



# **Bless the Beauty**

Special Agent Fang—Book One

Stacey Kennedy

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## **Blurb**

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a serial killer has been arrested for the deaths of nine women. This case, however, is far from closed. Two of his victims are alive and time is counting down to discover their whereabouts. Thus, brings in the assistance of the FBI.

Hadley Sloan and Chase Finley might be Special Agents within the Criminal Investigations Department, but what their comrades don't know is, they're in love...or that Hadley is a vampire.

Soon, Hadley's personal life is uprooted and she is left with even more of a mess on her hands when Kellen Boyd, her vampire husband returns to sink his fangs back into her life...

Hadley must juggle the two men in her life, keep her secret hidden, and locate these missing women before it's too late...

## **Dedication**

This story goes out to my super wonderful, totally incredible, just down-right awesome critique partner, Sara Brookes. My stories would have endless plot holes, lots of ick factors, and crummy grammar if it wasn't for her. Big hugs!!

## Chapter One

The warm salty rush poured through my mouth as my fangs retracted back into my gums. An explosion of energy coursed through my veins, as it always did after I drank a mortal's blood.

With my need met, I licked the wound along Chase's warm neck, lowered my head back onto the pillow, and met the gaze of the luscious man above me.

Chase's short blond hair and deep blue eyes more than appealed to me. Nothing about him was unattractive—right down to his succulent body defined by sculpted muscles. He was a splendid display of delicious mortal man.

With the release of my fangs from his neck, he braced himself against his hands and thrust harder. His body slammed against mine as I wrapped my legs around his waist.

The blood may excite him, but it fuelled me. The need to feel more of him consumed me. I thrust back while he moved between my legs. My moves matched his speed and added to the pressure building inside of me.

Apparently, his need was just as strong. He leaned back on his knees, placed his hands on my thighs and pulled them back along my body as he filled me completely, reaching down into my very soul.

My back arched as a rush of pleasure rocketed through me. An unrestrained whirl of pleasure stole my breath from the angle he forced upon me. With hard, powerful thrusts, he demanded my climax and I wasn't unwilling.

I screamed, encouraged him to go harder and demanded him to free me from the intense rush of pleasure as he kept me at the very edge of release. He pounded against me as if he hated me and wanted to cause me pain, but I relished it—wanted more.

Only a few more hard thrusts and the power of my release rushed through me. A scream of indulgence tore from my throat as I crumbled into pieces, reeled in the enlightened sensation that only existed when a body erupts into a state of bliss.

Sometime later—who knew how much time had actually passed, I was too busy recovering to give a damn—my mind began to clear and I laughed quietly. "That never does get old."

Chase raised his head from where it was buried in my neck. His eyes soft in satisfaction as sweat poured off his skin. "Not with you it doesn't."

"Why?" My tone was playful and light, as I intended. "Is it because I'm dangerous and drink your blood?"

He winked, grinned with the same playful edge. "You know I love danger and don't give a shit that you're a vampire."

I did know. We'd been together five years and our relationship was still as strong as the first day we met. After I had the balls to tell him—show him, that is—the creature I was, our love had only deepened. Sure, it was an adjustment for him to realize such things existed. But after some time, he came around to the idea and I think even thrived off the fact that I wasn't *normal*.

Reaching up, I took his face in my hands to pull his mouth back to mine. Sadly, I was disappointed when my phone beeped. "And there goes the fun." I sighed against his mouth, placed my hands on his chest and gave a steady push.

He slid out of my sated body then slumped into a tired heap beside me, only to groan with echoed disapproval when his phone beeped seconds later.

I leaned over toward the night table, grabbed my phone and scrolled down the messages. The bright screen displayed, "*Headquarters, 911.*"

An urgent call from headquarters meant only one thing—a shitload of trouble. My annoyance at the interruption might have matched Chase's if I didn't love the rush of solving a crime. It took an embarrassing amount of years to settle into what I would call my dream career, but this was it. I'd found my place as part of the FBI Criminal Division.

There would come a time to move on, though. In ten years, it'd be obvious I didn't age and would arouse suspicion. Certainly, a brand of trouble I did not need. I had five more years to enjoy the life I'd built for myself and I wasn't about to waste a moment of it.

"We have to go." I jumped out of bed and grabbed my clothes that rested on the floor. Eager and ready to work, yep, that was me!

Chase groaned again, nearly not as eager and reached his arms over his head. "This job is going to be the death of me."

*The death of him.* I cringed with deep heartache and I tried not to realize how much of a sore spot that statement was. I stepped into my panties, pulled them up and felt sick at the thought that one day he'd be gone. But he was a mortal. I couldn't change that fact. Well, I could, but I wouldn't. Chase was a fine human and one I wanted left that way. Maybe it was selfish of me not to offer him immortality, but I loved him just the way he was. So, if that made me a self-centred bitch, then so be it.

Making quick work of my pinstripe pantsuit, I mentally swore at the department for making me hide my legs. It was a shame the FBI didn't approve of short skirts. My thin, muscular calves were my best attributes and I hated hiding them. However, it just added to fun with Chase. He loved them just as much and I liked to tease him accordingly when I had the chance.

I buttoned up my shirt, settled my waist length black hair appropriately and glanced in the full-length mirror across the room.

Yes, I could see myself in the mirror. Vampire myths came in abundance. Most were funny, some annoying.

Old vampires, like me, with a few decades behind them, weren't burnt to a crisp by the sun, but it drained our energy. Powerless and more mortal-like was not a state any vampire wanted to be in. The older one got, the longer they could stay out in the sun. I could top half-an-hour before I fell to the ground in a heap and then the sun had the power to kill me.

Another truth was our abilities to warp minds. That talent always did come in handy. I may have—but would never admit to—altered some of the big-wigs in the FBI to ensure we always worked during the night hours. A girl's gotta do, what a girl's gotta do! But I did try my best to limit altering anyone's mind, there is guilt after all, which I usually felt lots of when I did it to someone I knew.

With that wonderful guilt in my mind, I tore myself away from the mirror, grabbed my jacket and slipped it on. Just as I finished up with the last button, Chase asked, "Ready, doll?"

I looked up to find him fiddling with the navy tie around his neck. I smiled softly and approached him. "You think a man of thirty would know how to do his own tie." Taking

the tie from his hands, I looped it around, and pulled it tight.

Chase grinned with a sweet innocence. “But then I wouldn’t need you around, would I?”

“Touché.” I laughed and pulled the knot up to his throat before giving his chest a light pat. “Done and as handsome as ever.”

He stepped closer, his hands around my waist to keep me locked in close to him. “If you believe that then why are you so hesitant to move in with me?”

I sighed exasperated. “You know why.” *Not this again...*

“Hadley.” His sigh equalled mine. “We have been together five years now. I think you could say we are in a committed relationship.”

“I do *not* commit to anyone,” I retorted, feeling right annoyed that we were having *this* conversation again. “You knew this about me when we started our relationship. If you are looking for that then it’s time you looked elsewhere.”

Yes, I was being harsh, but I wouldn’t lead him on. As much as I wished I could be solely his, it was an impossible feat. I belonged to another, Chase just didn’t know it.

Kellen Boyd, the vampire who gave me immortality, and the one I didn’t doubt for a moment that I belonged to, loved me. But after centuries of being with him, I needed to make something of myself. I couldn’t *just* be the bride of Kellen anymore.

At the time, he had let me go when my need for a life of my own had become evident. But he hadn’t hidden the fact that he would eventually come for me. I’d been glancing over my shoulder ever since. Not that the idea of seeing him wasn’t appealing, it was. Yet, with Chase in my life now, I didn’t need the added complication.

Numerous times, I had wanted to explain this to Chase, but I doubted he’d understand, ‘*By the way, I’m married under vampire law. Sorry.*’ He wasn’t likely to be okay with that.

Mortals just had different standards than vampires. And by Chase’s rules, leading him to believe we could have more was wrong. Mortals didn’t commit twice—well some did—but they were considered scum. Which is exactly why I’d chosen this approach.

Chase reached out, grabbed my arms and pulled me tight against him, breaking me away from my thoughts. “Never say that to me again.” His entire body was tense and his expression severe. “You know I don’t want to look elsewhere.”

I smiled at his tough demeanour and leaned up to kiss his lips, knowing just how to placate him. “Then no more talk of the C word, got it? You know how I feel about you. Let’s not ruin it with that kind of talk.” I placed my lips against his tight mouth and leaned in giving him a good hard peck.

When I drew away, his look hadn’t wavered. He stared down at me intensely and I had to hold back a laugh at his typical mull-over-it-and-keep-quiet behavior. When I stepped out of his arms, he said nothing as I made my way to the door.

Once out of the bedroom, I glanced around Chase’s bachelor apartment as we walked toward the front door. The small space consisted of leather couches, a big entertainment center against the wall, white washed paint on the walls and not a decoration in sight. The idea of stepping one foot into this man-hole and calling it home was absurd.

“Your car or mine?” I asked over my shoulder as I opened the front door of the townhouse and made my way down the porch steps.

“Mine of course,” Chase called behind me. He shut the front door with a loud bang,

locked it, then quickly made his way to the black '69 Dodge Charger, grinning with pride.

"You think you'd have better things to spend your money on than this old piece of tin." I hoped to get his goat in the off chance to ease the tension from earlier.

Chase stopped dead in his tracks to glare at me across the roof and frowned. "Knock the car again and I'll flatten you on your ass."

I opened the passenger door and sat with a loud thump. "I'd like to see you try, tough guy."

Chase slid into the driver's side and when his gaze met mine, we both laughed. I loved the playfulness he and I shared. When we first met, I broke through his tough cop façade quickly to discover what lay beneath was a gentle soul. Getting him to laugh was the only way to break his irritation and I was pleased to see the attempt had worked. What I didn't need was him pissy while we were on assignment.

I settled in and buckled my seat belt—we do enforce the law after all—as Chase started the engine. A soft purr came around us as he put the car in gear and drove off.

As we made our way downtown, the streets of Washington, D.C. were busy tonight. It didn't surprise me to see the city booming with tourists. It always was and I'd grown to love it for just that reason—it hummed with energy.

Within minutes, we began our approach down America's Main Street toward the J. Edgar Hoover Building. My gaze fell back to Chase and I couldn't help the smile that rose within me. "It feels good to be home."

"You live a sad life." Chase snorted.

"Sorry to break it to ya, you live the same life, jacko." And one we both loved. It wasn't only the love together that was the reason for our happiness—it was this poured concrete Brutalist architectural style building where our heart and passion lay.

Chase dismissed my remark with a grin before he pulled into the basement parking garage. Only a few feet in, he steered the car into an empty spot, then cut the engine.

Quickly, I exited the car and Chase trotted up beside me as we walked through the dimly lit space. Just as I reached the elevator doors, I pulled the security card from the back pocket of my pants. When we met the reinforced steel door, I swiped it through the card reader to identify myself.

It only took moments before my picture showed on the screen above the reader, as it said in the annoying woman's computer voice I had grown to hate. "*Voice identification.*"

I leaned forward, levelled my hand against the cold concrete wall. "Screw you." For months, I used my name to identify myself, but after time, I realized it was smart enough to recognize voice levels. Now, it just annoyed me. More than once, I'd told the voice what I wished I could tell others aloud. There was a sense of freedom in it all really. To speak your mind without having consequences—the perfect friend, I thought.

A minute later, a loud beep acknowledged receipt before the voice responded, "*Welcome, Special Agent Hadley Sloan.*"

"Nice." Chase laughed. He followed suit, yanked his identification from the pocket of his jeans then proceeded to swipe his card. After the same response from the computer awaiting his clarification of clearance, he leaned forward and winked at me. "I'd like to screw you good."

"*Welcome, Special Agent Chase Finely.*"

“Mmm.” I wiggled my brows in a sultry suggestion as the elevator doors opened. “I like that idea.”

Chase grinned, inclined his head to the elevator as he placed his hand along my lower back to usher me in. Once in, he hit the button for the fourth floor and the elevator shot up. He leaned against the wall and gave me a knowing look. “Wonder what’s up.”

“Considering the emergency text, I’d say it’s something serious.” Yes, our teams only worked during the night hours. No Agent could work all hours of the day. The job would be too draining. Needless to say, it’s why this job fit me so well, I was never asked to work the day shift, which suited me just fine.

Chase nodded as he angled his head back to glance up to the mirrored ceiling. “Fuck.” He sighed then looked back to me. “I should have slept more instead of spending the better part of the day buried inside of you.”

I raised my hand to my dead heart in shock, my face an expression of utter dismay. “You’d rather sleep than fuck me?”

A slow grin swept across Chase’s face. “When you put it that way, no.”

I lowered my hand as he began to approach me. His eyes darkened, the pupils widened so quickly, I sucked in a breath from the power of it. No matter how much I had this man, just this look from him caused moisture to gather in my panties.

My body shivered each and every time he showed his intent, and now, I could barely control myself. I licked my lips to moisten them as I readied my mouth for his impending kiss. My knees braced as my body tensed to take the weight of him when he came at me.

Only a hairsbreadth away from our lips connecting, the elevator chimed and snapped me back to the present. In a swift move, I moved aside and raised my hand to his face. “You know the rules.”

Chase sucked in a deep breath, frowned and stepped back. “No relationships within the Bureau or severe consequences. Yes...” He groaned, giving me a final once over. “I remember.”

It was another checkmark as to why we couldn’t make our relationship official. It’d mean one of us would need to polish up our resume to find other employment. Neither of us wanted that, but rules were rules, and put in place for a reason. Someone high up in the government had decided it complicated things. I couldn’t see much reason in it, but who was I to put up a stink.

The doors of the elevator hadn’t even opened before Mike’s enraged voice echoed through the halls. “Took you both fucking long enough to get here.”

I smiled innocently at my boss as his dark brows furrowed in unhappiness at me. His briskness was mostly for show. Behind those dark stern eyes, was a deep respect between us. I appreciated his whip ’em into shape attitude and understood the reasons for it. My team would walk circles around him if he let them.

Chase stepped out of the elevator then glanced back to me with a wicked grin. “When I went to pick Hadley up, she was pissing around with her makeup.”

I took a giant step forward across the little space in the floor. The elevator doors shut behind me as I scowled at him and gave his arm a punch, and laughed a little too. “Why would I even bother looking pretty for you bunch of dorks?” When silence reigned, I glanced back at Mike, who didn’t look amused.

He waved us forward, stern and serious. “Enough jokes, we have a situation.” He spun on his heel and headed toward the strategic room.



As I followed in behind, I examined Mike. Despite the fact of being in his early forties, he was in better shape than most thirty year olds. As the Director, he was steady and strong. Tonight though, something was off about him, which only added to my suspicion that whatever we were about to be faced with was a tragedy. “He looks tense,” I said quietly to Chase.

Chase nodded but said nothing as his brows furrowed and his gaze stayed focused on Mike.

Quickly, we made our way through the main part of the office and it was exactly what I expected to find at this time of night—empty. Only our team worked the night shift. Sure, other teams were on call for different departments, but the Criminal Division was usually the only ones who walked these halls once the sun went down.

Our team consisted of me, the interrogator, Mike as the man in charge, and Chase as his second-hand man. The final member of the team was Nick who dealt with all the forensic work, which only confused me.

We were all specialists in our chosen field. Of course, none of them knew that I was only good at what I did because I held the ability to warp a human’s mind and will the truth from them. Hell, being a vampire had to have some perks and I wasn’t going to waste such an ability. Even Chase didn’t know. The less he knew of my vampire abilities the better. I liked being as mortal as I could around him, besides the fact that I needed to drink his blood to survive.

Just as I cleared the door into the strategic room, Nick—the forensic wizard and whom I considered family—sat at the wooden table, waiting. It was partly why I loved this job. I could have that closeness only received from a family without the ties. If I had to walk away, I could. Not that it was something I hoped to do, I was happy here.

“How do you look so damn sexy in the middle of the night?” Nick asked me with a grin. His short black cropped hair made his pale skin almost glow. His equally dark eyes examined me with suspicion as his thin lips melted away to nothing in thought.

I laughed flirtatiously as I flipped my hair over my shoulder. “What can I say? When you’ve got it, you’ve got it.”

Of course, to mortals I did look beautiful. It was a way to lure them, although, I never resorted to such measures to feed from them—or hadn’t in a very long time, I should say. I took the blood I needed to survive only from the willing. Always. Which happened to be Chase and he could take it. He loved red meat.

Nick just laughed then glanced over at Mike as he said, “A situation has come up.” He began handing out the files. “Milwaukee, Wisconsin law enforcement has a serial killer they’ve recently arrested, Chad McKinney.”

I flipped open the file to see a young blonde woman who was obviously dead, if the blue face had anything to say about it. But that was only what struck me first. The longer I looked, the more it became obvious this woman was clearly on display. Everything about the position she was found in was on purpose. Her golden locks lay perfectly around her face. She had freshly applied makeup on her lids and cheeks. Even her cherry red lipstick appeared moist.

“He wanted them found,” I said aloud.

When I looked up, Mike confirmed my thought with a nod. “He left them in very open spaces and didn’t conceal their bodies.”

“Either he is really stupid,” Chase’s eyes burned with the thought of a hunt, “or

incredibly smart.”

Nick flipped a page, his nose buried in the file. “Looking at this, I’d say it was the latter.”

I agreed but kept it to myself as I moved to the next photo. The redhead was in the exact same position, right down to the very same shade of lipstick. It didn’t take rocket science to know all the pictures would be the same. I flipped back to the first picture to examine the minute details in the hopes of finding something.

Silence filled the room as I became lost in the picture. I could assume the others had followed suit, since the only sounds in the room were our deep breaths. Not that I needed to breathe, but I liked to. It might scare the mortals to see a person who can hold their breath indefinitely.

There was a reason these men were part of the team. They excelled in homicides, as did I. Chosen and trained specifically to understand the disturbed mind of serial killers.

Moments passed before Chase broke the silence and shut his file with a loud bang against the table. “How many kills?” he asked Mike.

I glanced up from the file and smiled when I took a good look at Chase. He wore his usual ‘think tank’ expression—brows furrowed, lips pursed and eyes focused. He might be serious, but all I felt like doing was littering his face with kisses. Inappropriate, but I could never ignore just how sexy he looked when he was all focused like.

Mike took a sip of his coffee, then answered, “Seven in a week.”

Chase raised his brows and whistled. “Busy boy.” His gaze turned curious. “If they have the suspect what’s the problem here?”

“Before his capture, he abducted two other women, Kelly Lewis and Sabrina Stopforth. Both women are presumed to be alive. The problem? The suspect won’t give up where they are located. He has indicated enough that he has them hidden.”

“Ahh...I see.” Chase drummed his fingers on the table.

Mike closed his file folder and let out a long deep breath. “We need to get down there and investigate him. Learn more so that when Hadley interrogates him she has enough to go on.”

I sighed quietly to myself, not loud enough for mortal ears to hear it. This was the annoying part of the job. I could just walk right in there and make him spill his guts. But if the team had been called in, it meant the police working the case were at a dead end. Meaning, if I sauntered in and got the information, I would set off warning bells. That I couldn’t allow.

Vampires had rules. Ones made by our leaders known as Mistress Vampires, each of whom run a region in the United States. The rule above all else was clear cut—keep your identity a secret. It kept vampires safe from being hunted and destroyed. Anyone who broke that rule, paid for it with their life.

I liked living too much to make that mistake. Each and every time there was a case, I followed the same protocol. Gather information and history about the suspect’s past, while the men headed off to do the investigative part. Then, when we all had enough, I took what I had and made it *appear* that I had gained a one-up on the police force.

Annoying, but rules were rules.

Mike finished off his coffee in a few deep gulps then glanced at the clock. “Flight leaves at nine, which is in an hour.” He nodded to the door. “Go get your shit from your lockers and meet at the airstrip in twenty.”

Nick jumped up, eager as he always was before we were knee deep in a mystery. And the shit-eating grin on his face only confirmed his enthusiasm. “And let the games begin.”

## Chapter Two

An hour and half later, the plane touched down and we were immediately en route to the Milwaukee Police Department, District Seven. Now, as we proceeded to step through the front doors of headquarters we weren't given a very warm welcome. Every police officer that greeted us appeared less than happy of our arrival, as most of them scowled as we walked by.

"Tough crowd," Chase grumbled.

I wasn't surprised to receive this kind of reaction. It was understandable, so I tried not to let it affect me. First off, it was close to eleven now. All the cops here were running on empty and probably had been for days since they were in the deep of the investigation. Second, the crimes happened in their city. They weren't looking for help in finding these missing women. They wanted to be the heroes and I respected that.

However, the choice wasn't theirs any longer. Seven young women had lost their lives and two more remained missing—the need for pride within this police force had left. I could handle the grumpy men if it meant these two women were found alive.

It wasn't often we were brought in on a case where the victims were still missing. Usually, they were already dead and we were hunting a killer. To say this was a unusual situation would be very accurate.

Just as the door slammed behind me, a kind voice called out, "Mike."

I glanced toward the voice on my right. The man's tone matched his look with equal softness. His sandy hair with hints of grey around his face was cut almost to his scalp. His brown eyes squinted from the smile that crossed his lips. I could only assume that this was the the Chief of Police since he was the one greeting us. Standard protocol for this sort of thing and the man had an air of authority around.

"Nice to see you again, Ralph." Mike extended his hand and confirmed my assumption that this was the man in charge since he knew him by name. "A nasty one you've got on your hands."

"Nasty as it comes." Ralph gave Mike's hand a firm shake. "Glad to have you aboard on this one. The entire city is in a panic."

I laughed softly. "Wonder why? Some psycho offed seven young women and made them look like Barbie. Now, two more are hidden somewhere with no answers as to where they are."

Mike shot an annoyed glance my way. Ralph squinted his eyes at me, a move that nearly made them vanish from sight. The warmth I'd witnessed before was now gone. *Yikes!* Then as if I said nothing at all, they completely ignored me, swiftly heading off down the hall.

"Not funny then, I take it?" I whispered to Chase.

He just laughed and shook his head.

"No one has a sense of humor anymore." This was how I dealt with the bad. It might seem cruel at times but if I took it all too serious, getting through the emotional part of this would devour me. I may be a vampire, but it wasn't how fantasy declared—I did have a soul.

Only a few steps down the hall, we stepped into a meeting room. I cringed the

second I cleared the doors and saw the photos that hung on the walls. Seeing what the woman looked like before and what remained of them after was a bit much to take.

Pushing away the unhappiness that rose within me, I took a seat at the table beside Nick and placed my briefcase on the floor as Ralph said, "We've given up this workspace for you and your team." He pointed down the hall. "We've set up our group over there."

Mike nodded respectfully. "You keep going at the investigation and we'll start fresh. Having both teams working independently can only help here."

That statement almost made me laugh, yet I restrained myself to not get any more stare downs. Mike was only saying that to keep the peace. He'd never let any other officer into our investigation, nor would he listen to what any of them had to say. He always made it appear as if he cared. I never knew why he bothered with such niceties.

Ralph grabbed the door handle and swung it open wider. "If we find anything new I'll let you know."

"Much appreciated," Mike responded.

The moment Ralph closed the door behind him, Nick laughed. "Why do you placate them?"

Mike grinned with no shame. "Keeps them out of our hair." We all laughed at the truth in that statement as Mike took a seat at the table. Once he sat, he hushed us with a wave of his hand. "All right, team. Let's get to work."

I took the file out of my briefcase and opened it. A picture of the blonde woman appeared before me. I let my mind drift away with thoughts as I tried to get an idea of who this Chad McKinney was. There wasn't any hatred in these murders. He made them pretty, peaceful even. That scratched the idea that he was a sexual sadist. He appeared to love these women. However, I doubted he could really have known all nine.

"What are you thinking?" Mike asked.

