

The book cover features a romantic close-up of a young man and woman about to kiss. The man is on the left, leaning towards the woman on the right. The background is a deep red, textured fabric. The publisher's name 'Changeling Press' is in the top right, and the title and author's name are at the bottom.

Changeling Press

Revision

Silvia Violet

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Revision

Silvia Violet

Vampire Protector Niall has found his Companion. Will a dark wizard prevent him from staking his claim?

Vivian used the power of the written word to free Niall from an evil wizard and discovered a world of vampires, magic, and incredible sex she thought existed only in her fantasies. Now the wizard's power is growing and Vivian and Niall must work with the Vampire Consulate to destroy him before he unleashes his power on humans and non-humans alike.

As danger intensifies, Vivian and Niall's connection strengthens until there is no doubt she is his Companion. Their desire for one another rages out of control, but will fear of what the future holds keep them from sealing their bond?

Chapter 1

Niall slid silently from the bed, cursing his lack of a weapon. Someone was on Vivian's balcony. He could hear a single heartbeat. He reached out with his mind, but whoever it was had shields too thick for him to break without giving himself away.

The balcony door slid open. Niall stepped into the living room, cloaking himself. No human would be able to see him now. Of course, he doubted the intruder was human, but he could always hope.

A tall man stepped into Vivian's apartment.

Niall sprang.

The man captured his wrist in an unbreakable grip. "You could have told me you'd reclaimed your body."

"Ethan." Niall's partner dropped his arm, and Niall stepped back.

Ethan growled. "Why didn't you call me?"

"I needed to regain my strength."

Ethan arched a brow. "Based on your smell and appearance I'd say you needed to fuck someone's brains out."

Niall ran his hand through his ruffled hair. "I would have contacted you as soon as we woke."

"It's not like you to be distracted from a mission."

"After months of being trapped by that bastard I deserve a night to feed and fuck without the Consulate coming down on my ass."

Ethan grinned. "That's true enough. Tell me how you got free."

Niall explained how he'd sent out mental feelers from the story world where he'd been trapped by Lorcan, a wizard so powerful even his band of elite vampire

assassins had been unable to capture him after months of trying. Vivian, a romance writer, had been the only one to respond to his calls.

She'd listened to him tell the story of his fight with Lorcan and his capture, thinking he was a character out of her own imagination. When she'd finished writing his tale, the magic of her words brought him back into his body and transported him to her apartment.

Ethan frowned. "When did you return to your self?"

Niall glanced at the clock on the wall. It was nearly 10:00. "About twelve hours ago."

Without warning Ethan lunged for him. Niall countered the attack, blocking Ethan's attempt to smash his jaw. He sent Ethan flying backward with a swift kick.

Ethan held up his hands in surrender.

Niall snarled. "What the fuck was that about?"

"A test. You're back to nearly your full strength."

"So?"

"You should need days to recover after going so long without feeding. There's something you're not telling me."

"Apparently, I'm stronger than you thought I was." Vivian had restored his energy almost instantly. She responded to him like a Companion, yet even a Companion shouldn't have such power before being Turned. He needed more time to examine their connection before sharing it with anyone, even Ethan.

Ethan growled. "You're lying. We can't afford secrets on this mission."

Lorcan was the greatest threat to their kind Niall had encountered since joining the Protectors. "There is nothing you need to know right now. I'll tell you when I can."

"You'd better."

Niall hoped there would be nothing to tell. The thought of letting Vivian go made his stomach knot, but she didn't deserve to be forced into a bond with him, especially one that linked their lifeforces so closely. He risked his life every day as a Protector, and when a vampire died, his Companion rarely survived.

Ethan stepped back onto the balcony and retrieved a bag. He tossed it at Niall. "Duval expects us at sunset. I brought you some clothes and weapons. You'll get a new phone tonight."

"Damn! I was hoping to avoid him for a bit longer." Like until he figured out whether Vivian really was his Companion or if something even stranger was going on. Companion bonds had become rare in the last few hundred years and he'd never heard of one that formed this fast.

Ethan shook his head. "It's a formal summons. He'll drag you there if you don't come willingly."

He would too. The bastard. "How pissed is he?"

"Well, you did get caught."

"God damn it! Nobody knew Lorcan would be able to suck me into his enchanted book. I'll not be --"

He realized Ethan was laughing at his vehemence. "Fuck you."

"You're the best Protector the Consulate has. The fact that you got caught shows how strong Lorcan really is. We've been unable to locate him since you disappeared. Then last night, Duval sensed you again, and I sensed Lorcan's magic. Vivian breaking his hold on you must have weakened him temporarily. We know where he's hiding."

"Then let's go get him."

"How well did that go last time?"

Niall snarled. "I want the bastard dead."

"As do we all, but this is too big for the two of us. We need Duval. Hell, we may need every last Protector and all the allies we can bring in. We've got a few shifters watching the townhouse he's using for his base. They'll alert us if he leaves."

"This can't wait. We need to go in now."

"We're going to make plans tonight. Duval understands the urgency. Over the last few weeks, I've been able to link Lorcan with five deaths, all young women."

"Sick bastard."

"Damn right. And that's not all. Each woman had bite marks on her neck and the bodies were completely drained of blood. He's got people freaking out about vampire killings so we've got to work harder than usual to hide."

"You're sure he's responsible?"

"I finessed my way onto each crime scene. I could smell his magic every time. If he's pouring that much death power into a spell, it's going to be his worst one yet."

Niall smiled as he imagined how Ethan had managed to get close to the bodies. His partner could be excessively charming at times. "Any idea what he's planning?"

"So far his focus has been on gaining control over individuals and making them his puppets. He can make their minds nearly as blank as the zombies he's created for his army. My guess is he's going to try for mass control over a large group, possibly the human leaders of the city."

"Vivian can help us. She's had more success against Lorcan than any of us. If we can find a way to use her power to strike at him, we can weaken him enough to kill him."

Ethan nodded. "Bring her tonight. As soon as I report to Duval, he'll order you to anyway."

"He's going to resent involving a human."

"She's already involved, and I think he's willing to take any measures necessary to strike at Lorcan."

Ethan was right. Duval would demand that he bring her, and he could hardly leave her in her apartment alone. Lorcan would locate her sooner or later. But he didn't want to take her to the Consulate. No human was safe there.

Duval was the most honorable of all the Consuls, but that said very little. He would use any method at his disposal to get what he wanted. And he was as seductive as he was ruthless. His powers of coercion were the strongest of any vampire Niall had met. "Twelve hours ago she thought vampires were a myth. How am I supposed to get her ready to meet Duval?"

"You've got the day to figure that out."

"I just taught her how to create shields. How the fuck is she going to keep Duval out of her head?"

"Realistically, she's not. No human can."

Blinding anger stole his control. Bloodlust stirred.

"Niall." Ethan projected calm.

Niall stood, still and silent, fighting his body's desire to tear something apart. Vivian needed him sane.

When Niall regained control, Ethan spoke again. "Vivian is your blood servant. It's your duty to protect her, but she can't help us if you don't bring her to the Consulate. Lorcan will track her down. We're her only hope for survival."

Niall nodded.

"If Vivian is strong enough to save you, she's strong enough to survive Duval's mindscan."

Niall knew he had little choice but if their Companion bond continued to strengthen, he could give Vivian the strength to fight Duval. "I may have a way to protect her."

Ethan raised a brow.

"This isn't the time to explain. But if I'm right, you'll know soon enough." He wouldn't be able to hide a full-fledged Companion bond for long.

Ethan frowned. "I hope you know what you're doing."

Niall drew a deep breath and exhaled slowly. "So do I."

* * *

Vivian opened her eyes. Someone was in her apartment, talking. Her heart pounded. She scanned the room for a weapon, but before she found one, she recognized one of the voices. Niall.

She pushed herself to the edge of the bed, wincing as her muscles protested. She was sore all over, like she'd been ridden hard, as hard as she remembered. She took a deep breath, trying to process the idea that she'd spent the night having sex with a real vampire.

She heard another voice, one she didn't recognize. Who was he talking to?

Vivian grabbed her robe off the floor, slipped it on, and tiptoed across the room. Through the crack in the door, she saw Niall, standing in the living room, stark naked. He was talking to another man who was as breathtaking as he was.

Hot breaths of sizzling fury rolled off Niall. Whatever the other man had said upset him so deeply he couldn't lock his emotions behind his shields.

Niall took a long slow breath and she felt it, breathed it with him. The storm of emotion pouring from him had her sagging against the doorframe. Anger was most prevalent, but lust was right under its surface. Another emotion swirled into the mix. Vivian couldn't easily identify it, but she was concerned it might be fear.

She knew Lorcan, the wizard who'd trapped her vampire lover in a realm beyond physical existence, was a threat to both humans and vampires. But if an ancient vampire, one who sought out those who threatened his race, was frightened, how would she ever keep her wits enough to help him?

You're awake. Niall turned to her and desire raced over her. Her nipples hardened and need tightened her pussy. Her cheeks heated at the thought of what they'd done during the night.

"Good morning, Vivian. This is Ethan, the associate I mentioned. We were just discussing our next move in tracking Lorcan down."

Vivian nodded and turned to get a better look at Ethan. He was taller, over six feet. His body had the same lean, feline strength as Niall's, but his eyes were emerald green, all twinkling seduction as opposed to the bottomless black pools she drowned in every time she looked at Niall.

Ethan's dirty blond hair was cut short. He exuded power, but it would be much easier to believe he was a Special Forces officer than a vampire. Yet when he smiled, lust slithered across her, and he made no effort to hide his fangs.

Shield, like I showed you.

Vivian tried to heed Niall's words, but her efforts were half-hearted. Ethan's need felt so damn good, like warm cozy fur.

He's bespelling you. Fight it.

Niall's words made her realize how easily Ethan had enchanted her. She built her shields, solid and strong, and his aura of lust died away.

His mouth curved up in a sly grin. *Impressive.*

Vivian shook her head, disgusted with herself. "If Niall hadn't been here, you'd have compelled me."

He shook his head. "Don't dismiss your abilities. I came on strong. Few humans could shield against such force. Besides, you were attracted to me before I compelled you. That always makes the enchantment harder to fight."

Heat rose to Vivian's cheeks. She glanced at Niall, embarrassed by her lust for his friend.

Niall grinned. "It never occurred to me that you wouldn't respond to him. Ethan is... irresistible." The two vampires exchanged a look filled with an emotion.

Vivian wondered what had passed between them. She was still angry at how easily she'd gone under. "No wonder vampires have no problem finding human victims."

Ethan smiled. "I assure you those I drink from do not feel victimized."

If his bite was anything like Niall's, they felt nothing but pleasure.

Ethan bowed to her and smiled. A hint of the sensations he'd compelled her with floated across the air. "I am very pleased to meet you, but I must be going before the sun rises any more." He shifted his gaze to Niall. "She's going to do just fine."

Niall nodded. He gave Ethan Vivian's cell phone number in case he needed to contact them during the day. "Watch your back. Lorcan may be tracking you."

Ethan snorted. "I'm hardly new at this. I'll see you both at sunset." He slipped through the balcony doors and disappeared.

Vivian gasped. "Where did he go?"

Niall laughed. "Bastard probably jumped. He loves to show off."

"I'm on the third floor."

Niall raised a brow. Vivian realized how very little she really knew about vampires. Real vampires. She bit her lip to hold back a hysterical laugh.

Suddenly she was surrounded by lust so thick and potent it stole her breath. She looked into Niall's eyes and nearly drowned in his heat.

Her body still thrummed from Ethan's testing of her resolve, and the sight of Niall standing naked before her with his cock hard against his belly weakened her knees. How could she want him so badly when they'd come together countless times in the night?

"I need you." Niall's voice caressed her like silk.

She needed him too, but she had so many questions. What had Ethan meant about her doing fine? What were they doing at sunset? What had Niall and Ethan been talking about?

"Now."

His rough command sent lust knifing through her. She untied her robe and dropped it to the floor. "Yes."

* * *

Niall's mind was a riot of emotion: fear, resentment, and overriding it all, hot, stabbing need. He'd spent months trapped, unable to do anything but wait for someone to answer his call. Then Vivian had saved him, and he'd paid her back by irrevocably altering her life.

He wanted to rip something or somebody apart. But if he could lose himself in Vivian, he might be able to forget how badly he'd screwed this mission up, at least for a few minutes.

She held out her hand and walked backwards toward the bedroom door. He followed, fighting the urge to drag her to the floor and take her right there. He could wait until they got to the bed. Maybe. But she was damn beautiful with her dark curls tousled from sleep and her hazel eyes burning with passion.

His control broke as they entered the bedroom. He lifted her and tossed her on the bed, crawling on top of her and pinning her arms above her head. His hands closed around her wrists.

Her eyes were wide, and lust tinged with fear filled the air. He breathed it in. "I have no restraint right now. This is going to be hard, rough, and fast. Are you ready?"

She nodded even as her fear spiked. "Dear God, yes."

He drove deep. She screamed. He fought for control, stabbing his lip with his fangs to distract himself. *Did I hurt you?*

Her thoughts were a wild mix of need and fear, and they were delicious. Yes. *Sore. Don't Care. Like it.*

The last hold on his control broke with her hot confession. He pulled back and shoved in, sinking in her to the balls. Her legs locked around his back.

He fucked her mercilessly, needing to claim her, devour her. He'd used her hard all night, but he couldn't get enough. He didn't think he'd ever slake his hunger for her. Every story about the Companion bond described the insatiable hunger that consumed the vampire and his Companion and gave them the stamina to fuck for days on end.

He shifted his position so he could lick and suck at her breasts. When he bit down on one of her nipples, Vivian's nails dug into his back. He snarled and sucked harder. She bucked against him.

I'm going to make you scream for me.

Please!

He sank his fangs into her breast.

Her scream echoed through the room as her orgasm burst over her. Their minds linked. Intoxicating pleasure flowed over Niall as he drank from her. But even in his haze of lust he knew he'd taken too much blood that night.

He pulled back after a few sips and licked the wounds to seal them. Then he raised up and pushed at her thighs, doubling them on her chest, giving himself access to fuck her deep.

He poured his need into her with his long strokes. His balls tightened. He couldn't hold on much longer. *Come again. With me. Now.*

Yes. The spasms of her pussy broke him. His orgasm hit so hard it hurt. He cried out as he emptied himself inside her.

