after what seemed like forever, Toby asked, "What was his name?"

Blaine paused, "Who?"

"The warlock from the Ninth who hurt you. What was his name?" Toby repeated.

Kale darted a look into the review mirror, his brows lifted in surprise, but otherwise he gave no indication that he heard the conversation going on in the backseat.

Blaine sighed as if he were wrestling inside himself as to whether to answer or not. In the end, he shrugged and said, "Tarick."

"And you have no clue where he may be living now?" Toby pressed.

"I have no idea. What does it matter anyway?" Blaine asked, his tone wary.

Toby wanted to scream that it was so he could hunt down the bastard and rip his throat out. He knew that would only make Blaine worry and be distracted during the battle, so Toby forced himself to give a carefree smile. "No, reason. I was just wondering."

Inside though, he filed away the name. Once they were all home, he planned on doing some research. He wouldn't stop until he knew everything there was to know about that asshole who'd made life miserable for Blaine.

"Hey," Blaine nudged Toby to get his attention.

"Yeah."

"When we get there, I don't want you to leave my side. No matter what, we stay together. Got it?"

Toby nodded. "Yeah, I'll be stuck to you like duct tape to a cheap lawn chair. No worries."

* * * *

Where in the fuck was Toby?

Blaine let loose a long string of curses as he shot a VRF soldier in the chest, then kicked the body down the stairs. All the while, Blaine's gaze frantically scanned his surroundings, hoping for a glimpse of his man.

All around him, mass chaos reigned. Rubble and small fires marred the once pristine white floors and walls of the massive, six-story structure. VRF soldiers ran around in every direction. Some looked unscathed, many were massively burned from the numerous Sunlight Grenades the Drones continually tossed around.

Still no Toby!

It didn't help that all the Drones appeared nearly identical because they wore heavy hoods and yellow UV goggles to

protect them from the Sunlight Grenades. If they didn't take the precaution, then their own weapons would have killed them, along with the Pure Borns.

"Toby!" Blaine screamed in desperation.

Where in the fuck had his vampire gone? When the clan had breached the perimeter, they'd been by each other's side. Sometime doing all the confusion of the battle that followed, they'd managed to get separated.

"We need to move," Cam called over the roar of the fight. "I can sense the demon is this way."

Blaine hesitated, still searching the area around him. "I don't know where Toby is."

Cam closed his eyes and tilted his head to the side, as if listening to a voice for moment before he said, "Toby is with Bear. They're okay and with a team that's currently fighting in the main offices."

"How did you know all that?"

"Bear and I can communicate telepathically. I just connected with him and he assured me Toby is by his side. He also said your mate is a vicious little thing when it comes to fighting." Cam jerked his head to a long corridor. "Now are we going to do this or not? That Bikor demon isn't going to kill itself."

Blaine nodded once before he followed Cam.

* * * *

Toby ran with the others up the wide staircase that led to the office of Corbin, the head of the VRF. A heavy layer of sweat built up under the thick layers of protective layering Toby wore and the goggles bothered him. He didn't dare take them off though. Not with the massive amounts of Sunlight Grenades going off.

Almost as if to prove his point, a bright flash of light

illuminated the area, the boom was followed by several screams of agony from the VRF soldiers. Toby felt sorry for them until he remembered the way his own childhood home had been burned to the ground, thanks to the fuckers.

How did the saying go? *What goes around, comes around.*

After some hand-to-hand with the few remaining surviving Pure Borns, they finally reached a set of heavy double doors. Toby's team leader, Brenden, used a grenade to blow them open and they all stormed inside.

Toby expected to meet with some further resistance, but the room was empty save for one Pure Born. Tall, with carefully groomed blond hair and an expensive black suit, he lifted his mouth into a sneer.

"Get the fuck out of my office."

Brenden made a tsking sound. "Now, that's not nice, Corbin. We came a long way to say hello to you."

Toby watched as several Drones and a few magics slowly surrounded the Pure Born. Even with the gear on, Toby recognized many of them as his friends, Brenden, Dante, Kane, Rafe, Ethan, Dominic, Morgan were all there and each and every one of them had the burning need for vengeance in their gazes.