As I glanced away from the photo to him, I saw that the question was directed at me. I shrugged. "It's the position of them. It keeps sticking out to me. Why is he doing this? What compels a man to make his victims look..."

"Angelic," Chase offered. When my confused gaze hit his, he looked down at the picture then those deep blue eyes met mine again. "When I first looked at the photos, that's what came to my mind. They look angelic in the poses he leaves them. So beautiful, almost perfect."

I knew what he was saying was important and something I should focus on, but I found myself a little lost in those eyes. He was mine—every last little bit of him. There was nothing in Chase I didn't love. More than once, I found myself acting like a lovesick puppy dog when he was around. Which apparently was what I was doing right now.

"I agree with Chase," Mike said, breaking the love song playing in my head. I gave my head a good shake to find some sort of sense and focused on what Mike was saying. "This is what stuck out to me too. From what I know, the police here haven't ventured along this line. They have just pushed him to answer. I believe if we find out why he is doing this, figure out the meaning behind it all, it might be the way to break him. Get inside his head."

I was about to voice just how much I wasn't looking forward to getting into the messy mind of Chad McKinney when the door swung open. Heavy heels clicked against the floor.

I gasped as a shiver went straight through me. My entire body froze as my eyes

stayed glued to the file in front of me.

*No, this could not be happening. Not now. Not here.*

“So, glad to see you could make it.” Mike’s chair scraped against the floor as he stood.

“The pleasure is all mine,” a man replied.

There was no need for me to look up. The man’s deep, smooth voice was enough to tell me who had just walked through the door. The energy that surrounded me was a dead giveaway.

I sucked in a deep breath, not wanting to look up, but compelled to do so. When I did, my maker—my vampire husband—Kellen Boyd stood before me.

Thirty years had passed since I’d seen him last. His look had changed slightly. Being an immortal, it wouldn’t be drastic, but there were subtle changes. Once long, his soft dark brown hair was now cut stylishly. I skipped his face for a moment, not wanting to meet his gaze. He was clad in a proper black suit and tie. As much as that all looked good, it was his marvellous body that I had enjoyed so many times that created this funny feeling in the pit of my stomach.

I shook my head to snap out of such thoughts. Then, that feeling that captured me washed away to annoyance. Before I could stop myself, I jumped to my feet and glared at him. “What are you doing here?” Part of me never wanted this day to come. The other part of me had anticipated this reunion. I was conflicted to say the least.

Kellen slowly looked away from Mike and glanced at me. His penetrating charcoal gaze was amused as well as delighted and his angular face quirked up at the side as a half grin spread across his lips.

Damn him for enjoying the situation he presently put me in. How was I going to explain this? To my team? To Chase? My mind reeled as I tried to figure out a way to put this. I kept coming up short of a good explanation that would leave me in a positive light.

A long silence filled the room until Mike finally cleared his throat. “You know each other?” His tone and expression was well beyond inquisitive.

Kellen’s grin spread to a full smile. The one that had, on every occasion and even now, stolen my breath. “We have been long acquainted.”

Chase immediately stood, glared at Kellen. His words came harsh through gritted teeth. “Is there a problem here, Hadley?”

Then, those accusing eyes left Kellen and closed in on me. I needed to ease the tension here. Not just because I was being entirely obvious that Kellen and I had history together, but because Chase was ready to explode.

*Chase...*

My stomach gripped with sadness. Kellen had returned. My secret was about to explode out in the open and the pressure of guilt struck me like a sudden wave of motion sickness.

*No!*

Nothing would be the same. The life that I had grown to love for the last thirty years was about to be erased in a flash. And the very worst part, Chase was going to get hurt. I didn’t doubt for a single second that Kellen would be unable to hide his adoration for me.

As if to prove me right, he began to approach me. I was frozen in place and was sure my eyes were wide. But I couldn’t deny the excited energy that coursed through me. His gaze, his grin—it was all home to me. I might love Chase now, but Kellen, I would love

forever. No amount of time would ever wash that away.

Kellen's grin shifted to a sweet smile before he grabbed me by the arms and took me into a passionate kiss. As much as I wanted to fight against it, the moment his lips touched mine, I couldn't deny myself. I sank into him as he parted my lips and let his tongue swipe across mine in a statement that said I was back where I belonged.

The kiss only lasted seconds. To me, it felt like hours. It lingered in every part of my body right down to my wobbly knees.

Slowly, but surely, Kellen drew away from my mouth. I met his gaze and assumed I looked as passionate as I felt since his expression screamed pride. My eyes felt droopy and my mouth still hadn't closed from his kiss.

Before I had a chance to recover, Kellen was hammered to the ground. I snapped my head up to Chase who had just knocked him a good one in the shoulder.

"Get the fuck up," Chase roared as he held his fists near his face, ready to kick some serious ass.

Kellen jumped to his feet, completely at ease. "She is mine to kiss." His voice was steady and lacked any hint of guilt.

"Fuck you she is." Chase pounced forward to deliver another round of punches. Nick immediately lunged from his chair, wrapped his arms around Chase and held him back.

I glanced between the men without a clue what to do here. I was still recovering from the effects of Kellen's mouth against mine after so many years. I had wondered when the day would come that he would return for me and I felt out of control now that it was upon me.

What would happen now? Would my job be over? Would Kellen make me return with him to wherever he lived now? Would I go back to being by his side? Would he force me to be the woman I used to be—voiceless and submissive to his wants and needs?

Mike cleared his throat again, louder this time. "I take it you know him then, Hadley?"

It took me a moment to gather myself to look at him. When I did, I slowly nodded. "He's..." I hesitated a moment, searching for the right word then said the only thing I could think of, "...an old boyfriend."

"I'd say it is a little more official than that," Kellen said, dismayed. Instantly, I shot him a look to shut it, but he just grinned happily and continued. "I am her husband."

Chase's anger immediately washed away as he pulled himself free of Nick then turned an accusing gaze on me. "An ex-husband, right?"

Kellen chuckled deeply, wrapped an arm around me. "Unlikely, bloke."

Chase stared at me, betrayal hard in his eyes. Finally, after a long lingering moment, he whispered, "You're married?"

All I could do was nod, ashamed and horrified at the betrayal that passed across his features. I had wanted to explain this to him so many times, but I doubted he'd understand. It was complicated. But now, I wished I had the courage to tell him, then I wouldn't be standing here watching Chase's heart break into a million pieces.

Mike cleared the stifling air by saying, "Chase, I know you are protective of a team member, but what Hadley does with her personal life is her own business." Then, he turned a speculative gaze on me. "Why she never told us she was married is within her rights." He waved out, clearly done with this whole conversation. "Let's get back to what

matters here please.”

I felt sick as I took my seat. With Kellen’s arm draped over my shoulder, he wasn’t helping any. Chase’s anger oozed off him beside me, but he also knew better than to continue to make a scene. His job was important to him. He wouldn’t risk losing his job over this. Instead, he said nothing and sat simmering in fury. That was almost worse than being ripped apart for my betrayal.

Mike took his seat, let out a long deep breath before he began. “I’ve brought Kellen in here to assist in the interrogation of McKinney.”

I snapped my gaze to Kellen’s in outrage. “What?” There was no way I heard that right!

Kellen brushed his fingers across my cheek in a slow, gentle caress. “I was curious about your fascination with the FBI, so I joined the bureau.”

I held back a roll of my eyes. I’d worked my way to the top, just like your average mortal. I suspected Kellen wouldn’t degrade himself by such behaviour and probably just mind warped his way in.

“They’ve got McKinney set up down the hall, continuing their interrogation on him,” Mike said, ignoring my shock again to keep us on the right track. “I think it’s about time we go and take a look at him. See what we’re up against here.”

This didn’t surprise me. It was protocol to sit in and watch the interrogation of the current men handling the case. To look for flaws in their work and see minute details they couldn’t. But right now, I could care less about this McKinney—my thoughts were too selfish to think of others.

The chairs all slid out and snapped me away from my internal hell. One chair however, remained frozen.

Chase sat head bowed to the table. I reached out to touch his arm as tenderly as I could. “Chase.”

My hand was only inches from his arm when he pulled away and stood. When he met my gaze, my stomach clenched with dread. I never wanted to see that hatred burn in his eyes. I was the enemy and his rage for me was clear. Without a word, he walked past me.

At the same moment, Kellen took my hand. Instantly, I yanked it away. “Don’t touch me.” Seeing that look in Chase’s eyes pulled me into a hole of despair. When Kellen touched me, all I felt was anger. If he hadn’t come, Chase wouldn’t be feeling the way he was. This was all Kellen’s fault.

Kellen grinned, calm and collected as he always was. “Is that any way to speak to your husband?”

I couldn’t do a thing, say anything—all I could do was swim in my own sadness. I controlled nothing and my mind wouldn’t allow me the right to make sense out of anything. My only thought was the look in Chase’s eyes, the raw pain there. I was a bitch. A cold, hard and nasty bitch. Shame engulfed my mind.

Mike opened the door to the meeting room and glanced back at me. “Go take a ride with Kellen, Hadley. Cool off and sort this out. I need your mind focused.”

“No—I—” I sputtered.

He raised his hand, stopping my jumbled speech, and my mouth closed accordingly. “We don’t need distractions now. Sort this out so you can get your mind back in the game. Don’t return until you have. That is an order.”



Dammit, an order was an order. What could I say? No? Not likely. Resolved, I did the only thing I could and nodded. I didn't really have a choice here. But this went so much deeper than Mike assumed. Would I return? I wasn't sure. Even if I did, I needed time alone with Chase to explain. Until I could, I doubted I'd be of any help here.

As Mike and Nick exited the room, Kellen took my chin between his fingers and brought my gaze back to his. "I've missed you."

I tore away from his grip, outright angry at the way he went about this. "I haven't missed you."

He gave me a grin I had seen a thousand times over, the one that said he knew better. "Now you are resorting to lies." He took my hand again and this time I let him, despite my annoyance with him. His touch felt good in the midst of all this confusion.

"I must do something about this unruly behaviour you have learned." His gaze was as penetrating as it was calculating and I felt it heat my body. No matter how angry I was or how annoyed I felt—that look levelled me and he knew it. "Let's go sort this out, shall we?"

### Chapter Three

Outside police headquarters, Kellen stood on Main Street and held the passenger side door of his black Mercedes sedan open, grinning. “In you go.”

I forced my annoyance to remain at bay. I may be pissed, but it didn’t hamper the appreciation I felt for his display of manners. Kellen was born at a time when women were adored and treasured. Such niceties just didn’t exist anymore in the world today and I had missed being handled in such a way. Not that Chase wasn’t loving and thoughtful, just modern men didn’t do things like that. And I’d missed it.

“Thank you.” I slid into the leather seat, then he closed the door behind me, trotted over to the driver’s side and quickly got in. Once settled, he started the engine, put the car in gear and with a squeal of his tires, drove off.

I sat in silence—torn. The feelings surrounding Chase were sending a horrible gut wrenching pain to pool in the pit of my stomach. I loved him, but I had hurt him and nothing about that felt good. I couldn’t imagine what he was thinking now, and in truth, I didn’t want to.

We drove a while in silence as I watched out the window. The dark night surrounded us and the streets were not like Washington. Quite empty.

Finally, sick of the silence, I turned my attention to Kellen. “Nothing like making an entrance.” I gave him a little glare. “Was that really necessary?” I could only imagine what my team thought. I kept my husband a secret then he suddenly appears and plants a big wet one on me.

Kellen laughed, quite pleased with himself. “You know how I like to make a scene.”

I did know that of him. The man lived to shock people and I’d witnessed it happen on hundreds of occasions. I leaned my head back against the headrest and released an exasperated breath. “So my time is up, is it?”

Kellen’s gave me a sideways glance that showed his unhappiness. “You make that sound so horrible.”

Instantly, I regretted my word choice and for reacting like a cold, hard bitch. He deserved better. I closed my eyes for a moment and breathed deeply trying to regain myself. “I’m sorry,” I finally said, opening my eyes to look at him. “It’s just complicated.”

Kellen studied me a moment then said, “Explain your relationship with the mortal.”

“I love him,” I responded without hesitation.

Kellen slammed on the brakes, which caused a horn to blast behind us. “You are in love with a mortal?” His eyes were wide with bewilderment.

I nodded, almost laughing at the disgust on his face, but couldn’t find it within me to let it out. “Have been for years now.”

Kellen stared for many seconds before he clucked, shook his head and began to drive again.

I watched Kellen as he was clearly deep in thought. I knew him almost as well as I knew myself. And that furrow of his brows meant he was trying to sort things out in his mind. Still, I couldn’t decipher what he was thinking.

*Is he mad? Will he leave me too?*

We travelled in silence for a while. Kellen's gaze focused on the road then he blessedly broke the quiet that threatened to kill me. "You're not willing to give him up?"

I suspected my expression came across as pleading almost to the point of begging. "I don't want to." And I didn't.

Not one fibre of my being wanted that, but I doubted I had a choice here. Chase would want nothing to do with me now. I couldn't blame him either. If the roles were reversed I would feel the same. It wasn't that I'd set out to lie to him, but he just didn't understand my world.

Kellen let out a deep breath then took a quick turn to head into an old abandoned car garage. He pulled in behind the old rickety building, turned off the car and shifted in his seat to face me. "It has been thirty years since I have laid my eyes on you. Never once did I expect to be united with you and hear that you are in love with some mortal."

I shrugged away his contempt. "Well...I never expected you to come here as a part of the FBI."

Kellen snorted, leaned forward and took my face in his hands. His eyes and even the set of his mouth were soft and loving. "I will not waste more time with this. Does this life make you happy?"

I didn't even hesitate. "It does. I'm very happy."

"So you want to continue on here?"

I nodded as much as I could with his grip tight around my cheeks. "I love my job, the people, the life I have here." I sighed softly. "I don't want to leave, Kellen."

Kellen lowered his hands, glanced away for a moment, focused on the steering wheel. After a few minutes, he drew in a slow breath before his gaze met mine again. I saw a depth of sadness I'd never seen in him before. "Do you want me to leave you?"

I was torn, desperately. I knew if Kellen stayed, Chase would be gone and I didn't want that. Having Kellen gone didn't sound good to me either. I missed his smell, the certainty he possessed and the love he had for me...no one loved me like Kellen, not even Chase. I knew if I asked him to go, he would because that was just Kellen. He'd put his wants aside time and time again to see me happy. I couldn't ignore any of that. Not now. Not ever.

Having him back, reminded me of all these things and that I had missed him terribly. For thirty years, a part of me was missing and now it had returned. I sank deeper into his gaze and slowly shook my head. "No, I don't want you to go."

A sweet smile swept across his face as he began to lean in. "That is all I need to hear." Then, he laid his lips against mine.

I let him explore my mouth. The familiarity of it was something I had missed too. Kellen knew how to kiss me. He understood what it took to build me up until I couldn't think of anything except being consumed by his body.

After a swirl with his tongue, he slowly backed away and opened his eyes just an inch away from my face. "You may keep a consort," he said gently.

I laughed quietly at the word. I doubted Chase would appreciate being declared a consort. I'd known many vampires who did keep one or two around. Some were humans they had grown comfortable with, some lovers they just considered meals.

As much as I doubted Chase would agree to this, it surprised me even more that Kellen would offer such a thing. "That wouldn't bother you?"

Kellen arched an equivocal brow as arrogance flashed through his eyes. "Am I

threatened by a mortal, is that what you ask?"

"Knowing that I love him?" I wasn't sure what his take would be on this. He was never partial to me having mortal lovers. He had them himself. Centuries of being alive called to stir up the sheets on occasion and I knew he wouldn't object to my being with Chase. It was the feelings I gained for him that caused me to question if Kellen would be willing to accept.

He ran his fingers gingerly up my arm and it tickled all across my skin. His fangs had released from his gums and showed his mind was not on this conversation and instead on my body being so close to his. "Your heart has the ability to love many, I know that of you. If it pleases you to share time with this mortal then why would I object to that?"

With those few words, I understood why this wouldn't bother him. Chase was a mortal. It wasn't eternal. If it was, I doubted Kellen would be so tolerant. But before I could respond, he grabbed me by the arms and yanked me over the gear shift and onto his lap as he began to lavish my mouth with his talented kisses.

Nothing in me would refuse him. Hearing those words pour from his mouth filled my heart immensely and to be reunited with him burned in my body. I squirmed against him, rubbed against his hard erection, which caused Kellen to growl in response. He reached forward and pulled on my jacket. His vampire strength was no match against the cotton suit. Quickly, the coat was shredded around me.

As he placed his mouth on my neck, I angled my head back and moaned at the familiarity of it. He knew every spot on me that increased my pleasure. He didn't miss a single spot now. He licked his way along my neck while his fangs trailed in its wake and sent an edge of pure desire through me.

I knew what he wanted, what he craved. I angled my head slightly to the side to allow him the right and he immediately nudged it further with his forehead. His breath grew raspy, and with a final lick, he sank his fangs deep into my neck.

My breath rushed out at the initial intrusion, then changed entirely. I felt like I was reborn. I began to grind against him harder, swirled my hips so that his cock could connect with my body. He groaned deeply as he greedily drank from my neck and soon I was spiralling in glorious sensual gratification. It'd been so long since anyone fed from me—too long.

After a long, hard pull on my blood, he licked my throat to close the penetration marks and I shuddered above him. He drew away, met my gaze and retracted his fangs as a dribble of blood rested on his bottom lip. I leaned forward and with a slow long lick, I lapped it up. His eyes flared to burn red-hot.

"I cannot wait any longer," he growled. "I need to see you."

He grabbed onto my shirt, moments away from tearing it to shreds when I latched onto his hands and stopped him. "I need this shirt." I meant to sound firm but it came out as a soft purr.

"Then off with it."

I kept my gaze focused on his while I unbuttoned my shirt slowly, punishing him. I enjoyed it—took pleasure in watching the burn that lay in his eyes. He might have had lovers since me, but no one could do what I did for him. And by his throbbing cock resting against me, I was assuming correctly.

By the time I was in my bra, he had already thrown me back over to my seat. His

pants were off and he'd made quick work of mine.

The movement took me by surprise. I was so used to being around mortals that I hadn't used that talent in well over twenty-eight years. The thrill of being with a vampire again consumed me.

Luckily, his need matched mine. Once my pants were gone, he raised my ass onto the console of the car, knelt between my thighs and plunged himself deep inside my slick opening. I arched at the spectacular feel of it. Kellen was a forceful lover. There was nothing gentle about him and the vampire aggression was something I had missed. The speed, the roughness, it was what made me a vampire. I craved this, even if I didn't know it.

He pulled out of my body and then thrust back with enough force that I couldn't withhold the scream that rose from my throat.

"More," Kellen's voice came out husky. "Let me hear more of you." He thrust back in hard, again and again.

I didn't disappoint him. With only a few hard thrusts, I propelled into orgasm. Before I could even recover, Kellen roared, "Again." He came at me with even more force and quickened thrusts.

I screamed from the strength of each pound against me. My entire body was on the brink of something fantastic and when Kellen grabbed me in his arms to straddle him, took my hips and rocked me against him, I was completely lost.

The control over myself was gone. The strength that he possessed made me his puppet. He moved my body forcefully to get each other off and I teetered on the edge. I leaned my head down onto his shoulder as he continued to lift me above him then slam me back down. His moans became deeper and I could feel his cock growing harder and wider.

It was an instant demand of me and I was not opposed to it. As he sent me slamming back down against him, my restraint broke and I could only grasp his shoulders in an attempt to hold off a moment longer.

I let my fangs release from my gums then sank them into his warm neck. My mouth immediately filled with warm powerful vampire blood as he roughly thrust against me. He groaned as I succumbed and allowed my orgasm to engulf me. My pussy clenched around him, urged him to come. His body grew with tension as I continued to draw blood from his body. Then, he worked harder. If I could have bruised, I would have. He grasped me around the waist hard and made an enemy of my body.

A second later, we both fell apart in a roar of completion.

When the sensations subsided, we were silent, unable to move. But when the warm taste of his blood dripped on my tongue, sense returned. I slowly licked the wounds on his neck to close them, then kissed the spot where I had my feast.

Kellen wrapped his arms around me, hugged me tight and I found myself sinking against him. I loved this man. How selfish I had been for leaving him. Now I questioned how I ever felt unhappy with him. He had been so patient with me, only wanted me to be happy. I had been wrong and would make up for that.

He pulled my head away from his chest then moved his hand along my cheek as he held my gaze steady. "I have missed you every moment you have been gone."

I leaned into his hand, my eyes blinking slowly as wetness began to rim them. "Me too."

His eyes filled with happiness as a sweet smile spread across his face. “Now that sounds better.”

I had to force myself to remain locked in his gaze. Shame began to cripple me. Tears of blood welled up in my eyes—yes we really cried, even if it is blood. “I’m sorry...”

He placed a finger on my lips, hushed my words. “No apologies. You needed the time to discover more of yourself.”

“But...” I started as a bloody tear escaped.

He shook his head, wiped the tear away with the tip of his finger. “I do not hold it against you.” Then, he placed his finger in his mouth.

What man would allow their woman to go off and experience life without them? Vampires weren’t known to be kind in nature. They were territorial and fiercely so. But as I racked my brain, the answer became clear—only a good man would allow such a thing. I gulped deeply, sickened. “I don’t deserve you.”

The night I left, he was heartbroken and I knew walking away from something good was selfish, but at the time, I chose not to care. Now here he was, arms wide open and welcomed me back without any explanation.

He rubbed another tear away from my cheek. “It is not important who deserves whom; it’s that we are bound. My life is yours as yours is mine.”

Okay, all that made sense, but that didn’t change the fact of how I felt right now. “I have been stupid.”

“You have never been that.” He gave me a chastising look, but softened when he said, “But now you know.”

I sniffed. “Know what?”

“Where you belong—where you’ve always belonged.”

A smile rose to my face at the truth of those words and leaned forward, but before I met his mouth, said, “Yes, I know.” After a slow endearing kiss, I backed away to see that Kellen looked pleased and content. I laughed and sniffed away the rest of my shame. “You happy to finally hear that?”

His smile vanished as he nodded firmly. “Let me make this clear, I gave you leave once so you could discover this in your own time.” He grasped my face with an equal firmness. “I will not allow it again.”

I gulped deeply at the pain in his eyes. It cost him a lot to allow me to do this. He wasn’t lying. One thing about Kellen was that his word was honorable. He never wavered away from it, and right now, I wanted nothing more than to be locked in his arms forever.

Here was where my heart belonged.

I kissed his lips once more deeply just so I could confirm to him that I knew my place—to show him my sorrow for the pain I’d caused him. Then, I slowly backed away and needed to remind him I was here to do a job.

“We have to get back.” My team would be waiting to get into the case and they’d be annoyed that we were taking our sweet-ass time. Even more than that, I could only imagine what Chase was thinking.

*Chase.*

I sighed and willed the tears to stay away. What a jumbled emotional mess I was in. A state I’d never been in and one I could live without.

Kellen laughed as he placed me on my seat. “Yes, we have a serial killer to have a little chat with.”

I reached down, grabbed my bra and clipped it into place. As I reached for my shirt, I gave him a speculative glance. “You find that funny?”

Kellen nodded without hesitation. “Quite. You have the ability to kill a human, but instead, you’re saving their lives.” He winked. “It’s amusing.”

Finishing up with the last button on my shirt, I snorted. “Feels a hell of a lot better to save someone than see them destroyed.” It was hard to believe how much vampires had evolved.

Two hundred years ago, they killed for the pleasure of it. Now, they lived peacefully among the mortals. Considering the act of feeding on them gave the mortal enhanced pleasure during sex, they came willingly. Times had changed and I was glad for it. The killing never did sit right with me, even if I was a natural born killer.