Chapter 2

Vivian slipped out of bed, leaving Niall sleeping. He'd stirred and grabbed for her, but she told him she needed coffee. What she really needed was a few minutes alone. She couldn't think straight when she was with him. She'd always envisioned vampires as seductive, but Niall's attraction went way beyond seduction. He seemed to have captured her soul.

She grabbed her robe from the living room floor and stepped into the kitchen. As she went through the motions of making coffee, she couldn't help but worry that she'd grown addicted to the hot, rough sex Niall gave her. That couldn't be good. Niall might have said he wouldn't leave her, but once she helped him catch Lorcan, what would bind him to her? As Ethan had proven, vampires could have any woman they wanted simply by turning on their charm.

Niall entered the kitchen a few minutes later. He didn't seem to need more than a few minutes sleep at a time. For all she knew vampires didn't really need sleep at all. She filled a mug and offered it to him. "Do vampires drink coffee?"

He smiled and took the cup. "We can, though it won't keep us from being grumpy at sunrise."

Vivian laughed. "I can forgive you for that. Most humans aren't too pleasant in the morning either even with coffee to help them along."

He smiled. "You certainly seem invigorated this morning."

Heat filled her cheeks, but his smile made her body dance. Yep. She was definitely addicted. No sane woman should want sex again after all he'd given her.

She was determined to ignore her body. She needed answers. "When you were talking to Ethan, anger burned across our link."

He nodded.

"Are you going to tell me why?"

He took a sip of coffee, seeming to consider how much to tell her.

"If I'm going to help you. I have to know what's going on."

"I know. But my instincts scream for me to protect you from what we face."

"I think it's a bit late for that."

Niall closed his eyes. Sharp annoyance sizzled in the air. "I'm afraid it is."

She got the sense that he was talking about more than involving her in a fight against a madman, but before she could question him further, he spoke.

"At least five women have been murdered in the last week. Their bodies were drained of blood, and they had bite marks on their neck. Ethan is certain Lorcan killed them. He's likely using their deaths as fuel for a spell."

Vivian's stomach knotted. She'd known Lorcan was power hungry and that he was dangerous, but she'd not realized how truly evil he was until she envisioned five women's bloodless bodies. "Why does he need to kill? I thought his power came from his talisman."

Niall frowned and took another sip of his coffee. "A wizard's talisman focuses his magic, but his magic also needs fuel. For some this comes from death, others use sex, others wind or water power, even electricity. Lorcan has killed before, but never in this manner or this quickly."

Vivian sat her coffee cup on the counter. Her hands were no longer steady enough to hold it. "Ethan's sure he's responsible?"

"Each of the women smells of his magical residue. Likely he used magic to paralyze them before draining their blood."

Nausea swept over Vivian. "That's horrible."

Niall's eyes turned to cold, black stone. "Yes."

"Are we going after him at sunset?"

Niall shook his head. "We're going to the Consulate."

"Is that like vampire headquarters?"

Niall's lips curled up just a bit as if he were trying not to smile. "Yes. The Consuls set vampire law and mete out justice to any who disobey."

"And we'll be meeting with them?" She couldn't repress a shiver. That much vampire power was more than she wanted to encounter.

"Just one of them. Duval. He's a ruthless bastard, but he is the head of the Protector Division, and we need his help to go after Lorcan."

Vivian frowned. "That is what you are, a Protector." She wasn't sure why she knew that. Perhaps when their thoughts merged during sex her subconscious had picked up the word.

He nodded. "Ethan and I are both Protectors. We track down and eliminate anyone who threatens our existence or tries to expose us to humans. The Consulate oversees our work. I don't always agree with their tactics and they find many of my methods... problematic."

"Like what?"

He smiled. "I have a reputation for involving humans in our affairs."

She couldn't help but laugh. "So why do you work for them?"

"Ethan and I both had psychic abilities as humans which gave us stronger than normal abilities as vampires. We're the best the Consulate has. I cannot ignore the importance of protecting our secrets, nor the safety of the humans who sustain us."

"Why do I get the sense not all Protectors feel as you do?"

"Some of the Protectors simply love the kill. We're sanctioned to track down our prey and eliminate them."

Vivian once again got the sensation that she was the one who was trapped in a book. "You mean you're an honest-to-God vampire assassin."

Niall nodded. "I am. Others of our kind will suffer the Consulate's retribution if they risk our exposure by murdering a human, but we're predators. The thrill of the kill intoxicates many of us. Some cannot live without it once they have a taste."

Vivian shuddered. "What happens to them?"

"The Protectors track them down and eliminate them."

“And you?”

Niall sat down his mug and began to pace the small room. “I never kill with my bite. Others find it beneath them to use human weapons, but Ethan and I know that we are all safer if we do not bite our victims. The kill looks like a human one, and we do not risk our sanity.”

Vivian leaned against the counter and took a long slow breath. “So we’re going to a strategy meeting at vampire headquarters. Am I right in assuming Duval is even more powerful than you or Ethan?”

Niall nodded and came to stand in front of her. “Yes. You’re going to have to be very careful and do exactly as I say in his presence. You felt what Ethan could do today. Duval will be much harder to fight.”

Vivian bit her lip, hysterical laughter once again threatening to pour forth. She looked up at Niall. The look of concern in his dark eyes did nothing to comfort her. “Are you sure I’m not the one trapped in a book?”

He shook his head. “This is all very real, Vivian. We’re going to have to work on your shields. You’re going to need solid defenses to keep Duval out of your thoughts.”

Without warning, Niall pushed deep into her mind. Determined to lock him out, she envisioned a thick wall, like that of a castle fortress. Their connection severed.

Niall smiled. “Good. That’s the strongest shield you’ve built yet, but we’ll have to make it even better before you meet Duval. I once told you that trusting me was foolish. I’m glad you ignored me, but trusting Duval could be deadly.”

Vivian shivered. “I’m scared.”

“I will protect you as much as I can. And like Ethan said, you’re going to do fine.” Niall pulled her into his arms and leaned down until his lips were a fraction of an inch from hers. Desire, hot and strong, made her breath catch. She drew her gaze from his full lips to his night-dark eyes. “I think I’m addicted to you.”

“The addiction goes both ways. I can’t get enough of you.”

She sensed that Niall was as uneasy about the force of their need as she was. “What’s happening between us?”

He closed his eyes and slowly shook his head. "I don't know."

She fought to keep her voice steady. "You're lying."

He captured her face between his hands, forcing her to see the pain and confusion evident in his eyes. "No. I've never felt like this before. But I know I need you again. Right. Now."

Desire beat at her senses. "I thought we needed to work on my shields."

"Later. Drop your shields. Let me show you what I want to do." Niall's voice whispered across her skin, making her shudder.

Vivian let go of the shields she'd built. Niall's lips captured hers as he entered her mind. She saw herself bent over the counter. Niall fucked her from behind. When that image faded, she lay across the table. Niall knelt between her legs, tasting her. She arched against him, begging for more.

Vivian's body tightened with need. She wanted exactly what he'd shown her and more, but her mind protested, reminding her how little time remained before she was expected to meet a vampire even Niall was wary of.

You'll be fine.

But we only have until sunset. My shields aren't reliable.

They will be.

His lips left hers, and he teased the flesh of her neck, nipping, licking.

Niall. Even her mental voice was breathless. *Please. We don't have much time.*

Your ability to hear me when I called to you and to read my thoughts when I drink from you prove you have latent psychic talent. You'll learn quickly.

Vivian pulled away, shocked. "You mean your other lovers haven't heard your thoughts?"

Niall shook his head. "They sense surface emotions and thoughts I deliberately project. No more. You're the first woman who's read me so deeply."

"But why --"

Niall pulled her to him again and ran his tongue along her neck. "I'll explain later. I need you now."

Vivian had never thought psychic talents were any more real than vampires. She tried to find the words to ask about psychic talents, but Niall was projecting his desire so strongly she felt his need slithering along her skin as surely as his tongue.

He made a noise halfway between a growl and a purr. *Let me pleasure you.*

The urgency in his voice was her undoing. She slid her fingers into his silky hair and arched against him. He loosened the tie of her robe and pushed it open so his hands could slide between her legs. His thumb found her clit as he slipped two fingers inside her.

He took her mouth, devouring her, claiming her until he was the air around her, the thoughts pouring into her, the sensation wracking her body, making her arch against him and cry out.

He worked her with his hand. His thumb brushed her clit, teasing her into insanity. She grabbed his wrist trying to force him to give her the pressure she craved, but she had no hope of moving him if he didn't want her to. *More. Please.*

He refused her plea, continuing to tease her instead, with slow strokes of his fingers, pressing slightly harder as he skimmed her g-spot. His other hand captured one of her nipples. She gasped as he pinched the hardened bud and rolled it between his fingers.

She let her robe fall from her shoulders and reached between them, circling his cock with her hand, determined to make him as crazy as she was, but he pulled away from her.

She whimpered, embarrassed by the desperate sound.

His low, sensual voice caressed her. "Turn around."

She turned, and he pushed gently on her back. She leaned forward, bracing herself against the kitchen counter. Oh, God, The image he'd shown her. Her pussy clenched, desperately wanting exactly what she'd seen, him fucking her hard, deep, fast, like his life depended on it.

Vivian braced herself against the counter. Niall pulled her hips back. She spread her legs farther and arched her back. He growled, the sound echoing in the small room, sounding far from human. She shivered, fear only making her hotter.

No human could do this for you. He pushed into her, sliding deep. She gasped, his cock felt so damn good inside her. His hands were around her hips pulling her back against him as he drove into her again and again, yet she felt him caressing her. Hands brushed her nipples, teasing them until they ached. Silky caresses slid up and down her sides, across her neck, around her thighs.

Vivian glanced over her shoulder. *How can you do that?*

Vampire tricks. His enigmatic smile said he wasn't going to elaborate.

You didn't do that last night.

He thrust deep and hard. *No.*

She needed several seconds to form a coherent thought. *Why now?*

You need to know what I can do. What I can give. You need me, not a human.

She let her head drop down and concentrated on the exquisite sensation of his cock driving into her, letting Niall feel her intense pleasure. *I love what you do to me.*

Now. But after you meet Duval, after you see what we really are, you might change your mind.

I know who you are. You've been in my mind for weeks.

You know me like this. You haven't seen me kill. You haven't seen what I can do when I'm angry.

He reached around and squeezed her clit with a real, solid touch, not the teasing caress of mind tricks. His strokes grew even more savage. Brutal pleasure spiraled through her.

I don't care what you're capable of. I want you. Please.

He growled. *You are mine.*

Yes. Take me. Take me. She screamed as her orgasm crashed over her.

Niall was everywhere, touching her with his mind, filling her with his cock, drinking in her pleasure, her thoughts.

His fangs sank deep into her neck. She cried out and came again; the second orgasm crashing on top of the first. She screamed, and he screamed with her, letting himself go, his cock flexing deep within her.

As their thoughts merged, every sensation she read from him screamed lust, need, desire as if all his anger and fear had been converted into need for her.

Chapter 3

As the pulsing between her legs slowed, Vivian sagged against the counter. Niall licked the wounds at her neck. He'd taken only a few sips but the strength of their mindlink had been as powerful as ever. His cock slipped from her body, but he held her tight against him.

She sighed. "That was amazing."

She felt his smile, and the warmth her satisfaction gave him. *How could you think I would leave you?*

"You will understand how by the end of the night. Our world is a very dangerous place for humans." He let her go and stepped back.

She forced herself to stand and face him. "You asked me to help you find Lorcan."

"We need your talents. And right or wrong, I..." He closed his eyes, when he opened them again they were filled with pain. "I don't have the strength to let you go, not with the connection we have."

Apprehension made her tense. "I want to be with you, Niall. But our connection, it's not normal, is it?"

Niall shook his head. "Our need for each other runs deeper than anything I've ever felt."

"What does it mean?"

His lips curved up in a wicked smile "That I need you again."

Vivian glared at him. "That is not an answer."

Niall refused to look her in the eye. His gaze strayed to her nipples, which peaked tightly under his perusal. "I don't know what it means. I need more time to figure it out."

His refusal to give a real answer made her furious. She *would* get him to talk to her, but right now her protection mattered most. "We need to work on my shields now."

Niall shook his head. "I'm not done with you yet." He pushed past the shields she'd put in place as if they were made of gauze and filled her mind with the image she'd seen before. She lay on the kitchen table. He knelt between her legs, feasting on her.

A flood of warmth filled her pussy, but she fought the fog of sexual need. "See how easily you just broke through my shields. We can't afford to get distracted again."

"We will be working on your shields." Niall looked wary. He was hiding something. And that frightened her even more than her lack of solid shields.

"How? By fucking?"

He laughed. "Yes."

"How?"

Niall debated how much to tell Vivian. He didn't want to frighten her with the possibilities of what their connection could mean. Less than a full day had passed since she'd discovered that vampires are real. Was she ready to find out she might be bound to him for eternity?

"I'm your lover. We've shared a mind connection, and I've taken your blood. Breaking your shields will always be easier for me." She frowned. Her fear scented the air, making him tense.

"We've been in and out of each other's thoughts for months. Nothing you show me now will make me want you less. But I'm scared of meeting Duval. I need to know how to keep him out of my mind."

"I'm going to give you the tools you need, but I can't simply teach you. I have to push my way deep into your mind. I will hurt you unless I get you so relaxed you can't keep me out."

Vivian frowned. "You've never hurt me when you've read my thoughts before."

Her fear and unease filled her mind, making Niall's cock harden even more. His predatory side couldn't help but be turned on by her rapid pulse and shallow breaths. "Your instincts will make you fight such a deep invasion of your mind, but I'm going to make you come so many times you won't be able to resist. You'll be so satisfied, you'll open completely and let me slide in all the way to the core of your thoughts where I can give you what you need."

Vivian sucked in her breath. Niall fought the urge to push her up on the counter and drive his cock into her. He had to stay focused on *her* needs.

"Niall, my body wants you now as badly as it has every second since you appeared in the flesh. But I'm tired and sore, and I want some answers." Her voice shook, and Niall felt her apprehension all the way to his core.

"What I'm going to do to you will repair your body and give you energy. When a vampire and his lover have a connection as deep as ours, they can heal each other. I want to share this gift with you, and I want to give you the strength you need to face Duval. He might stop at a surface scan, one your shields could prevent, but that's unlikely. He'll want to know what you've learned about our kind and whether or not you truly care for me."