Corbin finally seemed to realize just how much trouble he was in. Giving Bear a beseeching look, he pleaded, "I know what you are. Help me."

Bear replied with a smile so hard and cruel that a shiver slid down Toby's spine. "Corbin, I have searched your soul and found you very lacking. For crimes against the innocent, for all the pain you caused, for every life you destroyed, I find you guilty. Trust me when I say God will not have mercy on your soul."

The angel nodded to the Drones to indicate they could proceed. Toby closed his eyes against the carnage that followed, but he could still hear every single one of Corbin's

screams.

* * * *

Cam led them down what appeared to be a dungeon of sorts. Several cells with thick iron bars lined both sides of the corridor. Blaine held back a gag as the mixed smells of feces, blood and garbage hit him.

As they ran by, he caught glimpses of several different prisoners. Some of them in shackles, others pleading to be released, while some stayed immobile on their cots. Where a part of Blaine wanted to stop and help each one, he pressed on, determined to find the Bikor.

"Oh, my God! It's Jonas," Micah shouted as he stopped at one cell.

A few of the Drones stayed behind to help him break the door open while the rest of the group followed Cam. The angel finally stopped at the end of the hall.

"The fucker is in there." He pointed to the only solid door.

Before Blaine could ask how they would get it open, Cam waved his hand over the lock and it release. Kale and Donovan arrived just as Cam was about to open it. He paused and fixed them each with a hard stare. "Bikors are hard to kill so things could get a little froggy in there. Just follow my lead."

They all nodded before they rushed into the room.

As soon as Cam stepped in, a huge black mass tackled him in the chest and brought him to the ground. Blaine's heart raced in fear as he saw how frigging big the demon was.

Standing at over seven-feet, it was a solid wall of muscles and scales. Opening its mouth to roar, it showed off several rows of sharp yellow teeth that were wet with venom. Still

on his back, Cam put his hands in the center of the demon's chest and roared back.

Somehow it didn't come as a surprise that the angel would continue to be a smartass, even while under several hundred pounds of monster.

Blaine raised his hand and shot off a bolt of magic. It didn't send the demon scurrying, but it did appear to sting it a bit. Donovan and Kale joined in and eventually between the three of them, they finally weakened the demon enough for Cam to get free.

The angel sprang to his feet, at the same time pulling his long sword free from the scabbard on his back. Swinging it expertly through the air, Cam gave off a savage grin. "Time to have some real fun."

After that, Blaine concentrated mostly on staying out of the way as the angel and demon fought. Cam moved with a grace and speed that Blaine had never seen before. Several times he thought the Bikor would get the upper hand, but each time Cam managed to beat it back.

The battle seemed to go on for countless minutes, the tension high in the room. Blaine could sense Donovan's desire to go in and help kill the Bikor, but the warlock managed to hold himself back.

Then just as Blaine thought it would never end, Cam swung his blade around in a long, sideways arc. It caught the Bikor in the neck and sliced through, cleanly decapitating the demon.

Donovan let out a cry of relief as the demon's body crumpled to the ground. "Is it dead?"

Cam nodded. "Sure is."

"So does that mean..."

Cam smiled. "Yes, Nolan's going to be okay."

CHAPTER EIGHT

Toby joined the rest of the Drones celebrating near the parked vehicles. Off in the distance, the sky burned bright from the fires of the now destroyed VRF headquarters.

Strong hands grabbed Toby's shoulders and he found himself spun around so he faced a very angry looking Blaine. Suddenly nervous and a bit aroused, Toby smiled. "Hey."

Blaine snarled. "Don't *hey* me."

"You're mad," Toby observed, wondering to himself why that fact turned him on so much.

"Did I or did I not tell you not to leave my side?" Blaine demanded.

Toby ran a finger down the center of Blaine's chest. "Sorry, I didn't mean to lose you like that."

"Carried or on your own feet?"

"Huh?" Toby couldn't hide his confusion.

"You can either walk back to the *Hummer* or I can carry you there over my shoulder. Either way, we're leaving now."

Toby licked his lips in anticipation. "What are we going to do once we get to the vehicle?"