I picked up my jacket and swore softly. I never went without my coat on the job and the implication would be obvious. Chase would know what happened. Not that I’d keep the truth from him, he’d been lied to enough. If he asked me outright, I’d tell him what happened here. I threw the shreds that were once my jacket into the backseat and grabbed my pants from the floor of the car. Lifting my hips, I pulled them on and zipped them up. “So tell me, what you have been doing over the years?”

“Watching you.”

My hands steadied on the button as I turned my speculative glare on Kellen. “Watching me?”

“I have stayed with you the entire time,” he answered, completely unashamed. “You think I would have left you alone?”

Why I suspected otherwise was just stupid on my part. Instead of voice that, I moved along. “So you have been living in Washington then?”

Kellen nodded, then started the car. “I have been working for Slade.” When he saw my next question rise on my face, he continued. “A shield.”

It took a moment to process what he had just said. Maybe because I couldn’t believe it. “You’ve joined the Mistresses?”

In vampire society, Mistresses’ vampires had many who worked beneath them. It was far more serious than what I did with the mortal governments and it wasn’t a job that appealed to me in any regard. You did a bad job or fucked up—you died.

Kellen had finished buttoning up his shirt, then started the car and began to drive out from around the rundown garage. “Mistress Ellery was pleased to have me join her guard.”

This should not surprise me to hear, but it did. Kellen had once held a role within the Mistresses’ guard and hunted those who defied their laws. But he had moved on, tired of the death. Why would he return? None of this made any sense. “And you are happy doing that?”

He laughed loudly, clearly at my surprise. “Once a shield, always a shield.” He gave a firm nod of his head. “It feels good to be back to what I’m good at and I needed to keep myself busy in the time you were gone.”

After a moment’s thought, I suddenly realized just how great this was. If Kellen had joined Mistress Ellery’s guard that meant he had taken an oath to her. It also meant we wouldn’t leave any time soon. He wasn’t going to make me leave my job. I could continue doing what I loved and that made me blissfully happy. Feeling all warm and fuzzy, I felt the need to reciprocate that feeling. “You were always the best you know.”

He was highly respected within vampire society. His warrior skills were impeccable and I had always been proud of that.

Kellen grinned with superiority as he made a turn back on the main road. "Still am."

A classic Kellen answer. "I see the arrogance about you hasn't changed."

"You know you've missed it." He winked playfully.

I could only smile in return. I had missed him but until now hadn't realized just how much. Being beside him, having his hand rest on my thigh, was right in every way.

But I also knew I needed the time to accept this. Accept that I needed him—couldn't be without him. He'd been right in what he'd said to me the night I left him.

*"We are soul bound, take this time, but you will return to my side and be happy to be there."*

Kellen made my life worth living. I might pretend to have moved on, and not need him, but it was all an illusion. We belonged together. However, realizing all this left an empty space in my heart. Where did Chase fit into this? I needed—wanted to keep him forever.

Only one question remained...did he want to keep me?



## Chapter Four

Twenty minutes later, we were back at the station and had just entered the room viewing the interrogation of Chad McKinney. Chase stood with his arms crossed. Oh yes, the glare on his face said he knew exactly what had taken place between Kellen and me. Guilt roared through me and left me confused. One part of me was utterly thrilled to reunite with Kellen, while the other was horrified at what I'd done.

Not only had I cheated sexually, but emotionally as well. However, the truth of the matter was, he either had to accept that Kellen was back in my life or our relationship would be over.

My heart told me this relationship was heading toward the garbage disposal. The thought of not being held by Chase, not see his smile or feel his love, crippled me.

Kellen stepped up next to me, his sigh heavy before he closed the door with a loud slam then locked it. The move forced Mike and Nick to look his way. The second they did, he said, "Go to sleep now."

A second later, both men fell to the floor, dead to the world. It was just the thing to snap me out of my sadness. I shot my gaze back to Kellen. "What the hell did you do that for?"

Kellen nodded outward with a knowing look. "We must deal with this. I'm not going to stand by to see you in this much pain. Sort it out now."

Knowing exactly what he meant, I looked back to the person I needed to sort things out with. When I met his gaze, I'd never seen him so angry. His entire body was tense and the veins in his arms looked a moment away from bursting.

Chase seemed shocked, or traumatized, one of the two. He finally snapped out of wherever he had gone and glared at Kellen. "You fucking killed them?"

Kellen shook his head as he looked down at the men on the floor. "No, they are sleeping," he waved out, "have a look for yourself."

Chase rushed over to Mike, flipped him over and placed his fingers on his neck to check for a pulse. A moment later, he stood. The rage still burned in his eyes, but at least he looked a little more controlled now.

I understood why Kellen had done it. Yes, Chase and I had to talk, and I was actually glad it'd been forced upon me. I doubted I would've known what to do otherwise. But I never mind-warped my team, ever!

My glare was quick and steadied on Kellen. "I do not use mind control unless I have to, Kellen. Do not ever do that again, do you understand me?"

Kellen's brows furrowed, clearly displeased with me. "You have denied your abilities too long, Hadley." He shook his head in a disgusted manner. "What a waste."

I'd stood up to this man many times before and his angry face still did nothing except piss me off more. "Promise me you won't do that again."

Kellen studied me intently. Irritation ran through those dark eyes of his. The annoyance said that he realized just how mortal I'd become. Maybe it was the first time he grasped how much I had changed. I could tell by the unhappiness on his face, he didn't approve of the woman I'd become in this regard. I never doubted he would. He was a vampire, loved it and lived it. Conforming to mortal rules was definitely beneath

him, but this wasn't his life, it was mine.

That determination must have showed on my face because he eventually sighed and inclined his head in acknowledgement.

Resolved, I glanced back at Chase who stood, the glare on his face even worse now. Just as I knew Kellen, I knew Chase equally so. He was loyal, honest, everything that were qualities of a person good. I doubted he'd forgive me from keeping such secrets from him, but it didn't mean I wasn't going to try. If I was going to lose him, which I suspected, I needed to do it with a clear conscience. I needed to know that at least I tried to explain my actions.

I sucked in a deep breath before I steadied myself. "Chase..."

Chase raised a hand to stop me and my mouth shut promptly. "Do not say a fucking word to me." Fury radiated in his tone and his voice dropped a whole octave.

Okay, so I expected this reaction. But it didn't mean this wasn't painful to watch. Chase was a closed off type of guy. So serious, he only let a few people into his personal space. I had now become one of the people he kept out. Pain coursed through my heart.

"Please just listen to what I have to say," I pleaded, desperate for him to hear me out. "I just want to explain myself."

Chase took a deep breath through his nose. His jaw clenched tightly. "You don't deserve to be heard."

Kellen snorted. "Say that again, bloke, and I'll stuff that pretty head of yours up your arse."

Chase's body vibrated with anger.

I stepped in between them, not wanting a fight to break out. This wasn't about them fighting, but about making my peace. My bottom lip quivered, but I forced myself to stay strong. I would not fall to pieces here. I was in the wrong and deserved his wrath. I owed him that.

"Okay, I deserve that." I acknowledged his feelings in hopes that it would calm him. "You have a right to hate me."

"Damn right I do." Chase tore his gaze from Kellen and focused on me. "You're fucking married and never said a word about it." He raised his hand and pointed at Kellen. "This bugger comes in, kisses you and you go all mushy in his arms. Then, you return with him and reek of sex. I see the blush of your cheeks that only comes after you've fucked. So, tell me, Hadley." His voice was so cold. "Why should I listen to one word that comes out of your mouth?"

I glanced at Kellen who simply looked annoyed by the conversation. He wouldn't ever understand. He'd just mind-warp Chase and leave it at that. That wasn't an option for me. My relationship with Chase was real. I wanted it to stay that way.

I looked back at Chase, pleading. "I'm not going to deny that Kellen and I have been together and I won't lie that he has returned to be with me again." Chase's eyes burned with such rage, it was a surprise his head hadn't blown off. Quickly, I added, "But it's not what you're thinking, I'm not breaking up with you for him. You just don't understand vampires."

Chase gave a firm nod. "Yeah, 'cause I am fucking not one of you."

"I know that," I whispered. "But that's what I'm trying to explain to you. We're not monogamous."

Chase snorted a laugh that was in no way a happy sound. "That's clear, isn't it?"

Since the vamp isn't at all put off that you've been fucking someone else while married to him."

The term he'd just used broke my heart. "We haven't just been *fucking*...we're in love..."

Chase's gaze would kill me if able to and the look forced me not to continue. "Do not even fucking go there, Hadley."

My mouth clamped shut. I didn't know what to do. To me, it was normal to be married and have a mortal lover. Of course, it was almost unheard of for a vampire to be in love with one. Consorts were treated with great respect and thought highly of. But to be loved? It just never happened. Truthfully, I hadn't been looking for love, nor expecting it. Just like the fairytales say, Chase just rode into my life and swept me off my feet.

I glanced to Kellen, feeling lost and confused. What was I to say? I'm sorry. I wouldn't dare say something like that. I would never say I was sorry I hurt him. He deserved so much more than that. What I wanted was for him to accept this and forgive me on his own accord.

Kellen gave me a reassuring smile. Then, his gaze fell on Chase. "The name is Kellen." He extended his hand.

Chase crossed his arms over his chest, his eyes blazed with hatred. "I don't fucking care who you are."

Kellen lowered his hand and laughed. "You do love her, no?"

The point-blank question snapped Chase away from his anger for a moment and the barrier of protection he'd created around himself fell. Sadness washed across his face and he gulped deeply. He glanced at me with soft eyes and the gentleness in them spread goose bumps along my skin. This was the man I loved standing right here in front of me, vulnerable.

It only lasted a moment before his gaze returned to hard steel. He focused back on Kellen. "And what if I do?"

"Then, best we introduce ourselves." Kellen extended his hand again. "If you want to be in her life, you will be in mine also. Our being friends will make this better for her."

Chase dropped his arms, clearly stunned. "Say that again? You want me in her life?"

Kellen nodded without hesitation, lowered his hand again, looking annoyed and nodded toward me. "If you'd get over yourself and stop being so angry for a moment, you'd realize that is what she is trying to tell you. Nothing has changed between the two of you. Her love for you remains. Therefore, if she wants you in her life, the choice is not mine to make."

Chase gave him a speculative glare, plainly disbelieving him. He stood quiet a moment clearly trying to process this all. Finally, he found his voice. "As in, you are willing to share her with another man?"

Kellen gave his head a slow frustrated shake. "Mortals." He sighed then continued. "The way about you all is amusing. Of course, I am willing to share her. Why would I refuse her someone who makes her happy?"

I stepped forward then placed my hand on Chase's arm, pleased that he didn't tense beneath my touch or flinch away. "Kellen is a vampire," I told him softly.

Chase looked back at him, gave him a once over. "Point being?"

"We are wed under vampire law. Yes, we love each other and yes, he is back to stay,

but I want you in my life too.”

Chase’s brows furrowed as his gaze searched mine. “He may be okay with sharing you, but I’m not sure I’m capable of such a thing.”

I sighed and prayed this wasn’t the end. I hoped I wouldn’t have to erase our time together from his mind. Those were the rules if a mortal knew about a vampire and if things got messy. Their mind would have to be wiped clean—no scorned mortals to run around telling secrets. It created a safety net for vampires. Those were the laws the Vampire Mistresses lived by and every one followed or else they suffered some serious consequences. And I had no interest in being punished by a Mistress. I enjoyed my life too much to screw it up.

“It’s the only way to be together,” I implored he understand all this. “Kellen and I are bound. He gave me time to myself these past years—oh, bunch of years—so I could make something of myself, but...” I glanced up at Kellen to see a superior grin planted on his face, “I realize how wrong it was of me to keep him away.” Then, I looked back at Chase. “I love you, Chase. I want you to stay in my life too.”

Chase huffed, glanced down to his feet where he shuffled them around, apparently mulling this over.

Silence filled the room for well over ten minutes, while Chase looked at the ground. Kellen seemed uninterested in the present happenings and more fascinated in the interrogation taking place on the other side of the two-way mirror.

Chase finally sighed and raised his gaze to mine. “Let me get this straight.” He pointed between Kellen and me. “You are married under vampire law.”

“That’s right.” I was glad his mind was working again and he was putting things together. That had to be a good sign, right?

Chase glanced at Kellen and continued, “You are back in her life as her husband. But you don’t mind that she continues to have a relationship with me?”

Kellen nodded and looked bored. “That is what was said, yes.”

Chase gave his head a shake then looked directly at me. “Even though he is back in your life, you still want to have a relationship with me?”

“Of course I do.” Tears were on the brink of forming. I restrained them as bloody tears would likely upset him and I’d done enough of that already.

Chase crossed his arms over his chest which lowered my hand from his forearm, and gave me an expression I’d seen before. He was deep in thought. He worried his bottom lip in his mouth. After a final bite of his bottom lip he said, “This is by far the most fucked up thing I have ever heard, you do realize this?”

“It’s the only way you will have her, chum,” Kellen responded. His expression turned to one of a challenge. “Do you love her enough to share her?”

It seemed like a valid question, but I knew Kellen. He was challenging and testing Chase’s character. If Kellen didn’t believe he would be loyal to me, that he deserved these feelings I had for him, he would have wiped his memories in a flash regardless of how I felt on the matter.

That was Kellen. Always acting on what he thought best for me, which was one of the reasons I left when I had. I liked making my own decisions. I sent a little warning glare Kellen’s way. The determined set of his eyes faded immediately and he sank back against the wall.

Chase let out a deep wavering breath as he met my gaze again. Then, everything

about him softened. “Yes, I do.”

I let out a little squeal, lunged forward and ploughed into him. Being around Kellen had let my vampire out to play. I went way too fast toward Chase and hit him harder than I meant to.

We flew backward and landed hard on the ground. Chase let out a loud grunt, but he immediately wrapped his arms around my back and pulled me tight against him. “I’m not saying this is in any way normal, but you aren’t ordinary, are you?”

“No I’m not.” I gasped in shock and joy. I hadn’t really expected this and the happiness within me threatened to explode.

Chase placed his hand at the back of my neck and pulled me even closer. He met my lips and kissed me with more passion than I’d ever felt from him. His mouth danced with mine as I felt his forgiveness for what I’d done.

When he finally backed away, he smiled in a way that told me everything was going to be all right. “Can you handle two of us?”

It was certainly a challenge I was up for. “Damn right I can.” Then, I grabbed his face, kissed him with pure happiness and love. He was more accepting of my world than I expected him to be. Mortals lived sheltered existences. The thought of sharing each other never did sit well. I’d seen that many times.

Chase loved me. There was no denying that. He wanted me bad enough that it didn’t matter that I had Kellen too. I was getting the best of both worlds and I got to keep them both—every girl’s dream come true.

Just as I released Chase’s mouth, Kellen cleared his throat loudly. “Sorry to interrupt the happy reunion here, but...” he gestured to the two-way mirror, “they sound as if they are wrapping things up in there. And if you don’t want me to mind warp anyone Hadley, you best move along.”

Chase looked at Kellen and laughed a sound of disbelief. “It doesn’t bother you to see me kiss her like that?”

Kellen reached out his hand and pulled Chase to his feet once he took it as I squirmed off him. “Watching her get enjoyment does nothing but please me.” Then, he reached back down and assisted me to my feet.

Chase glanced between Kellen and me quickly. “Best just get this over with.” When I gave him an odd look, he continued and nodded toward Kellen. “Kiss him.”

I looked at Kellen, feeling very confused and he gave me an equally curious look. My gaze fell back to Chase for clarification. “Why do you want us to do that?”

Chase gave a feeble shrug. “When he showed up out of the blue and kissed you before, I was too shocked and angry to really see it. I’m not going to lie. This is not going to be easy for me. You all might be used to sharing, but I’m definitely not. So instead of mulling this over in my head, let’s just get it over with.”

Kellen grinned with a sultry suggestion. “Don’t need to ask me twice.” Then, with lightning fast speed, he grabbed me around the waist and pulled me toward him.

I silently cursed Kellen. He wasn’t being kind and guided me into a kiss that made my knees weak. I was instantly lost, and soon, found myself moving my body against his and demanding more.

Kellen sharply drew away and I stumbled slightly as I gasped. “And that’s how it’s done.” He chuckled deeply.

When I had enough in me to meet Chase’s gaze, I was surprised to see he wasn’t

angry. He stayed quiet a moment, then finally said, “I see what you mean about it pleasing you to see her enjoyment.”

My brows rose in total shock. “You liked watching that?”

Chase stepped forward, took my chin in his grip and tilted my head up. “I liked watching you.”

Kellen let out a loud sharp bark of laughter. “Chase...” he gave him a hard slap on the back, “me and you, brother, are going to get along just fine.” Then, he looked at the men still at our feet. “Wake up.”

In an instant, Chase lowered his hand from my chin and glanced at Mike and Nick, who jumped to their feet, completely unaware of what had just taken place. He burst out laughing then quickly disguised it as a cough.

Mike gave him an aggravated look. “Find something funny about two women still missing and likely dead?”

Chase coughed once more. “No, of course not.”

To save Chase from any more of Mike’s death looks, I stepped up closer to the two-way mirror. Two police officers sat at a steel table as they continued with random questions of Chad McKinney. He was your typical bring-home-to-your-parents type of guy. Handsome, well-dressed and, as I could hear, soft spoken. “Have you got anything here?”

“The kid is off his rocker,” Mike replied.

I glanced over my shoulder and looked at him. “Aren’t they all?”

He shook his head. “No, this is different. It’s far past just your normal fucked up serial killer—he is not right...” he tapped his finger on his temple a few times, “in here.”

Kellen laughed.

I shot a glare his way. No one needed to hear his opinion on what he thought of mortals or how ridiculous he thought this whole situation was. I focused back on Mike. “You think he has been institutionalized?”

Mike glared at Kellen for his rude display, then when he looked back at me, his expression softened. “I’d suspect it’s a place to start. If we can grab some history on him, it might help us understand his mind. Without it, we’re going to get nowhere. There is no flaw to the cops’ technique here, they are not the problem, it’s the kid is insane. If they weren’t sure it was him, I’d begin to suspect they were wrong. We need to focus our efforts on finding out more about him before we proceed—something that we can use to relate to him and get inside his head.” He started walking toward the door then looked back at us. “Hadley, you and Kellen start researching mental hospitals in the area. Call around and see if any of them have heard of this Chad McKinney.” He nodded toward Chase and Nick. “We’ll start looking back through the files and see if anything stands out that could help Hadley and Kellen along.”

I snorted, so annoyed I could barely breathe. Kellen wouldn’t be interrogating him. That was my job. I didn’t need him to assist me, nor did he want to help. He was just along for the ride. This was just a chance for him to see me in my element. I suspected he wanted to see what I’d be doing these past years. Part of me was glad he took an interest in who I’d become. The other, wanted his little huffs and smug grins to go away and let me get back to work.

Nick nodded in acknowledgment of the order and then headed out of the door.

Chase started to follow then gave me a sideways glance before looking back at Mike.

“I’ll join you in the meeting room. Gotta make a trip to the pisser first.”

Mike nodded and just as he stepped out of the door, he glanced back to me. “Let me know what you find out.”

“I will,” I replied.

Chase waited a moment until the door closed behind Mike, then met Kellen’s gaze fiercely. “I’m not sure how you want to work this out, but right now, she’s mine.”

Kellen leaned against the wall, crossed his arms over his chest and smiled. “I didn’t expect otherwise.”

*What?*

He didn’t expect otherwise? What were they going on about? What had I missed?

Before I could ask, Chase wrapped his hand around my arm and pulled me tightly against his body. He looked down at me and appeared angry, very angry. “Come with me—now.”

Wonderful, what was wrong with him now?

## Chapter Five

Chase kept his grip on my arm tight as he strode down the hall on a serious mission. He seemed intent, focused and very angry. I tried a couple times to ask where we were going, but was only rewarded with a stern look in return.

Instead of continuing with the one-sided conversation, I kept quiet and let him lead me down the hall, shuffling behind him. He finally stopped, looked around.

I followed his gaze, comforted by the fact the hall was quiet. He turned toward the door on our right. Just before he opened it, I caught the words, *Janitorial Room*.

My confusion slowly and surely melted away. He was finding shelter, privacy. The intense look, the stern set of his eyes—I didn't recognize it at first because I'd never seen it from him before. I should've expected this really with all that had taken place. He was in pure possession mode.

Kellen had me, now Chase needed to stake his claim. Of course he would, it was a male response to his woman being taken by another. His body needed to remind mine that I belonged to him.

Now that I put two-and-two together, my body warmed right down to my very toes as arousal spread through me. My man was on a mission to re-establish his territory, which meant I could anticipate one hell of a ride.

As he tossed me into the room, I couldn't withhold the smile that blossomed on my face. Without looking back, he closed the door, locked it then slowly spun around toward me. His mouth curved up ever so slightly as he approached me.

The strong set of his shoulders, the slight cock of his head led me to believe Chase was determining which way to devour me. Those deep blue eyes smoldered as he licked his lips. Oh damn, I was in trouble. But this kind, I'd happily receive.

Only mere inches away, he reached out, grabbed me by the arms and yanked me forward, tight against his body. His mouth captured mine and he immediately consumed me.

His hands moved from my arms up to my face. He held my cheeks in his tight grip as he kissed me deep enough to send a wave of tingles straight to my centre. My hands slid along his biceps and the muscles flexed as I explored each curve that made up his spectacular physique.

Leaving my face, his fingers trailed lightly down my neck, slowly running to the middle of my chest where he gripped my breasts and massaged them gently.

I moaned into his mouth. His caresses against my lips grew firmer as he took my whimpers and drank them in. The building heat between my thighs brought me closer to him and my body sank against his. His cock grew harder along my stomach and I wiggled in response. He gave my breasts a final fondle before reaching down for my pants.

In a quick move, they pooled at my feet and my panties quickly followed.

His lips left mine, travelled along my jaw, down my neck and little shivers of need quivered through me. I closed my eyes and leaned my head back to allow him further access.

I trembled as he gently ran his hands so lightly over my skin, teased along my thighs.



They drew closer to my pussy, but moved away when he came near.

The third time, with his lips still greedily feasting on my skin, I had enough and in a move that seemed to surprise him, had his cock free from his pants. I quickly stepped out of my pants to free my legs.

He sucked in a breath when my hand closed around his shaft and his body jerked forward. His mind had been so intent on teasing me, he hadn't been aware that I had him naked. His head snapped up, his eyes met mine and a grin played on the corners of his mouth.

"Impatient, are we?" His voice came out husky and deep.

Leaning forward, I licked his bottom lip and watched as his eyes dilated to black at the contact. "Fuck me."

A moment later, I was against a steel cabinet with his arm hooked under my leg as the other supported my weight. He hunkered down, held his cock in his hand and immediately thrust in—hard. My breath rushed out, my eyes widened as he settled himself in deep.

The length of him made this position so favourable. To watch him thrust in long slow movements—at how far he could go back because of his long shaft—left my inner walls clenching around him. His strength while he carried most of my weight against his arm only made the heat in me build further.

My moans grew louder as his thrusts began to draw in deeper. Harder. Faster. His free hand came around to the back of my ass and he used the grip to come at me with more strength. The move multiplied the sensations and I immediately shrieked and put my hands around his face. Our gazes locked on one another. He began grunting and I moaned against each movement as his length created heaven inside my body.

He brought my thigh up higher, shifted it on his arm to open my legs wider for him as he angled down to push himself in deeper. My hands fell to rest on his shoulders where I dug my nails into his skin. I urged him on, demanded that he go faster without words. My orgasm built, my body tightened and my breath panted out as the sensations grew within me.

"Ooo...fuck...I'm going to come," I managed.

"Fucking right you are." Chase grunted as he pushed my body harder against the steel cabinet. He braced himself, angled my hips more and thrust like a mad man.