Her eyes widened. He felt her realization. "He'll use me to get to you."

"He will if he thinks it will benefit his objectives. The Consulate needs me. I'm the best Protector they've got."

"I don't want to be a liability." Her fear trembled across their mental link.

"You're human, but your ability to manipulate words gives you a power none of the Protectors possess. We need you. I need you. That is what matters."

"But --"

"No more talking. Get on the table." He couldn't wait any longer to touch her again. He was lost, addicted, desperate for all of her he could get. She *was* his Companion. There was no other explanation for such need.

"Niall, I --"

Now. He let the full force of his power flow behind the word, caressing her with his need, his strength, his possession of her. He needed to see if he could enhance her powers as much as he'd promised. And he just plain needed to make her come again.

Vivian took a wobbly step toward the table. Damn! She was weak from the blood he'd taken. They had taken a break from touching each other and eaten at some point in the night, but he had no idea how many hours had passed since then. He would restore her strength as he pleased her and make sure she ate as soon as they were done. He lifted her, cradling her against his chest. "I've got you. Let's go to the bed instead."

She shook her head. "No. I want what you showed me."

He smiled, knowing her desire matched his own. He set her on the edge of the table. "Lie back." He grabbed a cushion from one of the chairs and placed it under her head. "Relax and enjoy."

He knelt at the end of the table. She spread her legs and arched toward him. His cock jumped at the sight of her laid out for him like a feast. The scent of her blood was driving him insane. He fought the urge to sink his fangs into her thigh and taste her again.

If his suspicions about their connection were right he would be able to give her the protection she needed, but he would take her freedom. If he were wrong, he had no way to keep Duval out of her mind, but she'd be free to leave him after the mission. He hated both choices. He wanted to give her the power she needed, but he wanted her to stay with him because she chose to. His heart pounded with lust and apprehension as he bent his head and let his breath warm her wet flesh. Then he sucked her clit into his mouth and she stopped thinking.

Vivian's hips shot up as she cried out. The heat of Niall's mouth scorched her tender flesh. His tongue alternately lapped her with agonizing strokes and teased her with rapid flicks that made her buck and twist, desperate for more contact. She fisted her hands in his hair, trying to pull his head where she wanted it, but he resisted her easily. His strong hands held her hips in place, preventing her from arching against him. He wasn't going to let her have anything he wasn't ready to give.

He tormented her with his lips, tongue, and teeth, bringing her to the edge then shifting his attention to her belly, her inner thighs, anywhere but where she needed it. Her body burned and throbbed, desperate for release. She was so damn close. If only he would let her go over.

Niall, please.

He laughed, the sound rushing across her skin, like wildfire, teasing her, drawing a groan from her throat.

Relax. Open to me.

She let go of the shields she'd built. He surged into her mind, and his need for her made her burn hotter.

Without warning, he took her clit again and slid first one, then two, then three fingers inside her. She cried out and bucked her hips. Silk brushed her nipples, fingers teased them, hands caressed her sides, her belly. He was touching her with his mind again, but it felt so damn real.

He was everywhere, stimulating her whole body at once. She gripped the sides of the table, desperate to steady herself from the erotic assault that came from the air itself. She couldn't hold on, couldn't stop herself. Her world exploded on a scream.

He showed no mercy. He used his hands and mouth to torment her while her orgasm shattered her senses. She no longer felt the table under her. Instead she seemed to be floating in a pool. Cool water lapped her heated skin.

Frightened, she opened her eyes. Everything looked just as it had. *What's happening?*

Enjoy it.

She wanted to question him, but he bit down on her clit, sending pleasure/pain shooting through her. She writhed against him, but he held on, biting just hard enough to hurt in a way that was divine. One thrust of his fingers sent her over again.

She hadn't yet recovered from the storm of her second orgasm when he pulled her toward him and drove his cock deep inside her.

She opened her eyes, wanting to ground herself in the whirlwind of sensations that buzzed around her. Then she saw Niall. He was standing by the table. His cock stood hard and thick against his belly. He wasn't really fucking her.

Panic filled her.

Stay with me. Feel. Don't think. Just feel.

Her heart slammed against her chest. She didn't know what was real and what was happening in her imagination. Was she still on the table? Was Niall even there? Was this a dream?

Everything is real, but some things are only happening in your mind rather than in your physical body.

But I can't --

Stop thinking. There is only pleasure between us.

She started to protest again but Niall flooded her mind with power. For just a moment she felt a sensation of crushing pressure in her mind. She tensed, but the pain in her head was forgotten when he pressed something that felt like a second cock against her anus.

She gasped. *What are you doing?*

I'm so far into you that I can see all your secret fantasies. You long to experience a double penetration so I'm giving it to you.

Niall, I don't think --

Don't think. Just feel. If you like it, one day we'll do it for real. He stretched her exquisitely, never really hurting but pushing her just to the edge of pain, distracting her from the fact that he was so deep in her mind she wasn't sure where she ended and he began.

Their minds were so deeply merged she could feel his desire for her as a living thing. He thrust deep into her ass and her cunt. She cried out. Too filled with his cock, with his need, with emotions so deep she didn't know a name for them. He fucked her, touched her, kissed her everywhere. Never, even with the vivid imagination of a writer, could she have imagined sex like this.

Come for me.

His words were more erotic than any touch. They filled her whole body, slithering through her mind straight down to her pussy. She exploded, a complete and total annihilation.

Chapter 4

Niall pushed through Vivian's last mental barrier. Sweat coated his skin, which for a vampire meant he'd exerted himself almost to the point of total exhaustion. He'd need to feed again before seeing Duval.

He knew instantly when he'd found what he needed among the threads of her deepest thoughts. Burning like a tiny light bulb, he saw psychic talent she should never have had. She'd probably been born with a modicum of ability. She'd likely read people's emotions easily, guessed what others were thinking more quickly than most humans, but she had not truly been a psychic until she answered his call.

Her talent looked and smelled of vampire. No human's mind should feel as hers did. There was only one explanation, a Companion bond. But none of her psychic talent should have emerged until he'd Turned her. She should have responded to him sexually and read his thoughts, nothing more. But they could share both strength and power.

He ignored the fear that knotted his stomach, fear that she would hate him for awakening this bond in her, for deepening it without warning her first. But he would not let her enter the Consulate unprepared.

He reached out with his mind and touched the light of her powers, surrounded it, and poured forth knowledge that would allow her to block a full-scale psychic attack. Before he could release his hold, her thoughts locked onto his. Her mind drank down knowledge he'd never intended to share.

Niall pulled back harder than he'd meant to, frightened by the determination of her unconscious thoughts. She tensed and groaned. He forced himself to slow down, releasing her from his hold bit by bit. When he pulled out of her mind completely, he sagged against the side of the table, exhausted and desperately hungry.

Vivian slowly opened her eyes. She should have felt drained from what Niall had done to her, but she felt rested, energized. Even the soreness from their sexual exertions had disappeared. What had he done to her? How much of it was real and how much was imagined? The thought made her shiver, yet part of her wondered if they could have sex like that all the time.

"Theoretically, we could but I'm not sure we'd survive long." Niall's voice sounded weak.

She sat up and looked at him. He was pale, even for a vampire. His eyes lacked their usual luster, and she got the distinct impression that he was leaning on the counter because he couldn't stand on his own.

Despite his obvious exhaustion, his cock lay hard and needy against his belly. She realized he'd never let himself come. Had he ever truly fucked her with his body? She didn't think he had.

"I couldn't risk the distraction when I was that deep in your mind."

For the first time, she remembered the purpose for the marathon session of pleasure. She formed her shields and gasped. The sensation she'd come to recognize as Niall reading her thoughts disappeared like she'd flipped a switch. "Wow! I guess it worked."

He nodded.

She couldn't even feel his lust stirring around her, something she'd started to take for granted. Should she be able to shut him out this completely? He'd said that as her lover he would always be able to push through her shields. A feeling of unease knotted in her belly.

"What exactly did you do to me?"

Niall looked away. Something wasn't right. "What's going on?"

"Nothing. I'm just tired."

He obviously wasn't going to tell her now. Maybe she could get more out of him after she'd revived him. She slid off the table and walked toward him. "You're tired and in desperate need of an orgasm. Let me help you with that."

But he held out a hand to stop her. "You should eat something. I've taken a lot of blood over the last day."

Vivian was starving, but he was worse off than she, both sexually and physically.

Niall shook his head. "Despite what my body thinks, I've indulged my needs enough tonight. We need to concentrate on preparing to meet Duval."

"When I said that earlier, all you wanted was sex. Tell me what is going on."

He looked away. "I'm fine. Let me make you something to eat."

She laid her hands on his chest and willed him to look at her. "You can hardly keep yourself upright. You need me."

His eyes burned with rage, and he growled like a wounded animal. "I'm fine."

Rage surged through her. Before she realized what she was doing, she'd lowered her shields and pushed into his mind. She broke through his defenses like they were made of straw. *Companion. Powers. Blood.* She got little else before his shields came roaring back.

The force of his anger shoved her back against the table as if he'd pushed her with his hands. His eyes were wide, and his fangs extended. He looked like a predator ready for a fight.

Vivian tried to catch her breath. "How did I do that?"

Niall took a few seconds to regain his composure. She knew he'd never attack her, but she couldn't repress a shiver of fear.

When his fury had receded, he spoke. "You're simply not used to your new powers."

Vivian pushed away from the table and stood up straight. "Powers? I thought you gave me the ability to strengthen my shields?"

"Opening our mindlink has unlocked latent psychic powers. They are simply stronger than we suspected."

He was lying. She was sure of it, but she didn't know why. "What's a Companion?"

Niall drew in a sharp breath, a sure sign her question had shocked him. "Why do you ask?"

"I read it from your thoughts."

"It's nothing. Vampire business."

"So now you're going to obey the Consulate and shut the human out."

Niall growled. "This is not the right time for this conversation."

"Then when will the time be right?"

He looked away. "I don't know."

She decided to change tactics. "You need blood."

"No."

She took a few steps toward him. "You're starving."

"I'm fine."

"Damn it, Niall. Am I going to have to force you to drink from me?"

He growled. Vivian wondered if she could force him. She'd just forced her way into his mind, something she never thought she could do. Since feeding and sex were deeply intertwined, all she had to do was seduce him. That shouldn't be difficult.

She took another step, positioning herself inches from his naked body. "Look at me."

"Vivian." There was a chill note of warning in his voice, but she refused to be scared off.

She pushed the words straight into his mind. *Look at me.*

He tried to resist, but ultimately, he did as she asked.

Watch me.

She knelt in front of him and gripped the base of his cock. He started to pull away, but she shook her head. *No. You need this. I will not let you refuse.*

She licked the tip of his cock, and his hips bucked toward her. Then she sucked the head into her mouth while working the base with her hand.

"Vivian I have very little control right now. This is not a good idea."

I don't want control from you. I want to swallow your come while you drink my blood.

Since when did she have the boldness to say something like that? Becoming a vampire's lover sure had made her brave.

Niall made a strangled noise. She felt his need burst from his mind and rush through the air like a hot wind.

He took her face in his hands and thrust his cock deeper into her mouth. She swallowed him, gagging as he pushed his cock deep into her throat. But his roughness only made her hotter. She wanted him wild, and she was willing to give him whatever he needed. He pulled back just as she started to panic with the need for air.

Is this what you want? You want me to stuff my cock down your throat?

She groaned. Anger sizzled in the air with his lust, but his harsh words scorched her, only making her want him more.

Yes, damn it.

Once she caught her breath, he thrust into her mouth again and again, going deeper with each stroke until she was taking his full, thick length. She dug her fingers into his ass and held on. Despite all the pleasure he'd wrung out of her, she wanted him so badly, wetness dripped down her thighs.

He was close. His lust filled the room, leaking through the shields he kept tightly shut. Vivian let go of his ass with one hand and lifted her wrist toward his mouth, looking up to gauge his reaction.

He inhaled sharply and wrapped a hand around her arm just below where her pulse thrummed against the thin skin of her wrist.

He snarled. "No!"

Vivian pushed past his shields as she sucked harder on his cock. She wrapped her free hand around the base, setting her own rhythm now, but taking him just as deep. *You need it.*

"No!"

Niall, take what I'm offering.

He shuddered as she swallowed him all the way to the root. He was going to come any second. *Drink. Now.*

He growled like an animal and pulled her wrist to his face, wrenching her shoulder. He bit deep and hard. She screamed around his cock. Her free hand dropped to her clit as his mind opened and the storm of his hunger and need flooded her. He came a second later, and she followed him as he poured his come down her throat.

His shields fell away, and she felt the familiar swirl of his thoughts. Through the haze of her own desire she forced herself to concentrate on what she felt there, knowing she wasn't likely to get another peek at his thoughts anytime soon. She let his spent cock slip from her mouth and concentrated on the sensations battering her mind.

Instead of lust, fear and an intense gnawing hunger permeated. He was afraid he would take too much blood from her and that she would run from him when she saw his true nature, but most of all he feared telling her she was his Companion.

She pushed deeper searching for more information about that word, but he'd locked the information deep. She swayed on her knees, suddenly feeling dizzy and sick. How long had Niall been drinking from her? Longer than he usually did. His hunger had diminished, but she could still feel it beating against her.

Niall.

She got no response.

Her heart beat faster. She was going to pass out if he didn't stop.

Niall, release me. She tried to pull her wrist away from his mouth, but he growled and tightened his grip on her arm.

Desperate, she reached deeper into his mind, planting her command there. *Release me now.*

He gasped, dropping her arm and falling back against the counter. She looked up, but he turned away. He was forcing himself to breathe slowly, something a vampire normally did quite naturally.

Vivian scrambled to her feet and stepped back. She knew he'd never hurt her intentionally, but she wasn't sure he was in control of his actions, or that she'd be able to stop him again if he came after her.

Had she really just used mind control on a centuries-old vampire? What had he awakened in her? Something more than latent human psychic talent, that was certain. Tense silence reigned for several minutes.

Vivian sat down at the table, dizziness preventing her from staying on her feet.

Without speaking, Niall opened the fridge and pulled out eggs and ham and spinach.

"Niall?"

"Not yet. You're too weak, and I'm still fighting for control. I'm not used to being overpowered by a human no matter how right she was to stop me. Let me concentrate on taking care of you."

Vivian laid her head down on her arms and let him be.