Blaine grabbed Toby's hand and started to drag him in the right direction. "You're pretty smart so I think you can

figure that one out on your own."

A thrill of excitement danced over Toby's body as he gladly allowed Blaine to lead him away. Once they got there, Blaine opened the back door, then all but threw Toby inside. He paused long enough to yell, "Kale, you're driving."

Shocked that they'd have an audience, Toby gaped at Blaine. "We're going to do it with him in here?"

Blaine tilted his head to the side. "Yes, got a problem with that?"

"No, if anything, it makes the whole thing hotter," Toby confessed as he palmed his own hardening cock.

"I thought you'd say that."

Blaine climbed in, his body pressing in on Toby so the vampire laid on his back. Giving Toby a hot, wet kiss, Blaine declared, "I'm going to fuck you so hard that you feel it for days. By the time we're done, there will be no doubt in your mind who you belong to."

There had never been any doubt in Toby's mind. From the first moment he'd seen Blaine, Toby knew he belonged to the warlock. He didn't voice that thought aloud though, too intent on wiggling out of his clothes.

Even in a vehicle as big as the *Hummer*, it wasn't easy for two full-grown men to strip in the backseat, but they were damned determined, so they managed. Soon Toby finally got to feel the wonderful skin-on-skin sensation of Blaine's naked body against his.

Toby was vaguely aware that they were on the road now, but he didn't pay it much mind, too lost in the sensation of Blaine's lips. They seemed to be everywhere at once, caressing Toby's neck, chest, nipples and finally cock.

Blaine only sucked him off for a few minutes before Toby felt the cool, slick press of a finger at his ass. Toby let out a sharp yelp of surprise. "Where did you get lube?"

"It's one of the oils Lachlan uses in his healing. Before I

grabbed you, I snagged it from his bag," Blaine explained as he started to saw the finger in and out of Toby's hole.

"Good thinking." Toby panted as he began to thrust against the finger. He realized they were probably rushing things, but the adrenaline from the battle still hummed in his body and he needed some way to ride it out. What better way than a good, hard, quick fuck. "More," he panted.

Blaine complied, adding a second and then a third finger, the added intrusion giving Toby the most wonderful burn. Toby began to let out loud keening cries, not giving a damn that Kale probably heard everything.

"Fuck me, please. I need your cock inside me," Toby begged.

Blaine gave him a soft kiss on the lips before he removed his fingers. Toby whimpered at the loss until he felt the tip of Blaine's slicked-up cock pressing in.

"You will forever belong to me," Blaine declared as he slowly slid all the way inside.

Toby opened his mouth to agree, but screamed in pleasure instead when Blaine started to pound into him. After that, all Toby could do was hold on and ride the fuck out. He'd been waiting for the moment for so long, it didn't take long before he found himself on the edge. Gripping Blaine's shoulders, Toby yelled, "I love you."

A tsunami-like orgasm slammed into Toby making him temporarily forget how to breathe. He gasped, a little squeaking sound coming from his throat as he shot off, covering both his and Blaine's stomachs.

A couple of thrusts later, Blaine came, too, his eyes fluttering shut as he moaned Toby's name. "I love you, too."

He then collapsed on top of Toby, both of them sweat slicked and panting for breath. Even though the warlock was heavy and the cum felt sticky between them, Toby couldn't bring himself to give a damn. Blaine loved him. They'd

finally claimed each other. The Drones had won the battle and Nolan would live. All in all, Toby couldn't think of a time where he'd been happier.

* * * *

Back at the clan's parking garage, Ian watched as Toby and Blaine stumbled from the back of their vehicle. Going by the way their clothes were all messed up and the smirk playing over Blaine's face, it didn't take a physicist to figure out they'd been fucking their brains out.

As always, whenever he spotted Blaine, Ian automatically looked for Kale. The two were never that far from each other and he didn't have any reason to believe this time would be any different. So when Ian spotted Kale still sitting behind the driver's seat, it didn't come as a shock.