My eyes involuntarily closed, head fell onto his shoulder as my orgasm took hold and trembled through my body. With no control over myself, the leg I was using for support gave way and I nearly tumbled to the floor.

Chase quickly grabbed my other leg, hooked it under his arm and stepped back. His hands cupped my ass as he delivered long, hard, deep thrusts. Over and over again, while my release continued to take on the definition of a *never-ending orgasm*.

My pussy clamped around him, clenched in a perfect rhythm of release as he continued to create a pace that was simply spectacular. Long fluid movements while he held me in his strong arms.

Without removing himself from my body, he dropped the other leg back to the ground, raised my leg so my calf rested against his shoulder and spread his legs wider to support himself. The move brought him even deeper and the feeling came as a shock of pleasure. His lips returned to mine, his breath warm against my face as he continued with deep thrusts.

I ran my hands through his hair, staring into the face of the man I loved, despite the fact we were different. Beyond the fact that he knew my heart belonged to another. We were in this together. No matter how flawed this situation was, he was mine as I was his.

"I love you," I whispered in a gasp.

His eyes softened from the possessive state they were in and he smiled sweetly. "You damn well better if I have to share you." Then, he drew back in harder.

His body was wicked against mine as my leg stretched to give him further access. The possessiveness on his face returned as he moved his hands to my hips to grip them. His face hardened as his thrusts began to build in pace. The moves of his body were forceful to stir his pleasure.

My pleasure was renewed. Little flickers of sensations began to swipe across me in heat waves. I linked my hands behind his neck as he drew his face closer to mine. His eyes stayed focused on mine as his brows drew together, more strained with each rough thrust.

His attentions had the desired effect. The rough embrace forced pressure to build inside my body, yet again. As his cock hardened further, the width and hardness brought an orgasm to the surface.

Our eye contact never broke as we both succumbed to our own releases. He shuddered, his forehead resting on mine as I moaned out in complete satisfaction.

After his trembling stopped, he raised his head and a sexy smile spread across his lips. My smile came immediately after. Yup, a good fuck was the perfect way to ease the tension of the past few hours.

He leaned in and kissed my lips softly. "I love you, too, by the way."

I laughed quietly and unlaced my fingers from around his neck as he began to back away. I ran a thumb across his lips. "I know you do."

Right then, a gasp filled the room, loud and shaky.

I snapped my head toward it, a guy in his early twenties stood with a large jug of what appeared to be soap in his hand, dripping all over the floor. His soft young brown eyes wide, his chubby cheeks flushed and his mouth in a perfect *O* as the soap dripped down onto the floor. Judging, by how much soap layered the floor, he'd been there a while and it hadn't occurred to me at the time, we might not have been alone in the room we entered. "Oh fuck," I grumbled.

Chase laughed, withdrew from my body and lowered my leg. "Ahh..." he stumbled.

His awkwardness wasn't warranted, I had this. Leaving Chase where he stood, and bare-assed, I approached the kid, naked from the waist down. When I drew close, he still hadn't moved an inch. I snapped my fingers in front of his face. He blinked, blank-faced and looked at me. "You saw none of that. You spilled soap on the floor. Go get a bucket and clean it up and next time be more careful."

The guy looked to floor and saw the mess. "Shit, I can't believe I did that. Sorry, I'll clean it up right away." Then, he scooted to the back of the room where a steel sink was located.

I spun on my heel to find Chase holding my panties and slacks in his hand. A look of shock filled his face. "So, Kellen isn't the only one who can do that. Care to explain that?"

"It's just something I can do," I replied with a shrug. Taking my clothes from his hand, I quickly got dressed. When I looked up, he didn't look settled.

“Not getting off that easy.” He gave me a firm look. “What the hell was that?”

Okay, so I’ve never really shown him what I could do as a vampire. He knew the basics. I didn’t like the sun and garlic didn’t really kill me—only a sword to the neck could do that—and I needed to drink blood to survive. But this was one thing I kept from him. I thought it might scare him if he knew that I had the ability to warp his mind. “It’s just a talent vampires have. We can alter...um...mortals’ minds.”

“Anytime?” His face became a mask of disbelief. “You can just walk up to a person, say anything, and they will obey you?”

I nodded with a slight grin on my face. It amused me to see him at a loss.

“I thought when Kellen did that maybe it was just something he could do.” As he finished, his expression shifted to a rebuked look. “You had better not ever attempted that with me.”

“Of course I haven’t.” I leaned up to kiss his lips, which were very firm. Backing away from him, I turned, headed toward the door and whispered under my breath, “Maybe once.”

“Hadley,” Chase called out behind. “What was that you said?” When I ignored him, he grabbed my arm. I turned back to him to find his expression serious. “What was that?”

I giggled. “Go, on...Mike’s waiting for you. You don’t want to make him suspicious.” His eyes narrowed, but I continued anyway. “I love you.” I leaned up to kiss his lips, but only firmness met me. No soft kiss in return.

“If I find out you’ve warped my mind...” His voice held a serious threat. “I will punish you for it.”

“Ooo...punish me.” I winked. “I might like that.”

His resolve wavered, the corners of his mouth ever so slightly curved up. “I’m not going to forget this conversation.”

“I wouldn’t think you would.” There was so much to discuss, including how he truly felt about it all, but now just wasn’t the time. And the intense look in his eyes said his thoughts lingered along the same lines that mine were. His mouth parted obviously to say more on the matter. I put my finger over his lips. “Later.”

He closed his mouth, his lips firmed into a tight line, and he sighed. “You’re right.” He leaned forward and opened the door. “We’ll talk later.”

We would have *the* talk. The one I had long avoided. I wasn’t quite sure if I’d be able to explain it all to him. Nor was I sure I knew the answers myself. How was this going to work between the three of us? All I did know was that I had just about everything in this moment that I ever wanted.

I had Chase. I had Kellen. What else could a girl want or need?

## Chapter Six

With Chase off to filter through the investigation with Mike and Nick, Kellen and I—well Kellen watched while I worked—called the nutty bins in the area. After my tenth call, I knew I was getting nowhere. I slammed down the phone, ran my hands across my face in frustration.

“Got nothing then?” Kellen asked in a bored voice.

I lowered my hands from my face and shook my head. My gaze fell back to the phone book. The yellow pages had eleven phone numbers marked. The last—*Aurora Psychiatric Hospital*. If this wasn’t the one we needed, it meant we had to do more research into Chad McKinney’s life. Truthfully, with the weight of the missing women, time wasn’t on our side. And I had guilt enough about having the moment with Chase. Personal time like that wasn’t appropriate now. We needed to find these women before it was too late.

I reached out for the phone again, took it in my hand and dialled the phone number just as Kellen said, “I still find it difficult to believe that you have fallen for a mortal.”

There went my non-personal matters. Kellen wasn’t obligated to this case, and the man I knew wouldn’t wait for the answers he needed. Like Chase would. Instead of prolonging this conversation, I hung up the phone as it rang the first time and settled on answering him quickly so we could move on and I could get back to business. “It shocked me too, but there is something about him—something special.”

Kellen’s brow lifted as his head cocked. “What makes him so special?”

That was the question wasn’t it? What did make Chase so special? Never in my life had I been attached to anyone other than Kellen. As much as I loved Kellen, I loved Chase equally strongly. Only the love for them was different, if that made any sense at all.

“I don’t really know what it is exactly. I was attached to him from the moment I laid eyes on him.”

Kellen grabbed a pen off the table and began to spin it in his fingers. “And you have only been with him?”

He appeared uncomfortable and very unsure of himself. It was an odd state to see him in. The tough, strong vampire seemed a little off his axis. “Not for the first while, of course. I looked elsewhere, but over time I needed no one else.”

Both brows rose now as he dropped the pen and it began to roll off the table before he stopped it. “A mortal kept you satisfied?”

I nodded, smiling at his incredulity. “Quite.” The idea was going to be hard for him to grasp. Vampires enjoyed being together. The unity of the two same creatures heating up the sheets and sharing blood was not one easily forgotten.

He glanced down to the table again, picked up the pen and continued to spin it between his fingers. Many silent moments passed, as he remained thoughtful, then he finally said, “I am oddly jealous.”

“You?” The idea sounded ridiculous. Kellen had nothing to be insecure about and never had I seen that emotion come from him. “Jealous of a mortal?”

He raised his gaze to mine, stern and unwavering. “You have never loved another

but me.”

Then I knew what he was grasping at. I hadn’t considered this might hurt him. I suspected he’d be annoyed or disgusted even. That he’d tell me to forget him and move on. I hadn’t expected that he would have his heart broken because of my relationship with Chase.

Guess it was time for me to explain, not only to myself but to Kellen too. “It’s totally different. With you, it’s boundless. You know me like no one else could. I am completely and utterly myself around you.” Then, I sighed deeply, hoped my words came out right. “With him, I just want to keep him.”

Kellen’s sigh equalled mine as he dropped the pen, leaned back in his chair and laced his fingers behind his head. “Luckily for you I am not unwilling. Not all would be so.”

Wasn’t that the truth! But that is the reason, Kellen was Kellen. So unselfish and I wasn’t quite sure how I felt about that. What I did know was that it made me a selfish bitch. The worst part, I couldn’t have it any other way. I needed them both. I leaned forward and gave him a kiss I hope displayed what my heart felt. “It’s why I love you.”

He laughed a soft sound when I backed away from his lips. “And so you should.” Then, he gave a stern look. “How do you wish to proceed with this?”

I thought we already sorted that out. “Proceed with what?”

He leaned forward in his chair, his face close to mine. “Are you going to treat him like a consort?”

Shit! I hadn’t really thought of that. Now, with Kellen back in our lives things had changed. With him working for the Mistresses, we needed to follow the rules by the book. I sighed at the idea of giving Chase such a title. “He doesn’t feel like that.”

“Hadley.” Kellen gaze chastised. “It will pose a problem if you will not declare him your consort.”

I understood. I’d been putting this off since I lived more like a mortal than a vampire. It wasn’t really necessary. But if it was discovered that Kellen was breaking vampire law, he’d be killed for it. Not an ideal situation. I wasn’t concerned about the meaning behind it, I knew Chase would be all right with declaring his knowledge of the vampires’ secret and would see to keep it that way. It was the ceremony I worried about. I doubted Chase would want to be declared under their command.

Our situation was so different than most. Mortal consorts were addicted to their vampire—to the high they got from the vampire drinking their blood. With Chase, it wasn’t that way in any regard. We loved each other and he was addicted to me. Sure, he enjoyed the rush of sexual satisfaction that came with the act of my feeding on him, but it was me he wanted—not the high.

If I didn’t declare Chase as my consort then he would be targeted as a threat. A means to expose the vampires to the world and that was something that went against our laws. My choices were limited.

“Have you shared blood with him?” Kellen asked, breaking me away from my train of thought.

I shook my head, as if I’d ever be that stupid. “I know better than to do that.” If I had, I would have defied the Mistress by not bringing Chase before her immediately. It was one of the reasons I never offered it to him. The other reason was that I just didn’t know how he would respond.

“Good girl,” Kellen smiled, approvingly and gave my thigh a pat.

My options were dwindling down to only one. Kellen's stern eyes said I couldn't manoeuvre my way out of this one. "I suppose there is no choice here."

"Not if you want this mortal to remain with you." His gaze turned curious. "Unless you want to turn..."

I stopped that line of thinking by raising my hand. "That is not an option." No, I didn't want to give Chase immortality. I wasn't quite sure of my reasons behind it, I just knew, it wasn't an option.

Kellen wanted to say more, I could see that, but apparently, he knew to leave it alone. "Then, we must bring him to Mistress Ellery." He glanced back to the phone book. "As soon as we can get away from this mind-numbing task." He glanced at me, amusement twinkling in his eyes. "You really enjoy this?"

I nodded and laughed. It was a funny thing really, something he would never understand. His life revolved around danger and action. Mine was so simple compared to his. "This is just one part of it, but yes, I love it."

The amusement in his eyes grew as he brushed his knuckles against my cheek. "I am pleased to find you like this. I had hoped that giving you this time would settle you and you would return to me when ready."

"You see a difference?" I asked, curious about what he saw.

He nodded without hesitation and pride oozed off him. "I see a purpose. Turned so young, you hadn't had the time to gain a life for yourself. I had two hundred years on your twenty-four. I was already established as a shield with a meaning for what I was to do. You lacked that." He ran his hand along my face to cup my cheek. "I am happy to see that you have found a purpose to your days that gives you joy."

I sank into his embrace. All of what he just said filled my heart with a certain kind of peace. "I guess I should probably thank you. I know the past years without me must have been hard."

"Hard..." he repeated, incredulous. He dropped his hand as a loud laugh spilled from his lips, "is putting it lightly, dear." His gaze was as intent as it was soft. "Your happiness is all—and will always be—what is important. If this life you have now pleases you, than I am content with that."

I smiled as happiness coursed through my body and leaned forward to bring my face close to his. "You know you are perfect, right?"

He grinned, haughtily. "Yes, I do know this."

I shook my head at him, laughing. Classic, arrogant Kellen. How I missed his confidence. "So what's the plan?"

"Make the call—if we find out this is the hospital, we'll take Chase with us to go and talk with this Doctor. But first we'll take a quick trip to see Mistress Ellery to claim him."

"We?" I repeated. Did I hear him right? Was he really that accepting of all this? I couldn't believe my ears.

"He is important to you," Kellen replied with a smile that showed he just enjoyed shocking me. "If I claim him too, it will give him a stronger protection."

"You think he could be in danger?" I hadn't even considered that a possibility.

Kellen glanced away from me for a moment. When he met my gaze again, there was guilt in the depth of his eyes. "I am a shield again, Hadley." His look was firm and serious. "You know what that means."

I did know. It meant danger of every sort. I hadn't wanted to go back to the memory

of all the times I found myself in precarious situations before I left Kellen. But it was those reasons he loved and thrived on by being a shield. The only reason I never put up a stink about it was because Kellen was a strong protector. I never was in serious danger. Now, things were different and the idea of bringing Chase into this world was very unsettling. “Have you been in danger recently?”

Kellen let out a self-righteous laugh, then his grin settled. “Not likely. If I happen to piss someone off and they know my bride has a consort, they may use him as an act of revenge. If I claim him too, it is more likely they won’t.”

The thought of anything happening to Chase sent a shudder straight through me. Just as that settled, I felt entirely grateful Kellen would offer this. No matter how long we’d been together, he could still surprise me. “You would really do that for me?”

“Darling...” Kellen arched a brow, “I would lay my life down for you. This is not putting me out by any means.”

I could only smile in return, unable to explain how I felt about this with words. I was beginning to remember why I loved Kellen so much. The man didn’t have a selfish bone in his body. I knew he was now, and would always be, a better person than I could be on a good day.

Resolved to get back to the matter at hand, I picked up the phone and dialled the number. Only two rings in a soft voice answered, “*Aurora Psychiatric Hospital*, how may I help you?”

“This is Special Agent Hadley Sloan. I am working a case with the Milwaukee Police Department, and wondered if you at some point had a patient there by the name of Chad McKinney.” Silence filled the line. “Hello?”

“I’m sorry,” the woman’s voice said in a soft tone. “I suppose we should have expected this call.”

My dead heart leapt into my throat. That was just the response that I’d been hoping to hear over the past hour. Her response, though, irked me. Why wouldn’t they offer their help on the information they had on him? Damn, mortals could be so annoying. “So, he was a patient there, then?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

I let out a long deep sigh, relieved that we had gotten somewhere. “We need to come and speak with you immediately.”

“But it is the middle of the night. Dr. Peterson, who treated Mr. McKinney, worked the day shift today. He will be sleeping now.”

“This cannot wait until morning.” Not only because this was urgent, but also because I couldn’t go out in the daylight to talk to him. We needed to act now. As it was, we were going to lose some time going to Mistress Ellery’s.

This choice was the only one we had. Kellen had enemies that would love to expose such a secret as what I had going on with Chase. “You need to wake him up. We’ll be there in...” I looked at Kellen, who raised two fingers. “Two hours. Make sure he’s there.” Then, without another word, I hung up.

Kellen grinned. “Now then, let’s go and claim ourselves a consort.”

## Chapter Seven

"I take it since you are driving in the opposite direction of the hospital, we're not going there." Chase gave me a stern look from the backseat of Kellen's car. "Mind telling me where we *are* going?"

I shifted in the front seat to look back at him, wondering just how I was going to put this. And furthermore, just what his reaction would be. I suspected he wasn't going to be happy. "All right, take a deep breath and don't throw a shit fit."

Chase's brows furrowed and his eyes narrowed. "All right." His voice was hesitant and very guarded.

"Under vampire law..." I hesitated a moment, pondered what to say next or if I even wanted to continue at all. After a moment, I sucked back the hesitation and finished in a hurried breath, "I have to claim you as a consort for you to know about us."

Chase's suspicious expression shifted to one of blatant confusion. "A what?"

"A consort, it's like a human..." I almost blurted out a word that he'd definitely not appreciate. I was only glad my mouth clamped shut before I made a terrible mistake.

"A pet," Kellen finished for me shamelessly.

Chase's expression returned to outrage so quickly, I was a surprise I managed to withhold my laughter. He crossed his arms over his chest in defiance. "You are not going to claim me as your pet, Hadley."

I smiled and it was definitely forced. "It's not really that bad." What else could I say? I wouldn't feed him bullshit or lie to him. What we were about to do was indeed under vampire law—acquire him for our uses. The term *pet* was exactly how vampires referred to it. I wasn't about to tell him any different.

My words did nothing to ease Chase's stern glance. "Hadley, if you think I am going to allow you to claim me as your pet, you've clearly lost it."

I glanced over at Kellen who drove with a smile on his face. *Jerk*. Looks like I wasn't about to get any help from him. My gaze returned to Chase. "It doesn't mean anything to you, only to vampires." I hoped he'd see past this. "I don't think of you that way."

"Well that's a fucking good thing." Chase guffawed.

Kellen laughed and his grin only grew as he glanced at Chase in the rear-view mirror. "What? You don't like the idea of being claimed by her?"

Chase snorted and glowered. "Not in the way it's suggested, no."

My hands clenched together as anxiousness set in. We were doing this, on our way to do this. I needed Chase to come to terms with it without scaring him. He was not agreeable in any way and this was part of the ceremony, the only way we would be able to stay together. He had to accept this. "It's just what vampires do. It really doesn't mean anything."

"Then what is the point of it?" Chase demanded.

Kellen took a quick right and let out a long deep sigh that sounded very annoyed. "So you don't get your ass killed."

I snapped my gaze toward him and my glare came quick. "Must you be so forward?" He wasn't helping. We had to take this slowly. There was so much to my world that



Chase didn't know, simply because I didn't want him to. I had to ease him into this as gently as I could.

Kellen gave me a sideways glance with a smug grin on that handsome face. "I must." Then he focused his attention back on the road.

I snorted and looked back at Chase. Instantly, I felt mortified. He had so many emotions running across his face I couldn't even decipher them, and I could only imagine how difficult hearing all this was. *You need to become my pet because if you don't, you could die.* Not really how I wanted to ask him to be my consort. Damn Kellen for making this much more difficult than it had to be.

"It's just protection," I told him as gently as I could. "It's the way we do things. By letting us stake the claim on you, you could never be touched by another vampire."

Chase's brows rose up to his hairline. "Us?"

"You will belong to me too," Kellen said with a smirk.

"The fuck I will." Chase pounded on the back of Kellen's seat with his fist, but Kellen just laughed it off.

I sighed. *Will he never shut up?* "Enough, Kellen." I focused on Chase. "It's just added protection. Kellen is a shield."

His raised brows rose even higher, an expression of complete blankness filled his face. "A what?"

I'd never seen him at such a loss for words, which told me how unsettled he was with all this. He couldn't even truly comprehend what was going on here. Before I had a chance to come up with an answer, Kellen said, "A hunter. A killer. Any of those will do."

"What exactly do you hunt?" Chase asked, with a note of scepticism to his tone.

"Vampires who have broken the laws," I replied before Kellen could say something horrible. "It's why he must claim you too. If you're attached to me and he pisses someone off, they could come after you for revenge. If Kellen is attached to you, they won't. It would be a personal threat against him."

Chase thought a moment, then asked, "If he didn't *claim* me and if someone attacked me, wouldn't it be a personal attack against you, therefore piss Kellen off?"

I shook my head. "It doesn't work like that. Vampires are bound by strict laws. We have to adhere to them. Kellen could never hurt anyone for doing anything to my consort. If it was his too, that is quite different."

Chase sighed, his expression still a mask of hesitation. "What is this claiming bit then?"

Oh good, he was coming around to the idea. Asking questions was a good thing, right? Maybe Kellen's straightforwardness actually helped here. It got the facts right out on the table leaving Chase to just face it dead on. Truthfully, I wasn't expecting him to settle into resignation so soon and was quite glad of the direction this was going. "Nothing happens really. We just go before Mistress Ellery and state our decision."

"A Mistress?" Chase laughed, a deep confused sound. "Now you've lost me completely."

Kellen answered before Chase finished laughing. "She is the leader of the Pacific Northwest."

Chase's laughter ceased as his expression swept back to confusion. Oh boy, he was going to be spent after tonight—shifting moods so quickly had to be exhausting.

“We, as vampires, are ruled by a leader. They are known to us as Mistresses.” Chase’s confusion only deepened so I added, “Each Mistress has been granted a region within the United States that they run as they please. It is their territory to protect, prosper—you know, that kind of stuff.”

Chase was silent a moment, blinked, then laughed. “You have got be fucking kidding me!”

I shook my head, slow and serious. “No joke, really.” Regret filtered through me that I hadn’t told him any of this earlier. Then at least, he’d have more time to accept all this, instead of just being thrown into it all head first. But what was done was done. I couldn’t dwell on what ifs, or at least, tried not to.

Chase leaned forward, his gaze intent on mine. “Tell me, just how have these *Mistresses* risen to power?”

Before I had a chance to open my mouth, Kellen interjected. “Age mostly—they have more years behind them then you could fathom.”

After a long hushed moment, Chase snorted a sound somewhere between annoyance and bewilderment. “Wonderful. I am about to go and meet some crypt creeper.” Then he looked out his window and his snort came again resembling laughter. “Where exactly is this Mistress?”

I followed his gaze out the window to see we were approaching a small private airstrip. I glanced at Chase, his brows raised in question, I laughed softly with him. “California and we are a bit short on time.”

Chase sent his examining gaze to land on Kellen. “You always have planes at your disposal?”

“Mmm...not exactly,” Kellen responded. He pulled up to the small jet that sat along the airstrip then turned off the car. As he opened his door, an older gentleman began to approach the car. I had to wonder what the man was doing here so late at night, but I assumed Kellen must have called him to meet us here. Who knew what he told him to get him out of bed. Not that I really cared, we just needed to get this done.

“Can I help you?” the man asked just as I stepped out of the car.

Kellen nodded firmly, his gaze focused on his. “We need to go to California. You will take us there now and quickly.”

The man nodded with a bright smile. “Of course, it’s clear skies, a perfect night for flying. We’ll push this jet to the limits to get you there quickly.” Then he strode off toward the garage.

I could kiss Kellen for knowing of this place. That was just an added bonus from his years spent as a shield. There wasn’t a city he hadn’t been to and he never went anywhere unprepared. If it was imperative that he move quickly, he needed to know where he could go to do so, and he gotten this one dead on. The shiny aerodynamic jet would provide just the speed we needed. Shaving off time was a necessity at this point.

Chase burst out laughing as he watched the pilot head back to the plane. He shook his head slowly. “That is fucking incredible.”

I laughed with him, glad to note the sound of his laughter had returned to the playful tone I loved. “Being a vampire does have its perks.” I hooked my arm through his as we began to walk toward the jet and leaned my head against his arm. “By the way, I hope you know how happy you are making me for doing this.”