Chapter 5

"Vivian?" She'd fallen asleep with her head on the table. Niall hated to wake her, but she needed to eat even more than she needed to sleep. He should never have fed from her again after all the blood he'd taken during the night, but she'd made it damn near impossible to resist.

And she was right, he wouldn't have lasted long without feeding from somebody, and he no longer wanted any blood but hers. He'd weakened himself dangerously pushing so deeply into her mind.

Vivian blinked and sat up. "What happened?"

"You fell asleep." He sat a beautiful ham and spinach omelet in front of her. "Eat this. Your body's going to need a lot of iron and protein today."

She rubbed her eyes and pushed her hair from her face. "Thanks. I wouldn't have expected a vampire to know how to cook."

He smiled. "Two hundred years is a long time to build up a set of useful skills." He handed her a glass of water and sat down next to her.

After she'd eaten several bites, she looked up at him. The resentment and fear in her eyes felt like a punch to the gut.

"Tell me what you did to me. And no more lies this time." Her voice was shaky yet determined.

Niall debated how little he could reveal and still tell her the truth. He was not yet ready to talk about what it meant for her to be his Companion. She would be bound to him for eternity.

The last thing he wanted her to think was that he'd trapped her. In truth he had as little control over their bond as she did. But would she ever believe him, especially when he'd already lied to her? "I strengthened your natural abilities."

"You told me I'd be able to build stronger shields, but you enhanced far more than my ability to hide my thoughts."

Niall nodded. "Our connection is very strong. There was a risk that you would pull other abilities from my mind when we touched so deeply."

"What type of abilities?"

"Clearly, you can force your way into someone's mind and control their actions, even someone quite strong. You'll likely be able to read thoughts and emotions on anyone who is unprepared to keep you out."

"You didn't think to warn me about this?"

Anger swirled around her and her shields slammed shut. Damn he was fucking this up. He was falling in love with her so fast he couldn't get his balance. He was two hundred years old and he'd served as a Protector for the most powerful vampires in existence, but Vivian made him feel like a fledgling. "I didn't do it on purpose. I've never experienced a mental bond like this before."

"Is that because I am your Companion?"

How did he explain what was happening between them without scaring her? Hell, he was scared himself. The last thing he wanted to do was push her away, not that she'd have much choice if she was his Companion. They'd be bound together forever, but that didn't mean she had to love him back or even like him.

"The Companion bond is a bond that occurs between a vampire and a blood servant, but normally, the connection doesn't run as deep as ours unless the vampire Turns his servant."

"Then what is happening to us?"

Niall frowned. "I don't know. The Companion bond is the only explanation that fits your response to me, but we've neither performed a Turning ceremony nor sealed our bond so you should not be able to share my powers."

Niall could hear the pounding of her heart, feel her fear. "So that's why I'm so strong? I'm sharing your powers?"

"Your mind read my abilities and learned how to duplicate them."

"Am I still human?"

He nodded. "Yes, you are human, but you have strong psychic abilities similar to mine."

The shrill tones of Vivian's phone interrupted them. Niall glanced down to see the number. "It's Ethan. I've got to answer it."

Vivian nodded, but he could feel her annoyance. She wasn't going to stop pushing until he told her everything. If he wasn't careful, she was going to break down all his barriers and pull it from his mind.

"Ethan?"

"You've got to get out of there now. Are you strong enough to bear the sun?"

He sure as hell was now that he'd almost drained Vivian. "Yes, what's going on?"

"At least five of Lorcan's zombies are moving in your direction. He may have discovered your location."

Niall ran a hand through his hair. Ethan was right. They needed to get out quick. If he were alone he'd stay and fight, but he wouldn't risk Vivian's safety. "We'll head north and circle around to meet you at headquarters."

"I'm going to stay on their tail, and see what I can learn. I'll meet you as soon as I can."

"Be careful."

"I will."

"See you soon."

Vivian stared at him. Fear mixed with her annoyance. He wished she would share her thoughts with him, but now was not the time to convince her to do so. "Lorcan has sent some zombies after us."

Her mouth dropped open. "Zombies?"

"That's what we call them. He reanimates human bodies, enhances their strength, and uses them like attack dogs. Their only thought will be killing us. We've got to get out of here."

Vivian got up and headed out of the kitchen. "Where the hell are you going?"

"To get my laptop."

"We don't have --"

"The only weapon that's been successful against Lorcan is my writing. I need a way to write fast if we have to defend ourselves."

Niall was impressed by her quick thinking. "Hurry."

Vivian had her bag packed in less than a minute. They exited the rear of her building then slipped through the fence into the yard of the next building.

"Where do we need to go?"

"Central Park West near 66th street. But we need to try and lose them first."

"Walking?"

"I would normally cloak myself and run, but you won't be able to match my speed."

Vivian snorted. "So I gain psychic powers but not vampire speed."

He shrugged. "For now."

"Meaning I will?"

"Meaning let's focus on avoiding Lorcan's zombies."

Vivian's phone rang again. He frowned as he answered it.

"The zombies changed course. They're headed toward your current location," Ethan sounded out of breath, which meant he was moving with lightning speed.

"Damn!" Niall took Vivian's hand, and they kept moving as he listened to what Ethan had to say. "We'll move as fast as we can."

"I'm headed your way. Be careful."

"You too." Niall put the phone back in his pocket. "Ethan thinks they're following us. He's on his way to help us."

"How could they find us? I mean, finding my address would be simple enough, but how would they track us now?"

Niall squeezed her hand, wishing he could say something reassuring. "It's possible Lorcan could trace you if he picked up enough of your magical signature when you freed me."

Vivian wasn't sure her omelet was going to stay in her stomach. "Wouldn't people notice a bunch of zombies walking around?"

"If anyone sees them, they'll look like normal humans and Lorcan's likely put a spell on them that makes humans avoid them."

"Great."

Niall squeezed her hand. "I'll protect you. I swear it."

He looked as fierce as he had after she'd forced her way into his mind. She knew he meant what he said but fear still thrummed through her.

They took a circuitous path through the streets. Vivian focused on following Niall's lead, trying not to think about where they were going and why.

Suddenly he pulled her into a side street and picked up his pace. They rounded the corner into a narrow alley leading to the back entrance of a theater.

"Did you see them?"

Niall shook his head. "Lower your shields a little. See if you can sense them."

Vivian did as he said though she had no idea what she was looking for. The only thing she'd ever sensed was Niall's presence. At first, she only sensed Niall, but then she got a strong sense of something off, something wrong. She didn't recognize it as a mental presence, just a sense of unease. "Something feels wrong."

"You're sensing dark magic. Can you tell me more?"

Vivian examined the sensation further. "They're close."

Niall nodded.

"Shouldn't we run?"

"Not yet. Stay behind me."

She listened with her mind and her ears but heard nothing. Suddenly Niall pulled his gun out. "Run! Try the theater door. I'm going to try to lure them into the street so they don't follow you."

"Niall. I don't --"

"Run, Vivian."

She ran until she came to the back of the alley. She couldn't just leave Niall. She heard a gunshot and bit her lip to hold in her scream. *Niall?*

Get out of here.

She ignored his order and stared toward the street. Niall was cloaking himself but she occasionally caught flashes of him as he grappled with the zombies. Another man entered the alley. Light glinted off his blond hair. It was Ethan.

She counted at least five other men. The longer she watched, the easier it was for her to see through their magical cloak, possibly another side effect of Niall's foray into her mind. Another shot sounded. One of the men fell. A second man rushed at Niall. She caught the gleam of a knife.

Chapter 6

Niall! Rage flooded her mind, and her world went red. She set her laptop bag on the ground and ran, faster than she'd ever imagined moving. One of the zombies came toward her, and she delivered a roundhouse kick. When her foot made contact with his chest, she heard the crunch of bone. He fell back. She ignored him, rushing forward. Saving Niall was the only thing she cared about.

Niall struggled against the zombie who'd rushed at him, twisting out of the way just in time to avoid a knife to the gut. At the edge of his awareness he sensed Vivian moving closer.

Run, Vivian.

She didn't obey. He heard a body hit the ground. Fear sliced through him until he detected her presence again. She was close.

He punched his attacker, hard enough to smash the bones of his face. The zombie fell to the ground screaming. Niall kicked his wrist, and his knife clattered to the pavement. He bent to retrieve it and spun to face the next attack.

He almost missed his target when he saw Vivian. She was attacking one of the remaining zombies with the speed and strength of a centuries-old vampire.

He focused on the man in front of him, bringing his knife up at the last possible second. He thrust it in and up, piercing the zombie's heart. The man fell to the pavement.

He braced for another attack, but none came. The last two zombies were occupied by Vivian and Ethan. As he took a step toward her, Vivian delivered a kick to her attacker's gut followed by a blow to his head. He fell to the ground.

Niall spotted his gun on the ground, grabbed it, and shot the zombie Ethan was fighting.

He turned back to Vivian. Her eyes were wide. She looked like a newly turned vampire, one who was unable to control the killing instinct.

Blood.

Vivian. Her shields were down. He could push deeper and try to take control, force her to put her weapon down, but he'd likely hurt her.

She took a step toward him, but she gave no indication she recognized him.

Ethan was slowly circling behind her, preparing to help him if she attacked. "How could you have Turned her so fast?"

"I haven't."

"No human could do what she just did."

"No human could lend me strength like a Companion, but she has since the first time we had sex."

"That's what you wouldn't tell me earlier."

Niall nodded. *Vivian. It's me. Niall.*

She stopped and looked down, surveying the men who lay dead on the pavement. *So much blood.*

You killed those men to save me. You're going to be fine now.

Her thoughts were a jumbled mass but the words that echoed in her mind were *Hungry. Kill. Blood.*

You don't need blood. You're still human.

So hungry. Lust sizzled across the air. Niall's cock hardened instantly. The link between blood and sex was strong for his kind. After a successful hunt, most vampires wanted a hard, rough fuck.

If he was lucky, he could bring her out of bloodlust with sex. As long as they were well fed, most young vampires could be satisfied with either blood or sex as they struggled for control over their appetites.

He projected his desire for her, letting his need slither across her skin.

She stumbled and gasped. Her own sexual hunger pulsed around her. *More.*

Ethan cleared his throat. "Do you have this situation under control?"

Niall nodded.

"Then unless you want me to join you, I'd better retreat to the street and call for a cleanup crew."

He and Ethan had shared lovers in the past, and he knew Vivian had fantasized about a three way. But she wasn't able to think rationally and someone needed to keep a clear head and make sure they stayed hidden. "Go. I may need help cloaking us. I'm not sure I'll be able to concentrate on anything but Vivian."

Ethan gave a wry laugh. "I'll take care of it. If the lust rolling off her is any indication, you're going to be one thoroughly distracted vampire. If I have to sit this out, I'm going to need to feed in more ways than one before the day's over."

Niall smiled despite his concern for Vivian. She had no ability to shield in her current state. Ignoring the sexual lure she projected would take iron control, but he could trust Ethan. He didn't envy him though. "Can you grab Vivian's bag, too? I'm not sure I'll remember it after this."

Ethan chuckled. "Will do."

Niall concentrated on Vivian, reaching as deep into her mind as he could. *Come to me, Vivian. Come to me, and I'll give you what you need.*

She took a step toward him. He pushed deeper past her shields. She still wasn't herself, but her blood hunger and the need to kill had diminished.

Vivian, it's me. You're going to be fine.

Niall?

Yes. He sent the full force of his lust into her mind.

She dropped the knife she'd grabbed during the fight.

He took a few steps toward her, continuing to use their mindlink to caress her. *You want to fuck, don't you?*

Her eyes widened, and she growled. She leapt at him. He caught her around the waist and lifted. Her legs wrapped around his hips. She pulled his head down to hers, taking his lips in a way that was more attack than kiss. She nipped his lips and sucked his tongue into her mouth. Her nails dug into his back.

He snarled, his own need rising in answer to the ferocity of hers. He took enough steps to reach the wall and shoved her up against it, praying the strength she'd obviously gained would prevent her being injured. There was no way in hell he'd be able to be gentle.

She bucked against him, rubbing her pussy over his aching cock. He needed to be inside her, right this second. The intensity of the fight with Lorcan's men and his fear for Vivian's safety had worked him into a frenzy. Now that energy was fueling a desire nearly as crazed as Vivian's.

He pushed at her shoulders, pulling away from her and forcing her to drop her legs to the ground. "Pants off. Now."

Her eyes were bright with lust and anger. She wanted to be touching him, but she did what he said, shoving her jeans and panties to the ground and kicking them aside. He undid his pants enough to free his cock.

He lifted her again and pushed her against the wall. She hissed as he drove deep, locking her legs around his hips. He took her hard and fast, bracing himself on the wall behind them.

Her back was going to be scratched to hell. *Vivian? Are you all right?*

She snarled. "Fuck me!"

He tried to push deeper into her mind, wanting to make sure he wasn't hurting her even as he doubted he could slow himself.

She slammed her shields down and bucked against him. "No games. Just give me your cock."

Niall smiled. The bloodlust was gone. She was herself again even if she was still caught in the grip of lust so fierce the taste of it was nearly enough to send him over.

"I need you."

She whimpered. "I need you too."

She dug her nails into his back and met every vicious thrust. "You're mine."

Niall gasped. Her words had brought him right to the edge. "Yes."

He drew in a breath, and the smell of her blood made him growl. He wanted to pour himself into her while he drank. He bent and swiped his tongue up the side of her neck.

"Bite me."

Niall froze. What the hell was he doing? He couldn't take any more blood from her. "No."

He pushed her against the wall and tried to pull out of her. She used her legs to pull him back. He shoved harder. "No biting."

"Yes."

"No." He shoved her again. Her nails dug into his arms. He didn't even flinch at the pain. He grabbed her arms and spun her. "Hands on the wall."

He jerked her hips back and thrust into her from behind.

Her back was covered in scratches from the wall. No wonder he'd smelled blood. He bent to lick at the wounds.

She moaned. "Your tongue. So good."

He laughed against her skin. He wrapped his arm around her waist and began pistoning into her again.

She arched deeply, meeting his every stroke. "More. I need..."

His hand reached between her legs. He captured her clit between two fingers. She tensed and came, her fluids gushing over his fingers as she squeezed his cock.

"You need me. You always will."

"Yes."

He thrust deep once more and exploded inside her.

* * *

Vivian's heart pounded. She took a deep breath and braced herself on the wall in front of her. She heard the sound of a zipper and knew Niall was getting dressed behind her.