Ian went over and pulled open the passenger side door. As he slide into the seat, the musky scent of sex and sweat wafted into his senses. He started to smile until he spotted the look of utter hurt and loss on Kale's face. Ian's chest ached in turn. Of anyone, Kale meant the most to him and it killed Ian to see the warlock suffering. Not that Ian dared voice that thought aloud. No one, not even Lachlan or Donovan knew about Ian's true feelings for Kale.

"Have you told Blaine?" Ian asked.

When Kale just sat there mute, Ian repeated, more forcibly, "Have. You. Told. Blaine?"

"Told him what?" Kale demanded sharply.

"That you love Toby." May as well lay it all out there.

Kale turned to shoot off a murderous glare. "Fuck off!"

"Believe me, if I didn't think you'd be screaming Toby's name out at all the good parts, I may take you up on that offer."

"You don't know what you're talking about. Toby is a

friend, nothing more.”

“You may have fooled everyone else, but I can see right through you.” Damn, Ian wanted nothing more at that moment then to reach out and touch Kale. The only reason he held back is because he knew how much contempt Kale held for him.

“Like I need some dark magic to tell me what I know. Do you have any idea how fucking pathetic you are?” Kale snapped.

That comment hurt. More so than any of the other insults that’d been hurled Ian’s way since coming to the coven. So as always, he lashed out with the best weapon he had, his meanness. “So if I’m pathetic, then what does that make you? The guy who has a hard-on for his own brother’s mate. I may be many things, but not even I would stoop so low as to lust after Nolan.”

Kale’s mouth parted as all the color drained from his face. Giving Ian one last look of hurt, Kale jumped out of the vehicle, slamming the door behind him.

Once alone, Ian let out a loud curse as he punched the dash. When would he ever learn to keep his venom to himself? The one chance he had to impress the man he loved and Ian had blown it.

* * * *

Several hours later, the rest of the Drones were back at the dwelling and in the midst of a huge victory party. Blaine grabbed Toby by the hand and led his mate over to Eric and Ethan.

Eric saw them approaching and saluted with his bottle of beer. “Good job tonight, both of you.”

“And congratulations on finally getting together,” Ethan added.

"Thanks," Blaine mumbled, feeling awkward. Given what they were about to ask, he almost felt guilty for accepting the praise.

He shared worried glances with Toby, which didn't seem to go unnoticed by Ethan.

"Is there something you want to tell us?" the coven leader asked.

"Yeah," Blaine nodded, before he gathered up all his courage and went on to explain about what had happened when he'd been living with the Ninth.

Even though he'd finally confessed the story to Kale earlier, it still didn't make it any easier to spill everything to Ethan and Eric. The strength and comfort he received from Toby holding his hand was all that allowed Blaine to get through it.

"So, you think this warlock is still out there and he'll come after you?" Ethan asked once Blaine was finished.

"We don't think, we *know*," Toby cut in firmly.

"So, we were wondering if you'd allow us to leave the dwelling for a while. Toby and I decided the best action would be to hunt down the warlock so we can strike first before he comes after us," Blaine added.

"Do you even know where he's at?" Ethan pressed.

Blaine shook his head. "We'll find him somehow. Kale will be going with us and he's not a halfway bad tracker."

"I'm better," a new voice cut in.

Blaine turned and saw Ian standing just a few feet away.

The warlock edged forward. "Let me go with you, guys."

"Why?" Blaine demanded suspiciously as he recalled the way Ian had been eyeing up Kale.

"I can help. The best way to fight a dark magic is with another dark magic."

"It's kind of hard to argue with logic like that," Ethan said.

Blaine locked gazes with Toby who just shrugged. "Doesn't matter to me. The *Hummer* can easily fit four."

"Okay, you can go, too," Blaine agreed. "We leave as soon as the sun sets tomorrow."

Blaine pulled Toby close to his chest as he fought back his doubts. He knew they had no choice though. So long as Tarick remained out there, they could never truly be happy. Only after they killed the warlock, could Toby and Blaine rest easy.

Blaine only hoped that they didn't die themselves before their mission could be carried out.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephani Hecht is a happily married mother of two. Born and raised in Michigan, she loves all things about the state, from the frigid winters to the Detroit Red Wings hockey team. You can usually find her snuggled up to her laptop, creating her next book.

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