Chase kissed the top of my head. “I do what I have to, doll.”

I sank further against him. I knew he loved me, but we never talked about just how deep it ran. Now, I discovered that his love was just as strong as mine. He wanted to keep me just as much and that knowledge elated me.

The pilot was waiting by the cabin door with his hand resting along the railing. “Welcome aboard the Gulfstream G550, I hope you have a pleasant flight,” he said to me.

I raised my head from Chase’s shoulder and removed my arm from his. “Thank you.” I climbed up the steps and entered the plane.

Quickly, we settled into our seats. After the pilot finished up with the flight plan, we were in the air. The clouds whipped by as the plane shot through the night sky with impeccable speed.

An hour whipped by. As each minute passed, Chase became more uneasy. I reached for his hand, laced my fingers through his. He glanced at me with quiet, thoughtful eyes. If only I could read his mind. “Where have you gone?”

Chase smiled softly. “I’m here.” He brushed his thumb across the back of my hand. “Just trying to process.”

The whirlwind had reached its peak and had reached his limit. Now, was the time to have the *talk*. There was no putting it off, he needed to get things off his chest and I needed to listen. “A lot has happened, hasn’t it?”

Chase let out a loud sharp laugh. It wasn’t a happy sound, but more exasperated. “Hadley, my world has just been torn out from under me.”

He was right, it had. I basically threw a bomb at him and forced him into a situation he never would have agreed to before. Not only did he have to share me with Kellen, but now, he was being whisked off to a society he didn’t know existed. I squeezed his hand tight. “Are you really okay with it all?”

Chase shrugged deeply. “Still processing.”

I glanced toward Kellen and gave a little nod toward the cockpit. I needed time alone with Chase.

Kellen winked, stood then said, “I’m hungry. I bet the pilot has something around here...or in him...I could eat.” He laughed and headed off down the aisle.

I glanced back at Chase to find his gaze steady on me. “What are you finding the hardest to deal with?”

Chase sighed as he leaned his head back against the beige leather headrest. “I suppose this sharing bit.” He shifted his head to the side, met my gaze again. “What will it mean?”

“It just means you will have to share my time.” I placed my other hand over top of his in hopes to give more comfort.

He laughed softly, but it wasn’t a laugh of amusement, it was more out of uncertainty. “What’s the plan then, are we going to work out a schedule?”

I shook my head and gulped at the same time. I hadn’t quite worked this out yet. And what I did want, I wasn’t sure Chase would agree to. “Kellen will be busy with his duty to the Mistress. He’ll be gone for long stretches.”

He worried his bottom lip with his teeth before he said, “All right, so, on those stretches you will be with me?”

I nodded without hesitation. That about summed it up. “That’s right.”

Chase pondered that for a moment, his bottom lip now looking red from the action with his teeth. “And when he’s back, you will be with him?”

It was an important question and he deserved an answer. But I wasn't really sure how it was all going to play out. "I don't really know." I glanced to our joined hands and for the first time with Chase, I was completely truthful. "I was kinda hoping we could all be together."

The silence grew heavy. When I couldn't take anymore, I glanced back up to see Chase's inquisitive expression. "Together?" he repeated, brow arched.

Trying to lighten the mood, I resorted to my usual playfulness that always eased him. "Yeah, like a big happy family."

His jaw clenched, the muscles flexed. This time my action didn't work in the least. "And who will you spend your nights with?"

So, *the* question had finally come up. The one that I knew he'd been eager to ask. Truth was I had no answer to this one. Maybe a schedule would work with allotted time with each, but would either of them agree to that? I wasn't sure.

I lifted my hand from his and reached up to touch his cheek. "We will work it out. It'll be all right, I promise."

Chase gave a soft smile in return.

Suddenly, my thoughts had me worried. He hadn't seen anything yet. He might still be processing what had taken place, but he was about to partake in something I didn't know how he would respond to. I could only hope it wouldn't tip his scale into a mental breakdown.

"We're landing," Kellen's sudden voice broke through my concern.

I smiled a thank you to Kellen for giving Chase and I some privacy, as he sat down, he returned it. I glanced back at Chase, hoped the answers settled him and by the softened look of him, it did. For now, anyway. I raised my other hand to place on his cheek. "You ready to do this?"

Chase nodded, I pulled his face down toward mine, needed to reassure him. I wanted him to remember all the reasons he wanted me in his life so when the time came, he'd get through all this. I laid my lips against his and followed his movements as our tongues swept across each other's passionately.

I didn't stop reminding him until the plane touched down.

## Chapter Eight

Chase cleared his throat deeply as his gaze stayed on the vampire before him. “This is the Mistress?” He glanced around at the lavish mansion set deep in the Hollywood Hills. “And this is where she lives?”

I chuckled softly, understanding his surprise. I’d seen it in mortals before. Their disbelief of how normal vampires lived. It wasn’t gothic castles and coffins. They were wealthy and enjoyed plentiful lifestyles. He was probably expecting the Mistress to have the look of death. Ellery was anything but that. She held the air of royalty, a natural beauty with dark eyes that swelled with softness, skin that was without a single blemish and rosy lips that needed no shade. “Yep, that’s her.”

“I see you went and found what you were looking for,” Mistress Ellery said to Kellen as her gaze swept over me.

When I looked over at Kellen, he gave a gentle nod with a supple smile spread across his face. “Indeed I did.”

Ellery rose from her chair, approached us in a fluid stride. “It’s nice to see you again, Hadley.”

I bowed my head in a sign of respect. I’d met the Mistress when I first came into this region asking permission to live here. That was a must in vampire society. From what I heard of her and knew her to be, she was an old school vamp—very tough and strict, curt almost. Tonight however, the Mistress was in high spirits.

Ellery did a once over on Chase then met his gaze and smiled. “You are a mighty looking mortal.”

Chase snorted, furrowing his brows. “Is that a compliment?”

“Very much a compliment.” Ellery laughed. Then, she examined him as she smoothed her skirt with her hands. “Do you know what you are entering into here?”

“I’m about to become a pet,” Chase groaned.

Ellery laughed loudly as did Kellen. My own laugh sounded more nervous than anything else.

“Not what you want?” she asked him.

Chase shrugged and gestured toward me. “I want to be with her.” He gave his head a little shake. “The term used is wrong.”

Ellery’s smile remained, but her gaze was clearly questioning. “If you do not wish to be a consort, would you like to become a vampire?”

I froze stone solid and glanced to Kellen who just grinned at me. I shouldn’t have been surprised that Ellery would be the one to let the cat out of the bag. But damn it, I didn’t want Chase to even think of that as an option. I liked him just the way he was and didn’t want that to change anytime soon.

“Excuse me?” Chase drawled.

Ellery glanced my way, curious. “You have not told him?”

I shook my head. That would be a big no to that question. This wasn’t what I wanted for him and I was silently cursing Ellery for mentioning it.

Ellery clucked and gave me a rebuked look. “Very selfish of you.”

Before I had a chance to respond to that, Chase turned an accusing gaze on me. “You

can make me a vampire?"

I sighed, annoyed, pissed off—probably a bit of both. "I could, yes." I didn't want to tell him though and the words ground through my teeth, but I couldn't lie to him. I never lied, especially to the ones I cared for. Hiding something wasn't nearly as bad as outright lying, I thought. Judging by Chase's angry expression, maybe I was wrong.

Chase dropped his gaze for a moment and when he raised his head, again there was sadness in his eyes. "Why didn't you tell me that before?"

After I got over the fact he wasn't angry, the wonderment of what had made him so sad consumed me, I quickly stepped forward and grabbed his hands. "I never said anything because I like you like this. You're happy. You have a good life, family. You love your job. All of that would be gone if you were turned." I squeezed his hands, pleaded with my eyes for him to understand. "I will not do that to you." Instantly, I felt ashamed for not sharing this before. Seeing that hurt look in his eyes cut deep within me. I betrayed him over and over again.

Chase's expression washed away from its grave position to become hard steel. "Isn't that my choice?"

"Not this time." I shook my head firmly. "I won't do it, Chase, not ever. I'm sorry." And no one else would either. Chase was my mortal—mine to keep, to love and nothing was going to change that fact.

Chase's brows squinted together, perplexed. "That is the reason then? It's not that you hate the idea of my becoming an immortal?"

What had upset him became clear and it instantly explained his sadness. He thought I didn't want him forever. I stepped closer toward him, needed to rectify his misconception and he wrapped his arms around me. "Of course, I would want you around forever, but there is too much to give up. When I was turned I was so young, I had nothing to lose. My family had sold me to a rich nobleman because they needed the money."

Chase moved his arm from around my back and raised his hand to my cheek, brushed his fingers across my skin softly. His eyes sank in despair. "You never told me you suffered that."

"That's because I don't speak of it. It was over three hundred years ago and not a happy memory."

Kellen stepped in close to me and rubbed his fingers along my other cheek. "It was why I turned her. I saved her from a lifetime of abuse and we destroyed those who harmed her." He leaned in and kissed my cheek. "Besides, I knew she was to be mine, the moment I laid eyes on her."

"Ours," Chase corrected him instantly.

Kellen gave a firm nod as a sly smile crossed his face. "Right you are. She's ours."

"It is hers to decide what you should become," Ellery interrupted us, clearly bored of our conversation. "Only she may change you. If she chooses not to, there is only one choice if you want to continue with her."

Chase examined me for a moment then let out a deep resigned sigh. "Fine," he said, releasing me from his arms. "Let's get on with it and make me a pet."

Ellery laughed as she went back to her chair. Once she sat she said, "Come and kneel before me, mortal."

Chase shot me a disgruntled look before he took a step, but then he walked toward Ellery.

Kellen leaned over to me and whispered in my ear. “Got lucky with that one.”

I met his gaze, shocked. “She never told him.” I could hardly believe that Ellery had just lied for me. Kellen had just as much right to turn Chase as I did, but Ellery had kept that knowledge from him. I couldn’t figure out for the life of me why she would do that.

Kellen’s grin said he knew why. I gave him a little wave to get on with it. “She must understand why you want to keep him a mortal and is helping you keep him that way.”

“I owe her,” I responded with a deep exhale. “Big time.”

Kellen inclined his head, gave a knowing look. “That you do.”

Ellery’s voice drew me back to Chase kneeling before her. “As consort to Kellen and Hadley you are obliged to feed them. Do you understand this?”

Chase glanced back at me and rolled his eyes.

I could only smile in return. Neither Kellen nor I would expect him to behave like a consort—basically a slave to us, but this was a step in the process. We needed to get through this.

Chase looked back to Ellery, then nodded. “Feed them, got it.”

“The secret of our kind cannot be told,” Ellery continued. “Will you promise with your life to uphold this?”

“I will.”

“The consequences of breaking this will mean your death.” Her look was firm and unyielding. “Do you understand the gravity of this?”

“Yes.”

Ellery clapped her hands with a brilliant smile on her face. “Very well.” She placed her hand on Chase’s head. “Chase, consort to Kellen and Hadley, you are protected under their status with the Pacific Northwest.” She stood from her chair in one fluid movement. “Follow me.”

Before Chase even had a chance to stand, I leapt forward and hugged him. “I’m so happy. It’s like we got married.”

Chase returned the hug and stood with me attached to him. “Fucking weirdest ceremony I’ve ever been to.” He kept an arm around my waist as we followed Ellery out of the sitting room.

Just down the hall, Ellery stopped and opened a door. “I must leave you now and I say,” she glanced Chase up and down, “it is a shame I cannot stay to enjoy this, but I am expected elsewhere.”

“Thank you for meeting with us.” Kellen leaned in and gave Ellery a proper kiss across her cheek.

“Just don’t keep me long, Kellen,” she replied in haste with the snappy tone I knew was usually Ellery’s way. “You have duties to attend to.”

Kellen gave her a firm nod in acknowledgement of her order. “My duties will be done with Hadley by dawn. I will return to Slade the moment the sun goes down tomorrow night.”

Right then, a deep voice sounded through the air, “Mistress, we must be off.”

I glanced toward it to see Locke—a scruffy vampire turned in the fifteenth century that still held the Viking appeal. I’d met him the last time I was here and he was a kind and loyal vampire who made me feel welcome whenever I came by.

When he stopped in front of us, I said, “Nice to see you again, Locke.”

He bowed his head in a proper way. “Pleasure is all mine, Hadley.” He glanced to

the Mistress. “We need to leave at once.”

Ellery patted Locke’s cheek and gave him a genuine smile. “What would I do without you?”

He grinned at her and winked. “You’d be late.”

Ellery glanced back at me and the smile remained on her face. “Off you go then. You will not be disturbed here.” She took one final look at Chase, sighed a moment, then followed Locke down the hall.

Chase leaned into the room then immediately snapped back, his eyes wide as he looked at me. “I’m taking it that bed isn’t for sleeping purposes?”

“No chum.” Kellen laughed, slapped him on the back then pushed him into the room. “This is the honeymoon night.”



## Chapter Nine

Hesitation raged through me seeing the confusion on Chase's face. I had to dig down deep to find guts to tell him what was about to happen. "Part of the ceremony is a blood exchange." I placed my hand on Chase's forearm and it flexed beneath my fingers. "We need to take in your scent and you need to wear ours to affirm to other vampires that you have been claimed. It is a warning to them that you are our consort and you cannot be touched without serious consequences—like death consequences. We normally exchange blood by...you know."

Chase's eyes grew wide, disbelief held strong in his eyes. "With him here too?" He gestured toward Kellen.

I smiled awkwardly and laughed just the same. "Ahh..." This was so normal to my kind. The more intense the sexual experience the better. Having multiple lovers was not abnormal, but mortals tended to shy away from this kind of interaction. Well...some did. Chase was apparently one of them.

Kellen laughed, a deep gravelly challenge. "Afraid of a little competition, are you?"

Chase's wide eyes lowered to slits and his brows came together in unhappiness. "I am afraid of nothing, but I don't do the guy thing."

"Nor do I," Kellen snapped, then in a swift move he grabbed Chase's wrist, bit down, sucked a moment then released it. He clamped down on his own wrist, took a swipe of blood on his finger and shoved it in Chase's mouth.

Chase swatted at him but Kellen was too fast for him to actually hit. "What the fuck was that?" he roared at Kellen and examined his bloody wrist.

Kellen grinned and crossed his arms over his chest. "That was our blood exchange."

I threw Kellen an annoyed glance. His way of doing things were just so harsh. "Was that really necessary?" At the same time, I was actually glad that part was over. I hadn't any idea how to get Chase to exchange blood with Kellen, even the little drop that was needed to seal the bound. So his plan had worked even if it was a bit aggressive.

Kellen nodded, very unashamed. "I am relieving him of his worries, that's all. Our part in this is over, now we can move past this and simply enjoy." Then, in a second, he stripped himself of his clothes.

I gasped at the sight and heat pooled between my thighs. His body was something to marvel at and I couldn't withhold my appreciation of it now. Hard lines met a thick physique of splendid man.

"Holy fuck." Chase voice came out strangled.

His shock was more from how quickly Kellen undressed than seeing his naked form in front of him, I didn't doubt that. Chase had nothing to be jealous of. He was sexy in his own right and in the male department, he wasn't lacking.

I forced my gaze away from marvelling at Kellen to look at Chase. "If you're not comfortable with doing this, we can just exchange blood and leave it at that."

I wouldn't push him into this. It sounded like he would have a hard enough time just sharing me with Kellen in relationship form. I had anticipated his reaction to this, and now here, I simply had no idea how he was going to react.

Chase stood silent for a moment then said to me, "You have done this before?" He

nodded again toward Kellen. "Been together...with others?"

Um...how to put this? Guess there's no real easy way to say that you've been between a few bodies at the same time. "We like to share, Chase."

He snorted loudly. "Apparently so."

"I am growing impatient," Kellen snapped.

I glanced at him. He wasn't exaggerating. His hand was wrapped around his cock as the need had evidently consumed him. With long slow strokes, he readied himself.

Watching it made me just as impatient, but I wouldn't rush Chase. If he didn't want to do this, I wouldn't force his hand. "We can just do the exchange like you and Kellen did, then if you want, we can leave."

Chase glanced between Kellen and I then repeated the gesture a few times over. The silence grew heavy.

Suddenly, Kellen let out a deep rush of breath and lunged forward, making quick work of my clothes. Before I knew it, I was naked.

Kellen ran his hand gingerly along my breast, my eyes closed and a sigh escaped my mouth at the feel of it. The lightness of his fingers across my taut nipple was enough to dampen my pussy.

"Are you willing to deny that this woman needs pleasure?" Kellen asked Chase.

I opened my eyes to see that Chase was not dumbfounded anymore. His eyes had grown deeper, darker. The tension set in his jaw I'd seen so many times declared his arousal.

Kellen stepped in behind me, left my naked body exposed for Chase to see. He swept my hair across my shoulder as he began to bask my neck in his glorious, open-mouthed kisses.

I couldn't take my gaze off Chase. I thought this might annoy him to see another man touching me. Apparently, it had the opposite effect. As I began to shiver from Kellen's touch, Chase began to tremble with the obvious need to consume my body.

Just as my need spiked with equal force, Kellen's fangs grazed my neck and I couldn't withhold the moan that came from my mouth.

"Ahh...this is what you want," Kellen purred before he bit down.

My eyes shut on their own accord as Kellen had his taste. He wasn't greedy, not yet anyway, he only sampled me. When he backed away, I felt denied.

Kellen stepped around me, trailed his fingers lightly along my shoulder and down my arm. "Come here," he said to Chase.

Nerves racked me. I knew what Kellen was about to do and I'd never gone there with Chase. Of course, I drank from him, but that was all he knew of vampires. I was excited, but worried about what his reaction would be. Would he be greedy like I wanted him to be or would he just take a lick to seal our bond? The anticipation was incapacitating.

Chase stared at my neck as the blood dripped from the wound. It only took him a minute before he took the final steps to close the distance between us. He grasped my face and twisted my head to the side. He gave me a grin that sank deep into my stomach and fuelled the heat raging through me, then laid his lips across the two puncture marks.

With two tough tugs, he swallowed the first taste of vampire blood. He groaned deeply as his body instantly tensed. I'd witnessed this before. The taste to a mortal was nothing they'd ever known. As I understood, it was sweet and titillated their senses.

I began to squirm with desire as Chase fed from my neck. I had longed for this.

Craved it. To me, this was about as erotic as it came. I'd never offered my blood to him because I was afraid he wouldn't have approved. Now that he did, I could hardly control the arousal that blasted through my body to warm me right to my center.

Chase pulled hard on my neck, gulped deeply as heavy moans vibrated from his throat. I was left to shiver and shudder. My moans increased as he swallowed each long draw of blood.

When he finally drew away, I let out a little squeal of unhappiness. I needed him, wanted him to take more.

Chase opened his eyes and his pupils were dilated. He lifted his hand to his mouth and gave it a soft wipe. "You have been selfish not to share this with me." His voice was almost a growl.

Kellen laughed deeply. "You're ready to please our woman then?"

Chase grinned at him, then slowly raised his gaze to mine. Never had I seen this intensity in him before—he looked like a vampire.

"Chase," I managed in a whisper. My body responded in a way I had yet to discover. My thighs clenched together tight in an attempt to save myself from the sensations that threatened to end me.

Now that I didn't feel the need to restrain myself, I lunged forward. In a speed Chase wouldn't see, I removed his clothing from his body. But Chase was stronger now, faster from the vampire blood he consumed. His instincts were sharper.

The second I attempted to draw away, he grabbed onto my arm to force me still. "Now you're mine to kiss." He yanked me forward and laid an unforgiving kiss upon my lips.

The power he received from the blood stirred him. His tongue was harsh against mine as he used this new strength to clearly demonstrate the love he had for me and just how much he wanted my body.

With his kiss warming my body, I was so lost in Chase's mouth I barely felt Kellen close in behind me. As the hard lines of his body pressed against my naked skin, one truth presented itself—these two men were determined to satisfy me and my body was about to become their playground.

With Chase at my mouth, Kellen began to run his fingers up my arms as he laid his lips against my shoulder. Their mouths worked in unison and lit a fire in my soul that was long extinguished and I could only tremble in response.

Just as Chase began to deepen the kiss to a place I'd never felt from him, Kellen picked me up around the waist and tore me away. When I met Chase's gaze, he not only smouldered, but outright burned with desire. And he was quite intent. As Kellen placed me on the bed, Chase was already striding forward with purpose. But Kellen would have his taste of me too. He laid his lips against mine and I moaned against the feel of it.

With Kellen at my lips, I reached out to stroke Chase's chest as he leaned down over me. His square chest felt like perfection under my fingertips. When he reciprocated by running his hands over my breasts, I arched up against his touch. He responded immediately. With a wet lick, he teased my taut nipple.

I arched up higher to get more of myself in his mouth as the moistened embrace sent intense pleasure through me. Kellen left my mouth and licked his way down my neck until he reached the other lonely breast. The moment he touched, I let out a moan of pleasure as my eyes flew open to discover both men had their heads nestled along my

chest. I reached up, held their heads firm to my body while they worshiped my skin with their glorious mouths.

The opposing sensations were my undoing. Their mouths were not working in unison. When one went rough, the other didn't, and the sensation of it sent me reeling.

I may have shared lovers before but never had I loved them both. Never had I shared their heart and as the men drew away from my breasts and met my gaze, I thought about how I'd once thought I was damned as a vampire. Now, I couldn't deny this life of mine was simply heaven.

Chase left my breast, grabbed my hips, and shifted me so that he could kneel before me on the floor. He widened my legs, pushed firmly on my thighs and began to run his tongue along the inner part of my leg.

Kellen took the moment to indulge in my mouth once more. He dove in with full intensity, encased my face in his hands tightly as his open mouth danced across mine.

Chase wasn't hurried. He trailed his tongue along my body, rimming the outside of my pussy to cause me agony. I was taking my frustrations out on Kellen's mouth. When I reached up and grasped Kellen's head, he growled deeply at my voracity.

With the lightest lick that I'd ever felt, Chase ran his tongue along my sensitive flesh. I tore my mouth from Kellen's so I could watch Chase eagerly devour my body.

He watched me in return as he played with my pussy. His gaze stayed glued to mine as he licked me exactly how I liked it.

Kellen didn't begrudge me the need to watch Chase and began to lick his way down my body. When he reached the same spot where Chase was, they decided to share. In an instant, I lost my mind as they settled themselves along my body.

Chase knelt lower onto the floor to bring his mouth further down my folds while Kellen went sideways across my body over my clit. Then, in the exact moment, the men glanced up to me, gave me equally sexy grins before they lowered their heads again.

Oh...I was in serious trouble with these two.

The moment their mouths resumed, I immediately thrust back. My body arched upward as Kellen lavished the little knot in a way learned from hundreds of years of practice and Chase worked his way down low, licked along my arousal.

I panted, squirmed, but they both held me still—kept on until I was screaming out from my body being used in such a manner. A man alone just wasn't capable of creating the pleasure building in me because it took two mouths to create this kind of impact.

My hands gripped the sheets as my body shot up to a near sitting position. The energy that surrounded me was equal to an electric current. Thousands of bolts of erotic glory rushed through me and with a final explosion, the men had finished what they intended. I was left shuddering with the after effects of their purpose.

Just when I thought I couldn't take anymore, Chase stood, raised my leg across his shoulder and thrust inside of me with a fluid movement. I was already beyond sensitive and a scream rose from my throat from the force of it.

Kellen was a patient lover. I wasn't surprised he let Chase have the first go. Instead of waiting and watching, he lowered his head to my mouth and kissed me once again while Chase pounded his demand against me.

I screamed against Kellen's mouth as Chase unleashed himself in a way he never had before, thanks to the powerful blood he consumed. My eyes watered. I held on to Kellen's arms in a need to save myself.