Maybe she should get dressed herself since she was standing naked in an alley, having just fucked like an animal after killing several men. What had happened to her?

She could only remember bits and pieces of the last hour. Half hour? Minutes? How long had it been anyway?

The last thing she remembered clearly was Niall sending her away, intending to take on a mass of wizard-enhanced zombies all by himself. But how the hell had she been able to kill them? She'd never been in a fight in her life.

Tears pricked the back of her eyes. What was happening to her?

Vivian?

Niall pressed gently on the edge of her shields. He wanted to know what she was thinking, but she couldn't let him in, not yet. She bent to retrieve her clothes. They were torn and bloody, but she couldn't very well walk down the street naked.

When she was dressed, she found the courage to turn around. Niall wasn't looking at her. He was looking down the alley, at Ethan.

Ethan had joined in the fight just as she'd -- lost her mind? Become a killing machine? -- rushed to save Niall. He'd been here the whole time. He'd seen, heard. Heat burned her cheeks.

Niall turned to face her. He looked wary, and his eyes were filled with something soft and deep -- fear?

She started to laugh, sounding hysterical even to herself. Then the tears she'd been holding back started to fall, faster and faster until she was sobbing. Niall pulled her into his arms.

"What did you do to me?" Like lightning, her fear turned to rage. She beat at him with her fists, struggling against his hold. He tightened his grip on her but didn't try to stop her from hitting him. "I don't even know who I am anymore."

"You're mine. And I will always take care of you." The depth of feeling in his voice took her breath. She collapsed against him, too tired to fight anymore. Her sobs died down to sniffles.

Ethan walked toward them.

Vivian's cheeks burned when she thought of what he'd seen. She could barely force herself to look at him. "I'm sorry."

He shook his head. "Never apologize for desire like that. All vampires need sex after a kill. And believe me, you couldn't shock me if you tried."

She turned to Niall, fighting to keep the terror out of her voice. "Am I still human, even now?"

"You're not a vampire."

She pulled away from him and stepped back. "That is not an answer."

"It's the best answer I can give. To become a vampire, you must drink from me, and we must perform a turning ceremony. But the connection between us continues to cause changes in you, changes that make your body behave like a vampire's. As far as I know. This has never happened before."

Vivian's heart pounded. She was cold, clammy. Her stomach knotted, threatening to rebel. She was one step away from full panic. "Why is it happening now?"

"I don't know."

"Will it stop or am I going to be like this forever?"

Niall's eyes shone. She felt grief pouring off him.

Ethan took a few cautious steps toward them. "If you are Niall's Companion you will retain your powers. A Companion bond lasts forever."

Niall took her hand. "I'm sorry for involving you in this. For bringing you into my world. For changing you."

She sighed. Angry as she was, she didn't want to go back to a life without Niall in it. She was falling in love with him, and a future without him was too horrible to contemplate. "What choice did you have?"

"I could have stayed in Lorcan's story realm until Ethan figured out a way to release me." His voice was devoid of emotion, and he was shielding his thoughts from her.

"You would never have given up the chance to escape. You had no idea if anyone else could save you." Annoyance at his stubbornness overrode her feelings of panic. "You told me you were the best the Consulate has."

Ethan snorted. "I'm not so bad myself."

His smug comment made her smile. "I think perhaps your merit was mentioned as well."

Niall's turmoil surrounded her. The force of his emotions stole her breath. "You don't deserve this. I should never have taken away your choices."

He turned away, and Vivian glanced at Ethan. He rolled his eyes. "Niall means well, but sometimes he needs a kick in the ass to make him see sense."

Somehow, Niall's apology had forced her to face the truth. She loved him. She would never have walked away from him, even if she'd been given a choice. "Niall, I'm okay. I just wish I had more time to process what's happening."

Niall frowned. "Vivian, I'll do everything I can to make up for what's happened to you."

"Have you considered that maybe I've gained as much as I've lost?"

Ethan clapped his friend on the shoulder. "You're one lucky vampire. Don't screw this up."

He turned and walked toward the mouth of the alley. "I don't know about you two but I'd rather not wait around for more of these goons. Let's go update Duval."

Vivian frowned. "What will stop Lorcan from coming after us at the Consulate?"

"If he can break through the wards at the Consulate then we're all screwed."

Chapter 7

They climbed the steps of a historic building on Central Park West. The door swung open before they reached it, and they stepped inside. Two men stood in the lobby, both holding guns.

Niall snarled. "Stand down."

"No humans." The guard stared at Vivian the way she might look at a nice steak. His hunger pushed at her shields.

She bit back a snarl.

Stay calm. Follow my lead. "This is my blood servant. Duval wishes to assess her usefulness for our mission."

The guard remained silent for several seconds, Vivian could only imagine he was communicating with someone via mindlink. Finally, he lowered his weapon. "Duval is waiting for you."

They walked down a narrow hall and stopped in front of an ornate door. Ethan opened the door and entered first followed by Niall. *Stay behind me.*

No problem. The last thing Vivian wanted to do was draw attention to herself.

The room looked like a study out of a Victorian costume drama. An ornate desk filled one corner. Across the room upholstered chairs faced a large fireplace. Duval stood by a tall window that looked out on a courtyard filled with night-blooming flowers. Power emanated from him, brushing against her like a caress she didn't want but couldn't resist.

When Vivian had first encountered Niall, he'd caressed her mind with lust and hunger. It had felt delicious. But Duval exuded cold strength and control. She couldn't repress a shiver.

He's magnifying his aura on purpose. Ignore it.

I'm not sure I can.

Shield harder.

She tried but only managed to tone down the sensations, not stop them. When Duval turned to face them, he hit her with a burst of power. He let her feel his lust as well. Her knees buckled, and she looked away. Niall grabbed her arm, steadying her.

Fight it. Show him you're not afraid.

She forced herself to look up. Duval's blond hair hung past his shoulders. His face was that of an archangel. Pale skin, perfectly sculpted features. He held himself so still he could have been carved from marble. His eyes were the color of cold stone.

He brushed at her shields. Never pushing, never forcing, simply caressing like a skilled lover, urging her to open to him. Dear God, she wanted to do as he asked. She'd thought Niall's power intense, but it was nothing like this. Her heart hammered and sweat ran down the back of her neck with the effort of holding her shields in place.

Suddenly, he was gone from her mind. His mouth curled up in a smile that would be enough to weaken most women's knees all by itself.

"Very impressive. I think perhaps your master has been holding back on us. You are far more than a writer, aren't you, little human?"

Niall snarled. Vivian laid her hand against his arm. *I'm fine.*

Ethan spoke next. "You summoned us here to discuss our mission. I think we can all agree that finding a way to destroy Lorcan is our priority tonight."

Duval glared at him. "Indeed. None of us will leave here until I believe we can succeed in our mission. I'm simply making sure I understand all the resources we have available." His gaze raked Vivian, and she felt it like a lover's caress.

Niall snarled. "Back off. Vivian is under my protection."

Duval reached out to Vivian with his mind. If she hadn't known better, she would have sworn he was kissing her neck, nibbling, preparing to bite.

Niall lunged for him.

Duval held out his hand. Niall froze as if he'd been turned to stone.

"Surely you've learned by now how very little power you have over me."

Shock slowed Vivian's reaction, but it was quickly replaced by scorching anger that threatened to overtake her as it had in the alley. "Let him go."

Niall stumbled then regained his footing and moved to stand beside Vivian.

Duval flashed an evil smile, but he no longer projected any sensations, not even the cold power she imagined surrounded him at all times. "I needed to know how strong Vivian was and how far you'd go to defend her. I have my answers. I will leave her alone, for now."

"What just happened?" The question burst from her before she could stop herself.

Duval looked at Niall and raised a brow. "I see you've been remiss in sharing your history with your... servant. Shall I tell her or will you?"

Resentment emanated from Niall. "Duval is the vampire who Turned me. A vampire must be able to control those he Turns so they do not give into bloodlust, but much of that control remains long after the new vampire has mastered his appetites."

No wonder he was wary of a vampire who could control him so completely. And yet, if Duval had Turned him, did that mean they'd been friends at one time or even lovers? Why hadn't Niall warned her?

It's not a story I like to tell.

But you will tell me.

Would you really take no for answer?

No.

"If you are done with your little exchange, we have a wizard to destroy."

Niall snarled. "Are you done playing games?"

"For now." Duval smiled, looking like a self-satisfied cat.

Ethan told Duval what he'd learned in the last day. Then he and Niall described the attack they'd suffered on their way to the Consulate.

Duval nodded occasionally but otherwise he let them talk. His face gave away nothing of his emotions. Vivian no longer felt anything from him, not even a hint of the

aura of power he'd sent out when they first arrived. She wished she dared test the edge of his shields, but she wasn't that foolish.

At Duval's request, Niall described his entrapment and her rescue of him.

"And since you were freed, what have you done?" His lips curled up once again in his most evil smile.

"I've spent the last day regaining my strength."

"Nothing else? Nothing you would need to inform the Consulate of?"

Vivian felt Niall's furor rise, hot and dangerous. She prayed he could contain it. "No."

"I think at best you speak a partial truth. You will tell me more when our business with Lorcan is finished."

"Vivian is still human and my blood servant. What happens between us is not under your authority." Niall's words were bitter and hateful.

Duval turned rigid. His fury chilled the entire room. "You are under my authority."

"I serve the Consulate as a Protector. Let me do my job and stop playing games."

Duval's gray eyes were so cold they made Vivian shiver. "If you are so interested in doing your job, why is Lorcan still alive?"

Niall's rage burned through Vivian.

He's baiting you. Don't give him the satisfaction of controlling you again. She felt his anger recede. He gripped her hand in his.

Ethan laid a hand on his friend's arm and spoke. "Lorcan is more powerful than anything the Protectors have encountered. Our usual tactics have failed, but now we know how to combat him. Vivian destroyed the spell that bound Niall. We can use her talents to trap Lorcan or even kill him."

Duval looked at Vivian. She expected a hit of power again, but he behaved. "Tell me how you freed him."

"Just as Niall said, I wrote his story as he told it to me. When I finished it, he appeared. I had no idea he was real until I was writing the last few chapters. Even then I didn't but half believe it."

"So he told you exactly what had happened to him?"

"No, he told me a similar story that would be more believable, and I embellished on what he said."

Duval spoke again, but Vivian didn't hear him, because suddenly she knew how they could defeat Lorcan.

"I've got it. If I change the story to more closely resemble the truth then it should have more power to affect Lorcan's world. Then I can rewrite the ending so Niall kills Lorcan. Even if Lorcan doesn't die in truth, he may be weakened enough for a Protector to kill him."

Duval remained silent for several long seconds, considering her words. "That might work, but only if we can get Niall back into the story."

"No --"

Niall squeezed her hand, cutting off her protest. *Listen to what he says. It may be the only way.*

Duval arched a brow. "Your lover puts his life at risk for us every day. That's what Protectors do. I will not spare him because you wish it so."

"I wish to stop Lorcan as much as you do. But I want to do it without endangering Niall." Her heart pounded against her chest.

"Has anything else you've written come true?"

Vivian shook her head.

"What do you think made this story different?"

She fought the urge to snap at him, just managing to keep her voice even. "The fact that Niall was in my head."

Vivian, this is what I do. If I can get back in, I'll be connected to you the entire time. You got me out once, you can do it again.

* * *

Long hours of strategizing and discussion followed. Ultimately, they devised a plan. Duval would take a restrained Niall to Lorcan, pretending to turn him over to Lorcan in exchange for the wizard's promise that he will not move against the Consulate. Ethan would accompany him along with several other Protectors and some of their allies.

As Duval negotiated with Lorcan, he would suggest that Niall go back into the story. Once Niall was back in, Vivian would make changes to the story as fast as she could. Ethan and the others would storm Lorcan's hideout and kill him when he was weak.

Their best intelligence told them Lorcan would attempt his spell on the night of the full moon. That gave them three days to prepare.

Vivian agreed to the plan despite her terror. There were so many things that could go wrong. What if Duval couldn't get Niall into the story? What if Lorcan overpowered them both? What if she couldn't write fast enough and Niall was killed before she could revise the end?

Ethan ran his hand through his hair, looking no more confident than she felt. "Are we set then?"

Duval's lip curled in an evil grin. Vivian was certain he was about to say something she wouldn't like. "Niall needs to be weakened before we go in. Otherwise, he might forget he's supposed to be helpless."

What does he mean?

Lorcan must believe that Duval is controlling me, but in reality I'll be able to break free at any time. If I'm at my full strength, Duval is afraid anger will overpower me, and I'll try to kill Lorcan on my own. He's right. I'm not sure I can see the bastard without trying to strangle him.

Vivian knew Niall and Duval were right, but the thought of him being given over to Lorcan in a weakened state nauseated her.

Ethan gave Niall a pointed look Vivian didn't understand. "Niall will need strength to communicate with Vivian once he's in the story."

Duval frowned. "That may not be possible."

Ethan looked at Niall again.

Niall nodded. *You're right. It's time.*

Ethan smiled. "Vivian can lend Niall strength once he's inside the story."

Duval's eyes widened. "Only a Companion could do such a thing."

Niall nodded. "Vivian is my Companion." He couldn't help but grin. Shocking an Old One was a rare treat.

Duval's eyes narrowed. "She is still human."

Niall nodded.

"You're telling me you have a complete Companion bond, yet she has not been Turned?"

"Yes. When I tasted her the first time, our minds touched. She could read my thoughts as clearly as I read hers. I regained nearly my full strength from that single mindlink."

Duval gave a catlike smile Niall had learned to dread. "Very intriguing. Have you experienced other benefits of a Companion bond?"

"Yes. When I opened her for a deep scan, she drew my powers from me just as a Companion. She now has strong psychic gifts, and they smell of vampire."

Duval's smile widened. "And?"

"When Lorcan's zombies attacked me, she went into bloodlust."

"A Companion that remains human. Perfect. Of course I will need to verify the extent of your bond."

"We have not done the bonding ritual."

"You should complete the ceremony before we execute our plan."

"No."

Duval arched his brow.

"I will not link her lifeforce to mine."

The older vampire studied him carefully for several tense minutes. Niall could feel his anger that Niall would challenge him, but he also sensed excitement and deep

satisfaction. He got the sense that the notion of a Companion who remained human was not new to Duval.

Finally, Duval spoke. "Very well. The mission can succeed without the bond if your connection is as deep as you say."

"It is."

Duval took a step toward Vivian, but he held Niall's gaze. "Would you prefer I bite or take the less pleasant route?"

"Ask Vivian."

Duval laughed. "I do tend to forget just how modern your sensibilities have become."

Niall heard Vivian's rapid heartbeat, felt her shallow breaths. *He's going to have to scan you to verify our connection. You can shield your other thoughts from him, but we don't have a choice on this.*

Duval walked toward Vivian until he stood inches from her. "If I bite you, then my scan will cause you little or no pain. Otherwise it will hurt like hell."

Vivian's heart pounded. She did not want this man in her mind. *What do I do?*

If he bites you, it will be harder to keep him out of your mind in future, but you will also be able to communicate with him mentally while we are at Lorcan's once he's tasted your blood. Niall hated the thought of Duval having easier access to Vivian's mind, but he knew having another line of communication open to her would give them both a better chance of surviving their mission.

Vivian took a long slow breath. "If you bite me, will that change my status as Niall's blood servant?"

Duval smiled, a more genuine show of mirth this time. "Very astute question. No, it will not."

Vivian nodded. "Bite me."

"With pleasure." His mouth descended to her neck before she had time to think. She cried out as his fangs pierced her. Searing pain shot through her, but it was rapidly erased by a flood of lust and power like nothing she'd ever known.

* * *

Vivian cried out as Duval bit her and Niall took a step forward. Ethan laid a restraining hand on his arm. *He will not hurt her.*

Niall watched, anger flooding him. How the fuck did Duval always manage to outwit them? He should have known better than to think Vivian could meet him and escape a scan or a donation of blood. At least he knew Duval would honor his word. He would not try to stake a claim on Vivian, not that he could if she were Niall's Companion.

He hated the sight of Vivian in Duval's arms, but he wouldn't allow himself to look away. Finally Duval licked at the wounds on her neck and stepped away. Her eyes fluttered open, and she swayed. Niall caught her around the waist. His palms were bleeding where he'd dug his fingers in to keep them from reaching for Duval's neck.

Duval inclined his head and arched a brow. "The connection is indeed as deep as you say. The mission will proceed as planned."

Niall nodded, annoyance still simmering in his chest. "Are we done here?"

"Almost." Duval looked from Ethan to Vivian. "Sex or blood, preferably both. You'll need a strong line of communication."

Duval left before any of them could say a word.

Niall looked up at his friend. Ethan raised a brow. *Should I do as he says?*

Niall nodded. *I trust you.*

Vivian fought the fog that still clouded her mind after Duval's invasion. She swayed again. This time Ethan caught her from behind. The heat of his body radiated into hers. "Duval wants us to have a blood connection so you can talk to me over long distances. If we also have sex, our connection will be stronger." His voice caressed her as if his hands were sliding up and down her sides, just grazing her breasts.

She moaned, arching against his touch.

The full strength of his desire crashed over her. She let her head fall back on his shoulder as he ground his erection against her back.

Her eyes flew open. What was she doing? She looked up. Niall watched them, heat in his eyes. *I like watching you with him.*

But --

You want him.

Her cheeks burned.

I told you I'd make sure your fantasy was fulfilled.

She remembered the sensation of two cocks filling her body. Heat flooded her pussy. *You really don't mind.*

Niall's eyes flared with passion. "Not at all. Let us take you."

Ethan swept his hands down her sides and pulled her hips against him. "Please."

"But isn't that giving Duval exactly what he wants."

Niall sighed. "Yes, but the fucking bastard is right. You'll be safer if you can communicate with Ethan too."

Ethan slid his lips along her neck. "Do you want me, Vivian?"

"Yes. God, yes."

Chapter 8

Niall stepped closer and took her mouth in a searing kiss. He shoved her T-shirt up and pulled aside the cups of her bra. When his thumb brushed over her nipples, she cried out, arching into his touch.

He captured the tight bud between his thumb and forefinger, pinching gently at first then harder. Ethan licked and nibbled at the back of her neck, while thrusting his hips against the seam of her ass. She moaned when she felt the hard length of his cock clearly through his pants.

Niall brushed his thumb back and forth over her nipple in the fast rhythm she loved. She whimpered. If they kept this up, she'd come right there. But she wanted more. *Fuck me.*

Niall laughed, letting his voice caress her. *We will.* He pushed an image into her mind. In it, she rode Ethan's cock while Niall fucked her ass.

She gasped, wriggling her hips, feeling both their hard cocks against her.

You want it, don't you? His desire swirled around her, making her burn hotter. Yet she was still nervous about taking what she wanted.

You truly don't mind?

Niall smiled, letting her both see and feel it. *Vampires need lots of sex, and we tend to appreciate it in all its forms. I want to hear you scream while he shoves his cock in you. But first I want to watch you suck him so deep he loses himself in your mouth.*

God, yes. His words made her so hot she feared she'd explode.

Niall spun her to face Ethan. Vivian couldn't suppress a groan as he slowly unbuttoned his shirt and slid it from his muscled shoulders, revealing sculpted forearms that begged her tongue to trace every crevice.

"Arms up." Niall tugged at her shirt.

She did as he asked, and he pulled her shirt over her head. He unhooked her bra and dropped it to the floor. As Niall undid the fastening of her jeans, Ethan cupped her breasts and brushed his fingers over her nipples. They tightened painfully, and she groaned.

Niall knelt and removed her boots. She stepped out of her jeans and stood naked in front of Ethan.

"Beautiful," Ethan's voice slithered over her, making her pussy clench. Dear God, how would she deal with two of them using not only their bodies but also their minds to arouse her?

Ethan opened his pants, freeing his cock. It was nearly as thick as Niall's. "Are all vampires so well-endowed?"

Niall laughed. "No, you're just very lucky."

She wrapped her hand around the base of Ethan's cock and knelt in front of him. She caressed him from base to tip and licked her lips as she took a deep breath, drawing in the musky scent of his arousal. His eyes burned with heat. She wanted to feel his need, but he was holding back, keeping his shields locked tight.

She leaned forward, her lips less than an inch from the head of his cock. "Show me how much you want this." Her voice was low, breathless.

His eyes widened, and he dropped his shields. Need screamed through her, Ethan's mixed with her own.

She slid her hands under the waistband of his pants and pushed them down over his ass as she sucked the tip of his cock into her mouth. He groaned and thrust forward, forcing her to take him deeper. She dug her fingers into his ass, pulling him toward her.

He growled and captured the sides of her face in his large hands. He held her still, sliding his cock in and out slowly at first and then faster. She forced herself to relax and let him fuck her mouth as hard and as fast as he wanted. His need flowed through her, and she rode it like a wave.

Niall stepped closer to them. His heat surrounded Vivian, and she realized he'd been shielding his need from her too. *Show me what you want.*

Her hot words made Niall growl. Watching Vivian suck Ethan had made his cock so hard it felt like it was going to explode. He opened his mindlink with Ethan. *Find a place to sit down. I'm going to fuck her while she finishes you off.*

Ethan slid his cock from Vivian's mouth despite her whimpered protest. "Believe me, I'm going to let you suck me until I come. We just need to change position so Niall can join us."

Vivian looked over her shoulder and smiled at Niall like a satisfied cat.

Ethan sat in one of the chairs by the fire. Vivian sank to her knees in front of him.

He pulled her head back to his cock. "Suck me while Niall fucks you. I want to watch you trapped between us."

"Yes," she whispered as she sucked him deep.

Niall knelt behind her and slipped two fingers into her pussy. She was dripping wet.

Fuck me, she ordered.

With pleasure. He pulled his fingers out, positioned his cock and drove in to the hilt in one hard thrust.

Vivian made a strangled noise around Ethan's cock. *This is what you want, isn't it? To be filled with our cocks?*

Vivian whimpered. Yes.

I'm going to fuck you so hard you won't be able to think. All you'll be able to do is feel our need and your own raging through you, splitting you apart.

Now. Do it now.

He pulled out and slammed back. She kept sucking Ethan's cock. Ethan groaned and his head fell back against the chair. He was close.

Niall reached around Vivian and captured her clit between his fingers. She arched into his touch. "Make him come, Vivian. Make him come as I bring you over."

Ethan gasped. "Yes. Fuck, yes." He only lasted a few more seconds.

Niall tugged Vivian's clit, and she stiffened against him, her pussy clamped his cock as she rode the wave of her orgasm and Ethan's.

Niall held himself still, holding back his own release, wanting her to fully enjoy the riot of sensation she poured into him. When he felt the rush of energy begin to subside, he drove back in her even faster and harder than before.

She pushed away from the chair and lowered herself to her elbows on the carpet, so he could take her more deeply.

She slammed her hips back to meet every thrust. *Yes. Take me deep, Vivian. Take it all.* He thrust one final time and spilled himself in her. She cried out, going over again, milking the last drops of his come with the spasms of her body.

They both collapsed onto the carpet.

Long moments later, Niall sat up, pulling her onto his lap. He kissed her gently, but lust stirred deep inside her.

He smiled. "More?"

"Yes."

"Good. It's time for me to see how it feels to bury myself in your ass."

Vivian's heart pounded. Suddenly she wasn't at all sure this fantasy fulfillment was a good idea. "Um, I'm just not sure that's going to work?"

Ethan chuckled as he joined them on the floor. "Did you really think you were going to have us both without one of us fucking your ass?"

Vivian chewed on her lip, cheeks burning with embarrassment.

Niall slid his hands up and down her back, and Ethan bent to draw one of her nipples into his mouth.

Niall whispered against her ear. "When you feel us both driving deep, you're going to lose your mind."

Vivian's need spiked as if someone had turned up the flame on a gas burner. Suddenly she needed them both right that second. Ethan flicked his tongue across her nipple, making her gasp. She dropped her head back onto Niall's shoulder as he nibbled at her neck.

"I want you inside me, but I'm scared."

Niall caressed her cheek. "We'll go as slow as you need us to."

Ethan gave her nipple a last lick and looked up. "I'm going to make sure you're so hot and ready for Niall you won't feel anything but pleasure."

Both vampires dropped their shields then, flooding her with their desire. She gasped. "Fuck me."

Ethan smiled. "Your wish is my command." He looked at Niall. "There's sure to be lube around here somewhere."

Vivian raised her brows. "Really?"

Ethan laughed. "Vampires are always prepared." He stretched out on the carpet beside her, his cock already hard again.

Vivian let her gaze run over him. Raw need flashed in his eyes when he felt her appreciation. She leaned forward and kissed him long and slow, fighting the need raging through her. He wrapped his arms around her and their kiss grew more ferocious.

When she released his mouth, he held her gaze with fire in his eyes. His lust slithered around her, like a caress. Pure need flowed over her chest, brushing her nipples. It slid down her belly and rasped across her clit. She cried out.

Niall knelt beside them. She turned and pulled his lips to hers, kissing him as ferociously as she'd just kissed Ethan. He drew his fingers slowly down the length of her spine. His fingers slipped between her ass cheeks and then one finger circled her anus, teasing the sensitive skin there. "I found the lube. Are you ready?"

Vivian couldn't suppress a shudder. "Yes."

Ethan growled. "So am I. Ride me."

She straddled him and grabbed his cock, positioning it at her entrance. She sank slowly, never breaking eye contact with Ethan or her mental contact with Niall. Ethan's eyes flashed, and he drew in a sharp breath as she took his full length inside her and settled against his belly.

His hands gripped her hips, pushing her backward, forcing her body up on his cock then pulling her toward him. She fought him, wanting to go slow so she could feel every nuance of sensation as he slid in and out.

He growled. "More." She smiled and let him have what he wanted.

Niall's need flooded her mind, making her feel hands brushing her nipples, stroking her back, pushing her forward until she lay against Ethan's chest.

"Keep her still while I get her ready."

Ethan wrapped his arms around Vivian and held her tight. Her pussy throbbed with need. She squirmed, rubbing herself against Ethan's belly.

Niall pressed a greased finger against her ass. "Open for me." She pushed against him. He slid in and out a few times before adding another finger.

The sensation wasn't unpleasant, but two fingers filled her enough to hurt just a bit. What on earth would his cock feel like? She'd fantasized about having two men like this for years but she'd never had more than a finger in her ass until today.

Niall added a third finger, and she gasped. "Don't tense. Push against me and relax."

She was too full now. Pain threatened to override the pleasure. His cock was going to split her in two. "I don't think this is going to work."

"Oh, it will work all right, and I'll go slow until you're begging for more."

Niall pulled his fingers free of her body. The emptiness startled her. She tried to move against Ethan's cock, but he held her still.

Then Niall pressed his cock to her ass. "Ready?"

Despite her trepidation, she pushed her hips toward him. She'd had enough of waiting.

He sent tendrils of lust racing across her body, but her breath caught as he pushed into her. "Too much."

His hands gripped her hips, stilling her. "Relax and open for me."

"I can't." She wanted him but she couldn't relax. He was too damn big.

"Ethan, help her."

Ethan released her waist, letting Niall take over the job of holding her. One of his hands slipped between their bodies, seeking out her clit, while the other captured one of her nipples.

She moaned, thrusting against his hands.

Niall surged forward several more inches. "God, you're tight."

Ethan groaned as he worked her clit and raised his head to lick at her neck. "Relax and let him in so we can get on with fucking you."

"I don't think... I can."

"You're doing great. Just relax." Niall pushed a little deeper and she whimpered.

She felt the scrape of Ethan's fangs against her neck. "Would you like more help?"

"Yes." She arched her neck, forcing his fangs to prick her skin. He growled and bit deep.

She screamed, speared with pain and pleasure.

Niall thrust again, finally burying himself to the balls in her ass. Between the raw need flowing into his mind from her, the sight of Ethan's fangs buried in her neck, and the hot tight clasp of her ass against his cock, he knew he wouldn't last long.

He pulled out slowly, fighting the urge to drive back in hard. Even with the intoxication of Ethan's bite and her vampire-like strength, Vivian needed him to take it slow. He worked her gently for a few strokes, until she was arching back to meet him. Ethan released her neck and Niall thrust back, faster this time. Vivian growled and shoved her hips back to meet him.

"Faster?"

"Yes, damn it."

He drove in hard. She cried out. "Did I hurt you?"

"Yes. No. More."

He laughed, letting the sound stroke her body. His thrusts grew deeper, harder, more frantic and Ethan surged into her, pistoning her from below.