Kellen immediately grabbed my hands and pulled them above my head. I screamed out at the restraint of it. He responded with a throaty laugh as he lowered his head back to my breasts.

I was swarmed with sensations. With Chase fucking me hard and Kellen licking at my nipple, I could not think or speak. I was only lost in pleasure. After a rough pull of my nipple, Kellen sank his fangs into my breast. The moment the blood rushed from my taut knot, I tumbled into eternal bliss.

Now, Kellen was greedy. He pulled on the nipple to extract deep amounts of blood to fuel him. He was moaning as loudly as Chase was.

“Yes, doll—yes. Come for me, baby.” Chase thrust in harder. His thrusts were sending a loud bang to ricochet off the walls. If I was any less than the night creature I was, I’d be left with bruises.

The sensation was unforgiving. It never let up—due to the pull on my blood Kellen was creating. The orgasm lasted much longer than I was used to. Not until I heard, and felt Chase let go within me did Kellen release his mouth from my breast.

But I was not done yet—not even close.

Chase withdrew from my body and climbed his way up to lay a kiss across my mouth. I welcomed it. Loved the fact he had just laid into me the way a vampire would.

Kellen grabbed my hips, flipped me on my side and rested in behind me. In a swift movement, he lifted my leg and entered my body. I immediately groaned against Chase’s lips as Kellen sank in deep. I was beyond comprehension now. As Kellen moved in swift fast movements, only served from a vampire, I found screaming difficult and began to pant in response.

After a moment, a hand wrapped tightly around my thigh, it didn’t feel like Kellen, and I forced my eyes open to see that Chase had pushed my thigh up even higher as he made his way down my body. All I could do was emit a shuddering moan in anticipation of what was to come.

Never had I expected him to be so willing here. Having his mouth so close to Kellen’s body was something I never expected. The thought of it sent a swell of happiness straight to my dead soul. He only wanted to please me and was about to do just that.

Chase positioned himself off the bed, leaned his head sideways as he nestled himself between my thighs and lightly teased my clit with his mouth while Kellen pounded in behind.

It was an immediate jump of my senses. I grasped Chase’s head with one hand and reached back with the other to latch onto Kellen’s neck. My reaction clearly stirred them and both men responded accordingly. My pants became shuddering screams as I was being used in a way to free my mind. These men knew how to touch me and please me beyond measure.

Chase pushed my leg up even higher and pushed against my clit. He took the little nub into his mouth and sucked. My screams were now gone, my eyes closed as the pleasure began to build inside me.

“Let me hear it,” Kellen demanded as he thrust hard. “Let me feel it.”

He knew me so well—recognized that I was on the brink. He lowered his head to my neck and ran his fangs along my skin. With a quick bite, he pierced my skin and drew the blood in a way that caused my utter surrender.

My body vibrated with pleasure—shook beneath Chase's mouth and around Kellen's shaft. With a loud roar of completion, Kellen ended with a final thrust as his climax meshed with mine.

I yielded to Kellen and to Chase as I realized I had never truly lived, never really been satisfied or known pure love.

Until now.

## Chapter Ten

The plane skidded across the runway. I glanced to my phone once again—ten missed calls, four texts, all between the hours of one and three, and all clearly displayed Mike’s frustrations.

“I didn’t even hear the phone at all.” I said to Chase.

He chuckled and his brow arched up sultry. “Wonder why that would be?”

I leaned up, took his lips in a soft butterfly kiss. “Hmm, I *was* a little preoccupied.”

When I backed away from Chase’s mouth, Kellen stretched his legs out in front of him. “A damn fine preoccupation it was.” I grinned as I leaned away from Chase. I felt like a woman who been taken to cloud nine and back again. When I settled back in my seat, I glanced down and dreaded the phone call ahead of me. “Better just get this over with.”

Just as I started tapping the keys, Chase put his hand over mine. “Let me.”

My gaze connected with his and I saw a very amused smile planted on his face. Of course, he would enjoy this. I wasn’t opposed to him taking the wheel here. The conversation with Mike wasn’t going to be a pleasant one.

Chase reached into his pocket, grabbed his phone to look at it, then grinned at me. “Ten here too.” He dialled and raised the phone to his ear.

It only took two rings before Mike’s enrage voice blared through the speaker. “Where the fuck are you?”

“I was helping Hadley and Kellen investigate the mental hospitals,” Chase answered, calm and collected. “Why? Have you been trying to reach us?”

“I have been trying to reach you both for two fucking hours,” Mike roared. Even without my super vamp hearing I’d still be able to hear him. The yelling might have had something to do with that.

Chase smiled wide at me, but his voice showed no hint of amusement. “Really? The reception must have been down.”

Mike grumbled something incoherent that sounded like a curse word. “Just get back to the station.” After a slight pause, he finished, “Now.”

“Ten-four.” Chase lowered the phone from his ear and ended the call.

“Ooohh, I’ve never heard him so pissed.” I laughed.

“Obviously, something’s up,” Chase agreed. “Well, other than the fact that two women are missing.”

Shame landed hard. I’d been so happy, so wrapped up in all this personal stuff, I forgot why we were all together in the first place. What had I been thinking? We were off gallivanting when we held the lives of two women in our hands. The reminder put a damper on my good mood and settled me into guilt.

Kellen sighed as the plane’s engine cut, quieting the hum in the air. “Hadley, you have nothing to feel guilty about. This had to be done.”

I stood immediately and followed Kellen out of the plane with Chase right on my heels. Of course, Kellen would sense my mood immediately. I said nothing in response. I did feel guilt and deservedly so.

“I hope you enjoyed your flight,” the pilot smiled at me as I stepped out of the cabin

door.

I nodded.

Before I could say anything, Kellen interjected. “You went for a leisurely flight to test the speed of your jet.” The pilot’s eyes glazed over as he stared at Kellen. “You were thrilled with this mighty machine you have spent your life savings on.”

The pilot nodded. “Need for speed.”

“That is truly fucking incredible.” Chase snorted. He placed his hand on my lower back and ushered me toward Kellen’s waiting car. Once there, he opened the back door for me and I snuck into the backseat as he climbed into the front beside Kellen.

Guess the two were getting on very well now. I suppose seeing each other naked could settle any remaining hostility between them. They shared and shared well. Maybe camaraderie had been born.

Suddenly distracting me from my thoughts, a beep came from my phone, quickly followed by another. I glanced to my phone. “*You’re not fucking here yet,*” the message read. I laughed, as did Chase. “He’s going to rip us a new one when he sees us.”

“I’m sure you can put a stop to that,” Chase offered. “Now that I know you can do such a thing—that just might come in handy.”

I raised my gaze from my phone to give him a stern look while I shook my finger at him. “No abusing it.”

He shrugged my words away as if my thoughts were meaningless. “If you got it, use it.”

Kellen nodded firmly as he put the car in drive and headed out of the driveway. “My sentiments exactly.”

“Men,” I grumbled with a shake of my head. Looking back to my phone, I typed away quickly to let Mike know we were on the way. “He’s got a right to be angry. Who knows what’s up and we were busy—well—getting busy.”

Kellen and Chase laughed.

The sound of their laughter warmed me. I looked at them and just marvelled for a moment, in awe this had all worked out. Kellen was happy, Chase was happy, and I was bursting out of myself with joy. Not only was Chase all right with it all, he and Kellen were getting along. I might have everything I’d ever dreamed of and more—something I wondered if I’d ever have. Now that I did, I would never let of any of it go. I had a great life, a job I loved and two men who adored me. They were mine to love, enjoy and savour. Kellen for all eternity and Chase for as long as time would allow.

Kellen drove with rapid speed as he manoeuvred the flashy car with ease through the streets of Milwaukee. Fast enough that within only ten minutes, the station appeared just ahead.

Chase groaned when we drew closer. “Here we go.”

It didn’t take much to understand what he was talking about. When we pulled into the parking lot, Mike waited at the front with his arms crossed on his chest and a scowl planted firm on his face. Kellen sped into a parking spot then slammed on the breaks.

When the car stopped, I jumped out as a little grumble escaped my mouth. “Uh oh.” I planted an ashamed expression on my face, which wasn’t all that hard, I did feel guilty. “Damn cell phones,” I muttered and gave the thing a shake in my hand.

Mike’s expression didn’t falter. “While you have been off doing God knows what, a discovery has been made.”



I stopped midstride as confusion raked me. “What discovery?”

“Kelly Lewis’ body was discovered an hour ago,” Mike answered in a curt tone. Then, he stepped past me, heading toward a rented truck. “Get the fuck in. Nick is waiting at the scene for us.” He glanced back, glaring at both Chase and I. “I came back trying to locate you fuckers.”

Now I felt rotten. While we were getting down and dirty, the young woman, Kelly, had died. If we hadn’t gone to the Mistresses’ we could have gone to see the doctor and discovered what we needed for me to interrogate him. Our hesitation had just cost this woman her life. Nothing about that felt good. I glanced at Chase. He smiled softly, however, guilt lived in his eyes too.

Kellen, of course, was just Kellen. Completely at ease with what had happened. But why would he care, mortals meant nothing to him. If this was a vampire and she’d been killed for no reason, Kellen would raise hell.

I sighed away the remorse as I got into the truck and situated myself beside Kellen in the backseat. What was done was done. Maybe Kelly had been dead for days. Therefore, my guilt was pointless. I’d wait to hear details before I punished myself. “Where was her body located?”

Mike’s tension still radiated off him as he started the ignition of the truck. His fists were clenched around the steering wheel as his pissed off gaze met mine in the rear-view mirror. “At the market.”

Chase’s gaze snapped to Mike from the front seat. Surprise filled his face. “Right out in the open?”

Mike took a deep breath, obviously in an attempt to regain himself. “The market is closed during the week, only open on Sunday. A security guard found her body under one of the vendors fruit stands.”

Okay, well that eased my guilt a little. It sounded like she’d been there a while. “So, she has been dead a few days then?”

Mike shook his head. My guilt returned. “I’m not sure until we get there. As I said, I was waiting to find you all.” His gaze met mine in the rear-view mirror and gave me another stern glance before he focused back on the road.

Another couple miles clicked away on the odometer. Up ahead, flashing lights lit up the sky. “Game faces on,” Mike exhaled as he drove past the group of people held back by the police.

A uniformed police officer waved us over and held up his hand in an indication for us to stop. Mike rolled down his window. “FBI, Criminal Investigations Department.” He flashed his badge.

The cop nodded. “Go right through.” He lifted the yellow tape and waved us in.

Mike pulled in slowly then parked the car. “Let’s go see what we got.” Then, he opened his door and was out in a flash.

As I exited the car, I bit my lip in anticipation of what I was about to see.

Just cause I was a vampire didn’t mean I didn’t have a heart. Seeing dead young women was never a part of the job I enjoyed and could happily live without.

In only a few short steps, Kelly Lewis appeared on the pavement. Her face was angled toward me. Pretty woman—mid-twenties, blonde, blue-eyed and I suspected when she was alive those lovely eyes had been filled with happy memories. Now though, her eyes were empty—cold. She appeared done up, which aligned with McKinney’s MO.

The makeup along her skin made her look so alive, but her blue skin clearly indicated that she was not.

She stared, almost looking straight through me. The blue depths held in those eyes was a unique kindness that still showed through even though her life was lost.

“About time you got here,” Nick’s curt voice came beside next to me.

I tore my gaze away from Kelly to look at him. “Sorry, we were...uh...checking out the hospitals in the area.”

Nick nodded gave a forgiving smile, clearly he barely believed my story. “From what the M.E.’s reported, Ms. Lewis has been here for two days.”

It was like a damn roller coaster with my guilt. Luckily, with those few words said, it evaporated. I kept it close. Until Sabrina was found I wouldn’t feel better about this situation.

“So, he put her here just before he was arrested?” Chase asked.

Nick nodded. “Manner of death is suffocation, but like buried alive kind of suffocation.”

My stomach clenched, a wave of sickness washed over me. “He buried these poor women alive?”

Nick sighed, glancing down to Kelly Lewis. “The M.E. found dirt in Ms. Lewis’ mouth and nose. He said he wouldn’t know more until the autopsy, but did note the findings of dirt lining her nostrils and down into her throat.”

“Fuck,” I exhaled. “So, he buries them, then digs them up and places them in places they’ll be found.”

“I’d say that is a likely assumption.”

I was about to ask more, but a thought presented itself that we hadn’t really dug into yet. It was what struck me first when I looked at the pictures of these dead women and what ran through my thoughts moments ago. I glanced over to Mike. “Have you discovered why he does this to them?” I waved my hand across my face. “You know, makes them so beautiful looking.”

There had to be more to it—something sick, I was sure of that. But my thoughts definitely kept bringing me back to this and that usually said something. Normally it meant I was on the right track.

Mike gave Chase a curious glance. “You’ve spent this much time with her and haven’t filled her in on what we have discovered thus far?”

Chase showed no moment of hesitation in answering him. “We were busy focusing on her end of the investigation—it just hadn’t come up yet.”

Mike gave a displeased look, but said nothing more on the matter, then glanced to me. “They’ve gotten jack shit out of him—the kid is insane. All he’ll admit to is that he has the other women hidden—keeping her safe, as he calls it.”

Nick let out a long sigh. “I’m going to stand in on the autopsy.” He looked over his shoulder as the M.E. pulled the gurney out of the white cube van. “I’ll call if they discover anything.”

Mike nodded, as Nick headed off toward the van. He looked back to Kelly Lewis, gave her a final glance before he started to walk back toward his car. “If they didn’t have the evidence they do, I wouldn’t believe they had the right man.”

“What makes you say that?” I asked, following in behind.

He glanced over his shoulder at me, signs of frustration sat hard in his jaw. “He is as

sweet as apple pie.” He looked ahead of him again and picked up his stride.

This didn’t surprise me. I’d witnessed this very same thing a dozen times over through the years as an interrogator. “Why do the crazy ones always have to be so damn nice?”

Kellen smacked my ass. “That’s how you know it—no one sane is ever that nice.”

I jumped forward from the hit and banged into Mike’s back. “Oops, sorry,” I said, peeling myself off his back.

Mike peeked over his shoulder and gave me a chastising look. “Focus please.”

I grinned shamefully. “Sorry.” Then snapped my gaze back to glare at Kellen and whispered, “Do you mind?”

Kellen shook his head completely unashamed. “Don’t mind at all.”

Chase’s grin came quick as he took a step forward and said in a low deep tone, “Actually, don’t mind if I do.” Then he walloped my ass—hard.

I gasped and shot forward again landing right into Mike’s back again. He spun around, glowering. “Hadley, pull it together.”

“I’m sorry,” I retorted, rubbing my butt. Chase’s hit hurt. I took a glance around to make sure no one had seen it, which they hadn’t. I should have known that Chase wouldn’t have taken such a risk as to expose himself. I met his amused gaze. “Stop that.” I looked to Kellen. “The both of you.” They just grinned at me in return. I might be annoyed, but it was hard to watch them both grin at me like that and not respond to it. I finally resigned and grinned back. “Just save it for later.”

Their grins grew with all types of sultry promise.

Up ahead, Mike stopped at the truck, held open his door, but didn’t get in. “What did you find out at the hospital?” he asked me.

“Oh...um...” Shit, I hated being put on the spot and lying. I never did it well like Chase could. “We ah...located the hospital Chad was in.” Okay, I was about to feed him a ton of bullshit but it would make our delay more believable. “We went there and spoke with the nurse. The, umm, the doctor wasn’t in, but is going to meet with us now.”

Mike looked solemnly. “Not much good it would have done anyway, we didn’t have a warrant. I doubt he would have talked to you. Luckily, I just got the warrant from the judge. It’s in the glove compartment.” He gestured for Chase to get into the driver’s seat. “Go on then. Get what you need and meet us at the station then Hadley can interrogate this McKinney. I’ll catch a ride with the Chief. Let’s just hope that Sabrina Stopforth is in better shape than this young lady.”

If I had a heartbeat, it would’ve started pounding. This was the part of the job I loved. The adrenaline that I was sure I’d been feeling now, if I could.

We started a race that I was ready to win.

## Chapter Eleven

An hour later, Chase was nestled in the backseat sound asleep. He might be upset with me later for the whole mind-warping bit, but he needed the rest. This whole situation had drained him. He looked beyond exhausted and I could see it wearing on him. Using a little mind control for his benefit was nothing I would feel bad about.

“There it is,” Kellen said, pointing out the front window.

I followed his gaze to see a large decorated wooden sign that read, *Aurora Psychiatric Hospital*. “Pfft, some hospital. Being nutty sure keeps you well.” The building resembled more of an upscale suburban bungalow than anything that could be classified as a hospital. I straightened up in my seat and glanced back to Chase. “Wakey, wakey, rise and shine.”

Chase immediately sprang up, glanced around, his brows furrowed in confusion. He leaned forward slightly, glanced at the clock to see it read, *four a.m.* He blinked a couple more times, then turned his speculative gaze on me.

I laughed in response and quickly added, “You needed the rest and trust me, you didn’t miss anything.”

His eyes squinted into nothing and the muscles in his jaw flexed. “You gave Kellen shit for doing that earlier.”

I looked at Kellen, who only grinned at me in return. Immediately, a serious pout settled across my face. Now there was going to be two against one. This might not be such a good idea after all. Oh, I didn’t like where this was going at all and felt the need to justify myself. “That was different.”

Kellen arched a brow and gave a sideways glance. “And just how was that different?”

“Yes, Hadley, do tell us,” Chase prodded with a sly tone. “How was that different?”

My gaze hit Chase, then Kellen and I repeated the move a couple times. After a moment of that ridiculous move, my eyes narrowed as I pointed at them. “Don’t even think of it, do you hear me?” Kellen grinned innocently, Chase mirrored it. “There will be no ganging up on me, got it?”

Kellen took my pointed finger in his hand and kissed the tip. “You cannot make all the rules you know.”

“Yes, I can,” I said adamantly before I glanced back at Chase with a stern look. “You needed to sleep. I was being considerate. Really, nothing happened here except dark sky passing overhead.”

Chase didn’t look settled. His jaw clenched a final time before he looked out the window and let out an annoyed breath from his mouth. “I take it we are here then.”

I was about to respond, but Kellen interjected. “Your way of doing this, Hadley, is absurd. You are a vampire. Walk in, capture their gaze, ask what you need and get out. You could go through this whole process in two minutes, but you resign yourself to phone calls and preposterous conversations.”

Here we go again. I was getting tired of explaining myself and the way I worked, but he needed to hear this. “Just as vampires have laws, so do mortals. This is how they do things. I follow their ways because it’s the right thing to do, Kellen.” Yes, my voice

might have held a bit of a sneer. He deserved it.

Kellen manoeuvred the car toward the curb and cut the engine. "It's a ridiculous amount of wasted time."

"You're an immortal." I waved my hand through the air. "All you have is time."

"I'm with Kellen," Chase groaned. "The catnap didn't do it for me. If you have ways of cutting this time in half, I wouldn't be opposed. Finding this girl then getting home and to bed sounds all too good."

I jumped out of the car and slammed the door behind me. "You're still tired?" I asked, but really didn't need to. I could see the exhaustion set hard on his features and the dark circles surrounded his eyes. His body looked heavy and without strength.

Chase nodded slowly. "Fucking exhausted."

The weight of everything still hadn't lifted from him. What he needed was a good twelve hours of sleep in order to pull himself back together. But we didn't have time for that. I glanced around quickly and found a big maple tree off to the side of the building. "Come with me." I took Chase's hand and yanked him with me.

At the tree, I stepped behind it and pulled Chase close to hide away from the streetlights dimming down on us. My fangs pressed against my gums before they released. Immediately, I bit down on my wrist before I held it up as the blood dripped down my forearm. "Go on." I nodded encouragingly to Chase.

He cocked his head, his expression blank. "Go on with what?"

I gestured toward my arm, which only caused the blood to drip faster as I raised it to his face. "Have a drink. It will give you a boost."

Chase's eyes were trained on my bloody wrist, his nose wrinkled in apparent disgust. "I cannot deny that this isn't exactly as appealing when you aren't standing in front of me nude."

Tough guy was unsure of himself and I had to admit I enjoyed making him squirm. But really, I just wanted him to feel better. Seeing him so tired tugged at my heart. Considering it was me who caused it. "Just go on, trust me."

"I already had lots of it," Chase retorted, trying to sideswipe my offer. "Why do I need more?"

"You're a mortal, bloke." Kellen smacked Chase on the back with a loud thud. "You used your energy elsewhere and burned the effects off."

It only took moments for the wariness on Chase's face to fade. He sucked in a deep breath and with purpose, stepped forward, grabbed my arm and raised it to his mouth. The second his lips touched my skin, his eyes closed and he groaned deeply.

My only response was to shudder out a sigh. Feeling his lips tight around my arm, the deep tugs he took on my wrist as he filled himself with my blood, was exhilarating.

Kellen suddenly gave Chase another hard knock on the back to break him free from my wrist. "Better stop now or you're going to give yourself a hard-on that will last for hours."

Chase released his tight grip and licked the remaining blood from my wrist. His eyes burned with desire. "I think that has already been accomplished."

He dropped my arm and stepped back. I raised my wrist to my mouth and kept my gaze focused on Chase as I slowly licked the wound to seal it. A little payback was due for the whole ass-smacking bit.

Kellen groaned deeply. "Now, I'm going to be hard for hours." He gave me a

chastised look. "Must you do that?"

I grinned, lowered my hand and with as much sass as I had, I responded, "I must." My laughter echoed through the air as I left the two men behind to walk awkwardly as their erections pushed against their pants. Payback is such a bitch.

At the hospital, I started up the stairs surrounded by large white pillars. I raised my hand to knock, but before I could, it opened to a kind-looking gentleman. Beige golf shirt, pressed pleated pants and brown loafers to boot, messy hair and tired shadowy eyes, it was obvious the nurse was right. The doctor had been asleep and by the looks of him he needed it.

"Special Agent Sloan?" he asked in a gravelly tone.

I reached into my back pocket as I offered my other hand to him. "Dr. Peterson, I presume." After I grabbed onto the piece of paper I put there, I handed him the warrant.

Dr. Peterson examined it a moment then shook my hand. "Call me Bob."

I glanced back to Kellen and Chase, almost busted out with laughter at their strained faces. Ooo...I'm damn good. They both looked uncomfortable, which I'd imagine would be the case with a hard cock and being unable to do anything about it. But I was also glad to note that Chase did look rejuvenated. The color in his cheeks had returned and the dark circles under his eyes were now gone. I smiled feeling good about that as I introduced them, "Special Agent Chase Finely and Kellen Boyd."

"Pleasure to meet you both," Bob responded.

Chase and Kellen nodded in return.

"Thank you for seeing us, Bob." I drew his attention away from Kellen and Chase. "I know it's late and we appreciate your time."

Bob opened the door and waved his hand to usher us through. "It's not a problem. I can only hope I can be of assistance here." As he continued down the hall, he made his way to an office just off the main hallway, which looked nothing like a treatment center and more like a home. He stepped through the door and gestured to the chairs in front of a large wooden desk. "Please take a seat. Can I get you a coffee, tea?"

I shook my head and sat down in a teal chair in front of the desk. "No time for that."

Bob took a seat behind the desk, settled his hands on the top and sighed. "Now then, tell me what it is you need to know about Chad McKinney."

Chase stood in behind me as Kellen took the seat next to me. There were a thousand questions running through my mind that I'd like to ask, but starting at the beginning was ideal. "What was he here for?"

"The state committed him after he killed his mother," Bob responded in a steady voice.

"He killed his own mother?" Kellen repeated in an utter gasp.

Bob nodded in agreement as he stood. He went over to the filing cabinet that sat in the corner of the room and pulled out a large file. "Yes. He was only ten when he committed the crime."

Kellen's expression was fast past appalled. It dabbled into disgusted. "What the fuck is wrong with him?"

Bob scowled as he returned to his seat. "Nothing is wrong with him."

"I would argue that, Doctor," Kellen said back with vengeance. "A kid that kills his own mother should have been shot on sight."

We didn't have time to care what or how Kellen felt on the matter, we needed to

press on. I ignored the entire conversation and before Bob could come up some snappy retort, I intervened. "You need to tell us his background. The police have Chad in custody and I need to know all I can about him before I interrogate him."

Bob's brows furrowed as a questioning expression filled his face. "What has he done exactly?"

"Watched the news lately?" Chase remarked, dryly.

Bob studied Chase a moment. Clearly, he was trying to figure out what this could be about. It was only a second later that clarity hit and his face paled. "Chad killed those women?"

"He's a suspect at this point, nothing more, nothing less." My standard FBI answer. It'd already been proven that he was the killer, and furthermore, that he had hidden these two other women well, buried that is, until they died. But we weren't allowed to say anything. Innocent until proven guilty was a rule we followed.

Bob flipped a couple pages in his file quite content in whatever it was he was looking for. "Mr. McKinney has classic schizophrenia." He glanced away from the papers to meet my gaze. "A textbook case. His mind is more confused than anything I have ever seen in my years of practice. Nothing in reality pertains to him. He lives in a dream that he creates and is quite content on being that way."

I took a moment to ponder what he just said. First, it surprised me he needed to be reminded of the case to know about Chad. Where there really that many crazy people here? That was hard to believe or imagine. Then, I tried to sort out what he had meant with his explanation. The jumbled mess of a mentally unstable person was not my area of expertise. After a long pause, I fell short of understanding. "Okay, so what is his world then?"

"He's a devout Christian," Bob replied. "He follows the word of the Lord with an impeccable dedication."

I nearly laughed at that statement. It didn't make any sense. Not one little piece of it. "If he believes in God as you say he does, how could he do these things?"

Bob leaned back in his chair and ran a hand through his hair. "That is the question those of us in the mental health profession ask ourselves daily." He sighed looking very tired and maybe even a bit fed up. "It's an answer you'll never find."

I bit my bottom lip while I thought this over. None of this made any sense. I knew being a nut caused someone to do odd things, cruel things, but to go to this extreme caused my mind to lack any sort of understanding. I needed more answers to understand Chad better. "So he lives by the words in the Bible then?"

Bob confirmed my suspicion with a firm nod. "To the exact word. It's what caused the murder of his mother."

"Say that again?" Chase butted in.

"His mother was an obsessed Christian. She home-schooled the boy and his only lessons were that of the Lord. She drilled it into his mind and was abusive if he disobeyed. She was a very malicious woman and beat him with a belt for his failures." His eyes flashed with darkness. "It wasn't with the leather end either."

I shook my head, saddened to hear of that. Most of the killers I had the not-so-pleasure of knowing all came from similar backgrounds. Abuse led them to this. I never thought of it as an excuse, though. I'd met mortals who had been through worse and didn't turn out like this. I also knew the mortal mind was complex and in some situations,

the brain warped because of the trauma.

Kellen leaned forward, apparently more interested in the conversation now. “She created a monster then?”

Bob nodded as if Kellen had hit the nail dead on. “It was his only lessons. He learned to obey the words written and lived them. It was all that he knew.”

That all made sense, but there was one part I just couldn’t wrap my head around. “Why did he kill his mother then?”

“It took ten years for me to understand his mind,” Bob replied. “To piece together what came out of his mouth, after some time, it was apparent that he killed his mother because she sinned.”

*Sinned? Huh?* “What sin?” I urged him to get on with it with a wave of my hand. Now, I was just impatient and taken by the conversation as Kellen was. This situation was definitely a first for me.

“She birthed him out of wedlock.”

Chase guffawed. “Are you telling me that he killed his own mother because she had him?”

Bob nodded with no amusement in his demeanour. “From what I learned of him, he thought there was no other choice. He was saving her soul.”

I sat back in the chair, let out a long breath and gulped deeply. “Saving her soul how?”

“You have to think like him to understand why he does the things he does. In his world, he is a prophet from God sent to save angels that have been taken over by the Devil.”

“He truthfully believes that?” Chase asked.

“Very much so,” Bob replied. “From what I got through our discussions, he saved his mother from her wicked ways and returned her to her maker for forgiveness. He buried her in a grave, but supplied her with an air tank. He said that he put her back to God and kept her there for seven days to let her free herself from her sins. Then, after those days, he returned to dig her up. He said that he made his mother pretty, made up her face so that when she was remembered by all, she’d be beautiful.”

“Fuck,” Chase exhaled.

“Yeah, exactly.” I could hardly believe my ears. This guy was a goddamn lunatic.

“Bless the Beauty,” Kellen cut in, his voice soft.

His terminology was dead on. It was an act to purify the victims, keep them perfect forever. It all made sense now and came together in a neat little package. He created a vision of them in his mind and when they disappointed him—*sinned*—he killed them to save them. At least that’s how he saw it. “Guess that sums up his reasoning behind it all.” I looked away from Kellen and back to Bob. “What do you suggest for questioning him?”

“It won’t be an easy task,” Bob replied in earnest. “It took me ten years to break through the depths of his mind.”

“Well, we don’t have ten years,” I retorted. “He has taken another woman, buried her somewhere, hopefully still alive. We need to get him to talk.”

Bob pursed his lips a moment then said, “The only way to relate to him is through the Lord. Connect with him. The problem will be in understanding his thoughts. His mind is confused. Remember that.”

A little nudge that had been stirring within me this entire conversation couldn’t be



held back any longer. With all the knowledge we needed out of the way, my frustration level hit the roof. “So Bob, tell me, how did he get released from here?”

Bob’s lips tightened into a fine line. Obviously, he knew exactly where I was going with this and didn’t appreciate it one bit. Well, too bad for him, I didn’t give a shit. Bob cleared his throat before he spoke. “We medicated him. He was doing quite well on Risperidone.”

That wasn’t the answer I was looking for. If anything, his remark only sparked the fire of irritation in my body to burn. Someone needed to take ownership here, and I was going to be sure to point that fact out. “You expected him to continue taking his medication unsupervised?”

“We had transferred him to home care,” Bob deplored. “He was living on his own for the last four years and was doing well.”

“Well that plan obviously flopped.”

Bob glared at me. A vein in the center of his head was beginning to bulge. “It’s our job to assess our patients, treat them and when they are well enough, we are expected to assist them back into the community. Our funds are low. We do what we can.” The vein looked about ready to burst as he continued. “Chad had been living independently for four years. He was no threat or danger to anyone.”

I struck a nerve with the doctor, but this nerve was hitting me just as strong. Lives were lost and this all could have been prevented. I jumped to my feet and glared down at him. “Why don’t you call the victim’s families and tell them that whole spiel you just shit out.”

Bob shot up from his chair, fists tight at his side. “It’s our job within the community to see them well. Chad had made leaps and bounds with his care. He was open and willing through our sessions. He understood between right and wrong and under medication, he appeared to be thriving. There was no reason to keep him here further. He proved himself to be a productive part of the community.”

My brows furrowed as my eyes narrowed. I leaned in, placed my hands on his desk and came close to his face. “If you kept him here, these women wouldn’t be dead and that rests on your shoulders, Doc.”

Okay, so lashing out at him was wrong. He was only doing what he knew to be right. This, though, was the one part of the mortal world I couldn’t stand. They gave chances. Vampires never did that. Fuck up once and that was it. Harsh as it was, it saved moments like these. Mortals always believed that people are capable of change. I knew better—once a killer, always a killer. I’d seen that point proven time and time again.

“I...I...” Bob stammered, shame flashed across his features.

I ignored his moment of ignominy. It was too late for that. I turned on my heels and began walking from the room. “If we need anything further, we will contact you, Dr. Peterson.” With that, I left, walked briskly out of the hospital with Chase and Kellen following in behind me.

Once outside, Chase softly touched my elbow, drew my attention to him. “A bit harsh on him, don’t you think?”

I snorted, outright angry about the whole thing. “It’s just so frustrating. They let him out knowing what he could do. These women are dead because they released them. He was their responsibility and I’m not letting them off the hook for that.”

Kellen gave me a knowing glance.

I felt the weight of that look right down to my very toes. The knowledge that if I'd just done what Kellen suggested right at the beginning, Sabrina would be home in the arms of her family by now. All this time wasted, for what? Following rules and protocols that now seemed meaningless.

For the first time, I began to doubt the way mortals worked and wondered if this whole time I'd been wrong. The little tinge of annoyance made me hate the fact that Kellen may have been right.

## Chapter Twelve

Back at the station, the time had come. Chad sat in the interview room in front of me, an image of your typical college grad. Clean cut, innocent face—cute. “Would you like something to drink—eat?” I asked, attempted to create a sense of camaraderie with the young chap.

Chad gave an award-winning smile as he looked at me with pretty, blue eyes. “No, thank you, I’m fine.”

Neither the smile nor the eyes won me over. I’d like to do to this man what he had done to his victims, only worse. Even though I had the ability to do just that, I knew I couldn’t—mortal rules and all. It didn’t mean the thought hadn’t crossed my mind and always would when I met these vicious killers.

And now, with all my doubts running through my mind about this whole situation, I seriously questioned doing just that. Instead, I held back and went through the procedure as I always did. I needed to ask questions—give the appearance I was a skilled interrogator before I locked him in and warped his mind to spill the beans. This was being videotaped, the camera in the corner was evidence of that. I needed to go through the procedure protocol called for.

“You are all so wonderful here,” Chad said, snapping me away from my thoughts. Then his expression became confused. “Will I be going home soon?”

I gave a loud snort. “I highly doubt that.” I opened the file in front of me, took out all eight photos of his victims and spread them out in front of him. “Do you know these women?”

Chad leaned in and a twinkle of pride rose along his face. “Aren’t they so lovely?”

“They’re exquisite,” I concurred. “God’s marvels.”

Remembering what the doctor had told me, I focused my questions along the lines of his advice. When the time came that he would be prosecuted, the doctor would indeed testify as to what he learned from Chad and also what he told me. I needed to make sure I covered my tracks with all this.

“That is just how I see them,” Chad marvelled.

Ah, ha. He was right where I wanted him. It was important I set out a path that would lead me to my final answers. Get him to admit that he knew them. I had to make it appear that I’d broken through to him. “So you do know these women?”

“God knows those women and I am his messenger.”

It was more curiosity that led me to my next question. Now that I had him here, it intrigued me a little to understand the way his mind worked. “What message are you sending them?”

“That they are beautiful and loved. That they’re God’s creation and he is proud of them.”

That was certainly the most fucked up thing I’d ever heard. It was hard to really grasp how his mind worked. I suspected no matter how much time I spent with him, I wouldn’t understand. “And why do you feel the need to tell them this?”

As Chad leaned down to examine the pictures more closely, his expression immediately turned dark. “These woman defied God.”

“I know that,” I said, eager to move along. “They had to be punished.”

The questions were moving along just as I hoped it would. Things were falling into place that would allow me to capture his mind and gain the truth from him without arising suspicion.

Chad looked away from the photos and met my gaze. He gave a cruel smile that spoke of the evil that lived inside of him. “I defeated the Devil out of them.”

On that disturbing note, I reached back into his file and pulled out the photo of Sabrina. “What about this woman?”

Chad’s brows furrowed as he eyed the paper with disgust. “She sinned.”

This was the real Chad. The one the women must have faced when they died. He looked at the others as if they were treasures. Since he hadn’t seen Sabrina’s dead body and decorated her face, she was still a person that needed to be saved by him. “This one has yet to be saved.”

Shame crossed Chad’s face and the disgust melted away as he looked like a little school boy being scolded. “I have failed Him.”

“There’s still time.” I hoped he’d give me something. I tried to remain calm but knowing that soon I could just will the truth out of him, I began to get antsy. “Take us to her and I will let you complete your mission.”

The darkness in his gaze only intensified. “You are not welcome there. God would not forgive me.”

Right then, I realized he’d just given me a clue. If I went into this questioning further, it would be obvious that he spilled the truth out of nowhere. I had him right where I wanted him. “Chad, look at me.” He did so. “God will forgive you if you act now. Where have you put Sabrina?”

Chad’s eyes glazed over. His contact was steady with mine. “In God’s house.”

I nodded, not surprised by his answer. “Yes, you want to send her to God, I’ve got that. Where? What location?”

His brows drew together as if he struggled with himself. Almost as if he was searching for the answer, but kept coming up blank. “In God’s house,” he repeated.

Fuck, this was going to be hard. His mind was so confused and sick—asking simple questions just wouldn’t register with his mind. I tried a different route. “If you needed to go and see Sabrina, where would you go?”

“To God’s house,” he repeated.

“Oh for fuck sakes,” I snapped. “Yes, you’d go to God’s house, but where is it, Chad? What’s the street name?”

Chad smiled, a proud expression flashed across his face. “God’s house lives in us all.”

I threw up my hands up in frustration and wanted to flip him the bird or slam his head down on the table. Before I could snap out another question or act on my impulses, a knock sounded on the two-way mirror.

My chair hit the wall as I slammed it back, I scowled at Chad then headed for the door. I flung it open, stepped into the other room and slammed it behind me. “What is it?”

Mike let out a very tired sound. “We need to change our course.” He gave me firm look. “This isn’t working and we need to break him.”

Pride wanted me to yell, *let me back in there*, but I knew he was right. My power

over him wasn't strong enough. He was answering my questions truthfully, but I didn't have enough strength to will what lay deep in his troubled mind. Talk about a punch to the stomach. Here I was, a powerful vampire with an ability to dive deep into a mortals mind and I failed at doing just that.

I stayed in my pity-party for well over five minutes as Mike discussed our next steps. Then, suddenly, an idea suddenly presented itself. I quickly glanced at Kellen, examining.

His brows furrowed as he watched me in return with a look of complete bewilderment on his face. "What?"

"You?" I pointed at him.

He arched a brow and that confusion on his face only deepened. "Me...what?"

"You're an excellent interrogator. It's why you're here." I winked. "You have a go at him."

Mike nodded with excitement. "That's right." He smacked his head clearly annoyed with himself. "My mind is so busy I forgot the obvious. From what I've heard of you, you're legendary."

I rolled my eyes at that. Of course, Kellen would feed a bunch of bullshit to make himself look like some rising star. "Yes, Kellen—you are the best."

Kellen's lips tightened as he gave me a rebuking look. He looked like he was about to refuse, but before he could, I glanced at Mike. "You're going to ignore this conversation."

Nick stepped forward. "What—"

Before he could finish his words, I repeated the line to him too. Both men instantly went quiet, their eyes glazed over as they were lost in space. I glanced back at Chase and Kellen, who both gave me a studied look. "You can mind-warp him, Kellen. Of course, you'll have to pretend to interrogate him, but you can get in deeper into his mind then you can will it out of him. My powers just can't go up against his mind, but you..." I really hated admitting this. "...are more powerful than I am."

Kellen scoffed and crossed his arms over his chest. "I have no clue how to interrogate anyone, Hadley."

As if there wasn't anything he couldn't do. I patted his cheek reassuringly. "I'm confident you'll do just fine here." Kellen was a very old vampire. He exuded strength. I didn't doubt that once he captured him, he would get the answers we needed. A mortal couldn't refuse to answer Kellen, no matter how messed his mind was. He would have to be tricky, ask the right questions, but I had no doubt he would manage just fine.

I glanced at Mike and Nick, snapped my fingers to make sure they both looked at me. "You can listen again."

The haze cleared their eyes, they both blinked once then Mike said, "Kellen, are you up for this challenge?"

Chase laughed.

Mike shot him an annoyed look and his brows furrowed with unhappiness. "Something about this amuses you?"

Chase shook his head as he bit his lip. "Nope, nothing at all."

Kellen looked beyond irritated that I had put him in this situation. But time was pressing and I had no doubt he'd get the information out of Chad that we needed. Besides, he's the one that put himself in this situation in the first place. Call yourself an

interrogator—well, go be one. “So...are you going in?”

Kellen’s cross look remained on his face, but eventually he sighed. “For you.” He pointed at me directly. “I will go in there.”

“Pardon—” Mike started.

Kellen shot his gaze to him, raised his hand in a pissed off gesture. “Ignore that and the rest of this conversation.” Then, he looked at Nick. “You too.”

Chase laughed again.

“You’re doing a good a thing here,” I told Kellen.

He gave me a steady look. “For you, I am going in there. You and you alone. Be sure to remember that.” He grabbed me hard and laid one of his immaculate kisses against my mouth. I was instantly lost in the spectacular kiss. When he abruptly pulled back, his eyes smouldered as his gaze locked on my mouth. “After we get the girl back, you are going to thank me with your mouth and that will make me feel good.”

I grinned with sultry intent. That wasn’t something I was unwilling to give. “You’ve got yourself a deal.”

“You may have her mouth,” Chase interjected, “but I get her pussy.”

Kellen grinned at him and the two men exchanged a hungry look. “Now, that is also something I can agree to.”

I fanned myself. Being swooned over by two men was fantastic. “Nothing better than being appreciated for my skills.” Then I gave my head a shake as I realized just how inappropriate this was. “What are we doing?” I pushed Kellen forward. “Go on, get in there.”

Kellen snorted a thoroughly annoyed sound then looked at Mike and Nick. “You can listen now.” Then, he walked through the door letting it slam behind him.

I stepped up close to the two-way mirror as he entered and began to walk around Chad. When he stepped in behind him, he leaned down and said beside his ear, “You have been treated well here, Chad McKinney, but that is about to end. I am here to get answers.” He leaned away from him and took the seat directly across from him. “And no more of this pissing around the bushes.”

“I’m not...” Chad started.

Kellen leaned in. I knew exactly what he was doing. He was locking him in, capturing his gaze to put him under his control. “You are going to answer what I ask and you are going to be truthful.”

“I am always truthful,” Chad responded. His eyes fogged as if he was looking at nothing even though his contact remained with Kellen. “It is the way of the Lord.”

“Good,” Kellen responded as he looked back at me and sighed. I smiled to myself. It was kind of funny seeing him in this position, completely uncomfortable. After a lingering glance my way, Kellen focused back on Chad. “You need to retrace your steps to when you met the young lady Sabrina.”

“She’s an angel,” Chad responded dreamily

Kellen nodded as if he had just expected that exact reply from him. “You watched her?”

“Yes, I watched her for days. God was pleased with her. She was on a path that would lead her to Heaven.”

My face was practically squished against the glass. This had to work. My job never entailed surviving victims. The truth was, now that I thought about it, I was desperate to

find this young woman. Not only to see her well, but to have a moment within this job that held happiness. A sense of pride to save someone's life. Something I had yet to feel as a Special Agent. Usually, it was more about preventing the killer from taking another life. Not finding one of his victims alive. I began to get anxious, unable to stand still as I constantly shifted my feet to ease my impatience.

Kellen leaned back in his chair and placed his hands in his lap. "When did her right path end?"

"When she sinned, she took the Lord's name in vain."

"And that is when you took her?" Kellen probed.

"I needed to save her from herself. She was going to be damned eternally. She needed to be returned to God."

Kellen's frustration was building by the tense set of his shoulders. The only downfall with stealing the mind of a mortal was that they only answered your question directly. You wouldn't get anything deeper. I moved around anxiously, hoped he'd pull through here. We needed this. This was the only way we were going to find Sabrina before it was too late.

Kellen leaned forward. His gaze was intent, focused and unyielding. "Where have you put Sabrina?"

"I have put her back with God."

Kellen's fists slammed down on top of the table. "Where have you left her then?"

*Uh oh!* Anger began to swell on Kellen's face. This I had seen too many times to count. Kellen had one flaw, a wicked temper. He wasn't patient, nor was he delicate. When he got frustrated, the world knew it.

Chad gave that sweet as sugar smile. "She will always be with me, I'm God's messenger."

In a movement that was far too quick, Kellen lunged over the table and slammed Chad up against the wall.

"Oh shit." I ran for the door. Fuck, I should have seen it with the clenched fists, but I hadn't really considered that he'd react the way he did. I thought he'd have more restraint over his frustrations. Clearly, he was bored with this all and wanted it over with.

"What have you done with her? Where is she?" Kellen roared. "My patience is thin. I am tired of this ridiculous journey." He slammed him up against the wall again. "Tell me where she is."

Chad gasped, his face beginning to turn a shade of blue. "She is being saved. I've sent her home to God."

"Where?" Kellen growled, a tone I'd heard before. He was willing every ounce of strength out of him. As I cleared the door I could see Kellen was straining in his powers.

I rushed forward as did the others and grabbed Kellen to pull him off Chad. "Let go, Kellen, right now."

"*Forest Home Cemetery*," Chad squeaked before he fainted.

Kellen glanced toward me. Annoyance weighed heavy on his face as he released Chad to the floor. The kid crumpled to the ground with a loud thud, knocked old cold.

"We do not manhandle suspects," Mike spat at Kellen. "You should know that as part of the FBI."

"I apologize." Kellen wiped his hands on his slacks and met Mike's gaze unabashed. "The chum got the best of me."

Nick looked down to where Chad was slumped out cold and whistled. “There is going to be some hell to pay for this.”

I ignored the limp Chad on the floor, Kellen’s arrogance and Mike’s anger. What the hell were they still doing here? “As if it matters. We know where she is.” All gazes met mine in a second flat.

Mike’s face filled with puzzlement. “He hadn’t said anything?”

Of course, he had, but Mike’s mortal ears didn’t hear it. “He told us, you just weren’t listening.”

Without a moment to spare, I ran as fast as I could without rising suspicion.  
*Sabrina...we’re coming!*



## Chapter Thirteen

The car sped down the road at rapid speed, weaving in out of cars with sirens blaring. "I hope you're right about this." Mike's hands gripped the steering wheel as he manoeuvred his way through Milwaukee.

"He said it, you just didn't hear it." I held onto the holy shit handle above the window in the backseat. The borrowed police cruiser continued to weave through the traffic, tossing all of us around in the car as Mike drove with speed only achieved through years of police training. The sirens continued to scream through the air as Mike honked the horn loudly.

"Would you sit still," Kellen chastised me as I rested upon his lap.

We were in such a hurry to get out of there, Nick, Kellen, Chase and I piled into the back with Mike in the front. Regardless of the fact there was an empty seat beside him. There wasn't time to think things out. Now, I wish someone had gotten into the front. It was damn uncomfortable. "Just because you are always cool and collect, doesn't mean we all are."

Kellen groaned and shifted me onto his other thigh. "Your ass is bony."

"We're not far now." Mike ignored the banter and took a quick turn that sent us all to demolish Chase.

"Muscle strength, please," Chase groaned.

Kellen forced himself straighter to offset the weight. "How far away?"

"A couple minutes." Mike punched harder on the gas and the engine roared in response.

I could hardly contain myself. We needed to get there. Find this girl and see her well. It was far past a need and now more of an obsession. I craved to see her healthy and returned to her family.

"Hadley." Kellen's tone was curt. Then in a quick move, he shoved me off and pushed me across to rest on Chase's lap. "I can't take any more of that bony ass."

"You seemed to like that bony ass not long ago," I retorted.

Low chuckles rumbled through the car.

Kellen raised a sultry brow. "Indeed I did. But you're not riding my cock, are you?"

My jaw dropped. *He didn't just say that...*

Those low rumbles turned to outright laughter. I glanced around at the men and even Mike was laughing. "Oh, just shut up, all of you." I adjusted myself onto Chase's lap. Glancing down at him, I knew I needed to appear that this was awkward for me to be here. "Sorry I was shoved here."

Chase winked. "It's not a problem." His tone was proper enough, but I could feel his erection under my ass cheek. He wasn't at all displeased with my being here and seemed to enjoy my ass.