Vivian sobbed, begged, snarled, screwing her hips back and forth, taking them both as deep as she could. "Feels. So. Good."

Ethan groaned. "Come for us, Vivian."

Niall thrust deep and lay over her, pinning her between him and Ethan. He bared his fangs and sank them into her neck.

She screamed long and loud. Her body shuddered between them, her orgasm squeezing Niall's cock to the point of pain. Her mind opened fully to him, and her thoughts became his. He felt her hunger, the exquisite fullness of her body, the jolt of pleasure as Ethan's fangs sank into her once more.

Ethan came then as he drank from her, and his orgasm crashed over Niall through his link to Vivian. Niall snarled and pistoned her as hard and fast as he could with her tight ass squeezing him. Vivian's pleasure. Ethan's hunger.

Blood. Sex. Need. It was too much. He dug his fingers into Vivian's hips, and cried out as he emptied every last drop of come into her.

He collapsed on top of Vivian, pressing her against Ethan. The three of them lay still for many long minutes.

When he thought he could move, Niall rolled off Vivian and ran a hand down her back. "How do you feel?"

She groaned. "Exhausted. Sticky. And very, very satisfied."

"More?"

She sat up and gave a weak laugh. "Not if I want to live."

"Then let's go to the shower."

Ethan ran his hands through his hair and sat up. "I'd love to join you, but Duval put me on guard duty for the next shift. He's found every excuse he can to punish me since I lost Niall to Lorcan months ago. He's even had me working day shifts."

Niall snorted. "Isn't that what the wolves are for?"

Vivian's eyes went wide. "Wolves? Tell me you don't mean werewolves."

"I do." He couldn't help but laugh at her obvious disbelief. "All those creatures of the night your parents told you were legends, they're real."

Vivian shook her head. "I am so not ready to contemplate that right now."

Niall smiled. "I'll save the ghost stories for later."

Vivian scowled at him and turned to Ethan. "Why would Duval blame you for Niall's capture?"

Ethan shook his head. "He doesn't, really, but he was worried and angry, and he had to take it out on someone. I was an easy target."

"But you're as strong as Niall. I wouldn't think you'd be an easy target for any kind of punishment."

"Only for Duval."

After a few seconds her eyes widened. "Duval Turned you, too."

Ethan nodded. Another emotion-laden look passed between him and Niall.

"You two are going to tell me your story. Now."

Niall looked at Ethan. His friend nodded. "Duval sought Ethan out when he sensed his strong psychic abilities."

Ethan sighed. "You've felt his power. He wasn't as strong then, but he overwhelmed me with ease, and we became lovers."

Vivian looked puzzled "But you're..."

"Interested in women?"

She nodded.

"Primarily. And up until I met Duval, exclusively. But, I found him compelling in a way that transcended gender."

"After a few months together, he convinced me to allow him to Turn me. I stayed with him for several years, until I could control my need for blood. Then I left, needing to get out from under his control. I met Niall about twenty years after I'd been Turned."

Niall took up the narrative. "It was 1813. I was working as an intelligence officer for the British army. My psychic gifts made me the perfect spy. I met Ethan while I was on an assignment in Paris. I had no idea what he was.

"We became friends, and I recruited him for intelligence gathering. Then one night we were attacked outside the city. He killed our attackers quickly and efficiently. I was terrified. I ran, and he let me go.

"But the next night he sought me out and explained. He wanted me to become a vampire, but I refused."

Ethan frowned. "I wasn't yet old enough to Turn him myself, but I knew Duval would Turn him if I asked. For reasons I still don't fully understand, he only seeks blood servants with psychic talents."

Niall frowned. "Perhaps he's been hoping all along to find a connection like I have with Vivian."

"Perhaps."

Niall continued the story. "A few months later, I was shot. There was nothing the surgeon could do. I was dying. Ethan couldn't stand it. He contacted Duval and told him about my gifts. Duval came. I had no strength left, but even if I'd been well, I couldn't have resisted him. He Turned me. And soon after that he formed the Protector Division."

"Well that certainly explains the animosity you feel toward him, but you and Ethan are still friends."

Niall smiled. "It took awhile for him to regain my trust, but like I said before, he's irresistible."

Ethan laughed.

Vivian felt heat creep into her cheeks, but she had to ask her question anyway. "Were you and Duval lovers?"

Niall nodded. "For a time. As Ethan said, Duval knows how to make you want things you've never imagined wanting. I found him compelling even when he wasn't using his vampire tricks on me. He's like no other human or vampire I've ever met. He seems to exist outside all normal rules for sex and gender."

Vivian smiled. "He certainly knows how to make a human want, but then so do the two of you."

Niall laughed. "Are you sure you don't want more?"

She shook her head. "No."

Ethan pulled Vivian to him and kissed her tenderly. "Thank you for trusting me."

"If Niall trusts you, I trust you. And that was one hell of a way to fulfill a fantasy."

He smiled, and she felt his pleasure slide over her as he walked through the door.

"How am I supposed to concentrate on writing after that?"

Niall leaned over and gave her a tender kiss. "You're not. You're supposed to let me clean you up, feed you, and put you to bed."

"But I've only got three days to rewrite your story."

"And you won't get any of it done if you don't rest."

Vivian sighed. He was right but she was so very afraid she wouldn't be able to write fast enough. She'd scrambled to meet plenty of deadlines, but fear of a scolding from her editor, even fear of not getting another contract, was nothing compared to the fear that Niall would die if she didn't work fast enough.

Chapter 9

Vivian dropped her head into her hands. She'd been through Niall's story at least ten times, marking all the changes she needed to make, thinking, making notes. If only she could go ahead and write. Her fingers itched to get started, and yet the thought of Niall being trapped again knotted her stomach.

She felt Niall's thoughts brush against hers. *You saved me once. I trust you to do it again.*

She turned to find him sitting on the edge of the bed, watching her. She hadn't even heard him stir. *You're a centuries-old assassin. I'm just a writer.*

But a writer is what we need. You have a power none of us have.

I certainly never imagined being useful to a group of powerful vampires.

Niall smiled. *You are exactly what we need.*

She returned his smile, but kept her thoughts shielded as she wondered what would happen when they didn't need her anymore. If they all survived and Lorcan didn't, what use would she be to them then? Niall had admitted that she was his Companion, but he didn't seem pleased, and she hadn't had the courage to ask him why.

After she'd saved him, he said he would never let her go but she'd taken that as no more than a rash statement in a passion-filled moment. Would he want her around when he no longer needed her?

* * *

A few hours later, as the sun set, Vivian, Niall, Ethan, Duval, and several other Protectors met in the room where she'd originally met Duval. Vivian's cheeks heated as she remembered what she'd done on the floor of that room a few days before. There'd been little time for pleasure since the night they'd arrived.

Her lascivious thoughts must have called to Niall, because he leaned down and kissed her neck. *Write fast. When I return, we won't get out of bed for days. I plucked a few more fantasies from your mind, and I have every intention of fulfilling them.*

Her body heated despite the seriousness of the meeting. *I'll hold you to that promise.*

Duval reviewed the plan with each of them. He looked at Vivian with his cool gray eyes, and her heart pounded. He didn't need to surround her with his aura of power to make her fear him. "Are you ready?"

"I've re-read the story until I know it by heart. I've got notes for the changes I need to make."

"Can you do this?"

Adrenaline pumped through her body. Sweat trickled down her back and she feared she was too light-headed to stand, but she would not back down. Niall and Ethan were depending on her. Lorcan was pure evil. He could not be allowed to perform the spell he was preparing. "Yes."

Duval smiled, looking more human than he ever had. "I believe you."

Vivian had not expected his confidence, and she returned his smile, feeling slightly less sick. "Thank you."

I believe in you, too.

As do I. She'd not expected to hear Ethan's voice in her mind, but she turned to him and smiled in acknowledgement.

Thank you both.

* * *

Niall bristled as Duval snapped manacles over his wrists. If he were truly Duval's captive, the manacles would be magically enhanced to prevent his escape. As it was, he was capable of breaking his chains. Capable but still weak.

Duval had drained him until his skin was so pale it looked translucent. His head pounded from dehydration, but he could still break free if he needed to. For a moment he considered a plan of his own. What if he could kill Lorcan with a surprise attack?

Duval snarled. "Don't try it. He caught you once he could do it again. Getting you in that story is our best chance to end this once and for all."

Ethan and a small army of Protectors and shifters were stationed around the block, ready to make an entrance on Duval's command. Another Protector posing as Duval's servant knocked at the door of Lorcan's residence, an expensive Upper East Side townhouse no human would suspect of housing such evil. Niall had smelled the stench of dark magic from blocks away.

One of Lorcan's blank-eyed servants answered the door but made no move to let them in.

Duval growled. "I won't stand out here all night."

"They are cleared," a voice said from the darkness behind him.

The servant stood aside and motioned them in.

Duval pulled hard on Niall's chains, and Niall stumbled to keep up. He bit back a growl. Duval was enjoying this too damn much.

They were taken to Lorcan's magical laboratory. Niall saw the transformation platform where victims stood before Lorcan separated their consciousness from their bodies, forcing them into his story realm. Power surged around Lorcan. He was stronger than the last time Niall had faced him. They'd been right about him absorbing the energy from the murders he'd committed.

"So you've brought back what the human writer stole from me." His mocking tone made Niall bristle. Damn, he wished he could break free and kill the bastard.

Duval cast a scathing look at Niall. "A Protector that gets caught is worthless to me."

Lorcan raised his brow. "Really? How can you be sure you won't be trapped as easily as he was?"

"Because you've been hiding since we found you. You may have caught this worthless specimen, but you're concerned by our pursuit. I have the power to call off our investigation. I will do just that if you swear to leave the Consulate out of your future schemes."

"You've no wish to protect the humans of this city? I thought the Consulate worked for the humans as well."

Duval hissed. "We work for no one but ourselves."

The wizard's lips curled up in a cruel smile. "So it's a truce you seek?"

Duval nodded.

"And you will accept my word that I will not harm you?"

"If you break your word, the full weight of the Consulate will come down on you. You may have captured one Protector, but you would never survive a full-scale attack." Duval's voice was low and steady, but Niall could feel rage burning beneath the surface of his calm.

"Perhaps if you truly understood my power you would not be so certain of yourself. But I accept your terms."

Duval appeared as still and cold as a marble statue. "I'm glad we could come to an understanding."

Lorcan's power rose, choking Niall with its stench of dark magic.

The wizard scowled. "Stand back so I can kill your worthless Protector."

Niall tensed, ready to break the chains if their gamble didn't work. Duval was good. Niall had seen him talk his way out of situations that would have been certain death for others, but if things went wrong, Niall had every intention of joining the fight.

Duval spoke as power built in the air. "It matters not to me if he's dead or alive, but I would think he'd be a lot more use to you trapped in your book than dead. He may have gotten caught, but he's still a vampire and a strong one. I imagined you could find something for him to do as your servant."

"No!" Niall shouted. "I won't go back."

Lorcan's mouth curved up in an evil smile. "Doesn't look like you have a choice, does it?"

Niall turned to Duval, doing his best to look as if he were pleading. "Just kill me. Don't let him do this."

"You failed me. If he prefers torture to death, it's no worse than you'd get from the Consulate."

Lorcan laughed. "Throw him on the platform."

Duval tugged on his chains. Niall fought, making Duval drag him until they reached the transformation platform. Duval jerked hard. Niall pretended to fall, and Duval kicked him onto the platform.

Damn, that hurt. He was going to get Duval back for this one.

Good luck. Duval's mental voice was strained.

Niall realized why when Lorcan pushed against his own mind, using brute force to try to break his shields. *He's trying to drain your powers, isn't he?*

Yes.

Good luck to you, too.

Lorcan pulled the lever that would separate Niall's consciousness from his body. "No!" Niall screamed, no longer pretending fear or pain.

* * *

I'm in. You can start writing.

Are you okay? Niall could hear concern even in her mental voice.

Yes. Lorcan was trying to rip power from our minds. Duval was holding out, but I don't know how long he can. Lorcan was hitting him hard.

Shit! I'm working.

Vivian pulled up her notes and began typing as fast as her fingers would go, making changes to the story that had freed Niall before. Every few minutes, she tested for Niall's presence, making sure he was still there, still alive. She didn't know if her writing would have any effect if their mental link was severed.

When Niall was trapped before, he said he'd never truly left her mind once he connected with her, fearing he wouldn't be able to find her again. Their connection was much stronger now, but the idea of losing him brought tears to her eyes as she frantically wrote.

Vivian sensed Ethan's presence in her mind. *How close are you?*

Halfway, maybe.

Damn. Lorcan's got a shield over the building that we haven't been able to break, and Duval's not responding to my call.

A wave of nausea washed over Vivian. I'm working as fast as I can.

Niall screamed.

Pain knifed through Vivian as if she'd been stabbed. "No!" She doubled over, clutching her head. Tears came to her eyes.

What's happening? Ethan sounded frantic.

Don't know. Pain. Niall. Screaming.

Fight it.

Can't. It... hurts so much... like a... knife in my brain.

Breathe. Slow and easy. Try to shield the pain while concentrating on Niall's thoughts.

I don't know how.

You've got to shield sensations but not thoughts. Imagine a wall that holds back feelings like it might hold back a flood. Only thoughts can come over the wall.

Vivian fought through the pain, trying desperately to shield herself. Finally, the stabbing sensation receded. At first, she felt nothing. Her heart pounded, terrified she'd closed herself off from Niall or that he was dead.

Finally, she felt him. He was in pain, bleeding, fighting someone. Niall? What's happening?

Lorcan's not using my body as a servant. He's using the story to torture me. He's sending creatures to attack me. They're so damn strong. I --

Take strength from me.

No. You'll need all your strength to escape when Lorcan comes for you.

He's not coming for me. He's going to die. Take what you need from me.

No! A blast of vicious pain broke through her shield. Niall? Oh, God, Niall.

Vivian. Ethan's voice called to her. You can build your shield again. Niall needs you. We all need you. I think Lorcan is sucking away Duval's strength and using it to strengthen his power over the story world.

Vivian pushed the pain away again. *I've got to try to change the story. Maybe I can stop the attack on Niall. He sounds so weak.*

Vivian, we're going to save him.

Ethan's confidence gave her courage.

Niall, describe the creatures for me so I can add them to the story.