"It's coming up," Mike suddenly barked out, drawing me away from the treasure in Chase's pants.

Chase lifted me quickly and moved me up onto his thighs. I didn't have to be intelligent to know why, he needed to focus. And his attention couldn't be on the hardness in his pants. I leaned forward and grabbed onto the seat in front of me to look

out the window.

Mike drove through the old metal gates and the wooden sign came and went that read, *Forest Home Cemetery*. My head smacked off the ceiling as he hit a speed bump, but I didn't care, we needed to get there. "Faster." I bounced up and down with a need to get there already.

"Stop moving, Hadley," Chase groaned deeply.

I ignored Chase's request and kept squirming. "Go faster, Mike."

"I'm going as fast as I can," Mike growled as we passed a chapel with ivy stretching up the sides of it that had to date back to the eighteen hundreds.

Within a few seconds, Mike hit the brakes and we all jumped out of the cruiser. As we ran, Mike yelled out, "Look for freshly buried graves."

"The doctor said he gave his mother an air supply," I followed up as I ran forward scanning the graveyard. "Something must be sticking out of the ground."

My path led me between two lines of graves. There was just so many. I circled around, scanned the area, but nothing—no undisturbed graves in sight. I began to run again, continued down the paths between the rows.

Suddenly, Nick shouted. "Found one."

I stopped dead in my tracks and turned to face his direction. He was kneeling, running his hands along the fresh grave. "Not it," he shouted, before he stood and ran again.

Without pause, I charged through the cemetery once more. "Chase, anything?" I called out, not looking toward him, but knowing he was on the left side of me.

"Nothing." His breath sounded laboured and harsh.

"Nor I," Kellen said from a distance away.

I kept on, running at full speed, searching, looking for any hints of a grave where McKinney could have buried Sabrina. *Where are you?*

When I reached the end of the graves, I turned. Kellen sprinted toward me as did Chase. I glanced around quickly. Mike and Nick were running and searching, their faces intent on finding her.

I took a deep breath to settle myself. I was letting the urgency of this situation gain control of my mind. I closed my eyes for a moment just to reign my thoughts back in. When I felt calm, I opened my eyes.

"What are you doing?" Chase panted out of breath.

I shook my head at him, raised my hand up for him to shut up. "Shhh...quiet."

Chase gave me an odd look, before he placed his hands on his knees to catch his breath.

I scanned the area. "She has to be here," I said more to myself than anyone around me. I looked across the graves, thousands of them. I doubted Chad would do it right out in the open. There had to be somewhere more hidden where he had placed her.

Kellen approached now. Not at all labored by the run, which wasn't a shock. Vampires don't get winded. We could have run the cemetery in a second flat, but of course, I'd never allow that. We needed to restrain ourselves to appear as mortal as we could because who knew who was watching.

Kellen's gaze drew dark as he came closer toward me. "What is it?"

I shook my hand at him too and waved it in his face. "Quiet." I ran forward, needed to get out into the middle of the grounds. I could hear the others follow behind, but I was

glad to note they were listening and staying quiet.

Once in the middle, I stopped, skidding against the grass. My gaze started at the left and ran across the length of the cemetery looking for anything—anything that would provide a sheltered area.

After many long moments, I felt defeated. “Nothing. Fuck, where is she?” I spun around and looked behind me, but still, there was nothing. No hidden area that would provide enough shelter that he would be able to hide the fact that he’d dug a grave. I circled around once more and just as I was on the verge of giving up, the chapel caught my eye.

“Of course.” I smacked myself in the head and ran off. He had told us the truth. *God’s house*. That’s exactly where he put her.

“Hadley?” Mike called out.

I waved them along, not bothering to look back. “Come on, quick.”

Their response was instant. Loud bangs against the ground barrelled behind me as I ran quickly. I reached the chapel moments later. When I got to the door, it was locked. I glanced over my shoulder. “Kellen.”

He approached the door, raised his leg and kicked, which sent the door to crash back causing pigeons to fly away with fear.

“She’s here,” I said as I ran into the old rickety chapel. “I know it.”

Kellen stepped beside me and his gaze quickly searched the small space. “Yes, yes, you are right.”

“How can you be so sure of that?” Nick asked behind us, breathless.

I didn’t have time for his questions or an explanation of how I knew, but I just did. Call it vampire instincts. “Just go search for her.”

The men all dispersed and ran through the chapel. Luckily, the moonlight provided just enough light to make seeing bearable. Although, like Kellen, I needed no real help in that regard.

I drew in a deep breath, concentrated and focused. Right now, I was kissing my vampire skills. Everything was sharper and my hearing was as good as any bat. I closed my eyes and just listened.

Sharp sounds came around me. The pigeons in flight, mice scurrying through the old run down chapel. I searched out for any sound of the woman, a deep breath, a small movement, but after many minutes, I found none.

“What are you doing, Hadley?” Mike shot out. “Get moving.”

I snapped my eyes open to see Kellen was in the same position. His head was cocked to one side and the furrow of his brows told me he heard something that I didn’t.

Quickly I ran toward him, collided into his side and he grabbed me in his arms. “You hear her?”

Kellen opened his eyes, shook his head, and arched a brow. “I hear something, I cannot say if it is her or not.”

“Where?” I glanced around, feeling a moment of envy that Kellen could hear something I couldn’t. Dammit, did he have to be better at everything? I quickly chastised myself for having such an emotion at a time like this and focused back on the present. This wasn’t about me.

Kellen shook his head again. His expression so focused and brows brought together tightly. “I cannot be sure.” Then, he looked down to his feet. “I think she might be

beneath us.”

It only took a split second to process what he meant by that. “A basement!” Chase spun around as the others froze in their tracks.

“Look for a basement.” I started to run again as I stared down to the floor. There had to be a trap door here or something that would lead us down there.

We all quickly dropped to our knees and scrambled around the dark space searching for the entrance.

Suddenly, Nick shouted, “Here.”

I jumped to my feet, as did the others and ran toward him. Nick had already moved an old pew out of the way and opened a trap door. When no one moved I pushed on Nick’s back with a hard shove. “What are you waiting for? Get down there.”

Since there weren’t any stairs, the men took the plunge and dropped down into the hole. I didn’t hesitate. When I met the opening, I fell into total darkness. I looked over at Kellen and he winked.

“Fuck. Got a flashlight?” Mike groaned, clearly unable to see anything in the dark space.

Suddenly a click sounded and Nick held the flashlight up to his face. “I come prepared.”

Mike patted him on the back with pride. “Good job, man.”

“Go, Nick.” I gave him a push forward.

Nick began to run as he kept down low to avoid bashing his head on the wood beams. “What kind of basement is this?” he muttered.

I wondered that myself. When we dropped down, it was to a hallway, not your typical basement. I took a quick look to the wall as I ran by and noticed names lining the wall—a clear indicator just what this place was. “It’s not a basement. It’s tombs.”

“This place was scary enough being a basement,” Nick called out ahead. “Now we’re fucking in the land of dead.” Suddenly, he came to an abrupt halt, which caused us all to slam into the back of him.

“Warning next time,” Mike chastised, pulling himself off Chase’s back.

“Look.” Nick’s tone was more serious than I’d ever heard. He swept the flashlight to roam across the room.

“Christ,” Mike exhaled.

My breath drew back in my body quickly, which echoed along the cold walls of this chamber. “There has to be at least fifty of them.” I spun in a circle, following Nick’s flashlight.

I’d never seen anything like this. Obviously, the people buried here were of importance. The tombs were spread apart widely, each gold plated and marked with ancient writing and holy symbols. The very worst part was Chad had used nine of these tombs for his personal use. All nine had a tube running through the tomb attached to an air tank resting beneath.

“She’s in one of these?” Nick said and the horror rolled off his tone.

It only took a second before I glanced at Nick and knew exactly what I had to do. I was about to break my rule—again. “Off to sleep, you.”

He immediately fell to the ground.

“What the fuck?” Mike roared as he rushed toward Nick.

“You too,” I snapped out. A second later, he joined Nick on the ground. With Mike

now sleeping as well, I glanced back at Kellen. "Focus, you need to find her."

Kellen gave a firm nod. He knew this wasn't a game. He may be against the idea of helping mortals, but he'd obviously grown attached to Sabrina since he'd been through the case with us because there was no hesitation when he closed his eyes.

I attempted to listen as well, but I suspected Sabrina was close to death. I couldn't hear her breaths. The fact that Kellen could was the only thing that was going to save the woman now.

Kellen spun around with his head cocked as he listened intently.

Chase stayed silent, not moving an inch. *Smart man.* I gave him an approving smile and his worry-filled gaze met mine.

Only a few minutes later, Kellen's eyes snapped open. "There," he said as he rushed forward. He raised his hand and with pure vampire strength, punched the tomb and it crumbled to pieces.

Dust and stone crumbled around us and blurred my vision. Chase began to cough as he breathed in the debris. This was why there was dirt in Kelly's nose and throat. It wasn't because she was buried alive, but she was kept in this place—the tomb—for who knows how long.

The air cleared slightly, and then I saw...

"Sabrina."

With lightning fast speed, I lunged into the tomb and pulled the young woman out, cradled her in my arms.

"Is she alive?" Chase asked, still coughing as he kneeled down next to me.

I flipped her over. Her coloring was off. She was so gray, her lips had a bluish tinge, but I could feel her lungs moving ever so slightly. More than that, I could feel the pull of her weakening pulse. "Barely. Kellen, quickly."

In a snap, Kellen knelt beside me, bit his arm and I held open Sabrina's mouth wide as he applied pressure from his wrist to give her generous amounts of blood. I would have offered my own blood, but Kellen's was stronger. It would revive her quicker and right now, we needed it.

When nothing happened and Sabrina's breathing became even shallower, I shouted, "More."

Kellen brought his wrist back to his mouth and bit deeper sending blood to pour out of his arm. "You owe me for this," he growled as he fed more of his blood to Sabrina.

Slowly, Sabrina's color returned. Her cheeks flushed with rosiness and her lips back to pink. I let out a long sigh when Sabrina's throat began to accept the blood eagerly.

Then, after a deep gulp, Sabrina's eyes shot open and she screamed bloody murder. Her eyes were wide with fright and her entire body trembled in fear. It was the first time I ever encountered this...and it was horrible in every sense. Normally, we saw a dead body, never saw what a victim felt while they were being treated with cruelty. I doubted her scream would ever leave my mind.

But I didn't waste a second. I grabbed her face, locked her into my gaze and forced her not to look away. "You were abducted, but that is all you remember. You were drugged and you will have no memory of anything else. You were not mistreated. You are going to go on and have a wonderful life filled with happiness." I glanced to the men sleeping soundly on the floor. "Wake up." When the men jumped to their feet, I continued, "Nick broke down the door, it's old, so it crumbled to pieces. We have

rescued Sabrina.”

The haze left their eyes instantly and Mike patted Nick on the back. “Good kick.”

Nick nodded the acknowledgment, thoroughly pleased with himself. “Strong legs come in handy.”

I glanced back to the now quiet Sabrina. She blinked a couple times then groaned. “What happened to me? Where am I? Who are you?”

“We are from the FBI, Sabrina.” I smiled so elated at the outcome. “It’s over now.” I sighed deeply as I glanced around to see everyone smiling in relief, even Kellen.

My gaze fell back to Sabrina as she rested in my arms, a feeling of complete happiness coursed through my soul.

“It’s all over now. You’re safe.”

## Chapter Fourteen

At Froedtert Memorial Hospital, Sabrina's parents hugged her, tears flowing down their face and I smiled. Never had I felt this before, it was really quite humbling. Sabrina was home—safe.

"So, this is why you do this?" Kellen asked from behind me.

I glanced over my shoulder to find him leaning against the nurses' station. "I've never experienced this before," I told him honestly.

Kellen raised a brow, his tone soft and in wonderment. "Never?"

I shook my head as I approached him. "Normally we don't see the women saved." Stepping into his arms, I hugged him and rested my head against his chest. "We just catch the killer before he can kill someone else."

Kellen took my chin in his hand to bring my gaze up to his and brushed his fingers across my cheek. "It's a good feeling, no?"

I laughed, that was an understatement. But for the first time, in his eyes, I could see that he understood what I liked about this job—my reasons for doing what I did. Humbling moments were all around me. "It's probably the greatest feeling I've ever had."

"If I didn't know you better," Kellen chuckled and continued to stroke my cheek. "I may think you were a mortal."

My own eyebrow quirked upward. What had he meant by that? "Why, because I care?"

Kellen nodded, gently. "You care for mortals and what happens to them." He inclined his head and gave me a knowing glance. "That is a rare trait."

"Hadley," Mike called out.

I stepped out of Kellen's arms and looked toward his voice. He and Nick were approaching from down the hall. "Time to go?"

Mike nodded with a smile. "Soon. The Chief has set us up in the hotel across from the station. Let's get some rest before we head back. We all need it." He let out a long deep sigh and his tiredness showed through. "Meet at the airstrip when the sun goes down tonight. The flight leaves at nine o'clock sharp. All right?"

I nodded and held back my laughter. Truthfully, it was just implanted into his mind that since the sun was due up soon we couldn't travel. I wasn't about to feel guilty about that. Like I said, I didn't like the sun. "Roger that."

Mike held his hand out to Kellen. "It's been a pleasure to work you. You have certainly lived up to your legendary status."

Kellen shook his hand, grinned and winked at me. "I'm only too glad to have been of service."

Mike gave me a curious look then looked back at Kellen. "Will I be seeing you again?"

"Count on it." Kellen smiled.

"Good," Mike replied then patted me on the shoulder. "Well done on this one."

I bat my lashes. "Thanks, I do try."

Mike laughed a tired sound then glanced into the window to peer into the room. He

witnessed the same display I had seen of Sabrina with her family. "Bless the Beauty," he said so very quietly.

Nick wouldn't have heard him, but I had and so had Kellen. Softness had reached Kellen's eyes. Hmm, the big tough guy was getting a little mushy around the mortals. But I didn't mind it. We were all ecstatic we had rescued Sabrina. The whole meaning of *Bless the Beauty* had changed.

Sabrina had been saved. Was it God's efforts that made it so? I didn't know that and wasn't about to speculate. For once, my job had a happy ending that didn't mean finding a killer or a dead body. It was more rewarding than I'd ever experienced.

After Nick exchanged pleasantries to Kellen, the men were off.

I stepped back up to the window. Sabrina's mother still hadn't let her go. I was amazed to see that it appeared Sabrina was consoling her mother as she patted her back and whispered words that she was all right.

*Another job done. Another life saved.*

Mike was right, it was a job well done and I felt satisfied with my part in it all. Seeing the family embrace each other with such love on their faces was something I wouldn't forget any time soon.

When I glanced back to Kellen, Chase had joined him and they leaned against the desk. I laughed at their serious gazes. "What?"

Kellen stepped forward with unadulterated desire in his stride. "The case is over, the worry is behind us and we have an hour to spare before the sun comes up." I gave him a curious look, dumbfounded by what he was going on about. He grinned passionately and ran his thumb across my lips. "Have you forgotten our deal?"

The memory flittered back in my mind. I had promised him some oral gratitude for his help with this. I stuck my tongue out slightly to connect with his finger, which sent his gaze to burn. "I might remember something of that conversation."

Chase closed in next to me, wrapped his hand around my hip and squeezed tightly while shielding me from watchful eyes. "You surely haven't forgotten my part in this." He used his other hand to cup between my legs.

I shuddered as I glanced between the hungry men before me. "Well then," I purred, reaching up to cup each of their cheeks. "Let's make sure I keep my promises."

Chase quickly took my hand, pulled me down the hall with Kellen right beside me. Chase glanced at me with molten eyes. "I cannot wait until we get back to a hotel." He then proceeded to yank me into a hospital room.

The room was bare except a long bed at the end, which was empty, and had a television anchored to the wall. Kellen stepped through the door then locked us all inside.

"Nor can I." Kellen declared as he turned around and began to approach me. His hands were on the button of his slacks and with a quick move he had the fly open. He stopped in front of me, slid his pants down and gave me a steady look. "A promise is a promise, on your knees."

I grinned, happy to oblige and sank down onto my knees, then grabbed his already hard cock in my hands. Without another word spoken, I licked his shaft from the base all the way to the tip. Kellen's hips bucked forward as a groan escaped his mouth.

"Is this what you want?" I purred, running my mouth along him teasingly.

He groaned, reached up and grasped my head to steady me. "Yes."

Teasingly, I gave little licks all over his erection. Up and down, swirled the tip,



danced my tongue along his skin. His groans grew increasingly louder as his cock hardened further in my hand. His gaze burned as he watched me play against his skin.

Suddenly, Chase's hands were on my hips and lifted me so I was standing again. Now, bent over, I continued to tease Kellen to insanity. Like a feather, I lightly flicked up and down his shaft. It throbbed in my hand.

Chase caressed my ass with his hands at first then he brought his body close to mine and rubbed himself between my ass cheeks. He reached down, undid my pants, then lowered them from my body and assisted me as I stepped out of them.

Kellen released one of his hands from around my head and trailed his fingers gently along my cheek. "You look beautiful there—with your lips around my cock."

"You look just as beautiful like this—bent over, waiting for me," Chase groaned, still caressing my ass.

Their husky voices, the desire that poured from their mouths, sent heat straight to my centre. Wetness began to mount between my legs—an ache to find a release stirred within me.

Suddenly, Chase's hands travelled down my thighs and then just as quick, his tongue licked up my folds. I shuddered. My movements along Kellen's shaft froze as I sighed against him.

Kellen brought his hand back up to my face, encouraged me with the tightness he held me with to continue. I used the flat of my tongue to bask his cock in wet pleasure.

His groans grew immeasurably, his body began to tremble as my teasing did exactly what I intended. But he wasn't the only one being brought to the very edge. His head buried between my thighs, Chase's tongue lapped at my folds and near my clit, but at the angle was unable to reach it.

Helping him, I arched my back, positioned myself better and it was just the access he needed. Immediately, he found my nub and flicked it deliciously with his tongue. His movements became my own. With each flick, each swirl, I repeated the move along Kellen's shaft.

Every lick, every little kiss of my mouth, Kellen trembled further as I began to quiver from Chase's playfulness on my pussy. Heat soared through my body. Small tingles began to shake my body. My thighs shook as Chase worked his mouth along my hot flesh to entice me.

I held Kellen's cock up close to his body, took a testicle in my mouth and sucked deep, then did the same to the other. His eyes were nearly black with pleasure. His jaw clenched tightly as his hands gripped my head even more.

I tickled his sac with my tongue, fluttered over it in a way that I knew drove him wild. Then, like the tease I am, slowly licked from the base of his shaft all the way to the tip in a long, hard embrace.

"Enough," Kellen nearly roared. My gaze stayed glued on his. I smiled, rubbed the tip of his cock along my lips teasingly. He looked at Chase, or so I suspected, since he looked more toward my ass. "Fuck her."

My stomach clenched. The words, the heat in them, the lust burning in his eyes—arousal reached near lethal limits within my body.

Chase didn't hesitate. He stood, dropped his pants, kicked open my legs and pressed his cock against my slick opening. The feel of it, the push against my body, left me eager for his advance.

Slowly, painfully slow, he pushed in. My hand gripped Kellen's shaft as inch by glorious inch Chase filled me. When he seated himself fully, I opened my mouth and welcomed Kellen into my throat.

Kellen's deep groan echoed through the room, followed by Chase's, as the two men were nestled right where they wanted to be.

Again, Chase withdrew only to return in a slow, gentle movement. The feel of his cock against my inner walls was heaven in itself. I continued to follow the speed on Kellen's body. Chase set the pace and I mirrored it.

Each withdrawal and push in, I bathed Kellen's shaft in the wet warmth of my mouth. One of my hands rested on Kellen's hip while the other moved along his shaft in time with my mouth.

On each push in, Kellen groaned. As I pulled away, he trembled. Slow, steady, sinfully delectable movements allowed our bodies to feel pleasure, to appreciate the sensation before the rise of a climax.

Chase ran his hands over my ass, while he continued to move tenderly. His length provided the perfect pressure to spark a little tremble of my own. My mouth released its hold on Kellen's cock as a loud moan escaped my mouth.

"You want this," Chase said, before he thrust in hard.

"Yes." My tone begged. I was not ashamed. I needed him to take me to a place where those screams evaporated into heated pants.

My gaze lifted back to Kellen's. The hunger that stared back at me only increased my need for a release. The arousal within me had built to a place I couldn't control. My pussy throbbed. My clit ached—I needed to come and needed it now.

Chase's throaty laugh came behind me. He placed his hands under my stomach, pulled it up so my back was no longer arched. He put his hands on my hips, nudged my legs further apart and gripped my sides.

Kellen widened his legs, put his hands on the side of my face and tilted my head up, opened my throat for him. His gaze so intent on mine my pussy contracted around Chase's erection and he groaned deep in response.

Testing the position, Kellen held me firmly in place while he slowly thrust his hips forward to push himself deeper into my mouth. I curved my tongue around his shaft. He leaned his head back and sighed.

Behind me, Chase thrust in, and I moaned. Kellen groaned again, brought his head back down to meet my gaze. Nothing but a man in the midst of pure passion stood above me. I suspected if I looked back, I'd see Chase's expression reflected the same.

Both men drew out, only the tips of their cocks rested within me, then in a sudden move they both slammed home. I screamed, but it came out strangled since my mouth was occupied. Kellen's hands held me still as he began to thrust in quick movements, followed by Chase's hard thrusts behind me.

Their moves met in speed and force. My eyes closed as feelings of pure ecstasy swept across me. Not only was Chase bringing me to a heightened bliss, but I was doing the same to Kellen and the feeling overwhelmed my senses.

My body responded, my pussy clamped down against Chase's cock and he moaned loud in response. Kellen responded equally so, his own cock grew in size within my mouth, hardened as his thrusts increased. And so did Chase.

I was left to scream out only to be lost against the force of Kellen thrusting into my

mouth. My eyes closed tight. My body contracted to shudder around Chase's cock as his hands gripped my sides, digging in for his own impending release.

Kellen's hand tightened at the same moment, my mouth had to stretch wider to accommodate his hard length. I couldn't think or free myself with the building orgasm stealing my train of thought.

Vaguely, I heard Chase roar. "I'm gonna come." Then, Kellen respond. "So am I."

I was just too lost in my own pleasure to think of either of them at the moment. Chase increased his pace, hard deep thrusts against my body—his sac slamming against my clit, only to bring strength to my release.

Warmth captured me, my breath caught in my throat and when a scream of indulgence roared from my throat, Kellen stopped the sound by shoving his cock to the back of my throat and released himself into my mouth.

While I took a deep swallow, Chase's body pumped inside me, throbbed and the pressure prolonged my own release, my body clenched around him as he moaned behind me.

Then I fell to the ground as both men left the place they had just called home. My body had no weight and no strength. I took a few breaths to regain myself and looked up. Kellen was on his knees, head bowed to the ground. Chase was in the exact same position—panting from his own exertion.

I looked between them, loved this moment. These two men I loved with every part of my heart, who I'd give my life for, just got their rocks off and royally so.

With a small smile, I cleared my throat. They both met my gaze. "Damn, I'm good. You both look knackered."

Kellen and Chase looked between each other, grinned at one another, then looked back at me. Kellen spoke first. "Let's get back to the hotel first, then see if you say that..."

Chase finished, grabbed onto my foot and yanked me toward him. "After another round."

## **The End**

### **About the Author:**

Stacey Kennedy is an avid lover of the paranormal romance and urban fantasy genres. If she isn't plugging away at her next novel, tending to her two little ones, she's got her nose deep in a good book. She lives in Ontario, Canada with her husband. Be sure to drop her a line at [www.staceykennedy.com](http://www.staceykennedy.com), she loves to hear from her readers.

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