Huge panthers. Red eyes. Massive paws. Two for now. Others coming.

Show me.

No.

Damn it, Niall. I can handle it. I'm not going to let you die. Show me.

The image flashed into her mind. Vivian's fingers flew over her keyboard, writing the scene into the story. In her book Niall defeated the creatures by reaching into their minds and convincing them to run.

Looking through Niall's eyes, she saw her words take effect. But before they'd gotten far, the panthers turned. They stalked back toward Niall as if the story had been altered again.

Vivian screamed as one of the creatures rose on its hind legs and ripped open Niall's belly with a massive paw. "No!"

Ethan read what was happening. *A wound like that would be fatal for a human, but not for one of us.*

Shut down the link. Niall's voice was weak, strained.

What? I can't change what's happening if I can't see it.

I can't hold out much longer. If we're linked then you will likely die with me.

You are not going to die.

Shut it down.

Vivian? Ethan's voice interrupted their argument. *Try to reach Duval.*

If he won't respond to you, how will I reach him?

He's tasted your blood, and your psychic powers are very strong. He's likely shielding himself from me and Niall. It's possible Lorcan could drain us too through our close link with him.

Vivian reached out, seeking Duval's thoughts. But another jolt of pain from Niall broke her concentration.

Let go of the deep link. Hold only his surface thoughts. Ethan's voice was calm, controlled.

I'm scared.

This is the only way. Get to Duval. Tell him we've got to get Lorcan into the story. If we trap him there with Niall, you can write his death.

Vivian reached out, guided by nothing but instinct. She concentrated on Duval, his smell, the feel of his fangs in her neck, the feel of his tongue.

Vivian?

Yes. Lorcan's changing the story. Is he draining you to do it?

Yes.

You've got to get him into the story. If he's trapped there, I can kill him. Right now he changes the story as fast as I can write.

Not much strength left.

Niall is going to die if you don't do this. Once he's dead, Lorcan will concentrate on the rest of us.

She felt a rustle of power across their link. *I'll do it. If I don't survive tell Niall he's one fucking lucky vampire to have you.*

You're going to live and so is Niall.

Duval closed the link.

Ethan? I got through to Duval. He's going to try.

Tell me as soon as it happens. We should be able to breach the shield around his apartment if Lorcan's not there to hold it.

She reached deeper into her link with Niall. He was barely alive.

Show me what's happening.

No. Get out. He tried to shield against her, but he had so little strength he couldn't. She pushed deep, forcing him to show her what was happening.

There were three panther demons now. They were taunting Niall, hurting him but not killing him. Lorcan obviously wanted to prolong his torture or else he wanted Niall alive but weak too weak to fight.

Sacrifice. Niall's voice was so weak she barely heard him. The power he could get from my death would be ten times what he got from any of the women he killed.

He will not take you. Duval is working to force him into the story.

Duval has little strength left.

He has enough.

Vivian you've got to break the link. I will not let you die with me.

I will not let you die.

A panther lunged. Niall didn't have the strength to defend himself. The creature's teeth bit into his neck. Vivian screamed. Pain like she'd never experienced exploded in her body. She fell from her chair.

Somehow she pulled herself up and put her hands on the keys. In her story the panthers backed away and Niall formed a shield around himself. *Take some strength from me.*

No. I will not weaken you.

Damn it, Niall.

In Niall's world the panthers pushed against the shield, but it held.

Duval's voice burst into her head. *Nearly got him. Just have to pull the lever.* He gasped in pain. *Get ready to pour your strength into Niall.*

He won't co-operate. How do I do it?

Duval's voice was weak. *Figure it out.*

Niall, Duval nearly has Lorcan trapped. You've got to take strength from me so you can kill him.

I can't weaken you.

If you die, I may die with you. If you use my strength to kill Lorcan, we all live.

Duval shouted in her mind. *Now!*

Ethan, Lorcan's in. Go.

Vivian pushed even deeper into Niall's mind. *Lorcan is there with you. Kill him and use me to do it.*

She saw Lorcan racing toward Niall. Light flashed. The shield failed and the panthers broke through.

Now, Niall.

She gasped. Something reached into her center and seemed to be ripping out her very soul. Dizziness and nausea made her drop to the floor. Instinct made her try to shield, but she couldn't. Dying. She was dying. Her vision darkened. *Niall!* she screamed as she collapsed.

Chapter 10

Niall broke his link with Vivian, praying he'd stopped in time. He'd been too weak to control himself.

A panther pounced, and he knocked it back as if it were a kitten. His body thrummed with energy. He wouldn't be this strong if he'd drained a dozen victims. The next panther attacked. He delivered a kick to its gut, and it went flying.

He charged Lorcan. The wizard struck out with a spell, cutting him across the face. He roared and pounced, wrapping his hands around Lorcan's neck and squeezing.

The wizard tried to scream, but no sound came out.

Niall squeezed, crushing his windpipe. Lorcan's eyes went wide, and he slumped in Niall's arms. Niall threw him to the ground, bashing his head again and again.

Niall. Niall!

It was Ethan. Let him go. He's dead. We need you here. Vivian needs you.

Niall gasped as his consciousness was sucked back into his physical body. He was back in Lorcan's laboratory. Duval lay on the ground unconscious. Ethan and numerous other Protectors fought Lorcan's minions.

Lorcan's body lay slumped on the transition platform. He had to kill his body. He looked for a weapon. Duval's sword lay on the ground in the midst of a tangle of zombies and vampires.

Ethan read his mind and kicked it toward him.

He grabbed it as one of Lorcan's zombies jumped him. Still pulsing with Vivian's energy, he ran the opponent through like he was made of butter. He stood over Lorcan, lifted the sword and swung, cleaving his head from his body in one stroke.

As Lorcan's head rolled off the platform, every zombie in the room collapsed, returning to the dead where they belonged.

It was over. Niall reached out to Vivian. He couldn't sense her. *Dear God, don't let her be dead.*

Ethan knelt by Duval. "He's alive. I'll take care of him. Go get Vivian."

"I can't sense her. I took so much from her." Niall hated the sound of panic in his voice.

"Go get her. She is not going to die."

Niall ran faster than the wind.

* * *

Something warm and delicious filled Vivian's mouth. She swallowed. More. She needed more. She took another sip and then another.

That's it. Drink.

Niall?

Yes, my love.

She opened her eyes and looked up. Niall's arm was clasped to her mouth. She was drinking his blood. She pulled back, startled, but he cupped her head and pushed her mouth back to his wrist.

You nearly died. Drink. Her mind rebelled, but her body wouldn't let her fight him. He tasted divine, like coffee and chocolate and wine all at once. It was like drinking heaven.

She wasn't sure how long she drank. The combination of his soothing presence in her mind and the intoxicating taste of his blood lulled her into a stupor. Eventually he pulled his wrist from her mouth. She whimpered at the loss and he laughed, his voice sending hot need through her.

Do you feel better?

She nodded looking up into his obsidian eyes. She watched him as he ran his tongue over his wrist, sealing the wounds he'd fed her from. Her body thrummed with need, feeling each lick as though it caressed her own bare skin.

But she was afraid of what would happen next. She'd almost lost him, almost died herself, and the thought of parting from him now brought tears to her eyes.

What's wrong?

I'm fine. She strengthened her shields as she felt him search her thoughts.

"Do you need more blood?"

She shook her head and turned away as tears overflowed despite her attempt at stoicism.

"Tell me what happened after I fed you my energy."

"Lorcan's dead. Do you remember me telling you?"

She shook her head. She didn't remember anything except the world fading away.

"Once I had your life force in me, I killed him in the story. Then I returned to myself and beheaded his physical body. His zombies died with him. Duval was unconscious but Ethan says he will be fine."

Vivian shivered. "Thank God."

"You saved my life. You saved us all."

Vivian looked away, embarrassed. "My writing didn't work."

"No, but you used psychic skills you didn't know existed until a few days ago. You communicated with Ethan and Duval and made a new plan even when I was too stubborn to help you. And you very nearly sacrificed yourself to save me."

"I wasn't going to let you die."

Niall walked toward her, stopping when he was inches away. "You're shielding from me. What's wrong? I'm sorry I took so much of your energy. I couldn't control it."

She shook her head. "I'm not angry with you. I told you to take what you needed."

"Then what's wrong?"

"I --" She couldn't do it. She couldn't ask if he still wanted her. It sounded so pathetic.

"If you don't want to tell me, just open up and let me see."

He'd seen her private fantasies, her most hidden thoughts. He knew her like no one ever had. She dropped her shields. His thoughts merged with hers. She saw the ever-present sexual need that raged between them, but his mind was also filled with anger at himself for nearly killing her, and fear that she'd reject him.

He pulled back, closing the connection.

He brushed her cheek with his knuckles. "How could you think I would leave you? I can't live without you."

He loved her. She'd seen that clearly in his mind. Happiness filled her, but she still wondered at his lack of enthusiasm about their bond. "You said you didn't want to seal our Companion bond so I thought you wanted to be able to leave once Lorcan was dead."

Niall shook his head. "I told Duval I wouldn't seal the bond, because I knew that if I died you would die too. Companions rarely survive the death of their vampires. I didn't want to trap you. I'd already changed you with no warning. I'd dragged you into my world and nearly gotten you killed multiple times. I --"

She laid a finger over his lips. "I love you. I want to be your Companion."

"I love you, too. More than I ever imagined possible, but are you sure?"

She nodded.

"I've never heard of a Companion who remained human. I can only guess that you will retain the ability to go out in the sun and your body will still need food, but you won't be able to live a normal human life. You will likely age far more slowly than a normal human, but if I'm killed you won't survive. You can draw from my lifeforce, and I can draw from yours, but as you saw today, that could prove deadly." His expression was wary. Pain shown in his eyes. He still feared she'd reject him.

"Knowing what I know now I could never live a normal human life. That's not what I want. I want you."

Niall smiled, his eyes bright with desire again. "I want you forever. In my mind. In my bed. As my Companion."

Vivian gasped as the full force of his need crashed over her. Tight heat coiled in her belly and wetness gathered between her legs.

"You're absolutely certain?" His voice caressed her like silk on bare skin.

"Yes." She tipped her head back as his mental caress stroked her neck, her chest, her breasts.

He pulled a dagger from his boot. "You have to drink from me as I drink from you. Our minds will open and we'll go deep, as deep as I was when I gave you psychic powers. Our thoughts will essentially become one while we drink."

She nodded.

He drew the dagger across his neck, making a shallow wound. Blood welled up and spilled across his pale skin. She drew in her breath.

"Taste me, Vivian. Be my Companion."

She wrapped her arms around him and lowered her lips to his neck. As she took her first sip, his fangs pierced her. She cried out and then love, lust, need, hunger, fear, longing, every emotion he felt now and in the past, his hopes and dreams, his anger, his hurt, all of it became hers. She fell so deep, her soul cried out to his, wrapped around him, became him. She gave herself in every possible way.

Then he pulled away, and she came back into herself. Yet she wasn't the same self she had been. She was forever linked to him, and she was happier than she'd ever been.

Her body burned with need. The very air seemed charged with sex. Niall lifted her, and she wrapped her legs around him, writhing against him, wanting him inside her.

Orgasm rose up and crashed over her before she even realized what had happened. She shuddered against him, and he groaned, stumbling toward the bed.

He laid her down on her back. She fumbled with the fastenings of her pants, desperate to have him inside her. He stripped as she wriggled her way out of her jeans and tossed them to the floor.

She spread her legs, and he climbed on top of her, entering her so hard and fast she screamed, pain and pleasure mixing, bringing her up, fast and swift. She was already close to a second explosion.

Niall drove into Vivian, desperate to claim her. He needed her to know he wanted her, needed her, couldn't live without her.

He was rough, wild, crazed, and she met his every stroke.

"More. Give me more," she cried.

"Yes. I'll give you everything you need. You're mine. Mine."

"Yes. Always."

He gasped and buried himself deep, coming so hard his vision went black and bringing her over with him. Her body clenched his cock so hard it hurt, but he didn't care.

His body had barely stilled from his orgasm before he was rock hard again, the energy of their bond demanding he stake his claim on her again. He rolled over, pulling her on top of him. "Ride me."

Vivian sat up and locked her gaze with his, her green eyes burned with need. "With pleasure."

She started with slow, agonizing strokes, but soon her rhythm was as wild and harsh as his had been. He reached for her breasts, brushing his thumbs back and forth across her nipples. Her head dropped back, her black curls bouncing wildly. She was close, so close. He dropped one hand to her clit. One squeeze, and she went over, bucking against him.

He rolled her back under him and pushed her legs up onto her stomach. He thrust into her, needing to be as far inside her as it was possible to go.

"Yes," she screamed. "Fuck me and never stop."

"Damn right I will."

One rough stroke, two, and he was lost. His cock emptying in her as his heart filled with the love she poured into their bond.

Long minutes later they lay curled together, her breathing still harsh and ragged.

"In all the times I heard stories about Companions. I never imagined a bond like this."

"I never imagined a real live vampire that could actually fuck like the hero of a romance novel."

He laughed and rubbed his cock against the seam of her ass. "Again?"

She shook her head. "I may have gained some of your strength, but right now, I can't move."

He smiled against her neck, unable to resist licking her, tasting her. If he had his way, he'd never get out of bed again.

"Why us? Why now?"

"I don't know. Duval has always maintained that Ethan and I have unique powers. I have a feeling he knows more about our bond than I do, that he somehow anticipated this possibility. All I know is that I'm damn glad I found you."

Vivian laughed. "All those years of talking to characters when my friends said I must be nuts has certainly paid off."

Niall pulled her tight against him, closing his eyes and breathing in her scent. "I love you, my Companion."

"And I love you, my Vampire."

Silvia Violet

Silvia Violet can often be found haunting coffee shops looking for the darkest, strongest cup of coffee she can find. Once equipped with the needed fuel, she can happily sit for hours pounding away at her laptop. Silvia typically leaves home disguised as a suburban stay-at-home-mom, and other coffee shop patrons tend to ask her hilarious questions like "Do you write children's books?" She loves watching the looks on their faces when they learn what she's actually up to. When not writing, Silvia enjoys baking sinful chocolate treats, exploring new styles of cooking, and reading children's books to her wickedly smart offspring.

Silvia writes erotic romance and erotica in a variety of genres. She recently won Angela Knight's Golden Stiletto contest with a hot excerpt from her Shifter's Station series.

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